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Simon Scott
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B'
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Inquiry into Tasmanian Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters

About Holyoake

Holyoake is a highly regarded specialist service providing a suite of research-based therapeutic interventions for children and adults affected by alcohol, other drugs (AOD) and other addictive behaviours. All Holyoake programs are evidence based, consumer - focussed and trauma informed. Holyoake programs are accessible state-wide.

Given Holyoake's proven capability working with adults and children in the Tasmanian criminal justice system over many years, we submit our firsthand observations to the following terms of reference of this inquiry:

- 1. Factors influencing increases in Tasmania's prisoner population and associated costs**
- 2. The use of evidence-based strategies to reduce contact with the justice system and recidivism**
- 3. The provision of, and participation in, services for people in prison and leaving prison (health housing and legal services)**

The Australian criminological literature is replete with evidence of associations between alcohol and other drugs and crime. The Health of Australia's Prisoners Report 2018¹ found that Tasmania has the second highest rate of illicit drug use for prison entrants in Australia at 86%.

Holyoake has worked with clients in the Tasmanian criminal justice system since 2008. The **Gottawanna** program, for adults seeking help for their own substance misuse or addictive

behaviour, has been delivered in most parts of Risdon Prison to men and women, with the majority of inmates learning of the program's value through word of mouth from other inmates.

More recently, and in response to client demand, Holyoake has introduced the [Recovery](#) program which provides a longer (12 months) and more intensive relapse prevention intervention for criminal justice clients at increased risk of recidivism related to relapse.

Clients seeking parole are frequently referred to Holyoake by the parole Board as a condition of release. Reports from Holyoake are instrumental in determining parole and associated conditions. Holyoake Gottawanna clients are regularly directed to attend Holyoake through the Court Mandated Diversion (CMD) program which deals with people whose offending is linked to their illicit substance addiction. This program is funded for a limited number of places, so an increasing number of Magistrates refer clients directly to Holyoake prior to sentencing, outside the CMD program. On many occasions, clients have been spared a custodial sentence when able to demonstrate genuine positive behavioural change, illustrated by Holyoake reports on client engagement and progress made.

These programs provide the only AOD throughcare model for criminal justice clients in Tasmania, connecting with clients before, during and following their incarceration. Such is the rapport we build with some clients that they often remain in voluntary contact with Holyoake for years following release, should they require therapeutic support during a rough patch in their lives. The support Holyoake provides in these instances can often combat poor decisions which may lead to relapse related recidivism.

Holyoake has repeatedly been requested to expand our specialist services to clients in all areas of the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, our ability to meet the growing demands is limited by funding.

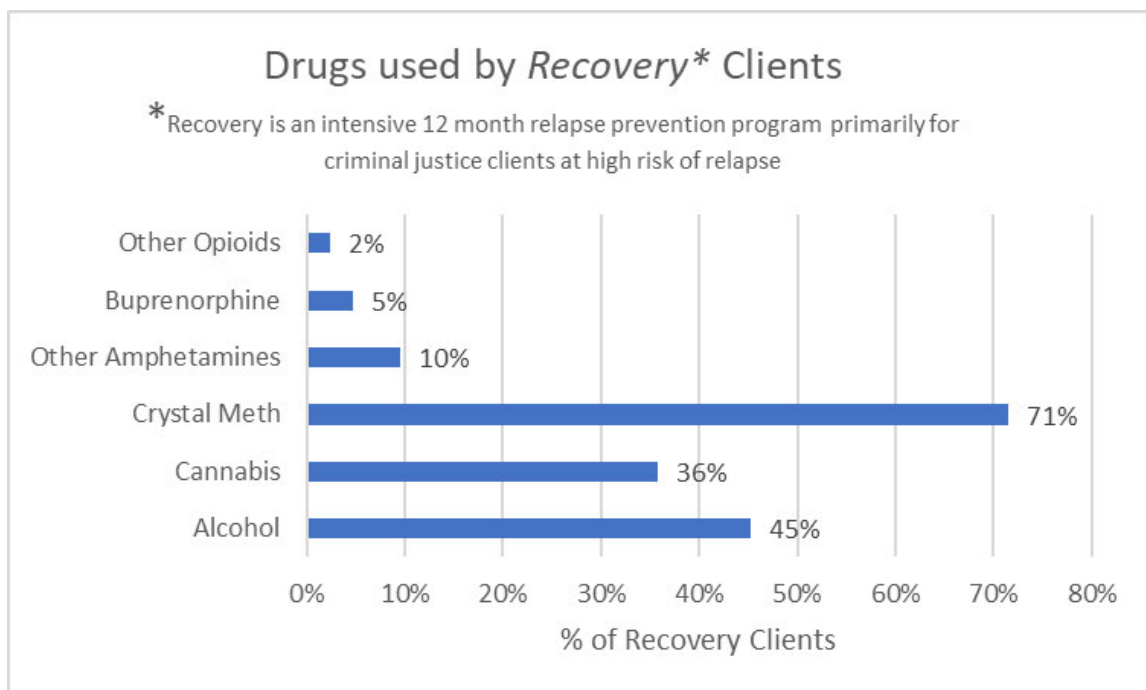
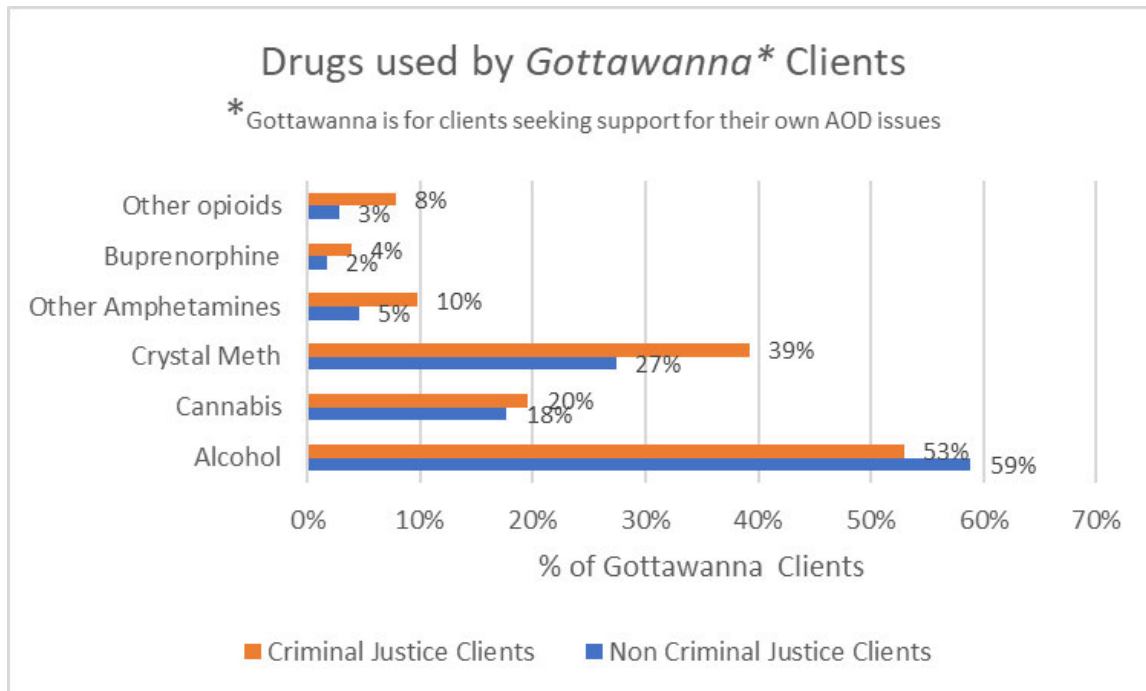
Holyoake's [Get Real](#) program is designed for young people who are experiencing difficulties with alcohol or drug misuse, anger, offending and other addictive behaviours. In this program, Holyoake encounters many young people with lived experience in youth detention and also

those who will inevitably do so in the future. We also work with young people affected by the AOD related criminal behaviour of their family members.

Holyoake has observed for some years the lack of specialist services available for young people with an AOD / mental health issue. In 2022, 42% of youth justice clients identified as having a mental health comorbidity. 22% of these clients were at risk of suicide and 20% had attempted suicide. There are currently no residential withdrawal services available for young people in Tasmania, and unless the young person can afford to travel to another state, they are unable to access a child psychologist or psychiatrist for up to a year. This delay has had critical impacts on the outcomes for many young people attending Holyoake and their propensity to enter the youth justice system. Holyoake provides support for young people who have spent time in Child Protection and sadly watched them move to the Youth Justice and ultimately the adult criminal jurisdiction.

The financial and social costs of providing AOD therapeutic interventions to reduce recidivism is significantly lower than the cost of housing a client in prison, and provides positive outcomes for both the client and their family. The maximum cost of providing Holyoake's Recovery program, to a criminal justice client at high risk of recidivism is \$3500 per year. Many clients will not require this intensive level of support to reduce their likelihood of recidivism and the cost to provide Holyoake's Gottawanna program is closer to a maximum of \$1500 per year. Without the support of Holyoake's specialist programs delivered by experienced AOD counsellors / psychotherapists these clients have an almost 50% chance of returning to prison at a cost of \$122,000 per client per year.

Holyoake data for the 12 months prior to Feb 2023 confirms the prevalence of AOD use among criminal justice clients compared to the general population who seek support for their substance use:



As the graphs above demonstrate, crystal methamphetamine (ice) is now the primary illicit drug used by 71% of criminal justice clients at Holyoake. 10 years ago, it was used by 1% of our clients. Whilst the therapeutic behavioural interventions used in the treatment of ice use are very similar to those used in other addictive behaviours, ice is a highly addictive drug with high relapse rates and recovery is a protracted process, lasting up to 18 months. (Lee 2015). It is vital that more

adequate resources are provided for the delivery of intensive and lengthy therapeutic interventions by Holyoake's skilled professionals for these complex clients if they are to avoid/reduce relapse and associated return to prison.

The growing number of prisoners and a recidivism rate of almost 50% suggests that the criminal justice system is failing dismally to support the reintegration of prisoners back into society where they can live a meaningful life in a safer society with reduced crime.

The Custodial Inspector Annual Report 2021-22₃ noted the lack of drug and alcohol treatment programs for all Risdon prison inmates. Holyoake has provided a proven and respected service to criminal justice clients, demonstrated by the increasing requests we have for our services. We could easily double the criminal justice clients we see if funding for our cost effective programs which deliver life changing outcomes.

Holyoake has observed, on numerous occasions, clients being released from prison with 3 days supply of medication and no way of accessing a GP within those 3 days. If clients require medications for a mental health condition, and are unable to legitimately access these drugs, they will often self-medicate with illicit drugs, leading them back into the cycle of reoffending.

Holyoake estimates that almost half the criminal justice clients we see exiting prison have no stable accommodation upon release, forcing them to return to the same environment where their criminal activity originated, or into homelessness, both of which vastly increase the likelihood of recidivism.

Holyoake clients exiting prison have told us of the degrading process of trying to secure employment, and the stigmatisation they experience from prospective employers unwilling to take on a 'criminal'.

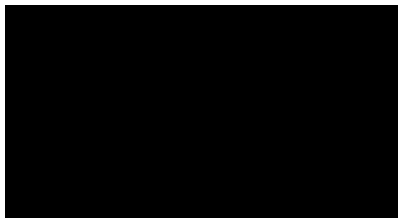
It is essential that the criminal justice system provide a wrap around case management process to reduce these barriers facing clients exiting prison and attempting to reintegrate into society.

The complexity of criminal justice clients is increasing, with 50% of criminal justice clients identifying as also having a mental health comorbidity, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD), anxiety, depression, Bipolar Disorder or suicidal ideation. Holyoake estimates this number to be closer to 80%, as clients in the criminal justice system are less likely to disclose this perceived vulnerability in a group setting where they may be stigmatised by their peers.

I hope our feedback has been helpful and I would be pleased to discuss these matters in person if the Committee sees that as useful.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Charlton
Chief Executive Officer
Holyoake Tasmania Inc.



References

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