

More than a roof? A critical review of post-prison housing provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

Many people in prisons in Aotearoa/New Zealand will have nowhere to go on release and few will settle into long-term accommodation. Post-release stable housing has been linked with reduced rates of recidivism but has, up until recently, received little official attention in this country. This article provides a critical review of the provision of post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It examines the substantial barriers to finding stable accommodation faced by those leaving prison and argues that current post-prison housing provision is inadequate, inflexible and precarious, and largely unsuitable for Māori. The article concludes that substantial reforms to post-prison housing are needed, including the introduction of Māori-led, whānau-centred initiatives, to break the cycle of homelessness and recidivism.

Keywords Prison; Stable housing; Reintegration; Aotearoa/New Zealand; Transitional housing

Introduction

Almost 8000 people leave prisons in Aotearoa/New Zealand annually (Department of Corrections, 2020b). For many of them, homelessness on release is an uncomfortable inevitability and less than half will settle into long-term accommodation (H. Johnston, 2018). International research has linked stable post-prison housing¹ with reduced levels of recidivism, possibly because housing is viewed as the “lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together” (Bradley et al., 2001, p.7), yet those leaving prison face many challenges to obtaining housing after release. Discussions of post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New

¹ For the purposes of this article, ‘post-prison housing’ refers to housing used by people once they have been released from prison and left the prison grounds.

Zealand are lacking and, until recently, it has been relatively neglected in the Department of Corrections' policy and practice. This article will critically review the provision of post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It will firstly examine the importance of post-release accommodation and the barriers to finding stable housing on release. It will then discuss specialist accommodation initiatives for those who have been incarcerated, which are often funded by the Department of Corrections, and will consider the suitability of this housing for Indigenous Māori. Finally, it will scope out suggestions for the improvement of post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly for Māori.

Imprisonment and colonisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Aotearoa/New Zealand has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the developed world (Boomen, 2018; Workman & McIntosh, 2013). In December 2020, 8,528 people were incarcerated in prison. Ninety-four percent identified as men, with just 6% identifying as women. Neither the Department of Corrections (2020a) nor Stats NZ (2020a), the main source of public statistical data in Aotearoa/New Zealand, provide figures on the proportion of gender non-conforming or gender diverse people in prison. Māori are substantially over-represented in prisons, making up 52% of the prison population but just 16.5% of the general population. Māori women are even more over-represented, comprising 65% of the women's sentenced and 68% of women's remand prison population (Stats NZ, 2020b). Reoffending rates in Aotearoa/New Zealand are high, with 62% of those released in 2016/17 reconvicted within two years and 43% re-imprisoned (Department of Corrections, 2019a). Recidivism rates for Māori are higher, with 67% reconvicted within two years and 48% re-imprisoned (Department of Corrections, 2019a). Māori make up 58% of people released from prison (Department of Corrections, 2020b).

The over-representation of Māori in the prison population and the recidivism statistics should be interpreted in the context of the ongoing and intergenerational legacies of colonisation, including land theft, dislocation from ancestral lands, loss of economic bases, Māori urbanisation, cultural

assimilation and the undermining of tikanga Māori (Māori custom and protocol) and Māori governance (Andrae et al., 2017; Jackson, 1988; McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Quince, 2007; Webb, 2017). Such events have led to intergenerational trauma; that is, unresolved psychological and emotional harm. The structural violence faced by Māori has created long-term conditions of economic marginalisation and poverty, which explain the ongoing impacts and consequences of colonisation on Māori communities, including violence, imprisonment and mental health issues (Pihama et al., 2014; Webb, 2017). Māori offending is caused by “the social, political and cultural devastation that has resulted from generations of enforced marginalisation of Māori” (Mihaere, 2015, pp.167-168) and by institutionally racist social and political policies (Jackson, 1988; Mihaere, 2015).

Māori have also been subjected to extensive criminalisation and social control by the neo-colonial state (Webb, 2017). This includes mass incarceration, which can be defined as high rates of incarceration which impact negatively on certain sectors of society and create the conditions for cumulative and intergenerational disadvantage (McIntosh & Workman, 2017). Such mass incarceration has substantial collateral consequences not only for those imprisoned but also for their whānau (extended family) and communities, “generating long-lasting and potentially intergenerational effects” (McIntosh & Workman, 2017, p.733).

The importance of post-prison housing

International research has long suggested that stable housing is associated with a reduced risk of recidivism, whilst post-release homelessness or unstable housing is linked with higher rates of reoffending and reincarceration (Baldry et al., 2006; Ellison et al., 2013; Lutze et al., 2014; Metraux & Culhane, 2004). For example, in an Australian study, Baldry et al. (2006) found that 22% of those who did not move at all or moved just once in a three-month post-release period were reincarcerated after nine months, compared to 59% of those who moved twice or more. Controlling for other factors, such as sex, co-habitees and type of

housing, people in unstable housing circumstances (who moved often) were between two and eight times more likely to be reincarcerated. Similarly, research in England and Wales found that 65% of prisoners who needed support finding a place to live when released were reconvicted within a year, compared to 45% who did not (Williams et al., 2012). Research testing this relationship in Aotearoa/New Zealand is ongoing but not yet available. However, qualitative research by the Department of Corrections based on interviews with formerly incarcerated people has found that “[m]ore than any other factor, a lack of stable accommodation was the most critical contributor to negative post-release outcomes” (Morrison & Bowman, 2017, p.48). Those people who were deemed by the authors to be ‘struggling’ after release were three times more likely than those ‘doing well’ to lack substantive accommodation plans and 80% of them had returned to prison during the study period.

The exact causal nature of the relationship between stable housing and reduced reoffending, if any, remains unclarified in the existing literature, although there are several potential explanations for this apparent link. With suitable, stable housing, people recently released from prison may be able to re-establish other parts of their lives, through claiming benefits and finding employment, but also through reconnecting with family (Morrison & Bowman, 2017). Housing may provide space for people to parent their children, establish health-promoting behaviours, build community support networks and access a range of services such as health, welfare or addictions treatment (Bradley et al., 2001; Clark, 2015; Grown et al., 2018). In the words of a formerly incarcerated person:

If you have somewhere to lay your head, cook your own meals, and space to call your own, that is huge. You start to feel human again. Like you could be a good member of society ... you need that space to adjust and get back on your feet. (quoted in A. Johnston, 2016, p.3)

As this quote suggests, stable housing may help people released from prison to begin to adapt to life outside and overcome the feelings of

institutionalisation inherent in experiences of incarceration. To do this, stable housing needs to provide more than a roof over someone's head but also a sense of ontological security or security of being. Without this, McNaughton and Sanders (2007) suggest, those seeking to move to new lifestyles may return to supportive but potentially negative 'networks of familiarity' which provide emotional safety but may encourage risky behaviour. To be effective in creating enduring change amongst those leaving prison, stable housing therefore needs to be perceived as a 'home'. However, the potential of a person released from prison to acquire stable housing which provides this ontological security is highly affected by structural factors such as poverty, colonisation, and dominant discourses of marginality, including racism and sexism (Workman & McIntosh, 2013).

Barriers to housing after release in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Those who have left prison face a multitude of barriers to finding stable accommodation on release. Such barriers are particularly likely to impact Māori, for whom reintegration after prison involves (re)integration into a colonial society (Mills & Lindsay, in press) where they experience racism and discrimination, including substantial discrimination in housing markets (Harris et al., 2006, Harris et al., 2012) and prejudice, stigma and intolerance targeted at those who have been incarcerated.

The majority of people who leave prison in Aotearoa/New Zealand will stay with family members, current/former partners or friends. Although this housing can provide a supportive environment, for some housing with former associates may lead to substance use and reoffending (Morrison & Bowman, 2017). Tensions or conflicts between family members and co-habitees, overcrowding and financial pressures can all make such housing situations highly precarious and potentially unsafe for those who have been incarcerated and/or their children. In other instances, people leaving prison may be unable to return to living with family or partners due to relationship breakdowns or an unwillingness to accommodate someone with a prison record (Bradley et al.,

2001; Carr, 2016). Family may also be financially unable to offer support post-release (Desmond, 2016). For some, feelings of shame and embarrassment may mean they do not seek out family support (Cid & Martí, 2012), whilst parole/release conditions can also forbid people from living with a partner/ex-partner or other family members (Morrison & Bowman, 2017).

Accessing social or public housing can be highly challenging in Aotearoa/New Zealand due to the lack of such accommodation. These shortages are significantly more likely to affect Māori and Pasifika who experience substantial socioeconomic disadvantage (Stubbs et al., 2017), leaving them in greater need of this type of housing. The waitlist for public housing reached a record high of over 16,300 households in March 2020 (Ministry of Social Development, 2020) and Māori are 6.6 times more likely than non-Māori to be on this list (Tanielu et al., 2020). Those released from prison can only access the public housing register if their release is both scheduled and imminent yet exact release dates for those on parole or on remand (that is, awaiting trial or sentencing) are often unknown.

Accessing Work and Income services, including housing and other welfare benefits, is highly problematic for the many people who leave prison without identification documents, telephone numbers or contact addresses (Conlon & Devlin, 2019). The Steps to Freedom grant of up to \$350 is the only financial support available immediately on release (Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). This amount was set in the early 1990s (Taylor & Giles, 2016) and is woefully inadequate for its intended purpose of meeting the full costs of living for the first two weeks post-release (Conlon & Devlin, 2019; A. Johnston, 2016).

Private rental accommodation is particularly difficult to obtain post-release due to the stigma of a criminal record, especially in times of housing shortages when owners can be highly selective about tenants (Faure, 2019; Hallot & Patterson, 2017). Those leaving prison frequently do not have the financial and other resources to secure private rentals, including multiple forms of ID, references, evidence of a bank account, proof of ongoing income, bond and advance rent payments (Carr, 2016). Furthermore, rising rents in many parts of

Aotearoa/New Zealand (Tenancy Services, 2021) have made private accommodation unaffordable, particularly for those on a benefit (Conlon & Devlin, 2019; Perry, 2019).

Post-release conditions mandated by the Department of Corrections can prohibit residence in certain areas, potentially further limiting housing options (Faure, 2019), opportunities for employment and reconnection with family. The development of specialist post-prison housing facilities can also be hindered by the opposition of local communities. For example, in March 2019 residents of Ōtāne in Hawke's Bay objected to the lack of consultation regarding the establishment of the E Hine programme for women at Te Waireka and raised concerns regarding public safety and potential negative impacts on house prices ('Hawke's Bay Residents', 2019; Sharpe, 2019). In October 2019, also in Hawke's Bay, residents raised objections to the potential conversion of a former backpackers' hostel into accommodation for ex-inmates, citing public safety and the lack of community consultation as the main concerns (Hyde, 2019).

Evidence from overseas suggested that those who identify as women find it more difficult to access stable accommodation post-release (Gojkovic et al., 2012; McKernan, n.d.) and such challenges are further complicated for Indigenous women, women of colour and trans women as they also are forced to contend with interpersonal and institutional discrimination (Baldry & Cunneen, 2014; Greene, 2018; Walsh et al., 2013). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, women are less likely to be employed after release (Morrison et al., 2018), limiting their access to financial resources. Nearly 90% of women in prison are parents (L. Gordon, 2009). The provision of stable housing for women is therefore particularly acute, as it is often a prerequisite for reunification with children post-release (Keene et al., 2018). Women who are primary caregivers can fall into the 'Catch-22' situation of being unable to regain custody of their children without stable accommodation but unable to access housing support and provision without their children (Gojkovic et al., 2012). The collateral effects of mass incarceration and its enduring stigma on whānau are intergenerational and highly destructive, with disproportionately more Māori children forced into

the trauma of state care. This creates further complexities for young Māori whose experiences with state care have separated them from whānau and created feelings of distrust and disengagement with social services. Such trauma reverberates through generations, with ongoing and compounding effects on whānau experiences and relationships (Groot et al., 2017).

Post-prison housing provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Given the substantial difficulties in accessing both private and social housing, those leaving prison are likely to be highly reliant on specialist housing provision and support which is provided specifically for this population. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, most specialist housing initiatives are financed by the Department of Corrections or other state agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Development, whilst community organisations such as PARS,² the Salvation Army and Anglican Action are contracted to provide the housing and various support services.

According to section 6.1(h) of the Corrections Act 2004, “[O]ffenders must, so far as is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances within the resources available, be given access to activities that may contribute to their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.” However, despite recent improvements in the range and variety of post-prison housing, it remains somewhat neglected in the policy and practice of both the Department of Corrections and other state agencies, and provision for Māori is particularly lacking. According to figures released in 2019, the amount spent on accommodation and support services equates to just 2.9% of the Department of Corrections’ rehabilitation and reintegration budget and 0.4% of this department’s total budget (Department of Corrections, 2019a; Grigg, 2019). A closer examination of post-prison housing provision, including various types of supported accommodation funded by state agencies, and community residential facilities provided by community

² PARS stands for Prisoners’ Aid and Rehabilitation Society. However, for the Auckland branch of PARS, it now stands for People At Risk Solutions. The organisation is most commonly known as PARS.

organisations, reveals the inadequacy, unsuitability and precarity of much existing post-prison housing.

Supported accommodation

A number of supported accommodation schemes operate for those leaving prison in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Such initiatives usually provide short-term, transitional housing with various support services to help people to readjust to life outside prison. The Supported Accommodation for Long-Servers scheme is the largest of these and was established in 2005. It is designed for those who have served a sentence of two years or over and are deemed to be at high risk of reoffending, with complex reintegrative needs. Under this scheme approximately 640 people annually receive accommodation and support services for 13 weeks in six main population centres. Clients are then expected to progress into their own independent accommodation, with a further 13 weeks of wraparound support (Hallot & Patterson, 2017). Under a separate Supported Accommodation for Women scheme, women are offered up to six months' accommodation and help to find longer-term housing (Department of Corrections, 2019a) and additional supported accommodation contracts now include employment and health provisions (Hallot & Patterson, 2017). For example, Manakau Urban Māori Authority (MUMA) Whānau Services Limited offer three months' accommodation and employment support in Auckland (Faure, 2019).

Additionally, two schemes provide supported housing for specific populations. The Supported Living Service offers 13 weeks of transitional accommodation and support for prisoners with mental health/cognitive impairments, ongoing health and treatment needs, and complex reintegrative needs (Azuela, 2018). The Creating Positive Pathways scheme, run by Kāinga Ora,³ is the only initiative to offer longer-term accommodation and support

³ Kāinga Ora (formerly known as Housing New Zealand) is a Crown agency which is the largest provider of public housing in New Zealand. It also partners with community developers, Māori, local and central government and others on housing and urban development projects (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, n.d).

services. It aims to provide accommodation to 250 people over four years in Northland, Wellington and Auckland. To be eligible, applicants must have served a prison sentence of more than two years or have had frequent interactions with the Department of Corrections. Accommodation and support are provided until people are ready to transition to greater independence (Department of Corrections, 2019a; H. Johnston, 2018).

As can be seen from this brief description, the post-release accommodation portfolio funded by the Department of Corrections and other state agencies focuses predominantly on providing transitional accommodation for those who have been sentenced to over two years, rather than more stable housing for everyone leaving prison. Those who have served long sentences may experience substantial institutionalisation and feel highly dislocated from their community (Rethinking Crime and Punishment, 2011). However, those on remand and serving short sentences may still lose their housing on imprisonment, and as noted by participants in Salvation Army research, whether “you are in for three months or six years, the feeling when you get out is still the same” (A. Johnston, 2016, p.2). Furthermore, those who have served short sentences have higher rates of recidivism. Out of those prisoners released in 2016-2017, 71% of those serving six months or less were reconvicted in two years in comparison to 42% of those serving two to three years, and 37% of those serving three to five years (Department of Corrections, 2019a). If stable housing is connected with reduced recidivism in Aotearoa/New Zealand, then greater assistance for this group to find stable housing would enhance public safety.

Remand prisoners are also excluded from supported housing provision and may not know their release date, making it difficult to organise accommodation whilst in prison (Gilbert et al., 2014). People on remand for over 60 days can access Department of Corrections-funded Out of Gate Services which offer navigational support to find housing, although many remand prisoners are excluded from these services due to spending only a short time on remand (A. Johnston, 2016). Future prison population projections suggest that the number of people on remand is likely to increase substantially over the next

ten years, therefore enhancing the likelihood that more people will serve their sentence on remand, with no or limited access to reintegration programmes (Ministry of Justice, 2020). This reinforces the need to provide housing and housing support for this group.

The majority of supported accommodation provides only limited, short-term transitional housing rather than a more stable place to live, with the expectation that people will find their own housing after the initial stay. The Supported Accommodation for Long Servers scheme, in particular, has been criticised for not providing a more flexible approach to meet the needs of clients (Mills, 2014). In a study of the relationship between community organisations and the state in criminal justice, one community provider described their frustration with this scheme:

I don't believe that when you've got someone who's been in prison, that you can expect to put them in a flat for three months and support them and then just say 'see you' ... It's like somebody's in the middle of an ocean and you throw them a life raft, and you say 'here you are you can have that for 30 days, if you're not rescued, you have to give your life raft to someone else.' (Community organisation stakeholder quoted in Mills, 2014, n.p.)

The short-term, 'one size fits all' approach of this scheme has meant that clients may be left without housing or support services when they are still desperately needed. Such short time frames of support are not enough to address the myriad of social, psychological and economic challenges that many people leaving prison must address. Furthermore, existing research indicates that, to be most effective, transitional housing needs to enable former prisoners to gain longer-term stable housing (Crawford, 2017). There is little evidence that this is occurring in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In 2016, less than half of the people on the Supported Accommodation for Long Servers scheme were supported into longer-term accommodation (Treasury, 2017) and the Department of Corrections itself has noted the need for greater support to transition to more stable medium-term housing (Morrison & Bowman, 2017).

Finally, supported accommodation initiatives are unsuitable for many Māori as these initiatives rely on individualised approaches to housing that do not prioritise whānau and whanaungatanga (building relationships). For Māori, “whānau is the basic foundation that supports all other aspects of Māori society” (Groot et al., 2017, p.154). Yet in supported accommodation schemes, people recently released from prison are accommodated in either individual studio flats or shared housing with others in similar situations, rather than with their whānau or family. Such initiatives may therefore actively keep them away from vital sources of support and do nothing to maintain or develop whānau relations or to build the capacity of whānau to provide their own solutions to the challenges of leaving prison. To better address this, housing services need to work with Māori within whānau contexts, prioritising relationality and working to better the conditions of entire whānau, rather than just the individual leaving prison.

Community residential facilities: Halfway houses

Unlike other jurisdictions, Aotearoa/New Zealand does not have an extensive network of ‘halfway houses’ or community residential facilities for people released from prison (Goldfinch, 2018). The United States Federal Bureau of Prisons, for example, contracts spaces for 24,000 clients annually. In England and Wales there are around 100 probation hostels and in Canada over 200 community-based residential facilities (Goldfinch, 2018). Alongside a therapeutic programme, such as addiction treatment, these facilities provide a less restrictive environment than prisons but may also encompass a degree of control through electronic monitoring, curfews and drug testing (Goldfinch, 2018). Information on whether halfway house provision in these jurisdictions is sufficient to meet the needs of their respective populations is lacking but a report by HM Inspectorate of Probation (2017) in England and Wales noted a shortage of places in probation hostels, particularly for women, with many spaces not located where they are most needed.

A small number of facilities run by community organisations in Aotearoa/New Zealand operate in a similar manner to halfway houses. These include the Salisbury Street Foundation, which currently operates a residential therapeutic programme for serious violent and sexual offenders in Christchurch (Hough, 2003), and Moana House (n.d.) in Dunedin, which offers a 12-month residential programme with a strong bicultural focus, including whānau support for adult males. Additionally, several other organisations provide housing and intensive support for people leaving prison for longer time periods than those places funded only by the Department of Corrections. These include Prison Care Ministries (Hamilton), Fellowship House (Palmerston North; see Lacy, 2012; Murphy, 2017) and the Grace Foundation Trust (n.d.), which offers space for children to stay with their parents in Auckland and Wanganui. Waikato-based RAW (Reclaim Another Woman) also provides a comprehensive support programme for women recently released from prison (prioritising Māori), which includes supported accommodation, mentoring and community partnerships to enable women to find meaningful employment or training and rebuild relationships with their families and children (RAW, 2021).

Services provided by community organisations can have substantial strengths which go further than merely providing a roof over someone's head, including building relationships with clients to ensure that they genuinely feel part of a community and providing connections to other services (G. Gordon & Mills, 2016). However, they are often funded through a miscellany of short-term, precarious arrangements. For example, Moana House (2018, p.4), which receives funding from several sources including government departments, noted in its 2018 annual report that "[t]his has been the most difficult year ever in terms of funding with real anxiety about whether our service would continue." In Aotearoa/New Zealand, then, good initiatives provided by community organisations are at risk of collapse if funding is delayed or withdrawn and cannot be replaced.

Kaupapa Māori and Māori-led initiatives

The most important limitation of post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the lack of appropriate provision for Māori and Māori-led initiatives. Despite the substantial over-representation of Māori in the prison and prison leavers populations, and disproportionately high rates of reoffending amongst Māori, only one of the four main Supported Accommodation for Long Servers providers explicitly adopts a kaupapa Māori (Māori principles) approach (Auckland PARS), along with just one of the original Out of Gate providers (NUMA).⁴ Auckland PARS state that their work is based on the values of manaakitanga (unconditional care), whakapapa (identity), wairuatanga (individual essence and well-being) and rangatiratanga (actualised potential) (PARS, 2020).

Other housing and support services that adopt kaupapa Māori approaches are limited. They include Tiaki Tangata, a whānau-centric, tikanga-based case management service funded by the Department of Corrections and run by four Māori organisations which provides up to 12 weeks' transitional accommodation for Māori men (Faure, 2019) and assistance to re-establish and/or develop strong whānau relationships (Sullivan et al., 2018).

The E Hine programme, based at a residential reintegrative therapeutic community at Te Waireka (with Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga, a Ngāti Kahungunu social services provider), has been billed as the first 'by Māori for Māori' initiative (Department of Corrections, 2019a). In partnership with the Department of Corrections, it provides kaupapa Māori-based support for Māori women on home detention and parole in a former Housing New Zealand property in Hawke's Bay (Department of Corrections, 2019a; Faure, 2019). A small number of other initiatives either take a kaupapa Māori approach or are designed specifically for Māori. These include the Ahikaa Trust (2021), a joint initiative between Hoani Waititi Marae and other service providers, which is New Zealand's first purpose-built bail and reintegration centre and is based in central Auckland. However,

⁴ The contracts for Out of Gate services were reallocated in 2020 but, at the time of writing, it had not yet been announced which organisations now held them.

this service receives no government grants/contracts or other major sources of funding and many of its employees are unpaid.

Despite these initiatives, existing housing provision for Māori remains patchy, fragmented and inadequately resourced to meet the needs of Māori leaving prison. With some exceptions, it is also prescribed by Department of Corrections contracts rather than being designed and led by Māori. Aotearoa/New Zealand approaches to reintegration have historically been premised on Eurocentric, colonial values and processes (Workman, 2014), which have the potential to increase the conditions which make offending more likely (Mills & Lindsay, in press). For example, they may continue the enforced separation of Māori from their whānau, as noted above.

Where to now? Visions for post-prison housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand

The failure to provide sufficient and suitable post-prison housing and support in Aotearoa/New Zealand may leave people who have recently been released at risk of homelessness and recidivism. In recent years, the Department of Corrections and other state agencies have increased the amount and type of housing on offer for people leaving prison (Faure, 2019; Hallot & Patterson, 2017). However, accommodation options remain fragmented and scarcely publicised, making it difficult for people leaving prison and their whānau to navigate these services. A. Johnston (2016) found that few former prisoners had met their case manager to discuss their release and many had little awareness of the available accommodation services and support. In addition, for Māori, even when information is made available there may be little trust that these services will be able to help them, due to experiences of intergenerational trauma and structural violence.

Current housing provisions remain insufficient to meet the needs of prison leavers. If, as the Department of Corrections' own research suggests, less than half of those leaving prison are settled into long-term accommodation (H. Johnston, 2018), around 3800 to 4000 people leaving prison each year do not

have such stable housing. The Department of Corrections (2019a) currently funds approximately 1100 accommodation places per annum, which seems highly inadequate to meet this level of need. All specialist services funded by the Department of Corrections and other state agencies are restricted in some way. For example, they are only available in certain parts of the country, to longer-term prisoners or on a short-term basis, and they rarely provide the stability necessary to assist in reintegration. Furthermore, even though the majority of those incarcerated are Māori, most post-prison housing and support does not take a kaupapa Māori approach, so many Māori are left to default to either Eurocentrically-designed housing support or none at all.

In the 2018 Budget, the Department of Corrections (2019a) and Housing New Zealand were awarded \$57.6 million over four years for housing and support services to establish new accommodation initiatives and expand existing ones for 300 people annually. Whilst new housing provision is welcome, it remains to be seen how these resources will be spent. We hope that this funding will lead to a greater diversity of housing options for all groups of people leaving prison, including longer-term housing or assistance for people to move on from transitional accommodation. To stop cycles of homelessness and recidivism, every person leaving prison could be supported until they are in stable, long-term accommodation within their chosen communities. Ideally the aim should be to create a 'home', a space where inhabitants have a sense of ontological security and feel safe, rather than providing housing that functions only as a temporary aide that maintains cycles of poverty, homelessness and recidivism. Facilities such as hostels or night shelters often require compliance with a number of strict rules such as: abstinence from substance use; curfews; no visits from whānau, partners or friends; and no pets. These rules can inhibit homemaking and restrict the ability to draw on support networks and foster social relationships (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Housing services that use lifestyle and behavioural changes as a prerequisite to access housing can also push people away from accessing support services (Gaetz et al., 2013).

The Housing First model of accommodation has been adopted by some agencies in Aotearoa/New Zealand, such as Auckland PARS (2020). This model prioritises the provision of immediate permanent, stable housing, followed by flexible, client-led multidisciplinary support to address complex needs and assistance with sustaining accommodation (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2018; Isogai, 2018). International research suggests that persons who have had contact with the criminal justice system do well in Housing First-type models, in terms of housing retention and reductions in recidivism (LeBel, 2017). However, it should be noted that Housing First approaches are not a panacea for post-prison housing as they, along with other housing programmes, do not address the structural drivers of homelessness, including inequitable resource distribution, volatile and insecure incomes, housing discrimination, inadequate health and addictions care, and racism (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Concerns have also been raised that existing Housing First-type models in Aotearoa/New Zealand have not engaged with Māori or sought to optimise outcomes for Māori (Rigby, 2017). Nevertheless, the principles of these models could be explored for their suitability for people leaving prison in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Despite calls for *tino rangatiratanga* (absolute sovereignty for Māori), both the criminal justice system and housing services continue to operate within a Eurocentric system. Funding has increased for housing and related programmes that co-opt *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge), grafting it onto existing institutional frameworks rather than creating and funding separate institutional spaces that are distinctly Māori (Workman, 2019). Such initiatives fail to address the ongoing processes of colonisation and marginalisation which exacerbate reoffending and homelessness. Instead, such programmes often internalise the issue for Māori, often putting the focus on the strength of a person's cultural identity (Mihaere, 2015). In doing so, the visceral and damaging impacts of land theft, cultural and spiritual violence, marginalisation, economic deprivation, monocultural education and health systems, racism and the devastating collateral, intergenerational effects of mass imprisonment are ignored, neglected and

denied (National Health Committee, 2010; Workman & McIntosh, 2013). If we are to see sustainable outcomes from post-prison housing initiatives, government services must now work to change the environments that socially, financially and politically marginalise Māori.

New housing provisions should therefore be genuinely Māori-designed and Māori-led to account for diverse Māori realities and historical experiences. This could be done by giving more control to iwi (tribal) governance bodies, increasing funding for papakāinga housing (Māori community housing) and transferring social housing stocks to Māori organisations to use to support their whānau. Total and unconditional control should be surrendered to Māori, meaning that what this provision looks like will differ by iwi, hapū (subtribe), whānau and community. Māori communities and organisations, rather than the Department of Corrections, would then have the power to control their own selection criteria, implement programmes and define the measures of their success.

To foster wellbeing for whole whānau and communities requires a shift from individualised approaches to reintegration and housing to collective approaches which are compatible with whānau circumstances and suit their specific needs and aspirations. While stable and desirable housing can protect and support people after release from prison, any changes promoted by such housing are unlikely to be sustainable if they rely on separating individuals from their whānau in order to be effective. Therefore holistic, whānau-centred approaches are needed that enable entire whānau to build supportive relationships, access opportunities and foster wider wellbeing. This may mean providing housing for the whānau of those who have left prison rather than housing just the individual. Although new initiatives, such as the Māori-designed E Hine programme, have recently been introduced and the use of Māori-designed programmes is essential, their operation and effectiveness are likely to be hindered when the programmes are grafted onto a Eurocentric criminal justice system, where the Department of Corrections and other state agencies retain dominant control. Much like the Hōkai Rangi strategy to reduce the over-representation of Māori in prison (Department of Corrections, 2019b), the

success of kaupapa Māori housing services is contingent on the redistribution of power to Māori and dramatic institutional changes to how Aotearoa/New Zealand approaches crime and punishment.

Conclusion

Housing is a crucial component of successful reintegration for many people leaving prison. Post-prison housing provision in Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to be increased and restructured so that it fosters wellbeing for whole families and gives people the best chance for a good quality of life. Regardless of the potential benefits that housing can have in terms of criminal justice outcomes, safe, secure and comfortable housing is a human right that is being denied to many leaving prison (Groot & Mace, 2016). Post-prison housing is only one part of a larger, complex puzzle of homelessness and reintegration. Any approach to mitigate homelessness amongst those leaving prison needs to do more than merely provide short-term accommodation. If we are to truly tackle homelessness amongst those leaving prison, we must also be willing to target its root causes, including criminalisation, mass imprisonment, poverty and institutional racism.

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