

## DRAFT REPORT INTO IMPRISONMENT AND RECIDIVISM

Hello

My name is Paul Bryden. I am a retired Commonwealth Public Servant, and for the past 15 years have been visiting Woodford Correctional Centre, since 2008 as an Anglican Chaplain. I welcome the opportunity to offer brief comments on your Draft Report.

Thank you for your efforts in putting the costs and challenges of imprisonment clearly. Public discussion of our legal, judicial and prison systems will be much better informed, which will hopefully lead to better outcomes for the community in the future. I support all your Recommendations, with brief comments as follows:

Recommendation 3: Forgiveness and reconciliation can have powerful, positive effects on people's lives. I often encourage Inmates to think about their victims, and consider an apology, if that is feasible.

Recommendation 4: Community service can be a positive alternative to incarceration (or financial penalties). Meeting and working alongside other community minded people can help normalize an offender and encourage self-belief and confidence.

Recommendation 6: Accommodation for homeless offenders on remand should be given priority (as indeed should homelessness in general!). If we expect offenders to turn up for appointments, to be kept track of, they must have somewhere to live. (And homeless people have major problems with Centrelink, which needs an address.)

Recommendation 8: In my experience, the rate of Parole Breaches has increased markedly. Some time ago a Parolee was breached after three 'fails' (eg. missing an appointment, being late, not phoning in on time, dirty urine etc). More recently, the Parolee is returned to custody at the first breach. The system is full of Parole Breachers, who are jailed for an automatic 28 days, before then being able to apply for resumption of parole. Allow another 28 days for the Board to decide and a Breacher can spend 12 weeks in custody, at public expense. I have known men whose entire worldly possessions, accommodation, and jobs have been lost through a technical breach. Someone working on a building site on the Sunshine Coast phoned and given one hour to get to Chermside for a urine check – not possible without a high speed police escort! And walking off the job means the sack.

I hope I am wrong, but there seems little or no thought of the financial cost and impact on the Parolee of the decision to breach a Parolee. The two systems ie Corrections and Parole, in my view need to work closely together if we are to help offenders stay out of trouble and get on in the community.

In my experience, Parolees have little understanding or faith in the system. I encourage men to look at 'Parole' as their freely entered into 'Promise' to abide by conditions, their side of the bargain. Be a Man and keep your Promise! The other side is of course, the parole Officer assigned to help them.

Recommendation 10: Support by community based volunteers organisations such as AA, NA, Kairos, Chaplains etc in my experience has a positive impact on offenders as they are reminders that the community outside is interested in them and their future. Correctional Services should encourage and foster more community outreach, and streamline procedures for entry into their Centres.

Recommendation 11: Kairos runs courses in Wolston and Arthur Gorrie (also Gatton when it was all-male). Kairos has had a positive impact on most men who undertake it. Courses are run in other States, and overseas. See [www.Kairos.org](http://www.Kairos.org).

Recommendation 12: Access to accommodation, and jobs is clearly a major impediment for many offenders. Surprisingly little help seems to be available, particularly for those exiting full term. From Woodford, men are offered a ride to Caboolture CentreLink in a Prison Bus.

Recommendation 15: Arguably, foreign born senior school students might be advised to become Australian citizens when turning 18! Deportation awaits the unenlightened offender who may well have been brought up in Australia, parents and family are all here, siblings have taken out citizenship etc. But twelve months in prison and off you go.

Recommendation 17: See my earlier comments at Recommendation 8 about the cost of breaches.

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Final thought: It takes some time (months) for visitors to Centres to obtain clearances (Form 27, 27A). Also, many Centres are some distance from potential work and accommodation. I don't know whether this is being done, but it should be straightforward for video conferencing to be arranged as required to enable prospective employers and accommodation providers to interview and get to know inmates prior to release.

Thank you again for your work on these issues, and the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely  
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