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Supported Housing for Prisoners Returning to the Community: a review of the literature

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Executive Summary

Commissioned by Corrections Victoria to inform its future strategies for delivering housing support strategies to people leaving the prison system, this report presents a literature that builds on two earlier reviews conducted in 2010 and 2013. Those earlier reviews identified a range of models and approaches to delivering housing support that represented the key elements of good and promising practice. In the period since 2013 new literature has become available that builds on this evidence base, reasserting some of the earlier findings, adding clarity to others, and expanding into new considerations.

Several recent studies have reinforced the need to provide housing assistance for people leaving prison. Interviews with police detainees showed that nearly one quarter had been homeless or experiencing housing stress in the month before being arrested. A study by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute emphasised the role of demographic factors in contributing to homelessness, with 42 percent of homeless people across Australia being found in just 10 percent of Australian regions. The demographic factors that contribute to homelessness tend to be the same as those that contribute to engagement with the criminal justice system and there are substantial cross-overs between homeless and correctional populations.

A number of other recent studies have highlighted the value of meeting the need for housing support. Studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) have shown that the costs of even resource intensive housing assistance are substantially less the cost of imprisonment and harms resulting from reoffending. Other studies have reinforced earlier findings on the association between housing stability and reductions in recidivism, with former prisoners in stable housing much less likely to reoffend than those in circumstances of homelessness or unstable accommodation. While research has shown all program elements used in aftercare programs for ex-prisoners have the potential to be effective, including housing components together with aftercare support enhanced ex-prisoner's chances of successfully reintegrating with the community. Consistent with the risk principle of correctional programming, housing-related services produced the most effective outcomes, in terms of reduced offending and order revocations, for medium- and high-risk offenders.

Despite the demonstrated needs and value of providing housing assistance to released prisoners, recent evidence points to the likelihood of community resistance to establishing transitional or other support housing. A United States (US) survey of attitudes towards re-entry initiatives found a moderate degree of public support for the provision of housing assistance to offenders. This support diminished rapidly when the assistance was intended for serious or repeat offenders, or when the hypothetical notion of a housing facility being established in the respondent's own neighbourhood was raised. The study found very little public support for transitional housing for violent and sex offenders.

Models of housing support identified in the literature included models with differing degrees of control or choice by clients. Custodial housing applications are most applicable for people with severe mental illness who require strict controls, limited or absent choice, and housing that is tied directly to treatment. The terms supportive housing and supported housing tend to be used

interchangeably in the literature. Attempts to establish different definitions of the terms have tended to place supportive housing in the realm of rehabilitation, with clients being allowed increasing degrees of control and choice as they transition through different levels of supervision. Conversely, supported housing tends to be used more for approaches focused on recovery in which clients live independently and exercise choice in regard to the range of flexible and individualised supported services available to them. However, not only is the terminology often used interchangeably, different models are not considered mutually exclusive, and some programs will often be a blend of supportive and supported housing, sometimes including emergency crisis accommodation and transitional housing in their mix of services.

Evaluations of supportive and supported housing programs have shown they have a potential to deliver positive outcomes for clients, including physical and financial security, greater social inclusion, greater feelings of stability and control and increased well-being. These evaluations and related discussions of housing models emphasise their application to psychiatric populations and care should be taken in assessing the applicability of any given approach to other vulnerable populations, including offenders.

In Australia, two dominant models of supportive housing have emerged. The Common Ground model is based on congregated housing with onsite support and social services. It has been implemented through an alliance of housing providers across five states, including Victoria. Scattered-site housing models utilise geographically dispersed accommodation with clients receiving support services through outreach from allied organisations. Neither of these models should be considered as fixed or rigid, with many different approaches and designs being implemented within these broad models. One of the characterising features of both models is the flexible and individualised support provided to clients. The nature and intensity of the support can vary widely across programs and between individuals, but the most effective models appear to be those that allow clients to determine the services they receive.

One of the important areas of development in the recent literature is the emergence of different financial models, including social impact investment approaches. Often aligned with strategies such as Justice Reinvestment, social impact investments have taken forms such as Social Impact Bonds and Payment by Results methods. Each of these strategies aims to deliver social reforms and interventions without substantial up-front costs or risks to government, through investment arrangements with commercial or philanthropic organisations. Social impact investments potentially represent a way for government to deliver costly housing initiatives without impacting on other areas of need or government expenditure.

A range of different housing support models are in place across Australia, each aiming to provide stable and secure accommodation for offender clients at high risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. In many ways the Australian implementations have similarities with those implemented in the US and UK, even though the elements and approaches vary between programs and locations. Quite different approaches are in place in some European countries, resulting from the different ways offenders are managed in those countries. Practices in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands emphasise rehabilitation and normalisation, aiming to have the experiences of life in prison parallel those in the community as much as possible. People leaving prison in those countries have typically had substantial opportunities to maintain family relationships and maintain or secure accommodation well before they are released.

There remains little clear evidence of the application or effectiveness of different housing models and approaches to vulnerable groups within correctional populations. The evidence shows that sex offenders, particularly sexually violent offenders with strict limitations on their residence and movements are at heightened risk of homelessness on release from prison. International experience shows that attempts to establish housing options for sexually violent

offenders are likely to meet with substantial resistance from communities as well as local authorities.

Little attention appears to have been paid in the literature to the housing support needs of Indigenous Australians.

Overall, a review of the recent literature on supported housing for correctional populations highlights the importance of flexible and individually oriented approaches to delivering housing assistance. Good practice in housing support focuses on individual needs and the provision of appropriate degrees and types of individual choice and control. Holistic and integrated wrap-around services delivered through collaborative, multi-agency approaches that span the range of individual support and treatment needs remain an integral part of good practice housing support interventions.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a review of the literature related to housing support for people returning to the community from prison custody. The literature was commissioned by Corrections Victoria in mid-2015 to inform future practice and policy development in the area of housing support for its clients. The report aims to examine recent evidence concerning the importance of stable housing for achieving prisoner reintegration and reducing offending, best practice in supported housing for correctional clients and emerging models for the delivery of supported housing services.

The literature review builds on and updates two previous literature reviews produced for Corrections Victoria - a review of best practice in a number of areas of correctional responsibility, including housing services, produced in mid-2010; and a mid-2013 report on transition services delivering housing and case management. The scope of this current review is therefore literature published from mid-2013 onwards. In a small number of instances literature from before the period is presented, where it is particularly salient to the issues being discussed and warrants reiteration to give context to later work, or where it is salient to the issues and has not been covered in the earlier reports.

Corrections Victoria Housing Program

In presenting the findings of this literature review, it is also important to note the context established by Corrections Victoria's existing involvement in the delivering transitional support to offenders leaving prison custody. Since 2001, Corrections Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services have been responsible for program delivery in this area and have delivered programs including:

- the Corrections Housing Pathway Initiative (CHPI);
- the Corrections Victoria Housing Program (CVHP); and
- Intensive Transitional Support Programs (ITSPs).

Through the CVHP, Corrections Victoria provides access to housing, together with individualised post-release case management and support. Through these services, Corrections Victoria aims to address disadvantage and assist offenders leaving prison to successfully reintegrate with the community, resulting in reduced risk of reoffending and reductions in the economic and social costs of crime.

The CVHP was the subject of a 2013 evaluation conducted by researchers from the University of Melbourne (Ross et al. 2013). The evaluation found high levels of homelessness among offenders entering custody, with two-thirds of the prisoners sampled having a pre-custody history of homelessness. The evaluation found that CVHP exceeded by 80 percent its target for the number of tenancies provided to offender clients and had maintained an adequate flow of clients. Program stakeholders were overall supportive of CVHP, seeing it as providing an effective pathway into high-quality housing that would otherwise have been unavailable to clients, particularly in the case of sex offenders and offenders on parole (Ross et al. 2013). Stakeholders did express concerns about lack of clarity regarding eligibility criteria and the basis

for allocating housing to selection clients, while also indicating difficulties with understanding referral and placement processes. While not a view expressed by service providers, both Corrections Victoria and the Department of Human Services expressed reservations about the appropriateness of a criminal justice agency directly funding accommodation services.

In terms of program goals, the evaluation found that the CVHP has been successful in reducing housing disadvantage for those clients successfully placed into housing, while noting that this was in the context of a much larger group of offenders who left prison without receiving CVHP services and who may have experienced homelessness and housing stress (Ross et al. 2013). An analysis of recidivism outcomes based on comparisons between CVHP participants and others who were referred to CVHP but did not receive tenancies through the program indicated that CVHP contributed to reduced recidivism for medium and high risk offenders, but not low risk offenders (Ross et al. 2013). Survival analysis also indicated that the CVHP group had significantly lower rates of recidivism.

Based on these findings, as well as positive cost-benefit analysis, the evaluation concluded that the CVHP has been a successful strategy for addressing housing disadvantage among released prisoners. While recommending some refinements to processes including feedback to service providers, the evaluators also recommended that the CVHP should be maintained and if possible extended, that protocols should be established for long-term follow-up of CVHP participants to support further cost-benefit analysis and that the CVHP client database should be redeveloped.

Despite the effectiveness of the CVHP as shown through the evaluation, Corrections Victoria has faced challenges in maintaining this model of service delivery. Information provided by Corrections Victoria to inform this report suggests that accommodating some correctional clients, who may present with multiple and complex needs, has created difficulties for other residents and service providers (Corrections Victoria 2015). This has led to service providers being reluctant to engage with correctional clients through the provision of housing.

Findings from earlier reviews

In presenting the findings of the current review of the literature, it is useful to briefly outline the findings from the two previous literature reviews, as this will help to give background and context to the current findings.

2010 report

The main conclusions of the 2010 report, in relation to transition and housing support services were:

- there is evidence to show positive impacts of intensive transitional support services on a range of post-release outcomes and these services have the potential to reduce recidivism; however, the evidence is somewhat mixed;
- no single best practice model for transitional programs and services was identified;
- good practice features identified for transitional support services included holistic and individualised approaches focused on prisoner needs, multi-disciplinary and collaborative service delivery, integrated service delivery, continuity of support, release planning from an early stage, long-term post-release support, and a case managed approach;
- housing services that support ex-prisoners to access and maintain stable accommodation have been linked to reduced recidivism; and
- good practice features for housing services include multi-agency and collaborative approaches, use of throughcare approaches, case managed service delivery, diversity of

accommodation types with varying levels of support, and addressing the wider needs of offender clients, including employment, alcohol and other drug use and mental health issues.

2013 report

The 2013 report built on these conclusions and presented key features of effective housing-linked case managed support services, including:

- individually tailored placement and support services;
- early and ongoing assessment;
- availability of diverse accommodation types with varying types and levels of support;
- holistic or wrap-around service approaches to address the totality of individuals' needs;
- emphasis on client empowerment and active engagement in delivery of services;
- coordinated multi-agency service delivery approaches, with effective partnership arrangements;
- collaboration between criminal justice and community partners;
- flexible and intensive case management;
- small caseloads; and
- identification and allocation of services before exit from prison.

The 2013 report also identified some areas where the literature was inconclusive:

- there is little evidence of the relative advantages of any given housing-linked support models for specific groups, such as women, older people or Indigenous Australians;
- whether there should be role separation in site management and support services;
- there is commentary in the literature suggesting that case management of ex-prisoners should be undertaken by people entirely independent of corrections, but this is not supported by empirical evidence;
- there is no agreement in the literature on the optimum length of time to provide housing-linked support and services;
- eligibility criteria for different services varies, with little consistency aside from a demonstrated housing need.

The current report

The current literature review has been undertaken in the context of both the successful housing support program currently conducted by Corrections Victoria and the previous literature reviews. It will aim to provide further evidence to clarifying those areas where the evidence was previously mixed or inconclusive, to the extent that new evidence is available in the literature.

The report will begin with some consideration of the extent of housing need among people leaving prison and returning to the community, as well as recent evidence relating to the contribution of housing support to reducing reoffending. The next section of the report will provide an examination of the key models of supported housing, including some emerging approaches to funding social support initiatives. It will then cover some of the different approaches to delivering supported housing that have emerged or been discussed in recent years, including in relation to vulnerable groups within the offender population. Finally, the report will include a discussion of the conclusions of the report and their implications for Corrections Victoria policy and practice.

Housing: need and value

This section will present findings regarding the level and nature of need for post-release housing services. It will then consider recent evidence for the role of post-release housing in reducing reoffending and further imprisonment.

Housing need

Data collected by the Victorian Ombudsman (2014) shows that around 4,500 sentenced prisoners are released from Victorian prisons each year. However, in 2013-14 just under 700 of those prisoners were able to access Intensive Transitional Support Program places (Victorian Ombudsman 2014). Access to stable accommodation is critical for successful reintegration into the community and offenders leaving prison are highly vulnerable to not having adequate and stable accommodation. Data provided to Corrections Victoria by transitional support service providers indicates that close to one-half (44%) of females and one-quarter (22%) of male clients became homeless when their funded program placement was completed (see Victorian Ombudsman 2014).

Recent research has indicated high levels of unstable accommodation among those coming into contact with the criminal justice system more generally. Interviews with a sample of just under 1,000 police detainees conducted through the Drug Use Monitoring Australia program showed that nearly one-quarter (22%) of these detainees had been living rough or in temporary or unstable accommodation for most of the preceding 30 days (Payne, Macgregor & McDonald 2015). In addition, 12 percent of detainees with permanent accommodation had temporarily lived elsewhere for at least one of the past 30 days. In some cases, detainees living in temporary accommodation had been doing so in positive circumstances, for example while visiting family or friends. Once these circumstances were controlled for, an estimated 23 percent of the sample (222 detainees) had been homeless or experiencing housing stress in the 30 days prior to being placed in police detention. Across this sub-sample, detainees reported a wide range of reasons behind their housing and homelessness situations. While family and relationship problems were the most commonly reported, followed by financial problems, eviction and drug problems, the authors noted that the broad range of reasons suggested the need for individualised policy and program responses to homelessness and housing stress among criminal justice populations (Payne, Macgregor & McDonald 2015).

Some recent analysis by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI 2015) highlighted the critical role of demographic factors in determining shaping homelessness. They study found that 42 percent of homeless people across Australia are found in just 10 percent of Australian regions. Homelessness tended to be concentrated in regions with higher proportions of men, sole parents and Indigenous persons. Higher levels of income inequality and high density dwellings were also indicators (AHURI 2015). The study found that homelessness is not linked with a shortage of affordable housing. Perhaps paradoxically, areas with a greater supply of affordable housing relative to demand tend have higher levels of homelessness. Higher rates of homelessness were also found in some areas that had low unemployment rates. The authors suggested that areas with economic disadvantage have more affordable housing, in the form of

lower rents, but also have larger pool of people at-risk of homelessness. In these circumstances it only takes a relatively small proportion of people from that pool to become homeless to push rates up (AHURI 2015). Areas of low unemployment may have small at-risk populations, but the degree of risk is higher because of higher rents. People with low incomes may be priced out of the rental market. These areas may also attract people from other areas who come hoping to find work. If they are not able to find work, they are also not able to afford the higher rents in these areas.

Housing value

Access to suitable and stable housing has long been recognised as an important component of successful prisoner re-entry strategies. If housing support programs are able to contribute to reduced reoffending and imprisonment, there is a potential for substantial cost savings to be realised. An analysis undertaken by the English Fry Housing Trust, taking an offender convicted of committing grievous bodily harm as a case study, found the cost of providing housing support for six months was £6,179, compared with £143,778 for each offence of the type committed by the offender in the case study (Donath 2013). Put another way, the cost of imprisoning this offender was estimated to be 23 times the cost of providing housing support.

In recent years a number of studies have been undertaken to examine support for the hypothesis that stable housing has a direct role in reducing recidivism. A longitudinal study of more than 1,400 adults sentenced to imprisonment in the UK found that 15 percent of prisoners in the sample reported being homeless before entering custody, compared with three and a half percent of the general population who report ever having been homeless (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012). More than one-third (37%) of prisoners stated they would need help with finding accommodation when released, and 84 percent of these indicated they would need a lot of help. Those who reported they would need help finding somewhere to live were more likely to have served a previous prison or community-based sentence than those who did not need help, and prisoners with prior sentences were more likely to have been homeless before being incarcerated. Greater needs for help finding accommodation were also associated with having a drug and/or alcohol misuse problem (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012).

Importantly, the study showed a clear association between prior homelessness and recidivism. More than three-quarters (79%) of prisoners who had been homeless before incarceration were reconvicted within 12 months of release, compared with just under half (47%) of those who were not homeless (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins 2012). Prisoners who indicated they would need help with finding accommodation when released were more likely (65%) than those not needing this help (45%) to be reconvicted in the first year after release. Those who had shorter-term housing, for less than a year, before imprisonment were more likely (52%) to be reconvicted in the first year than those who had been in their accommodation for more than a year (43%) to be reconvicted within a year of release.

A review of available literature on the role of stable accommodation in reducing recidivism found that the evidence was unclear (O'Leary 2013). The author found that the evidence tended to be one of two types. Some of the reviewed studies used robust methods but did not isolate the effects of stable accommodation from other factors that may have been contributing to recidivism outcomes. Other studies did focus on accommodation, but used weaker methodology that made their findings less reliable. In conclusion, O'Leary determined that providing or supporting offenders to achieve stable accommodation has a potential role in programs aimed at reducing recidivism. However, the nature of that role, the causal mechanisms that link accommodation and recidivism, and the most effective methods for increasing housing stability were not clear, based on available evidence.

Another recent study involved a comprehensive analysis of 35 evaluations of community-based prisoner re-entry programs published between 2010 and 2010 (Wright et al. 2013). As some programs were evaluated more than once, the analysis included a total of 29 different programs. It is somewhat telling that the authors expressed surprise at the small number of evaluations in the literature, given the scale of the issues involved with prisoner re-entry. Of the 29 re-entry programs evaluated, the most common were those including life skills and substance abuse treatment. However, programs that included aftercare and housing assistance were the most likely to produce positive outcomes. While no program features were found to be particularly ineffective, including of housing components together with aftercare support seemed to have the most positive effects in terms of supporting a successful reintegration into the community after imprisonment, based on the reported outcomes (Wright et al. 2013).

More direct associations between housing and reduced offending came from evaluation of Vision Housing, a British housing initiative for ex-prisoners (Ellison et al. 2013). In placing this evaluation in context, the authors noted that prominent recent British initiatives to address high rates of reoffending have met with limited success. The Diamond Initiative was a two-year 12 million pound integrated offender management scheme. It involved a multi-agency approach to the reintegration of short-term prisoners serving periods of less than 12 months in custody. The Diamond Initiative gained prominence in the literature as the primary British implementation of a Justice Reinvestment strategy. Despite the degree of investment in the Initiative and the level of support it received from stakeholder agencies, the Diamond Initiative produced no impacts on re-offending for the intervention group, compared with a control group (Ellison et al. 2013).

Consistent with the findings and observations of other authors, Ellison et al. (2013) noted the limited literature on links between housing and re-offending. They noted there was even less focused on the impacts of specific housing initiatives. Most studies have come from the US and have involved rehabilitation or re-entry programs that include housing as part of a broader program

The focus of Ellison et al.'s (2013) paper was an evaluation of Vision Housing, set up in 2007 as a London-based housing charity and social enterprise. The program was established by ex-offenders and engages ex-offenders as staff and volunteers. Together with the involvement of ex-offenders in its establishment and operations, the evaluation of Vision Housing saw its ability to provide good quality accommodation on the day of release, outside the client's area of offending, as the key feature separating Vision Housing from the Diamond Initiative and other programs (Ellis et al. 2013).

References to Vision Housing come from local authorities, the prison service, probation trusts and third sector organisations, as well as some self-referrals. The program is available to males and females and supports those leaving custody as well as those who are serving, or have completed community corrections orders. Its clients are typically persistent, prolific adult offenders, but it excludes convicted arsonists and, for the most part, violent and sex offenders who are subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements.

Measures of reoffending in the evaluation were based on proven reoffending by clients in the Vision Housing cohort, compared with the estimated likelihood based on matched cohort data. The use of reoffending estimates, rather than actual reoffending by a matched sample, was acknowledged by the authors as a limitation of the study (Ellis et al. 2013). Within that limitation, the evaluation findings were highly positive. Analysis showed a 9.1 percent reduction in proven reoffending by the Vision Housing cohort, compared with estimated likelihood. Provision of accommodation appeared to be particularly important for female offenders, who showed a 26.4 percent reduction in reoffending compared with the estimate, compared with 6.3 percent for male clients (Ellis et al. 2013). Reductions in reoffending were also strongly linked with age. Clients under the age of 35 experienced a 16 percent reduction in reoffending, while no reduction was observed for those in older age groups. In addition, reductions were associated

with the type of offences previously committed by clients. The authors assigned a measure of seriousness to each offence category. Reductions in reoffending were highest for those in the most serious offence categories, with a 20.9 percent reduction in reoffending for those in the upper (most serious) 50 percent of categories (Ellis et al. 2013).

Other studies have also indicated that high risk offenders stand to benefit from the provision of supportive housing. Another London-based program was examined in a separate study (Bruce et al. 2014). This pilot program, operating in South London, provided services to men with a personality disorder returning to the community following imprisonment for a serious offence. Each of the clients had been assessed as being at high risk of reoffending. Services were individualised and could include combinations of supported housing and treatment. The study found that reconviction rates of clients were nearly four times lower for those who received supported housing and treatment, compared with those in treatment only (Bruce et al. 2014).

High risk offenders were also the recipients of services through Washington State's Reentry Housing Pilot Program (RHPP), which was the subject of a recent multi-site outcome evaluation (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). This was a longitudinal study of all program participants accessing the program during the period from 2008 to 2011.

The Washington State program arose from concerns about fiscal crises impacting corrections and social services. This led to calls to move beyond coercive responses to offending to coordinated responses, including the provision social services, treatment and community support for offenders returning to the community from incarceration (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). The RHPP was based on observations of high rates of failure and return to custody in the first three to six months after release (see Hamilton & Campbell 2013; Petersilia 2003). The led to recognition of the importance of establishing residential stability in the period immediately following release. At the same time, the authors of the RHPP evaluation cited the limited and mixed evidence on the impact of housing on reoffending, although they cited an earlier study showing that housing combined with other services for high risk offenders led to a statistically significant 12 percent reduction in recidivism (Miller and Ngugi 2009).

The RHPP provides a housing-centred intervention that includes wraparound services targeted to the individual needs of the high risk and high needs offenders in its target group. Lutze, Rosky and Hamilton (2013) examined the effects of the program on recidivism for a period of up to three years after release from incarceration. They also examined and measured experiences of homelessness over time for the treatment and comparison groups to control for the effects of residential instability on outcomes.

The evaluation concluded that the intended outcome of reducing recidivism by providing housing to high risk offenders who would have otherwise have been released into homeless had been achieved (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013). Stable accommodation emerged as a very important factor in reducing recidivism. Periods of homelessness over time significantly elevated the risk of recidivism, with those in stable accommodation having lower rates of recidivism than those experiencing periods of homelessness. Those in the RHPP treatment group experienced significantly lower rates of new convictions and readmissions to custody. Using survival analysis, the authors showed that the time to parole revocation for participants was significantly greater for the RHPP treatment group than it was for the control group. However, there was no difference between the groups in the number of offenders whose parole was revoked. Across both the stable housing and homelessness groups, the groups with the greatest risk of failure were men and younger people; women and older individuals were at lower risk of failure through reoffending or revocation (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013).

The authors acknowledged that the rigorous requirements for participation may have led to increased motivation to succeed among the treatment group. They limited the potential for this

by accounting for individual motivation for change as part of the propensity score matching process (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013).

In conclusion, the authors of the Washington State RHPP evaluation recommended that subsidised housing for high risk offenders should be a central element of all responses to managing offender re-entry to the community after incarceration. They suggested that policymakers need to move beyond seeing residential status as a fixed event, rather they should see it as:

a fluid and volatile state of being for offenders that is an ongoing threat to successful re-entry and long term reintegration (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton 2013: 483).

Housing resistance

Despite both the demonstrated need for housing support for released prisoners, and the value of that support in terms of reducing offending and the costs of imprisonment, there remains evidence of general opposition from the public to the accommodation of prisoners in their neighbourhoods.

A study conducted in the US gauged public support for a range of initiatives, including public support for housing programs (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Using a survey methodology, the researchers found overall support, in principle, for assisting offenders in securing housing on their release. A small majority (58%) agreed that helping ex-prisoners find somewhere to stay after release should be a high priority for the state, while 42 percent disagreed. Just over one quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that people who have been in prison multiple times are as deserving of housing assistance as those who are coming out for the first time, while nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) disagreed with this proposition. The belief that those who have committed offences should be given lower priority for housing assistance was reflected in three quarters (75%) of respondents agreeing that during a housing crisis people who have never been in prison should receive housing assistance over those who have.

The survey used for this study also gathered some more nuanced information about levels of support for a range of initiatives, including transitional housing centres. Respondents were asked whether they supported having transitional housing programs in their city, and then whether they supported having them in their neighbourhood (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). One half of the respondents (50%) generally or overall supported transitional housing centres in their city. However support fell to one quarter (25%) for transitional housing in their own neighbourhood. When asked about transitional housing specifically for drug offenders, one-third (34%) supported having the housing in their city, but only 18 percent supported transitional housing for drug offenders in their own neighbourhood. These figures fell further in relation to violent offenders, with only 24 percent of respondents supporting transitional housing for violent offenders in their city and only 10 percent supporting it in their neighbourhood. Only 22 percent of respondents supported transitional housing for sex offenders in their city (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). The authors did not report the percent that supported transitional housing for sex offenders in their neighbourhood, but this could be assumed to be very low.

Looking at the full range of initiatives, the study found overall support for prisoner re-entry initiatives (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Large majorities of respondents agreed that helping prisoners adjust to society is a good idea, that communities should provide programs and services to ex-prisoners, and that released prisoners would benefit from well-run services and programs in the community. There was also strong support for helping prisoners with employment so they earned enough money to get by, but not for assistance that led to them earning as much as the average middle-class citizen.

Conversely, the study found little public support for higher taxes to fund re-entry initiatives, or for the notion that those who had been in prison multiple times were as deserving of employment as those leaving prison for the first time (Garland, Wodahl & Schuhmann 2013). Despite the demonstrated importance of housing for the effective reintegration of offenders, support for housing was considered by respondents to be less important than job training (supply- and demand-side employment assistance), drug treatment, mental health, health care or voucher programs.

Service delivery and financial models

The literature suggests there is a clear acceptance that housing support should be an element of strategies to support the re-entry and reintegration into the community of people leaving prison. The same can be said of programs to support offenders on community-based orders who do not have stable accommodation, as well as people whose lack of stable accommodation is contributing to an elevated risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. While there remains limited evidence of the nature and scale of the impacts on offending associated with housing support, it is apparent that there is an accepted role for housing assistance in offender re-entry programs.

With the importance of housing assistance being more or less accepted within correctional programming, recent developments in housing assistance for offenders have tended to be in relation to models of both assistance and the financial basis of providing that assistance. These developments have been at least partly driven by tightening fiscal environments that have created a demand to contain or reduce expenditure on corrections. Another product of this environment, the concept of Justice Reinvestment, both complements and contributes to the development of new models for providing housing assistance.

Service delivery models

In recent years a number of distinct models of housing assistance have emerged. While these have most commonly been discussed in relation to mental health clients, an understanding of the different models is relevant to a range of client groups, including offenders. This is particularly so given the intersections that can exist, with clients sometimes falling into a number of groups.

In an examination of the impacts of supported housing in a small community in Canada, Leviten-Reid, Johnson and Miller (2014) outlined the three dominant models of housing assistance for mental health clients:

- **Custodial** housing is tied directly to treatment. Clients have no control or choice over their living environments or the type and extent of care they receive;
- **Supportive** housing is focused on rehabilitation. Housing is provided and often sits along a continuum as individuals transition from residences providing high levels of supervision to those providing less supervision; and
- **Supported** housing is a more recent development and is focused on recovery. It is based around a model where clients live independently, accessing a range of flexible and individualised support services. Clients are assisted to secure housing options that are affordable and integrated into general community settings.

These models are not mutually exclusive and some programs will provide a blend of supportive and supported housing (Leviten-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014).

Supported housing is claimed to give residents greater feelings of control and stability than other forms of housing (Leviten-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014), at least for mental health clients. Supported housing has been demonstrated to contribute to less unlawful behaviour by residents, compared with the other housing models (Bean, Shafer & Glennon 2013). From the limited evidence that is available, supported housing in rural and suburban areas is associated with improved housing stability and greater feelings of positivity from limited studies in rural and suburban areas (Leviten-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014). However, the literature indicates mixed findings with regard to feelings of isolation and integration, and the impacts on mental health, associated with supported housing approaches.

Leviten-Reid, Johnson and Miller's (2014) study focused on mental health housing in a small rural community in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. The authors noted some of the challenges to implementing treatment and support services in smaller community areas, particularly difficulties recruiting and maintain staff, travel time for staff living in larger centres and limited housing stock. Interviews with clients, conducted for the study, showed a range of positive outcomes, compared with the experiences before entering supported housing:

- Security - clients felt a greater sense of physical and financial security living in supported housing than in other housing arrangements;
- Social inclusion - compared with custodial or supportive housing, clients in supported housing felt more socially included and a greater sense of 'normalcy';
- Stability and control - clients in supported housing indicated feeling a more stable and in control of their lives than those in other forms of housing;
- Recovery - clients in supported housing felt they had greater capacity to focus on their recovery while living in stable and controlled environments; and
- Well-being - living in supported housing was associated with improvements in feelings of independence, happiness, self-worth or self-confidence (Leviten-Reid, Johnson & Miller 2014).

A recent Australian study by University of Queensland researchers focused on examining different models of supportive housing and evaluating their effectiveness (Parsell & Moutou 2014). The study focused on two models, said by the authors to be the two dominant forms of supportive housing in place throughout Australia:

- Common Ground – the Common Ground supportive housing model is based on congregated housing with onsite support and social services provided; and
- Scattered-site – the Scattered-site supportive housing model involves geographically dispersed accommodation with clients receiving support services provided by alliance organisations through outreach services.

There is no consensus in the literature about whether scattered or congregate models (of which there are several) are more effective (Busch-Geertsema 2013).

The predominant model of supportive housing for homelessness in contemporary Europe is through scattered site dwellings, which are person-centred rather than place-centred (Busch-Geertsema 2013). Busch-Geertsema links scattered-site approaches with normalisation.

In Australia, the Common Ground model has been implemented through the Australian Common Ground Alliance, a partnership of non-government service providers consisting of:

- Homeground (Victoria);
- Mercy Foundation (New South Wales);
- Common Ground Adelaide (South Australia);
- Micah Projects (Queensland); and

- Common Ground Tasmania.

The Common Ground model originated in New York and provides permanent supportive housing (Mercy Foundation nd). The model brings together business, government and not-for-profit organisations to deliver permanent housing solutions to end homelessness. Through a socially inclusive and integrated mixture of housing and support services, Common Ground provides independent housing for formerly homeless people, as well as offering housing for low income workers. Common Ground developments may be purpose-built, or implemented through redevelopment of existing properties. While not directly applicable to the Australian context, US research has shown that Common Ground housing can be delivered for one-quarter to one-fifth of the cost of imprisonment (Mercy Foundation nd).

Whichever model is used, supportive housing is seen as an ongoing and coordinated solution and the “antithesis of Australia’s former homelessness crisis system” (Parsell & Moutou 2014: 1). The authors contended that earlier approaches were not intended to provide permanent housing and lacked the resources to provide this or to respond to complex needs. A later conceptualisation of supportive housing, applied to an evaluation of supportive housing models, defined supportive housing as:

any package of assistance that aims to assist tenants with a broad range of health and other aspects of their lives including access to and sustaining of affordable tenancies. Affordable tenancies can be in social housing or the private rental sector, although in the contemporary Australian context most approaches to supportive housing rely on social housing. This definition includes supportive housing in either scattered-site housing with outreach support or single-site housing with onset support (Parsell et al. 2015: 5).

Parsell et al. (2015) note that the level and intensity of support provided can vary across a wide spectrum, but with the level and intensity voluntarily determined by the tenant. While tenancy and service provision are integrated into a model of supportive housing, accessing to housing is not conditional upon accessing support or complying with support provider requirements. While these definitions and principles may appear to reflect a settled position on the conceptualisation of supportive housing, most of the existing literature stems from research conducted in the US and, to a lesser extent the UK (Parsell et al. 2015) and it is arguable how well it applies to the Australian context.

For this study, Parsell et al. conducted a quantitative survey of tenants living in scattered-site and single-site supportive housing, receiving 102 responses. They also conducted 28 interviews with tenants and 22 interviews with tenancy and support providers; each of the interviews concentrated on the single-site supportive housing with onsite support model (Parsell et al. 2015). Among the key findings of the research, the authors identified that single-site supportive housing was suited to tenants with life experiences, such as trauma and dysfunctional families, that made them highly vulnerable. Supportive housing provided opportunities not to merely make the transition from homelessness into housing, but to establish the skills, attitudes and behaviours required to be a good, reliable and pro-social tenant (Parsell et al. 2015). Rather than support being viewed as service providers acted behalf of the tenant, support was seen as providing tenants with skills and opportunities to take greater control of their own lives. In this way, informants saw supportive housing as an active process for tenants, who actively contributed to shaping their environment. Importantly, tenants saw themselves making positive life changes that they attributed to supportive housing.

From the perspective of policy implications, the findings of this research suggest that supportive housing provides an environment in which tenants can feel physically and emotionally safe, in ways they do not necessarily experience in other forms of housing (Parsell et al. 2015). Supportive housing gives people experiencing chronic homelessness and high level support needs immediate access to stable housing that they are able to feel confident in maintaining.

This housing can be achieved without the need for preparatory interventions or transitional periods. Parsell et al. suggest that the positive elements of supportive housing can be achieved through either single-site or scattered-site models, providing the arrangements recognise the centrality of the tenants and their decisions in shaping the environments in which they live. While this view of supportive housing is in one sense liberating, as it creates potential for a range of markedly or subtly different models to be effective, it is also problematic from the perspective of identifying best practice models and principles. Parsell et al. note the many slightly different forms of supportive housing that have emerged, and hence the challenge of identifying the elements that make supportive housing effective. Importantly, they also cite Tsembris (2010) who observed that while housing interventions may end homelessness, they do not address the other problems that initiated, accompanied or were exacerbated by homelessness. As Tsembris (cited in Parsell et al. 2015) observed, housing programs can help people escape homelessness into the everyday realities of poverty, addiction, psychiatric illness, unemployment and stigma.

While the principles applied in supportive housing may ostensibly have some application to correctional applications, Parsell and Moutou (2014) place its application firmly in the domain of psychiatric populations. They note that in North America, where a large majority of the literature originates, supportive housing is clearly located in mental health contexts and often discussed as a response to people with severe mental illnesses. Nonetheless, the distinctions between models of housing, particularly supported and supportive housing, become blurred in the literature. While the literature establishes these as two different models, the terms are often used interchangeably (Parsell & Moutou 2014), although a number of authors have sought to provide distinct definitions. Parkinson, Nelson and Horgan (1999, cited in Parsell & Moutou 2014) saw supportive housing as focused on rehabilitation and identity as a resident, while supported housing emphasises empowerment, integration and identity as a citizen. Supported housing is seen as strengths-focused, with choice an important component of the approach and with the role of the landlord separated from that of the service provider (Kirst et al. 1999 cited in Parsell & Moutou 2014).

A set of criteria integral to supported housing was identified through a systematic analysis of 38 studies published between 1987 and 2008 on both supportive and supported housing (Tabol et al. 2010). These studies involved interventions for people experiencing homelessness and with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. All but one of the studies was undertaken in North America. This analysis identified five criteria of supported housing:

- Standard or normal housing within the general community, underpinned by normal tenancy arrangements and with the intention of the housing being long-term;
- Flexible supports, aiming to meet individual needs through accessible services in close proximity to the residence;
- Housing is separate from support services and occupation of the housing is not conditional on use of services;
- Choice, with the resident able to exercise choice about the various housing options that might be available to them and able to share in decision-making about aspects of their housing and the services they access; and
- Immediate placement into the housing, without a requirement to transition through preparatory circumstances.

Despite these attempts to define supportive and supported housing separately, the terms continue to be used interchangeably in the literature (see Parsell & Moutou 2014). In practice, these two housing models sit along a continuum where their application in practice does not always neatly align with carefully drawn definitions. The degree of choice available to the individual and the separation of services from housing arrangements can vary between

individuals and over time as a function of a range of variable conditions. These might include the availability of housing types and services, the amount of time the individual has been in normalised housing, legal orders the individual is bound to comply with, case management decisions made by service providers or authorities, and the extent of the individual's progress with addressing issues that have contributed to their situation and behaviours.

Taking into account these definitions, it is apparent that supportive housing, and arguably supported housing, is a model whose application outside North American psychiatric populations may be limited. At the same time, the principles underpinning these housing models can be adapted outside these populations and environments. In the US state of Ohio, supportive housing is being used to relieve costs to the prison system by providing accommodation and assistance for high needs offenders leaving prison through pre-release planning and post-release housing. The Returning Home Ohio initiative, jointly developed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, targets people leaving prison with disabilities who have histories of chronic homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless on release (De Santis 2012, Fontaine 2014). Eligibility criteria relating to disabilities are broadly interpreted to include developmental disorders, severe addiction and serious behavioural health issues (Fontaine et al 2012). It was established in 2004 out of recognition that halfway houses and transitional housing were not meeting the needs of offenders who required longer term housing with wrap-around services. Establishment of the program relied to a large extent on commitment from state leadership, coordination across state agencies and the involvement of specialist community-based service and housing resources (De Santis 2012).

Consistent with other supportive housing initiatives, Returning Home Ohio gives priority to ex-prisoners with severe mental illness, developmental disabilities or other needs that require long-term support. The program operates across several cities in Ohio and the supportive housing providers also vary across cities, with some primarily working with indigent populations and others catering more for clients with severe mental illness and trauma backgrounds (Fontaine 2014). Housing models also vary, with some service providers using scattered-site housing involving private landlords, and others directly managing properties that house both correctional and non-correctional clients. A diverse group of service providers was intentionally selected to align with the diversity of needs among the client population (Fontaine 2014).

Returning Home Ohio was evaluated by the Urban Institute in 2012 (Fontaine et al. 2012). As this evaluation was referenced in the earlier literature review on Intensive Transitional Support programs (Henderson 2013) it will only be discussed briefly here. The evaluation concluded that the Returning Home Ohio initiative had a positive impact on participants, linked to the combination of stable housing and the provision of services including mental health treatment and drug and alcohol counselling (Fontaine et al. 2012). Participants were 40 percent less likely to be rearrested than subjects in the comparison group, but mostly in relation to minor offences. Participants were 61 percent less likely to be rearrested than those in the comparison group, and time in the community before rearrest was significantly longer for the treatment participation group. However, when Returning Home Ohio participants were rearrested, they were likely to experience significantly more rearrests than the comparison group. The reductions in recidivism observed among the participant group came at a cost, with the additional costs of services provided through Returning Home Ohio exceeding the savings realised through reduced imprisonment (Fontaine et al. 2012). The evaluation also showed that recidivism outcomes were poorer for those with a personality disorder or substance abuse/mental health co-morbidity diagnosis (Fontaine 2014). The evaluators were unable to determine whether this was due to workers not having sufficient experience to work with these clients or whether clients with these histories are particularly difficult to provide services and housing for. The evaluators noted that:

the combination of certain mental health diagnoses with recent criminal justice contact may be indicative of a particularly high risk population (Fontaine 2014: 72).

The evaluation suggested that Returning Home Ohio demonstrated the capacity for a correctional agency and community-based service providers to work effectively together, supported by recruiting experienced service providers and training them to work with released offenders and correctional institutions (Fontaine 2014). The pre-release engagement and planning was facilitated by housing service providers being given information about prisoners and the capacity to engage directly with them. The positive outcomes from the pilot studied have seen Returning Home Ohio continued and expanded.

The growth of supportive housing models in Australia reflects the policy position seen in the US, where it has been partly in response to a lack of funding for additional crisis accommodation. In both countries supportive housing is embedded within frameworks targeting those deemed most vulnerable and achieving permanent housing and support solutions. Models of supportive housing therefore emerge from differing policy perspectives – one a normative approach about equity and targeting those most in need (Parsell et al. 2013) and the other linked to cost effectiveness (Johnson, Parkinson & Parsell 2012). In Australia interest in supportive housing is also about a national agenda of achieving coordination in government and community responses to homelessness. Phillips (2013) has shown complete consensus among Australian policy-makers about the importance of service integration and collaboration between homelessness services and mainstream institutions

While the evidence for supportive housing is overwhelmingly positive, there are critiques as well. These again arose in the context of predominantly North American psychiatric populations. Nonetheless, like the principles and models, it is worth considering the context to which they might usefully inform consideration of housing for Australian correctional populations. Due to interchangeability in the literature these critiques can be taken as applying also to supported housing.

The main critique of supportive housing has been that there is little evidence of further life improvements among those exiting homelessness to housing (Parsell & Moutou 2014). Evaluations of supportive housing have not shown evidence that attributes such as social integration, social participation, alcohol and other drug, poverty, stigma, unemployment or mental health deficits have been improved through engagement with supportive housing. While supportive housing appears to deliver improvements in stability of accommodation and measures of financial security, it does not appear in itself to provide a platform for achieving further life gains. One reason for this may be that people who are eligible for supportive housing carry deficits and disadvantages that are too difficult to overcome. Related to this, Parsell and Moutou (2014) have raised questions about what supportive housing can reasonably be expected to achieve. Targeting those assessed as being at the highest risk may tend to mean the chances of them achieving further life gains are reduced, compared with those in lesser need.

Financial models

The challenges of funding social support initiatives in environments of fiscal constraint have led to the development of a range of social impact investment strategies. Through the means of social impact bonds, also known as social benefit bonds and other names, social impact investment aims to bring together capital and expertise from various sectors to help address social challenges (NSW Government Premier & Cabinet 2015). This form of social investment typically involves private and charitable organisations investing in bonds linked to social improvement initiatives. Profits are made on the bonds when the social impact or benefit outcomes result in the government's costs for those social services being reduced.

Social impact investments have been adopted in the United States, United Kingdom and more recently in Australia, often associated with the implementation of Justice Reinvestment strategies. Justice Reinvestment aims to reduce prison populations and stem prison growth through investment in strategies to prevent offending and breaches of conditional release orders. While one of the principles of Justice Reinvestment is that savings made through reduced imprisonment can be used to fund social reform interventions, social impact investment provides one way of making the funds available to develop and implement the interventions. Consequent savings can then be reinvested, while social impact investment saves governments from having to make available the initial funding.

Social impact bonds were first used in the United Kingdom, to finance a prisoner rehabilitation program operating from Peterborough Prison. The bonds have operated through a fund created to give private bodies, such as charitable trusts, the capacity to profit from investments by achieving better outcomes (such as lower recidivism rates) than government-run offender programs (Hudson 2013).

The first social impact bond in the US was issued by Goldman Sachs Bank, in the form of a \$9.6 million loan to support therapeutic programs for young offenders held on New York's Rikers Island (Olson & Phillips 2013). Loan repayments were tied to actual and projected cost savings to the New York City Department of Corrections, resulting from decreases in recidivism. As the financial outcomes of the loan were linked to successful social outcomes, Goldman Sachs acknowledged robust process and impact evaluation of the intervention were essential components of due diligence (Olson & Phillips 2013). Initial results from the Rikers Island social impact bond have not shown a sufficient return on investment and the intervention was scheduled to end in August 2015 (Roman 2015).

However, this has not necessarily represented a failure for social investment. While the Rikers Island intervention has not achieved a reduction in recidivism, these outcomes did not result in ongoing government expenditure as would have been likely under prevailing procurement arrangements (Roman 2015). New York City officials have identified the social impact bond arrangement as a success, as it did not incur financial impacts for the City while introducing greater rigour into its processes (Burton 2015). The process of establishing the bond necessarily required the New York City government to approach its program management in a more rigorous and outcomes-focused way than it had previously, resulting in processes and mechanisms that can help to ensure greater rigour and accountability for future interventions (Roman 2015). The robust evaluation demanded by the social impact bond approach can in itself be considered a positive step towards more effective programming and a valuable contribution to the evidence base (Roman 2015).

New South Wales has been the first Australian jurisdiction to trial social benefit bonds, introducing in 2013 two bonds related to services for children in foster care. The first return on the initial bond, issued in August 2014, resulted in a 7.5 percent return for investors (Eyers 2014). South Australia is also in the process of establishing social impact bond arrangements (Eyers 2014). Through its Social Impact Investment Policy announced in February 2015, the NSW Government identified a number of priority areas for further use of social benefit bonds, including supporting offenders on parole to reduce reoffending (NSW Government Premier & Cabinet 2015). Measures of success for this investment would include reduced reoffending rates, increased time to reoffending and reduced severity of offences. Other priority areas for the NSW Government include managing chronic health conditions, mental health hospitalisation and addressing homelessness among young people.

Very similar in conception to social impact bonds, the introduction of 'Payment by Results' (PbR) in the United Kingdom has been heralded as a major reform that will provide substance to the concept of Justice Reinvestment by channelling investments into programs to prevent offending rather than mechanisms to manage the consequences of offending (Homel 2014). PbR

approaches are seen as a way of increasing standards while reducing costs. A number of housing-related TSOs in the UK have been involved with PbR arrangements to support accommodation of short-term prisoners (Mills et al. 2013).

The effectiveness of PbRs is largely unproven at this time and it has been suggested they may be little more than a twist on previously failed attempts to introduce contestability into the criminal justice system (Calder & Goodman 2013). It has also been suggested that PbR has the potential to force innovative organisations out of the marketplace in favour of multinational corporations (Calder & Goodman 2013) that are able to leverage their large resource and assets bases and use more traditional approaches that may produce lower rates of return on investments but with lower levels of risk. Some prison staff involved with housing-related services have suggested that PbR approaches could lead to "quick fix" housing solutions, with a lack of follow-up and ongoing support for offenders accommodated in this way (Mills et al. 2013).

Social impact investment has potential to contribute to the ongoing development of supported housing for correctional clients, perhaps linked with the Justice Reinvestment approach with which they have a degree of resonance. Both social impact investment and Justice Reinvestment involve financial incentives to improve social justice and community wellbeing outcomes through improved interventions and services. Within a Justice Reinvestment framework, bonds could potentially provide a source of funds for initial investment in offending-related interventions, such as post-release housing, or they could be used to supplement realised savings from JR strategies.

Social impact bonds and PbR programs have been criticised for transferring from government to private investors the risk of scaling up crime prevention and offender rehabilitation interventions, when the government has not previously invested in producing the evidence to support large-scale delivery of these interventions (Homel 2014). Perhaps a more fundamental issue with social impact bonds and PbRs is that they tend to be focused on redesign of the criminal justice system, rather than on broader social justice reform to address community-level needs and the underlying factors that contribute to crime at the social and community level (Homel 2014), such as unemployment, education deficits, financial disadvantage, anti-social attitudes and social structures.

At the same time, it should be recognised that social impact investment is an emerging field and these criticisms may become less relevant as the policy frameworks for social impact investment more fully develop. To date, social impact investment has been used in relation to those in highest need and who experience frequent and involuntary interaction with justice and care systems. If social impact investment proves successful it is likely that it will be applied to broader areas of social need and to addressing some of those underlying factors cited by Homel (2014).

Another approach to providing housing support in a constrained fiscal environment is through the use of private rental support programs. The role of these programs comes from the observation that in the last two decades social housing has become more focused on those at the highest levels of need, making low rent private tenancies more important for households with lower incomes (Tually et al. 2015). A range of tenancy assistance models have emerged, including brokerage programs.

By its nature, private tenancy is precarious and prone to instability. Research shows increased risks of tenancy failure for vulnerable groups, including Indigenous Australians, women escaping domestic violence, recent humanitarian arrivals, the disabled, young people and older people (Tually et al. 2015). While not referred to in the literature, corrections clients would also tend to fall within the vulnerable groups who face heightened risks of private tenancy failure.

Contending that the concept of Private Rental Brokerage Programs is poorly understood and undefined, Tually et al (2015: 2) offer a working definition:

Private Rental Brokerage Programs are a flexible, early-intervention housing assistance measure designed to support vulnerable households as successful tenants in the private rental market, thereby avoiding eviction and homelessness. To achieve this such programs work with clients to optimise their success in accessing and sustaining private rental tenancies. This work may involve building tenancy capacity, helping access financial or material assistance, connecting with other relevant services, providing a degree of ongoing support or otherwise as the individual case and resources require.

While, based on the limited information available, Private Rental Brokerage Programs appear to offer promise of increasing housing stability for vulnerable people, it is not clear how their principles differ from existing case management approaches. There is also little evidence available on the operation or outcomes of Private Rental Brokerage Programs, largely due to a lack of uniform reporting or data collection (Tually et al 2015).

A 2012 study conducted by the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) and StreetCare (the HPLS Homeless Consumer Advisory Committee) involved consultation with a group of people who had exited prison into housing crisis or homelessness, as well as service providers who supported those leaving prison in this situation (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). The study explored the experiences of these 26 offenders and the challenges faced by homeless services aiming to meet their needs. The participants were mostly males, aged between 35 and 50 and from the Sydney metropolitan area. Most had histories of income support reliance, mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse and educational deficits. One-third of the participants had experienced primary homelessness on release from prison and all had experienced homelessness in the preceding three months.

Participants in this study identified a range of issues with accessing pre-release services, such as housing support, life skills training and education and prison welfare services (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013). Some of the participants had accessed New South Wales Corrective Services' Community Offender Support Program centres (COSPs). COSPs, most of which have subsequently closed, provided transitional accommodation through what is described by NSW Corrective Services as a non-custodial, community-based service providing interim accommodation, assistance with accessing independent housing and access to a range of services. Several were critical of COSPs due to the restrictive nature of the environment, with strict regimes and practices that some saw as overly similar to the prison environment and not conducive to reintegration into the community. These participants saw COSPs negatively for the short-term nature of the accommodation they provided, which were not seen as leading into longer term housing, being located on prison grounds and therefore isolated from the general community and its facilities, and being operated by prison staff (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013).

More generally, participants cited a range of difficulties finding accommodation after release, including not being able to access accommodation due to lack of available beds (including crisis and temporary accommodation stipulated in parole orders), most accommodation options only being temporary in nature, lack of access to social housing and being unable to afford private rental accommodation. These difficulties compounded with a range of other issues confronting those returning to the community, such as avoiding negative associations, resisting temptations to reoffend, and a lack of independent living skills.

In relation to housing issues, findings from the Schetzer and StreetCare (2013) study noted the importance of pre-release planning and case-managed throughcare. Their consultations suggested the need for greater resources in the form of community-managed transitional accommodation, crisis accommodation, affordable accommodation and social housing. Participants temporary and crisis accommodation services as being an important part of the

post-release environment, with related services such as medical and counselling services being viewed positively. Transitional accommodation services, such as the Community Restorative Centre, were also cited as being very helpful. However, both participants and service providers noted the difficulties sometimes experienced in accessing these centres due to limited resources (Schetzer & StreetCare 2013).

Moving on

An important consideration providing any form of supported housing is planning for clients to exit from that housing when the time is right. Moving on frees up limited resources to meet continuing demand and allows for a more complete reintegration with the community. However the duration of required will vary with different models of service provision and different levels of individual need and exiting supported housing will not be a viable goal for all individuals. For example, some people with severe psychiatric illness will require support throughout their lives. Some models of supported or supportive housing will include provision for clients to remain with the service either permanently or indefinitely.

For most criminal justice clients exiting supported housing into independent housing, whether public or private, or into other service and support arrangements will be a goal of support and identified in individual case plans. For planned support generally, the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) suggests talking about the aim of independence, once goals have been achieved, at each review meeting (QCOSS nd). Exit planning will involve discussing what support the client will need on leaving the service, which service will provide this and how the client can access the service (QCOSS nd).

Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (QDHPW) service provider procedures state that service providers must work with each tenant planning to exit and review their individual tenancy plan. The review must take note of the tenant's capacity to manage rent, comply with a tenancy agreement and sustain the tenancy without support (QDHPW 2013). For tenants exiting to long-term social housing the service provider must confirm the tenant's eligibility, level of need and placement on the housing register and attempt to place the tenant within the service provider's portfolio if possible. Service providers in Queensland should assist tenants seeking to exit to private housing or home ownership and must ensure that no social housing tenant should exit to homelessness or crisis accommodation (QDHPW 2013).

There is little information available to show the pathways for ex-prisoners and other clients from supported or transitional housing clients. A review of the HomeGround Transitional Housing Management Program in Victoria noted that the program relies mainly on social housing and private rental as exit options (Thomson Goodall Associates 2009). This reliance is problematic as there is insufficient supply of both, and insufficient affordable private housing. The reviewers suggested that advocating for affordable long-term housing for all members of the community is an important future direction for transitional housing providers (Thomson Goodall Associates 2009). An examination of the impacts of transitional housing on homelessness in the USA found that most families who exited from transitional housing into more stable housing remained in stable housing situations at the time of a 12 month follow-up (Burt 2010). The study showed that 86 percent of the 179 families studied exited from transitional housing to their own independent homes, with only four families becoming homeless during that year. Family members also remained stable following transitional housing, with 86 percent of family groups maintaining the same membership at 12 month follow-up as they had on exiting the program. While not directly relevant to supported housing outcomes for offenders, these findings give some indication of the importance of planning for exits from supported housing to stable long-term options.

Increasing capacity

The availability of suitable housing is a critical element of the successful reintegration of prisoners into the community. Providing housing support is dependent on there being sufficient affordable housing available to meet the level of need, within the overall level of demand for affordable housing. Services in all jurisdictions face challenges in securing accommodation for criminal justice clients, whether it be released prisoners or people on bail. There is necessarily a limited supply of affordable and/or government-provided housing and that supply must meet the needs of criminal justice clients as well as people seeking to escape homelessness or domestic violence, experiencing disadvantage linked to mental health or disability, and those on lower incomes. Engagement with government and non-government housing providers, including through the private rental market, is accordingly a central and critical element of providing an effective housing support service. Having a range of housing options available also helps to ensure that services can respond to the range of individual and often complex needs presented by ex-prisoner clients and differences in housing types and availability between different areas.

Some suggestions for ways of increasing housing capacity for prisoners re-entering the community can be found in a guide developed for policy-makers developed by the United States Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Centre (Cortes & Rogers 2010). The guide suggests three approaches to increasing housing capacity for the reentry population:

- Greater access
- Increased housing stock, and
- Revitalised neighbourhoods.

Greater access involves maximising the use of existing housing stock by helping released prisoners find and maintain affordable housing (Cortes & Rogers 2010). This might be through strategies such as engaging with non-government service providers with a history of tenancy advocacy for clients with challenging behaviours and complex needs. Using existing stock and improving access through the use of rental assistance and housing placement services saves substantial capital costs and can facilitate a smoother transition into ongoing unsupported housing for clients who do not need ongoing support. The main challenge in using existing housing stock is the very limited stock that is available in some areas, where there may be low vacancy rates and excessive demand among those in need of affordable housing (Cortes & Rogers 2010). Substantial service provider resources may be required to identify potentially suitable properties, assess clients for eligibility and conduct advocacy and liaison with property owners to ensure tenancy can be maintained if problems arise. An additional challenge can be the concentration of affordable housing stock in areas of high relative disadvantage, limited resources and potentially negative social influences that could impede and offender's reintegration (Cortes & Rogers 2010).

Increased housing stock is a direct way of expanding housing availability and options, particularly in areas with tight housing markets (Cortes & Rogers 2010). This option involves locating suitable property that is vacant or can be redeveloped and constructing appropriate housing. This allows for purpose built housing with the potential for a concentration of services in areas selected for the purpose, to the extent that land is available. This approach nonetheless faces challenges arising from the substantial funding required and the need to establish appropriate partners for what may be a high risk venture requiring a long term commitment. (Cortes & Rogers 2010). There is also a strong potential for communities to mount challenges to housing for criminal justice clients being located in their area.

Revitalised neighbourhoods represent a third approach to increasing housing capacity and availability. This involves government and non-government service providers working together to broadly improve services, supports and potentially infrastructure for the benefit of all members of the community (Cortes & Rogers 2010). By improving community life and safety for

all residents, the negative perceptions that offenders coming into an area might otherwise engender can be reduced and the integration of former prisoners and their families with the wider community can be eased. Community redevelopment nonetheless requires substantial planning, resources, time and commitment, and the application of effective evaluation to ensure long term benefits are sustained (Cortes & Rogers 2010).

Housing options

In addition to guidance on approaches to increasing housing capacity, the CSG Justice Center guidebook provided a useful tabular summary of housing options that might be available to support ex-prisoner integration. This summary, with some modifications to improve relevance to Australian conditions, is set out on the following pages.

Housing options

Private Rental		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental properties in the private rental market, secured on an individual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most commonly available option across all communities Can be fully or partly funded through government rental assistance Provides the greatest freedom of choice for individuals – subject to availability individual can choose a property accessible to work, family, treatment and so on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private owners and agents may not make properties available to applicants with criminal records or some categories of offender Some clients may not be eligible for rental assistance Access is subject to market forces affecting prices and vacancy rates Tenancy may be particularly vulnerable to withdrawal (due to falling behind in rent, complaints from neighbours, etc.) without advocacy
Public Housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing is publicly owned and managed by the government directly or through arrangements with service providers Priority and eligibility determined by public housing authorities using standard policies and criteria Rent may be subsidised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government retains control of eligibility and access Dedicated units or properties can be made available for clients on the basis of needs or classifications Generally more affordable Housing authority has more control over how to respond to tenancy difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing stock is limited and generally subject to excessive demand, resulting in very long waiting lists for clients not deemed to be high priority Maintaining and replacing stock may not be fiscally efficient Properties can be in very disadvantaged areas or of poor design, particularly older properties Tenants may be exposed to negative social influences and stigma from the wider community
Affordable housing		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be owned and managed by service providers or private owners Rent and utility costs may be subsidised by government Dedicated to low income or disadvantaged clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally more affordable than private market (although there can be cross-overs) Eligibility criteria may be more flexible or inclusive than public housing May have on-site services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing stock and availability may be limited May be non-cost effective compared with other options Some offenders may be considered ineligible or otherwise excluded May be difficult to balance needs of different client groups
Halfway houses		
Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides accommodation in periods immediately after release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides transitional environment to support and promote reintegration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically short-term Some clients may struggle to comply with rules, perhaps leading

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally highly structured with strict rules and expectations, including release conditions • Treatment and services generally included as part of the model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients can have readily accessible, tailored and monitored treatment and services • Conducive to trained and dedicated staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to breach of conditional release orders and return to custody • Some clients may find environment too similar to being custody and struggle with relative lack of freedom • Can be challenging environment to manage, including potential conflict and negative influences between clients
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Supportive housing

Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental contribution and costs may be contained and subsidised • Treatment and services linked to housing • Typically managed by non-government and community-based service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored to needs of disadvantaged clients with complex issues • Treatment and services tailored to the individual • Can be long-term housing • Can promote pro-social engagement with the community together with community and professional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to meet the needs of groups of clients with diverse and complex needs and sometimes challenging behaviours • Can be resource intensive • May be unsuitable for some categories of offenders (eg, sex offenders) • Clients who do not respond well to supportive housing may have few other options

Specialised re-entry or reintegration housing

Features	Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised for criminal justice clients, usually under supervision orders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be individually tailored to the needs of clients with offending backgrounds and typically complex needs and challenging behaviours • Services and treatment programs can be aligned with criminogenic needs and delivered by trained staff • Opportunities for mentoring and peer relationship • Reduced likelihood of difficulties between criminal justice and other clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing a residential population can be difficult and resource intensive • Potential for violence conflict between clients, particularly in the absence of comprehensive risk assessments • As with some of the above forms of housing, may be difficult to find a location where housing can be established without community resistance • Generally short-term option

Source: Adapted from Cortes & Rogers 2010

Supported housing in practice

This section outlines examples of some of the housing support programs currently in place in Australia and internationally. It also examines the limited evidence available for housing programs targeting vulnerable groups within corrections populations. The section will conclude with a focused consideration of the role of Third Sector Organisations in supported housing service delivery.

Australia

The Queensland Offender Rehabilitation and Support Scheme (ORSS) provides case managed reintegration support to people leaving prison, for up to six months post-release (Department of Community Safety 2010). It is the one service funded by Queensland Corrective Services to provide this support. ORSS provides both direct support to ex-prisoners in the form of assisting with securing housing, attendance at Probation and Parole appointments and engaging with employment services. The program also provides brokerage and advocacy for prisoners accessing other rehabilitative services. A survey of 42 ex-prisoners accessing Catholic Prison Ministry services found that a large majority (88%) had been offered ORSS services while in prison, mostly in the form of transport from prison and accommodation assistance (Wong, Tyle & Lindsay 2014). However, just under half (45%) of the respondents had not communicated with their ORSS worker after release while most of the remainder had very limited contact. Only 16 percent had been in contact with the ORSS worker more than once in six months and only 13 percent of the respondent group had received accommodation assistance despite 57 percent being offered that assistance while in prison (Wong, Tyle & Lindsay 2014). Only one respondent had been successful in securing accommodation, but was finding it too expensive.

The South Australian Integrated Housing Exits Program (IHEP) aims to reduce exits from prison into homelessness as well as reducing recidivism among those leaving custody (SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion 2013). It is funded jointly by the Commonwealth and the South Australian Government, through Housing SA, pursuant to the Council of Australian Governments National Affordable Housing Agreement.(COAG 2013). IHEP provides housing support either directly through allocation to one of 60 IHEP properties or through referral to other housing options. A further 20 properties are allocated for the IHEP Youth Justice Program. The program is delivered through Housing SA, Preferred Growth Providers (PGPs - a selection of non-government housing organisations) and, for adult prisoners, Offender Assistance and Rehabilitation Services (OARS) SA as the Preferred Support Provider (PSP). IHEP adopts Housing First, an approach to homelessness that centres on providing housing as the first priority, with other services following through a case management plan. Where necessary, IHEP workers adopt an Assertive Case Management approach, actively seeking to engage reluctant and difficult to engage clients.

Under the IHEP arrangements, South Australian Department for Correctional Services (DCS) staff who identify housing needs of sentenced prisoners and remandees refer them to the Housing SA Outreach Program for a Housing Needs Assessment. Those assessed as Category 1, indicating urgent housing needs with long term barriers to accessing or maintaining private

housing, are referred to the DCS IHEP Coordinator (SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion 2013). The Coordinator then works with a PGP or Housing SA property manager to determine an appropriate placement. Once a client is placed in housing and case managed services are established, support continues until case management review determines it is no longer required, with the prevailing consideration being to ensure the client does not exit into homelessness. Where necessary, the client will be supported to access home ownership, private rental or one of the range of social housing programs available in South Australia.

North America

Bissonette House is a transitional housing service provided in Buffalo New York by the Peaceprints organisation. The service is available to men leaving prison through direct application or referral by Buffalo Parole Officers who believe referred offenders will benefit from the program (Peaceprints nd). Bissonette House considers all offenders under Community Supervision orders, other than those convicted of sex or arson offences. It operates as a community living facility where residents are expected to participate in chores, shared meals, spiritual focus and meditation as well as other house and community activities (Peaceprints nd). Each resident is expected to meet with the house Case Manager at an agreed time once per week for individual case meetings, with these appointments scheduled to take into account other individual commitments including parole requirements.

Peaceprints also operates supportive housing, Hope House, for men moving on from transitional housing towards full reintegration to the community. Hope House offers eight private rooms with full residential facilities where residents are responsible for paying rent and utilities, cleaning the residence, purchasing their own goods and abiding by release conditions (Peaceprints nd). Supportive group meetings to support continued personal growth are held once per week and the residence has a live-in Housing Coordinator who supports residents on a daily basis. The service does not place a time limit on stays at Hope House, with the length of residency dependent on individual circumstances and personal goals (Peaceprints nd).

A transitional housing model with similarities to Peaceprints' Bissonette House is the HOPE Resource Center, operated by HOPE Services Hawaii. The Center provides transitional housing for both men and women, with 24/7 staffing and random on-site drug testing to ensure maintenance of a sober living environment (HOPE Services Hawaii 2015). Daily evening classes are provided at the Center that include relapse prevention groups, gender specific groups, methamphetamine groups, budgeting and life skills classes. The program is funded by the US Department of Human Services, County of Hawaii and two community organisations. In addition to transitional housing service, HOPE Services Hawaii offers permanent low-income housing for men, women and families through a multi-unit development that also provides transitional housing with a resident manager. Elsewhere in Hawaii, HOPE Services provides emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families as well as a scattered-site transitional housing service.

A recently released report by the Vermont, United States State Auditor highlighted some of the important issues for governments to monitor when providing resources for housing programs (Hoffer 2015). The Auditor investigated a transitional housing program funded by the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC). The Auditor found that transitional housing grantees often did not develop offender services plans, as required by the DOC. Of nine service provider grantees examined, only one provided plans for all offender clients and two did not provide any (Hoffer 2015). Altogether, 35 percent of offenders did not have service plans and of those that did, only five percent were approved by DOC. As a result, DOC was unable to have any assurance that the vast majority of offenders were receiving appropriate, individualised services. The reasons for these failures included ineffective DOC program management, a lack

of awareness by grantees of their obligations and a lack of consequences for non-compliance by grantees. Further to this, each of the nine grantees provided inaccurate or unsupported documentation about the services they provided. The Auditor further found that while DOC had implemented performance measures for its goal of supporting community reintegration and reentry, it had not established performance measure or targets, or collected any data, regarding its goals of maintaining public safety or reducing recidivism (Hoffer 2015).

Canada

Community-Based Residential Facilities

Halfway houses, facilitated by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) or non-government service providers, have been in operation in Canada since the 1940s (White 2003). Halfway houses, also known as Community-Based Residential Facilities (CBRFs), provide community-based residential accommodation for offenders serving part of their sentence through community-based supervision (AHAA 2015). The facilities are owned by non-government agencies that provide services to CSC under contract (CSC 2015). While they are typically houses, CBRFs include hostels, placements in private homes or supervised apartments (CSC 2015). The halfway house model allows offenders to seek employment or education, or attend programs such as drug and alcohol use or mental health treatment. Residents must follow a set of house rules and participate in cleaning and maintaining the property (AHAA 2015).

Offenders being considered for community-based residential facilities undergo comprehensive risk assessments and the facilities adopt strict admission and discharge policies (AHAA 2015). All the houses can refuse offenders for various reasons and offenders face the threat of return to prison if they breach release conditions. Programs and treatment are available for offenders with specific mental health or substance use issues.

Halfway houses contribute to community safety by providing a way for offenders gradually being reintegrated into the community, which in turn has been shown to contribute to reduced recidivism (see John Howard Society 2001, AHAA 2015). The cost of housing an offender in a halfway house is around half that of incarceration (John Howard Society 2001). Studies conducted in Canada have shown that the presence of halfway houses does not negatively impact on residential property values (see John Howard Society 2001, AHAA 2015).

Community Correctional Centres

Halfway houses, or CBRFs, are distinct from Community Correctional Centres (CCCs), which are minimum security facilities operated directly by CSC (CSC 2015). CCCs accommodate offenders on various forms of release and offenders on full parole and certain long term supervision orders with residency conditions (CSC 2015). Over time the role has changed from accommodating offenders on day parole near the end of their sentences (OCI 2014). Based on 2014 figures, a little over half of offenders in CCCs are on statutory release, one quarter on a long-term supervision order and most of the remainder on day parole (OCI 2014). Around two percent of offenders in CCCs across Canada are on full parole and virtually all offenders in CCCs are male (OCI 2014). Around 19 percent of CCC residents are Canadian Aboriginal and this group is overrepresented among offenders assigned a residency condition by the parole board (OCI 2014). Overall, a little over three-quarters of CCC residents in 2014 had committed violent offences and were considered a high risk of reoffending while just over half were assessed as having low potential for successful reintegration and 70 percent were assessed as high needs across various domains (OCI 2014). Halfway houses in Canada usually do not accept sex offenders, for who CCCs are the only community-based residential option available.

Within CCCs, corrections parole and support staff often work in co-operation with community partners to provide services and programs for offenders linked to their offending behaviours and to prepare them for release (OCI 2014). As a minimum security correctional facility, CCCs provide a very structured environment include continuous supervision and monitoring, curfews and leave privileges and sign-in/sign-out procedures. Nonetheless, an examination by the Canadian Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) revealed a lack of consistency between and within CCS with regard to the enforcement of disciplinary rules and the provision of programming and services (OCI 2014). There was also substantial variation in the extent to which CCCs engaged with the community, staff in some having ongoing engagement with business and community groups, while others deliberately remained insular and sought to avoid community engagement (OCI 2014).

The United Kingdom and Europe

The Supporting Prisoners Advice Network (SPAN) is an initiative of Shelter Scotland, the nation's housing and homelessness charity (Shelter nd). In partnership with a Citizen's Advice Bureau and Scottish offender rehabilitation and support service, SPAN has working arrangements with three Scottish prisons and is funded through national lottery revenue. The service provides assistance with homelessness, rent arrears, government housing benefits, finding and applying for accommodation, and maintaining accommodation. SPAN aims to provide what might be called a 'whole of housing' service that extends through to working with clients to responsibly surrender accommodation when appropriate. Targeted support is maintained until clients are established in safe and secure accommodation and able to access education, training or employment. SPAN maintains working relationships with a broad range of government and non-government service providers and criminal justice agencies.

A similar service to SPAN is operated in Wales through Prison Link Cymru, an initiative of Shelter Cymru and the Tai Trothwy housing agency. This is a national prison link service covering all of Wales, working with supported housing providers, private landlords, bond schemes, housing associations and local authorities (Shelter Cymru nd). The service also connects with prison resettlement teams, transitional support services, drug intervention programs and the probation service. The service aims to work with prisoners on remand or short sentences who may have accommodation they can return to, and to work with other clients while in prison to address their housing problems. This typically includes resolving issues with government housing benefits and contacting landlords to resolve problems with previous tenancies to lessen the chance of future tenancy opportunities being jeopardised.

There is little information available on supported housing and post-release programs in continental Europe. This is no doubt due in part to language issues, as only English language literature was able to be considered. However, this result is also due to the different approaches to managing offenders adopted in some European countries compared with the US, UK and Australia. These differences were highlighted in a report by the Vera Institute of Justice that compared sentencing and prisoner management practices in Germany and the Netherlands with the US (Subramanian & Shames 2013).

Imprisonment rates in Germany (79 per 100,000 residents) and the Netherlands (82 per 100,000 residents) are lower than in Australia (185.6 per 100,000 residents) and markedly lower than in the US (716 per 100,000 residents), with some states and territories in both Australia and the US substantially higher than the national rate (ABS 2014, Subramanian & Shames 2013).

Germany and the Netherlands also differ from the US and Australia in actively fostering 'normalised' custodial environments that are as similar to the general community as reasonably possible, with central tenets of resocialisation and rehabilitation dominant in both of the

European countries (Subramanian & Shames 2013). German and Dutch prisoners wear their own clothes and prepare their own meals, as well as being allowed individual expression in their living environments and the capacity to exercise a substantial amount of control over their daily lives. In both countries prisoners retain their rights to vote and often receive social welfare benefits. It is common for German and Dutch prisoners to spend time out of prison, including spending weekends with families working on their relationships and practicing what they have learned in rehabilitative programs (Subramanian & Shames 2013). Short term or extended home leave to visit family or search for work and accommodation is routinely granted and failure to return rates from this leave are in the order of one percent.

A consequence of these practices of normalisation is that there is little need for Germany or the Netherlands to provide housing services for released prisoners. German and Dutch offenders have much more opportunity than American or Australian prisoners to maintain pre-incarceration accommodation and relationships, as well as greater opportunities to secure accommodation before they are released. They are also more likely to leave prison with the life skills needed to maintain stable housing.

Similarities to the German and Dutch approaches have been observed in other European countries. Nordic countries tend to emphasise rehabilitation and normalisation, particularly in the open facilities to which many prisoners move towards the end of their sentences (Ward et al. 2013). Conditions in these open prisons aim to reflect those in the general community and prisoners are afforded a substantial degree of freedom. The Norwegian model of halfway houses for prisoners nearing the end of their sentences has recently been adopted in Lithuania, with four houses expected to open in late 2015 or early 2016 (Delfi 2014). Prison conditions in Scandinavian countries are also based around a belief that they should parallel conditions in the general community as closely as possible (Ward et al. 2013).

Special needs groups

Sex offenders

Sex offenders can face a range of barriers to accessing stable housing on release from prison. People convicted of sex offences, particularly involving children, can have strict conditions imposed on them, restricting the areas in which they can live. This will typically involve not living within a specified distance of schools, childcare centres and playgrounds. Sex offenders carry a greater degree of stigma than most other offenders and must also deal with the challenges facing other offenders on release, such as limited income, lack of life skills and shortages in housing availability (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Sex offenders can also experience high levels of psychosocial stress and may have a higher likelihood of becoming homeless after release than most other offender groups (Levenson et al. 2013; Socia et al. 2014).

A recent study examined the reentry experiences of sex offenders residing in transitional housing in the US state of Missouri (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Sex offenders entering transitional housing facilities followed one of three pathways, entering the facility due to:

- lack of financial means or social support to secure other housing;
- other housing options, including residing with family, were not available due to restrictions on residency and supervision requirements; in some cases offenders with only adult victims were restricted from residing within a given distance of environments where children would be present; or
- being remanded to the transitional facility for technical violation of parole conditions (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014).

Several of the sex offenders interviewed for the Missouri study reported experiencing stigmatisation within the transitional facility and many experienced the transitional environment as form of punishment, with conditions similar to prison and exposure to active drug users (Kras, Pleggenkuhle & Huebner 2014). Several of the interviewed sex offenders found it hard to find a pathway out of the transitional housing facility as they were unable to obtain suitable housing or employment. Being resident in transitional housing was identified as barrier to employment, due to the facility attracting stigma and negative perceptions from potential employers as well as the inability to directly receive phone calls from employers.

The difficulties of securing housing for sex offenders was also highlighted in a study of the work of a committee in the US state of Wisconsin, tasked with locating a suitable site for a facility for sexually violent offenders under supervised conditional release (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The committee was required to find a site that met a range of criteria under sex offender legislation, most notably ensuring a minimum distance from any facility for children or other sensitive areas, including nursing homes, community-based residential facilities and community centres. The committee had also to take into account zoning requirements, appropriateness of the site for a residential building and financial considerations. This severely restricted suitable sites, particularly given the population density in the city of Milwaukee, with light industrial areas presenting the most likely suitable locations.

To assist its search for a location, the committee drew on maps, information on the residential locations of supervised sex offenders already resident in the area, crime data, and sought assistance from real estate agents. Of 44 real estate agents contacted by the committee, only one responded and agreed to assist (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The committee also received little support from citizens during public consultation hearings. Both the Sheriff and Mayor of the city issued statements asserting the need to keep sexually violent offenders separated from other residents, and to put the wishes and needs of those residents first (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013).

The committee ultimately failed in its efforts and no facility was found or built to house the sex offenders (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The experiences of the committee highlighted the need for substantial education and awareness raising, both of the public and authorities, regarding the need to house sex offenders and the consequences of not being able to do so appropriately (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013). The authors, one of whom was a member of the committee, attributed a large degree of the failure to the unwillingness of public officials in Milwaukee to educate themselves about the issues and find ways of dealing with them. The authors also raised the importance of establishing strong and clear mechanisms for supervising and managing sex offenders in the community. One possibility suggested by the authors was the use of 'Circles of Support and Accountability' through which trained community volunteers assist and support offenders and hold them accountable for their actions (Stojkovic & Farkas 2013).

Indigenous Australians

Research has not addressed issues of supportive housing for Indigenous Australians – Parsell and Phillips (2014) have shown how cultural assumptions about Indigenous Australians affect how homeless Indigenous people are handled – but the literature is silent on adaptations of supportive housing for this group

Third Sector Organisations

Across the different forms of housing support that are available to prisoners, a broad range of 'third sector organisations' (TSOs) are involved with providing assistance in the form of information, referrals and direct housing provision, often in partnership with criminal justice agencies (Mills et al. 2013). In order to examine the role of TSOs in providing housing support

to prisoners, a research team from New Zealand and the UK undertook interviews with 254 prison and TSO staff and conducted a survey of 680 prisoners across eight prisons in the UK. These eight prisons collectively had links with 37 housing-related TSOs.

The study found only limited awareness of housing services among prisoners. Only 21 percent of prisoners surveyed had heard of at least one of the organisations and only four percent of prisoners surveyed had made use of TSO housing services (Mills et al. 2013). Against this, 10 percent of prisoners surveyed had identified a lack of specialist housing TSOs as a key area for improvement. Lower levels of engagement with TSOs were reported by female prisoners, as well as those from non-British Black, Asian and mixed ethnic backgrounds. Young respondents reported less awareness and involvement with accommodation-related TSOs than adults. However, as the authors noted, these findings may have reflected a lack of TSOs offering housing to these sub-populations (Mills et al. 2013).

The surveys and interviews undertaken for this research identified some of the barriers faced by prisoners trying to accessing housing-related services from TSOs as well as the problems faced by TSOs themselves. Many of the TSOs operated with very limited resources and very few staff. As a result, they had a tendency to apply eligibility criteria very strictly and narrowly, as they did not have the capacity to support a wider pool of eligible prisoners (Mills et al. 2013). Even among those then deemed eligible, resource constraints meant that some TSOs were reluctant to take on prisoners with complex needs. A specific problem identified in housing choice was a lack of consideration of the need to promote desistance and reduce reoffending (Mills et al. 2013). This sometimes manifested in offenders being accommodated in areas well away from support agencies, workplaces or pro-social peer influences. In some cases offenders faced increased risk of breaching probation and parole appointments due to transportation difficulties. These location-related problems seemed particularly to arise when housing providers worked with strict criteria for their catchment areas, which constrained the areas in which offenders could be accommodated, even when more suitably located housing was potentially available.

In considering the findings of this research, the authors suggested that the reluctance expressed by social and private housing providers in accommodating ex-offenders could be alleviated by providing guarantees of rental payments, or the provision of support packages that reduced the risks to providers (Mills et al. 2013). However, the authors also recognised the fiscal constraints facing corrections agencies and TSOs. In addition, the authors noted that while stable housing is a fundamentally important element of reentry programs, reintegration and desistance objectives required approaches that also provided supports such as monitoring and crisis supports (Mills et al. 2013).

Conclusions

This review of the literature on supported housing for people leaving prison custody has built on the findings of two earlier literature reviews, conducted in 2010 and 2013. While the earlier reviews have been broader in scope, each has looked at issues of best practice in the provision of housing-related services for offenders exiting the prison system. The current review has taken into account the findings of those earlier literature reviews and has also taken into account the context of a positive evaluation of the Corrections Victoria Housing Program, which identified the value of that program in making stable housing available to people who might otherwise be leaving prison into circumstances of housing stress and perhaps homelessness.

The main findings of the current literature review do not vary greatly from the earlier reviews, but they do provide an additional level of evidence and degree of clarity to the previous findings. The literature provides further support for the contention that transitional and housing support services have the potential to reduce recidivism, thereby bringing direct benefits to clients, increasing community safety and reducing criminal justice system costs. The capacity of housing support to yield cost savings is particularly pertinent as the current fiscal environment, together with our responses to fiscal constraints such as the development of Justice Reinvestment strategies, demand cost effective criminal justice system responses. While supported housing initiatives can be resource intensive, there is evidence to suggest that they are nonetheless more cost effective than imprisonment. Supported housing initiatives can also require substantial capital inputs, which may produce medium-term cost savings but at the potential expense of opportunity costs for government. The emergence in recent years of various forms of social impact investment, such as Social Impact Bonds or Payment by Results approaches, provide innovative models through which governments can deliver social programs without upfront investment or risks.

Earlier reviews of the literature suggested that there is no one best practice model for delivering housing-related services and that remains the case. Rather, the evidence suggests the need for flexible models that are adaptable to individual circumstances. Good practice appears less directly linked to the practices of service providers and more to ensuring that services are centred on the individual and their capacity to make decisions about their own circumstances. At the same time, supporting the individual to realise that capacity requires an holistic approach to service delivery involving collaborative multi-agency and multi-disciplinary ways of working. A number of promising practices emerge from partnerships between criminal justice, housing and broader social support agencies. Working together in partnership provides opportunities for each of these agencies to contribute from a position of strength, aligned to their areas of primary responsibility and expertise. Importantly too, these partnerships provide ways of facilitating the types of client contacts and interagency communications that are necessary for achieving the goals of throughcare.

The literature traverses a number of different models through which supportive or supported housing can be delivered. The Common Ground supportive housing model is gaining prominence in Australia, promoted by an alliance of housing providers across several states. This model is based on congregated housing with onsite support and social services provided. It contrasts with scattered-site models that utilise dispersed accommodation with clients receiving

support services on an outreach basis. There is no clear evidence in the literature of either model being superior in effectiveness or other measures than the other. Indeed, within each of the broad models practice manifests in a range of variations. Rather than being seen to undermine the integrity of the models, this variation emerges as an apparent strength by increasing the capacity of each program to meet the individual needs of clients.

Similarly, there is no clear evidence to suggest whether housing programs for released prisoners should be funded, managed and delivered by the corrective services agency, by housing providers, or some combined arrangement. A range of models are in place with responsibilities falling to different agencies or to various collaborative and partnership arrangements involving government and/or non-government agencies. Issues of leadership in supported housing delivery appear best to be resolved within individual jurisdictions and local arrangements.

Many of the programs currently operating do not stipulate timeframes or limits on the housing and accompanying services that are provided. Housing and support services are typically available for as long as the client needs them, consistent with goals of achieving ongoing stability and minimising possibilities of the client returning to homelessness or housing crisis. As supportive housing models are usually implemented for clients with psychiatric disorders or other chronic needs that would tend to permanently place them at risk of housing instability, the models accept the possibility that clients may never exit the service. At the same time, it is important that housing providers work with clients on exit planning to ensure those who are able to do so move onto independent living and free housing and service resources to meet continuing demands.

There remain areas in the literature that are unclear or inconclusive. There remain few rigorous evaluations of different housing models and few studies that focus on criminal justice populations. The variability of supported housing models limits the extent which the literature can inform questions about separations of responsibility, or the most appropriate roles to be adopted by each of the agencies involved in a partnership. While social impact investment strategies offer promise and their early application in housing and criminal justice contexts appears to have met government expectations, there has not yet been time to properly examine their effectiveness or impact on financial markets.

Coupled with social impact investment strategies, the relative openness of potential models for delivering housing supports to ex-prisoner clients creates opportunities for Corrections Victoria to be innovative in its approach to housing support. Based on the available evidence, effective applications of this innovation will involve client-centred approaches that aim to build capacity for clients to become firstly secure and stable tenants, and then good and reliable tenants able to access and maintain tenancies through their own resources.

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