



The Greens are committed to building communities—not prisons. We’re taking the smarter approach to the criminal justice system.

While crime rates are going down, incarceration rates are going up. A growing population, together with more awareness around domestic, family and sexual assault, are part of the story. More effective policing, reduced rates of bail, social issues like unemployment, poverty and family trauma, particularly among young offenders, also have an impact.

As imprisonment rates rise, the challenges of housing growing rates of detainees are only going to increase, and the Greens don’t believe we can—in good conscience—maintain the status quo.

World leading justice targets to reduce reoffending rates

In the ACT, as part of our Parliamentary Agreement, we have committed to an ambitious target of reducing recidivism (reoffending rates) by 25% by 2025.

Meeting this target will be a challenge—to think differently about how we address our use of imprisonment as a punitive measure, and how this can be done in a safe and supportive way for our community.

We cannot keep building larger and larger prisons in the hope that this will simply deal with the issue of rising imprisonment rates.

That’s where justice reinvestment come in.

Justice reinvestment – supporting stronger communities

Justice reinvestment seeks to reduce crime and make communities safer by re-directing money away from prisons into stronger, more supportive communities.

We believe that prevention is better than cure, and that imprisonment usually proves to be a temporary solution to the root causes of criminal behaviour.

Justice reinvestment seeks to make the ACT a community that arrests vulnerability, not just individuals; one that addresses the causes of offending.

Justice reinvestment acknowledges that some members of our community are significantly more likely to be incarcerated. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately represented across the justice system. This is often compounded by social economic issues, combined with the effects of intergenerational trauma, disenfranchisement, colonisation and structural racism. Vulnerable groups, including young people, those with minimal education and mental health concerns are also over-represented.

With the right supports in place, we can help change the trajectories of those coming in and out of the prison system.

Justice Reinvestment requires justice and corrections to be people-focused, rather than just taking a 'tough on crime' approach.

It requires us to consider the whole of the individual - their offending behaviour, their backgrounds, and their capacity to change when provided with the right rehabilitation opportunities and interventions.

Justice reinvestment means being honest about the reality of incarceration in Australia: that we cannot continue to simply spend millions, if not billions, building prisons. We *can* choose to reinvest some of this effort into building communities.

Justice reinvestment sees that there can be a better way.

Key facts

- The population of Canberra's only prison, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), was first built in 2009 to house 270 detainees. The Centre has been expanded to now house up 511 operational beds for detainee accommodation and 28 beds designed for special short-term use such as health, mental health or disciplinary requirements.
- As rates-to-prison rise, there has been as high as 507 detainees in June 2017, more than doubling in population over six years.
- Over the same period, rates of those imprisoned who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detained at the AMC has increased by 135%: up from 48 in 2012 to 111 in 2018.

Canberra: Justice Reinvestment in action—Building Communities Not Prisons

The work in the ACT to realise the principles of justice reinvestment for those coming in and out of the prison system marks some of the most ambitious justice work underway in Australia. This is the first time an Australian jurisdiction has committed to reinvesting what would otherwise be millions of dollars in funding towards expanding prisons: instead, these future funds will be directed to rehabilitative programs.

Known officially as 'Building Communities Not Prisons', a major new project will realise a number of intersecting and overlapping initiatives that aim to reduce reoffending, reduce the prison population, improve the lives of those individuals and their families, and improve community safety.

The Building Communities Not Prisons (BCNP) program will include:

- Ruling out an expansion of the Alexander Maconochie Centre high security campus—an Australian-first
- Enhancing our rehabilitation framework at the AMC, including the construction of a purpose built “reintegration centre”;
- Providing more supported housing options for people on bail and exiting detention - a major factor in reoffending - for better justice outcomes;
- Early support for people living with a mental illness or disability
- Providing more pathways for safe and sustainable bail
- Community building capabilities

That’s why we are:

- **Deferring an expansion of the Alexander Maconochie Centre High Security campus, instead reinvesting prison expansion funds into community-based rehabilitation programs: marking an Australian-first in Justice Reinvestment.**

We cannot keep building larger and larger prisons in the hope that this will simply address the drivers for reoffending.

In an Australian first, Greens Minister for Justice and Corrections Shane Rattenbury has announced that the ACT Government has ruled out any high security expansion to the Territory’s only correctional facility.

By methodically reinvesting funds that could otherwise be used to build bigger prisons every five years, we are instead funding evidence-based programs focused on crime prevention and addressing the actual causes of criminal behaviour.

In taking this decision not to simply expand the jail, the ACT Government has clearly affirmed that not only do we want to urgently stem the flow of people into the prison, but that we will work to reduce the trauma and costs of crime for victims and their families and related costs for government and the broader community.

- **Improving rehabilitation options for detainees at the AMC, including a purpose built “reintegration centre”**

As part of the BCNP program, we’re investing **\$997,000** into work to plan and design the Alexander Maconochie Reintegration Centre. This Centre will build on our ongoing rehabilitation efforts, and will include trauma and relationship counselling, alcohol, tobacco and other drug rehabilitation, and other training including job skills. These will help detainees to build their connections to community as they exit the criminal justice system.

- **Providing more supported housing for better justice outcomes**

In the ACT, an average of 1 in 5 detainees say they had ‘unstable accommodation’ in the four weeks leading up to their time in prison. Living without a secure lease, staying temporarily with friends or family or in short-term transitional housing, can contribute to a range of issues that impact offending behaviour. This lack of stable housing is also directly linked to decisions by courts and releasing authorities to refuse to grant conditional liberty on bail or parole.

As the needs of those in who would benefit from better housing supports are diverse, BCNP programs will include both short term, culturally sensitive, transitional accommodation and longer term supported accommodation. A comprehensive justice housing program will be developed over time, beginning with supported accommodation for men on bail.

- **Tackling the impacts of drug and alcohol dependence**

We know that too often, those who come into contact with the justice system have experienced the potentially devastating impacts of drug and alcohol dependence. This dependency may have had some impact—direct or otherwise—on an individual’s offending.

To address this, the Government will provide for more treatment programs to address alcohol and drug related offending, its harmful health effects on detainees, and the related harm that impacts on families and communities. These programs will be developed over an extended period.

The ACT Government is also progressing a Drug and Alcohol Court - a commitment made as part of the Greens-Labor Parliamentary Agreement. The Court will better support those caught in the re-offending cycle to overcome their addiction and abuse behaviour, reducing the likelihood that they will again reoffend, and improving community safety.

- The National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 identifies individuals in contact with the criminal justice system as a priority group.
- The 2016 ACT Detainee Health and Wellbeing Survey reports that in the year before their incarceration, 74 per cent of respondents used meth-amphetamines, with this being the most common form of illicit drug used.
- Treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community, rather than in prison, is associated with lower mortality and improved health-related quality of life.

Early support for people living with a mental illness and/or disability

We know that too often, those who come into contact with the justice system are living with a mental illness, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability. In some circumstances, this can impact a person’s understanding of the impacts of their crimes on others, and increase the likelihood that they will come in contact with the justice system.

That’s why we providing up to 18 months of case management support for referred detainees with diagnosed mental health illnesses as they exit detention—helping them to reach individual milestones in mental health, resilience and social connection.

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that almost half of prison entrants have been told by a health professional that they have a mental health disorder, and more than 1 in 4 reported currently being on medication for a mental health disorder.
- This research indicates that almost 50% of adult detainees have some type of a disability.
- The ACT is working to develop a Disability Justice Strategy which will include a range of actions and supports aimed at reducing the contact that people with disability have with the criminal justice system.

Building pathways to safe and sustainable bail

We need more options that will allow release on bail with effective conditions for people who do not represent a serious risk of offending and are not a risk to community safety.

- While there have been improvements in recent years, there can be significant delays in sentence hearings, at times leading to poor outcomes in programs and rehabilitation options that can be offered.
- Over one-third of people at the AMC are held on remand awaiting trial or sentence, broadly in line with the national average.

Reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT's prison system

Over-representation is both a persistent and growing problem with incarceration rates increasing by 51 per cent across Australia between 2012 and 2018 and the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous imprisonment rates widening. We also know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented as victims of crime.

In the ACT, we have been witness to increases far beyond what should be possible in a city-state as well-resourced and inclusive as ours. We must do things differently if we want a different outcome.

That is why we have:

- fully funded Yarrabi Bamirr - a truly co-designed model of on the ground justice reinvestment in partnership with Winnunga Community Health Services, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Women's Legal Centre targets not just individuals but families with intensive wrap around support;
- funded new Ingenious Liaison Officers within the Victims of Crime Commission;
- expanded circle sentencing options for juvenile offenders (led by the Attorney-General); and
- Introduced Winnunga Aboriginal Health and Community Service's Model of Care in the AMC.

Reducing the growing rates of women in the ACT's prison system

The lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women who enter the justice system are marked by acute disadvantage. The overwhelming majority are survivors of physical and sexual violence and many struggle with housing insecurity, poverty, mental illness, disability and the effects of trauma. There are ways to respond to women's offending that are more effective, cheaper and that address the cause of offending than imprisonment.

The flow-on effects are immense, for not only our incarcerated women, but for their families, and particularly their children – not only during the prison sentence, but for lifetime impacts, and we need to reverse the trend of increasing incarceration.

That's why we're committed to identifying what some of these key drivers are, and developing programs that seek to meet these needs in gender responsive and culturally responsive ways.

A focus on rehabilitation through 'real world skills' development

The AMC was built in 2008, with few opportunities for industry or skills development.

Since 2012, we have placed a strong focus on rehabilitation through 'real world' skills development and vocational learning opportunities, helping to break to the cycle of reoffending. These include:

- horticulture programs, developed in partnership with Landcare and city services groups;

- a fully functional 24/7 bakery operation that continues to grow, providing CIT certification opportunities for detainees;
- A waste recycling program that has reduced the waste that the AMC sends to landfill by 46 per cent.

We continue to seek innovative ways to expand these programs, and with the positive addition of a dedicated reintegration centre, we can increase the numbers of detainees eligible for supervised day release into gainful employment or traineeships.