

Inquiry into Imprisonment and Recidivism

Options to reduce imprisonment and recidivism and improve community outcomes (Reducing Imprisonment and Preventing Recidivism).

There are a number of barriers to successfully preventing recidivism that could be addressed and provide positive outcomes.

Prisoners are spending longer in custody than they need to be, negatively impacting them, adding to overcrowding and costing the community.

Examples:

1) If a prisoner is sentenced to a 6 year imprisonment order with a parole eligibility after two years, they may not get an opportunity to complete their compulsory program/intervention prior to their parole eligibility date, in many cases until 6-12 months after this date.

The prisoner may apply for parole when eligible and be declined by the board because they have not completed their compulsory program/intervention, and will not be entitled to re-apply for six months.

In many cases the prisoner will not be able to successfully gain parole until months and sometimes years after they are eligible due to the length of program waitlists.

2) If a prisoner is sentenced to a shorter sentence of 3 years imprisonment they would be eligible for parole after 12 months, however due to the above program waitlists, the prisoner may only receive parole for the final eight months or less if they are "Protection" prisoners.

3) Another issue which creates delays is the process of prisoners not being officially recommended their compulsory program until they are minimum 12 months into their sentence. This is the timeframes which QCS uses for completing the assessment which leads to the program recommendation.

Using the above example (Example 2), the prisoner is likely to apply for parole, have the Parole Board check with the prisoner to discover they are yet to be waitlisted for the program, decline the prisoners parole application based on outstanding treatment needs, wait another 12 months, by which time the sentence is nearly completed.

The above inefficiencies create a number of problems:

- 1) prisoners are not treated in a timely way, making them much more difficult to treat due to the negativity they hold.
- 2) The Parole Board is resistant to releasing prisoners without treatment, thereby holding them far longer than envisaged when they were sentenced.

- 3) The community is paying a huge cost given the \$107 000 /year figure quoted in the issues paper. There are many hundreds of prisoners waiting in custody for no other reason than the above noted issues within QCS.
- 4) Many prisoners prefer to “do fulltime” then complete their compulsory programs as the system is too difficult and unfair to negotiate.
These prisoners are not being treated and are being released from custody with no supervision and are a greater risk to the community.

Ultimately prisoners should be assessed and waitlisted for their treatment/programs at the beginning of the sentence, and they should be able to complete their programs prior to their eligibility. This would allow the Parole Board to properly assess their applications in a timely manner.

It is inexcusable to keep hundreds of prisoners in custody for no other reason than having not completed a program, when the cost of increasing interventions and programs is far cheaper than the cost of imprisonment. How can this be rationalised.

Thank you

