



JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

The Greens' plan for a more effective approach to justice
Smarter. Safer. Stronger

If we want safer communities, it is time for new thinking in Australia. Justice reinvestment is a smarter approach to criminal justice: reducing crime by re-directing money away from prisons into stronger, more caring communities

Since 1984, the number of Australians in prison has doubled.¹ Prison budgets in the States and Territories are spiralling and yet we don't feel safer.

The Australian Greens know it is a social and economic imperative we find ways to reverse escalating imprisonment rates.

> TIME TO END OUR LOCK-UP CULTURE

Justice reinvestment reflects the idea that prevention is better than cure. Prisons are only a temporary solution to criminal behaviour.

Statistics show that 40% of prisoners will be back in prison within a year.² This revolving door is counter-productive and expensive. Imprisonment as we practise it in Australia represents a social and financial policy failure.

It's time to embrace evidence-based solutions that will really reduce crime. Investing in disadvantaged communities, where most offenders come from, strengthens those communities, reduces crime and makes us all safer.

The Australian Greens' plan includes:

- Investing \$10 million over four years in establishing a National Centre for Justice Reinvestment
- Funding a Justice Reinvestment Grants Program worth \$50 million over four years.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Crime Facts and Figures* (2014) <http://aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/facts/2014/facts_and_figures_2014.pdf>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Prisoners in Australia* (2015) <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0~2015~Main%20Features~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20prisoner%20characteristics~7>>.

> THE COST OF INCARCERATION

The *real* price of growing incarceration rates is not just the cost to taxpayers of building and running more prisons, but the long-term impact imprisonment has on each prisoner, their family and their community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are shamefully over-represented in prisons. They make up 2.5% of our population but more than a quarter of those in prison.³

The situation for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is even worse. They are 26 times more likely to be in criminal detention than their non-Indigenous peers.⁴

While we will always need prison for the most serious offenders, there are many people who do not need to be there. Prisons should not be storing houses for people with mental ill-health or people with minor traffic infringements.

There are more effective ways of managing these issues. Imprisonment for every offender does not make economic sense.

> A SMARTER APPROACH

Justice reinvestment reduces the number of people in prison and the number of people returning to prison, generating savings which can be re-directed towards disadvantaged communities where most offenders are concentrated.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Youth detention population in Australia* (2015) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129553698>> (2)

⁴ Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, *Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia* (2013), <http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/justicereinvestment/report/~media/wopapub/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/completed_inquiries/2010-13/justice_reinvestment/report/report.ashx> (11, 12)

Investing in carefully developed programs and services in those communities reduces crime. Less crime means less people in prison, fewer victims and safer, more caring communities.

Justice Reinvestment is a smarter, more cost-effective approach to criminal justice which has been successful internationally and will pave the way for safer, stronger Australian communities.

> AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL CENTRE FOR JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

The Greens know that Australia urgently needs a new, ambitious approach to criminal justice.

The “tough on crime” mantra is actually weak, ineffective and financially unsustainable. We need a long-term commitment to reduce crime by addressing disadvantage and building stronger communities.

Research shows a large number of offenders come from, and return to, a small number of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Justice reinvestment targets those communities.

It requires scrupulous data collection, analysis, consultation and evaluation. Independent advisory bodies have been critical to the success of justice reinvestment overseas.

As recommended by a recent Senate inquiry,ⁱ the Australian Greens will invest \$10 million from 1 July 2016 in an independent National Centre for Justice Reinvestment to provide high-quality information and research.

The Centre would help identify ‘high stakes’ communities and assist and advise States and Territories who are willing to try a smarter approach.

> FUNDING AN ANNUAL JUSTICE REINVESTMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The rising number of people in prisons is putting pressure on government budgets.

Australia spends more than \$3 billion dollars a year just running our prisons. The cost of building a new prison can be in the vicinity of half a billion dollars. Locking up someone costs an average of \$305 per prisoner per day, or more than \$110,000 a year.ⁱⁱ

Prisons just don’t make economic sense. This money can be more effectively spent addressing the causes of crime and making our communities safer.

Overseas experience has shown that targeting disadvantaged communities where offenders are concentrated, with locally-owned programs like supporting new mothers, early childhood education, and intensive housing and employment support, will reduce crime.

That’s why we’re proposing an annual Justice Reinvestment Grant Program worth \$50 million over the forward estimates to support communities, organisations and representative bodies to initiate local justice reinvestment pilot programs across Australia. The Australian Greens know that we need to be smarter on crime and we need to start now.

ⁱProductivity Commission, *Report on Government Services*, (2013) <http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/121769/11-government-services-2013-chapter8.pdf> (8.24, 8.4)