

22 August 2013

NSW Law Reform Commission
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SYDNEY NSW 2001

via email: nsw_lrc@agd.nsw.gov.au



Scoping Paper: Parole

Enclosed is a copy of a report released today by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), *Beyond the Prison Gates - The experiences of people recently released from prison into homelessness and housing crisis*, which is of relevance to the NSW Law Reform Commission reference on Parole, particularly the issues raised in the section 'Reintegration into the community and management on parole'.¹

PIAC's Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) and StreetCare (the HPLS Homeless Consumer Advisory Committee) undertook a consultation project exploring the experiences and difficulties faced by people who have recently exited the prison system into situations of housing crisis or homelessness.

This project involved consultation interviews with 26 people who exited prison in the previous two years into situations of housing crisis or homelessness, and interviews with six community workers who are employed at services that provide assistance services to homeless people and people recently released from prison. These interviews were undertaken by members of StreetCare with support from HPLS.

The aims of the project were:

1. To identify the experiences of people experiencing homelessness who had recently been released from prison;
2. To identify the perceived difficulties faced by generalist homeless services and agencies that assist homeless people in relation to the provision of services to homeless people recently released from prison.

Over a third of participants indicated that on the night they were released from prison, they slept rough, or had some other form of primary homelessness. Other responses also indicated a form of homelessness, such as couch surfing, short-term emergency or temporary accommodation, supported accommodation, transitional accommodation, boarding house accommodation, or staying with friends and family. All participants were either currently homeless, or had experienced homelessness in the previous three months.

Participants provided specific comments relating to barriers to accessing stable housing and accommodation after leaving prison. The most commonly identified problems included: difficulties accessing public housing, lack of availability of short-term or crisis accommodation, unaffordability of private rental and boarding house accommodation and being discriminated against because of their recent prison experience.

¹ New South Wales Law Reform Commission, *Parole Scoping Paper*, (2013) 1.7.

Several participants spoke about the difficulties in securing accommodation due to inflexible parole conditions, and the fact that often they would end up in breach of their parole conditions as a result of the unavailability of beds in the designated accommodation, or having to leave that accommodation before the end of their parole. Some participants also reported that not being on parole meant that they did not receive any support or assistance in obtaining accommodation on release.

If you have any questions, or would like further information, do not hesitate to contact me, or Louis Schetzer, Senior Policy Officer, on 8898 6516 or lschetzer@piac.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward Santow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edward" and last name "Santow" clearly legible.

Edward Santow
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