

## FACT SHEET

# Prisoner Rapid Rehousing

### *Information for service providers*

(V4.A November 2018)

#### **Overview**

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing is a housing assistance initiative funded by the Department of Justice and administered by Housing Tasmania. The initiative provides prisoners exiting the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) with transitional accommodation (leases up to 12 months) at subsidised rent.

The initiative is designed to address known blockages that prevent prisoners exiting prison without secure accommodation.

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing is a partnership between the Tasmanian Government (Housing Tasmania and the Department of Justice), registered Community Housing Providers, Housing Connect and the Salvation Army. The initiative is funded by the Department of Justice until 2020 and may be ongoing subject to commitment.

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing complements the current social housing portfolio by creating a pool of 12 dedicated properties – either private rentals or owned by Community Housing Providers. Suitable Prisoners are matched to affordable accommodation from the pool of properties. Rent payable by the occupant will not exceed 30 per cent of the income of the household plus Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing will use systems and processes established through the successful Family Violence Rapid Rehousing initiative.



## Support

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing tenants will be provided with support to transition back into the community, to access and maintain stable accommodation, and to address issues which may contribute to reoffending through the *Beyond the Wire Salvation Army Throughcare Service*.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Housing Tasmania will:

- Have oversight of the administration of the initiative including authorisation of Suitable Properties, monitoring and reporting on this initiative
- Provide Community Housing Providers with a tenancy management payment for approved Suitable Properties

The Tasmania Prison Service will:

- Identify Suitable Prisoners for the initiative
- Through the Prisoner Rapid Rehousing Panel (the Panel) facilitate the matching of Suitable Prisoners with Suitable Properties

Community Corrections Tasmania will:

- Supervise parolees and work with the community and other stakeholders to provide opportunities for reintegration

The Salvation Army will:

- Provide support to prisoners through the *Beyond the Wire Salvation Army Throughcare Service*
- Collaborate and liaise with the Tasmania Prison Service, Community Corrections and the Parole Board to assist prisoners meet their conditions
- Work with the Housing Connect Front Door to support exit planning out of Prisoner Rapid Rehousing into stable accommodation, social housing or affordable private rentals

Community Housing Providers will:

- Either find private rental properties or nominate properties from their portfolio that are suitable for the initiative
- Ensure private property owners provide evidence of current insurance documentation for their property (including tenant damage cover)
- Ensure properties are furnished, secure and suitable for occupancy



- Allocate properties to Suitable Prisoners in collaboration with the Tasmania Prison Service
- Receive \$12 000 per approved property per annum to assist with tenancy management costs
- Enter into a residential tenancy agreement with Suitable Prisoners to a maximum term of 12 months
- Provide tenancy management services in accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*
- Manage vacancies and meet the costs of any rental arrears
- Recover costs associated with tenant damage

Private property owners (or their agents) will:

- Ensure their property is clean, tidy and fit for initial occupancy
- Provide evidence of current insurance for their property (including landlord and tenant damage cover)
- Enter into a head lease with a Community Housing Provider for a one or two year term that takes effect from the date that the Community Housing Provider enters into a residential tenancy agreement with the tenant
- Prescribe and receive rent from the Community Housing Provider
- Be responsible for the payment of council rates, maintenance repairs (excluding fair wear and tear) or improvements and all other property owner obligations as per the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*
- Liaise with Community Housing Providers regarding tenancy and property management

The Housing Connect Front Door will:

- Provide advice and information on the initiative
- Provide intake and assessment services
- Work with the Salvation Army to support exit planning

## **Suitable Prisoners**

Suitable Prisoners are prisoners who are due to be released from the Tasmania Prison Service but do not have secure accommodation. Suitable Prisoners will be 18 years of age or older and must meet the income eligibility threshold for social housing.

## **How Suitable Prisoners will be selected**

The Panel will assess individuals due to exit prison who may be suitable for the initiative.

The Panel comprises representatives from:

- The Tasmania Prison Service (Reintegration Consultant and Team Leader) as Chair
- The Salvation Army (*Beyond the Wire* Salvation Army Throughcare Service Manager)



Tasmania Prison Service Planning Officers will nominate Suitable Prisoners for consideration by the Panel. The Panel will assess the viability of the referral including the proposed housing location, support needs (based on the Level of Service Case Management Inventory results), the reintegration plan and the potential outcomes to be gained by referring to the *Beyond the Wire Salvation Army Throughcare Service*.

The Tasmania Prison Service will liaise with Housing Connect to ensure that the Suitable Prisoners are listed on the Housing Register.

Suitable Prisoners may be new to the Housing Register or may have an existing social housing application.

### **How tenants will be selected**

The Panel will match Suitable Prisoners with Suitable Properties.

For parolees, recommendations from the Panel will be forwarded to the Parole Board and to Community Corrections for timely consideration.

The Panel will advise Housing Tasmania of their decision, and then Community Housing Providers will allocate the property to Suitable Prisoners.

Participation in the Prisoner Rapid Rehousing initiative will not affect their social housing application status.

### **Suitable Properties**

Suitable Properties may either be private rentals or owned by Community Housing Providers and must be located in close proximity to services, especially:

- Health services
- Public transport
- Shops/grocery stores (open on weekends)
- Community Corrections Parole Officer (if Parolee)

Properties must also meet minimum standards under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

A pool of 12 properties is required for this initiative.

### **Location**

**Attachment I** outlines the preferred locations for properties in the South, North and North-West.

Approximately 60 per cent of those exiting prison are from prison services in the South of the State, 20 per cent from the North and 20 per cent from the North-West.

Properties in small isolated areas are not preferred. However there are no particular suburbs or areas that should exclude a property from consideration if there is access to services or regular public transport.



The number of Suitable Properties required in each area is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Suitable Properties required for the dedicated Prisoner Rapid Rehousing pool.**

Region	No. of bedrooms	No. Suitable Properties required
South	1-2	7
	3*	1
North	1-2	2
North-West	1-2	2
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>12</b>

\* the location of the three bedroom home will be at the discretion of the Director of Housing Programs.

### Property Attributes

The majority of properties will be single-person accommodation (one or two bedroom properties). A three bedroom property may be required to accommodate prisoners and their children and shared tenancies.

The property may need to align with special needs such as physical disabilities, mental health issues, intellectual/cognitive impairment, medical/health issues and aged care.

It is preferable that properties **not** be:

- close to schools, childcare services or public parks
- in small, isolated areas
- in medium to high density unit complexes given that it may impact on tenants' ability to cope

Suitable Properties will include:

- One stove
- One refrigerator
- One microwave
- One washing machine
- One bed (double) for a one bedroom unit, two beds for two bedroom units and three beds for three bedroom properties
- One couch to suit the number of bedrooms
- One dining table with a minimum of two chairs



## **Property Approval Process**

Properties that meet the Suitable Property requirements will be identified by the Community Housing Providers. The Community Housing Provider will then complete a Property Approval Form and submit it to the Director of Housing Programs for approval. Properties will be considered by the Director within two business days of receiving the completed form.

The Director of Housing Programs has discretion to approve more (or less) properties in a particular region if required due to an identified change in demand and need. The total pool of Suitable Properties approved will not exceed 12 properties.

On confirmation by the Panel that a property is suitable, payment will occur on receipt of evidence of the tenancy agreement with the occupant. If the property is a private rental, this means that the community housing provider must enter into a head-lease with the property owner or agent and a sublease with the occupant.

Application for re-approval of a dwelling must occur not less than 10 weeks prior to expiry of the initial approval. The provider will submit a Property Re-Approval Form to Housing Tasmania. Where a client has been in a property for 12 months or more a further grant will not be approved (subject to discretion of the Director of Housing Programs).

## **Tenancy arrangements**

The Community Housing Provider will receive \$12 000 per annum, per property, which will contribute to the costs of:

- Subsidised rent and waiving of bond payments
- Rent arrears and any periods of vacancy
- Furnishings and appliances
- Any necessary security or safety upgrades
- Losses associated with unrecoverable tenant damage
- Fixed water and electricity costs and connection fees

For parolees, the length of a tenancy will be subject to release conditions imposed by the Parole Board and will consider any advice from the Salvation Army support worker. Rapid Rehousing tenancies will not exceed 12 months in total.

Shared tenancies may be permitted subject to parole board conditions.



## **Tenant Responsibilities**

The Tenant will enter into a lease with the Community Housing Provider and will be responsible for:

- Water usage
- Payment of income based rent (no more than 30 per cent of income) plus CRA
- Tenant damage
- All other obligations under the *Rental Tenancy Act 1997* applicable to tenants

## **Terminations**

The lease can only be terminated by any party in accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

In accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*, the lease can be terminated by agreement by both parties. If the tenant wishes to terminate the lease, the Salvation Army support workers may provide support to the tenant to negotiate an agreement with the Community Housing Provider to terminate the lease. If no agreement is reached to end the agreement, the termination process will be as prescribed in the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

Where a lease is terminated, the Community Housing Provider will liaise with the Prisoner Rapid Rehousing Panel to source another Suitable Prisoner for allocation to the property from the Housing Register.

The Community Housing Provider will assist the exiting tenant to contact the Housing Connect Front Door to ensure a social housing application or other form of housing assistance is made.

## **Tenancy Disputes**

Dispute resolution processes will be as prescribed under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*. Parties to agreements may make use of representative bodies such as (but not limited to) Consumer, Building and Occupational Services – Residential Tenancy Commissioner and the Tenants Union of Tasmania.

## **Breach of Parole**

If a breach of parole occurs release conditions may be varied, suspended or revoked.

If a prisoner's release on parole is revoked, the prisoner is liable to serve the remainder of the sentence.

The Community Housing Provider will seek advice from Justice in these instances (case by case basis).

## **Exit Planning**

Prisoner Rapid Rehousing is a transitional accommodation option. Exit planning will be managed by the Salvation Army support worker to find long term housing and determine ongoing support needs. The Salvation Army is expected to work closely with the Housing Connect Front Door to deliver a successful housing outcome. The outcome may include exiting into social housing or into an affordable private rental.



The Salvation Army will also be required to work closely with Community Corrections to ensure that a lease termination does not result in a breach of parole.

Tenants exiting out of the Prisoner Rapid Rehousing will have a priority exiting status under the Housing Assessment Prioritisation System (HAPS) and may be eligible to apply for Private Rental Assistance.

### **How success will be measured**

<b>Effective</b>	Secure housing is sustained <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- low exits into homelessness</li><li>- low repeats</li></ul>
<b>Occupancy</b>	Vacancy rates are low
<b>Safe</b>	Tenants are safe in their homes
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Tenants are satisfied that the housing meets their needs
<b>Activity</b>	12 households are assisted by the initiative

### **Further Information**

Contact Housing Connect on 1800 800 588 for further information about Prisoner Rapid Rehousing.





## Attachment I: Preferred location of properties

South	North	North West
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Glenorchy</b> area (near Glenorchy, Claremont, Moonah, West Moonah)</li> <li>• <b>New Norfolk</b></li> <li>• Greater <b>Hobart</b> area</li> <li>• <b>Kingston</b></li> <li>• Huonville</li> <li>• <b>Clarence</b> CBD (and immediate surrounding suburbs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Launceston</b> area (near inner <b>Launceston, Newnham, Invermay</b>, Kings Meadows, Norwood, Punchbowl, Youngtown)</li> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• Prospect</li> <li>• Hadspen</li> <li>• <b>George Town</b></li> <li>• Deloraine</li> <li>• Scottsdale</li> <li>• St Helens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Devonport</b></li> <li>• <b>Burnie</b></li> <li>• <b>Ulverstone</b></li> <li>• Wynyard</li> <li>• Penguin</li> <li>• Smithton</li> <li>• Queenstown</li> </ul>

*NB: Exemptions may apply where prisoners may only be housed in certain other locations required by the Parole Board.*

*NB: Top priority areas are shown in bold*