

Submission
No 31

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF DRUG
REHABILITATION SERVICES IN REGIONAL, RURAL AND
REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Just Reinvest NSW

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Just Reinvest NSW submission to Inquiry into the provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales

We write to you on behalf of Just Reinvest NSW and the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project in relation to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Drug and Alcohol Treatment.

Just Reinvest NSW is a coalition of more than twenty organisations and individuals that have come together to address the significant over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody through a Justice Reinvestment framework.

Just Reinvest's key message to the government and the community is that there is a solution; a smarter approach that will reduce crime and create safer, stronger communities.

In 2013, Just Reinvest NSW began a partnership with the Aboriginal community in Bourke to implement the first major justice reinvestment trial in Australia, the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project in Bourke.

Responding to ToR 2: the level and adequacy of funding for drug and alcohol treatment in NSW

In November 2016, Just Reinvest NSW convened an expert roundtable to develop legislative and policy reforms to reduce the rising prison population in NSW, with a particular view to addressing the levels of Aboriginal overrepresentation.

The roundtable included representatives from the Law Society of NSW, the NSW Bar Association, the Law Council of Australia, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, Legal Aid NSW, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the University of NSW, the University of Technology Sydney, the Public Defenders office, and other prominent members of the NSW legal and justice communities. *Policy Paper #1: Smarter Sentencing and Parole Law Reform* was developed out of recommendations arising from the roundtable (**attached**).

It has been the subject of consultation with peak NSW Aboriginal organisations and other key organisations and agencies and has been endorsed by the Aboriginal Medical Service Cooperation Limited, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat, Aboriginal Education Council (NSW) Inc, Community Legal Centres NSW, Kingsford Legal Centre, Mental Health Coordinating Council, National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council, NSW Council of Civil Liberties, Youth Action, the University of Sydney and other prominent members of the NSW legal, Indigenous youth, treatment and justice communities.

The paper was launched in August 2017 at a parliamentary forum hosted by the NSW Attorney General, The Honourable Mark Speakman SC MP.

Participants at the roundtable discussion strongly expressed the view that the current level of resourcing for drug and alcohol treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW is insufficient, particularly in regional and remote NSW. A key recommendation to the NSW Government arising from the discussion and included in the paper was that there is an ***urgent need to map existing residential and non-residential drug and alcohol programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to identify and meet additional needs including resourcing for:***

- ***Additional options for those with mental health issues, an intellectual disability or a cognitive impairment***
- ***Healing and cultural components including access to trauma informed and culturally safe community based healing for offenders and victims***
- ***Additional programs for women and juveniles***
- ***Aftercare support.***

It is important to highlight that recent changes to Intensive Correction Orders (ICOs) as part of the NSW Government's Criminal Justice reform package, to expand their scope and availability will result in increased demand for drug and alcohol treatment programs, particularly in remote and regional NSW. Adequate resourcing is critical to ensure programs are available and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across NSW. JRNSW does note that advice was received from the Attorney General's office that where services do not exist, Community Corrections officers will be in a position to provide individual and group treatment services. However, it is essential that if these officers are to be utilised then they must be adequately trained in culturally competent and trauma-informed practice.

It is the recommendation of JRNSW that wherever possible treatment options are provided by community controlled organisations.

Funding for drug rehabilitation services under a justice reinvestment framework

Justice Reinvestment is a place based, data-driven approach that builds stronger communities by redirecting money that would be spent on prisons into early intervention, crime prevention and diversion. It recognises the strong correlation between locations of disadvantage and high rates of contact with the criminal justice system.

By adopting a justice reinvestment framework for NSW, resources could be redirected from expanding the state's prison infrastructure and into far more effective programs and services, including rehabilitation services, for communities which produce high numbers of offenders.

Justice reinvestment is essentially a two-pronged strategy to reduce offending and incarceration and create savings for reinvestment. The first is about community-led, place-based solutions, like the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project. A portion of savings made possible as a result of reduced offending and incarceration is then available for reinvestment into what is working in the community. The second is the development and implementation of state level policy and legislative measures, the implementation of which will have an impact on the size of the prison population, thereby freeing up resources for reinvestment into supporting effective community driven strategies to reduce crime.



In 2016 the NSW Government allocated \$3.8 billion (\$2.4 billion capital and \$1.4 billion recurrent) over four years to increase prison capacity by approximately 7,000 prison beds. In contrast, in 2016-17 and 2017-18 the Government's total allocation to drug and alcohol services was \$427 million. The NSW Government is currently utilising funds to increase prison capacity, not to reduce rates of offending and reoffending. Investment in community based drug rehabilitation programs in regional, rural and remote NSW is a far smarter investment as it will have the ability to reduce offending, reoffending and imprisonment.

Just Reinvest NSW thanks you for the opportunity to comment and would welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Inquiry if required. Questions may be directed to

Yours faithfully,

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