

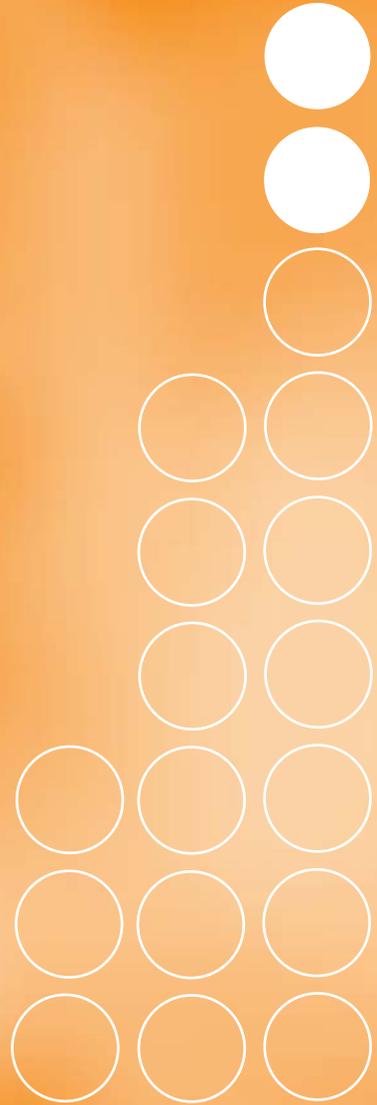
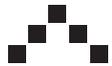
GETTING OUT >

and how to survive it



GETTING OUT

and how to survive it



Pre-release checklist

Read through the questions below and decide which ones apply to you.

	YES	NO	Pages to read
Have I organised somewhere to stay for when I get out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10-18
Have I organised my Centrelink payment for the day I get released?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	19-23
Do I have a plan to avoid using drugs or alcohol after I get out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51-55
Do I know where to get help if I'm not coping?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24-25
Do I understand the conditions of my parole?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	28-31
Do I know how to go about looking for work after I get out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	32-36
Do I know how I am getting home, or to where I'm going to stay, on the day of my release?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39-40
Do I know where to go for financial help?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	41-44
Do I have all the ID I need?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-48
Have I arranged to see a doctor on release regarding my health issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51-64
Have I thought what problems might arise when I return to my family?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	66-70
Have I thought about how to cope with emotions like loneliness, depression or anger after I get out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	72-77
Have I organised everything I need to do on the day I get out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	77



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An electronic version of this guide is available from the website of the Victorian Department of Justice, www.justice.vic.gov.au

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This booklet was written with help from prisoners and ex-prisoners. If you have any ideas on how this booklet could be improved for future editions, we would welcome your views.

Please contact VACRO at Level 1/116 Hardware Street, Melbourne (PO Box 14093, Melbourne, VIC 8001), phone (03) 9602-1366 or email enquiries@vacro.org.au

To the best of our knowledge, the information in this booklet was accurate as of July 2006.



This booklet was produced by VACRO, the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. VACRO is a community organisation that has been providing assistance to prisoners and their families for more than a hundred years. For information that is not provided in this booklet, or for general support, call VACRO's Prison Information and Helpline.

VACRO: (03) 9602-1366

VACRO's services include:

- Support, advice and referral for prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families
- Telephone counselling, referral and information about the prison system for relatives of offenders
- A banking and property service for prisoners, providing assistance with:
 - banking related matters (transfers, managing of withheld monies, opening bank accounts etc)
 - storage of prisoner property
- A counselling and support service for offenders and their families.
- A support group for the families of offenders.
- Family services at MAP and Tarrengower prison.
- The 'Bridging the Gap' program providing intensive pre- and post-release support to offenders identified as 'high risk' (in conjunction with a number of other community agencies).
- The VACRO-Good Beginnings program for prisoner fathers and their children at Fulham prison.

VACRO wishes to thank the following individuals and organisations for their invaluable assistance in producing this booklet:

The prisoners of the Melbourne Assessment Prison, Port Phillip Prison, Fulham Correctional Centre, Tarrengower Prison and the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre who participated in focus groups to ensure that the information in this book is relevant; the management and staff of Corrections Victoria, Port Phillip and Fulham prisons; Melbourne Citymission, the Adult Parole Board, Centrelink, the Hepatitis C Council of Victoria, and Moreland Hall.

VACRO is grateful to the Victorian Law Enforcement Drug Fund (VLEDF) and Corrections Victoria who recognised the need for this book and whose support made it possible.

This is the fourth edition of this booklet, which was first released in August 2002.



Making a New Start



GET OUT AND STAY OUT

This booklet is an easy to use guide for prisoners about to be released.

Freedom presents many day-to-day challenges. Finding a job or a place to live. Understanding how Centrelink works and where you can go for help. Facing family and old friends. These are all issues that hopefully run smoothly but in many cases become difficult and stressful.

The current reality is that more than half the prisoners released from custody in Victoria return to prison sooner or later. So the first few weeks and months are critical to a successful new start.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Use the booklet to prepare in advance for your release and make contact with people and organisations that can help. You can do this on your own, or ask your case worker, Community Corrections Officer, or a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) worker to assist you (see below).

- **Next to the contents page of this booklet you will find a checklist of questions to ask yourself before release.** As you go through the booklet refer back to the checklist and tick off each question.
- **Use the contents pages at the front of this booklet and index at the back for an easy guide to matters that affect you and organisations that can help.**
- **At the back of the book is a pre-release planner and clear pages to take notes, write lists or jot down contact numbers.**
- **When in doubt, ask for help.** Discuss any matters still concerning you with relevant custodial staff or Community Corrections Officer before release.

THIS BOOK IS YOURS TO KEEP. REMEMBER TO TAKE IT WITH YOU WHEN YOU ARE RELEASED AND USE IT.



MAKE THE MOST OF THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Each prison provides a series of pre-release preparation information sessions designed to help you prepare for release. This is called the Transition Assistance Program. The sessions provide similar information to that provided in this booklet. All information here was current at the time of going to print, but things change over time. If there is a difference between this booklet and what you are told in your TAP sessions, trust the information provided in the TAP.



WHO CAN HELP ME PREPARE FOR MY RELEASE?

All prisoners at prisons other than the MAP and the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre have a staff member known as a 'Case Manager', 'Case Worker' or 'Contact Worker' who is assigned to assist you with practical issues. They may assist you themselves or arrange for you to see someone who can. The Senior Officer on your unit will tell you who this person is. If you are being released from the MAP or the DPFC, a Community Corrections Officer will help you with pre-release preparation. At the DPFC, you may also be assigned a 'Through-care' worker if you are being released on parole or a Combined Custody and Treatment Order (CCTO).

You can also ask the person who delivers the relevant session of the TAP to refer you to someone who can help. For example, if you have problems with drugs or alcohol, speak to the person that delivers the TAP session on drug and alcohol issues.



A NOTE ON THE SERVICES LISTED IN THIS BOOKLET

This booklet lists many agencies that can help you after release. Because of the large number of services out there, in most cases 'key' numbers have been provided rather than a list of all the existing agencies. These agencies should be able to refer you to an appropriate local service if they cannot assist you themselves. If you find that a number listed in this book is out of service, call VACRO, and we will help to connect you with an appropriate service.

Remember: if you need help, ask for it.

GOOD LUCK!



Housing and Accommodation

Stable accommodation will be difficult, if not impossible, to find if you wait until you're released to start looking. With a shortage of cheap, available housing it is important to arrange a place to stay well before the day the prison doors open.

If you haven't started looking for post-release accommodation already, start TODAY!



PUBLIC HOUSING

The Office of Housing provides cheap, permanent accommodation to people on low incomes. Rent is payable at the rate of 30% of the income you earn. However, the waiting period can be up to ten years, so it is often only available to those who apply at the beginning of a long sentence.

If you are eligible you may apply for Early Housing which speeds up your application but still has a waiting period of more than six months. A housing worker will need to assess your eligibility.

For more information contact your local Office of Housing. (Look up 'Human Services, Department of' in the White Pages, then look under the heading 'Housing Services'.)



PRIVATE RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Private rental accommodation is much more expensive but easier to find. Real estate agents expect references from previous landlords and would be unlikely to accept a tenant without them.

Renters usually have to provide a month's rent in advance as well as a bond, which is usually equal to one month's rent. A bond is an amount of money that you pay when leasing a house that helps to protect the owner of the house in case of damage to the property or failure to pay the rent. You get the bond back when you leave the house, so long as there is no damage or rent owed (see Bond Loan Scheme, below).



BOND LOAN SCHEME

The Office of Housing can help you to pay a bond through an interest free Bond Loan. When you leave the property you will have to repay the loan, even if some money has been taken out of the bond due to property damage or unpaid rent. Note that you must organise the Bond Loan prior to paying the bond. The Office of Housing will not refund you for a bond you have already paid. You can apply for a Bond Loan directly from the Office of Housing or through a Transitional Housing Manager (see below).



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Transitional Housing Management Programs (THMs) are funded by government to provide housing information, referrals and short term housing assistance to people who are homeless or who are in housing crisis.

THMs provide:

- **Housing Information and Referral** – information on what housing is available and how to apply for it.
- **Transitional Housing** – short term housing for people who are homeless and who need some support to deal with problems that have led to homelessness and need assistance to find long term housing.
- **Housing Establishment Fund** – financial assistance to households in housing crisis.
- **Public Housing Early Allocation Assessment** – assistance to assess whether you would be eligible for access to public housing.

Note that Transitional Housing Managers can't help you while you are inside. To get help before you are released, see the next section.

A list of THMs in Victoria is provided at the end of this section (page 10).



WHO CAN HELP ME BEFORE I AM RELEASED?

If you are at Port Phillip Prison, Fulham Correctional Centre, or the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, and have experienced homelessness before prison (or are likely to be homeless upon release), then you may be eligible for the *THM-Corrections Housing Pathways* Initiative. This is a program that aims to provide housing information and assistance for people who have a history of homelessness and who are likely to be homeless on release from prison.

At each of these three prisons, there is a Housing Placement Worker who can provide you with housing information and conduct an assessment of your housing situation and post-release needs. The Housing Placement Worker can only take referrals from your case worker/manager, so you must apply through them.

If you are located at another prison, take a look at the list of organisations in this section, which provide assistance with finding post-release accommodation (page 12). It is important to ask a

housing worker to assist you, as there are far more housing services in Victoria than can possibly be listed here. A housing worker can make calls for you, and will be familiar with the most appropriate services in your area. The procedure for arranging to see a worker depends on which prison you are in (see *'Who can help me prepare for my release?'* on page 9.)



ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

An excellent website for finding accommodation information is www.infoexchange.net.au

Click on the 'Housing and Homelessness' link, followed by the 'Accommodation Vacancy Register' to search for available accommodation in your area.

PRE-RELEASE HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE

ACSO

Phone: Sister Clare McShee on **(03) 9320-4022** (pre-release)

Or: Beverley Fox on **(03) 9320-4000** (post-release)

ACSO's POST program assists male prisoners over the age of 22 to find housing. A small number of flats are available which can house ex-prisoners for a period of up to three months. These are available on a 'first come, first served' basis. You cannot book them in advance. If none of these flats are available, ACSO can help to find other accommodation for you. They will also provide general support.

ACSO have a prison outreach worker (Sister Clare McShee) who visits all men's prisons to provide information about the program and make referrals.

Flat Out

Phone: **(03) 9417-6984**

Flat Out provides support including assistance with accommodation for single women coming out of prison and their children. Flat Out is active in the women's prisons and can assess your needs prior to release.

The Brosnan Centre

Phone: **(03) 9387-1233**

The Brosnan Centre provides short to medium term supported accommodation for male and female offenders under the age of 25. The Brosnan Centre also provide counselling, referral and job search assistance for young offenders.

Women's Housing Limited

6 Otter Street Collingwood, 3066

Phone: **(03) 9412 6868**

Provides transitional housing for women with or without children in the Melbourne metropolitan area, with a particular focus on women released from prison and women experiencing domestic violence. Also provides housing referral and information for women statewide.

OTHER HOUSING AGENCIES**Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria**

125-127 Scotchmer Street, Fitzroy North

Phone: **(03) 9482-4585**

Provides low cost rental accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as referrals for emergency accommodation.

Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association (AVA)

See listing on page 25. Note that housing assistance is offered to both male and female offenders of Vietnamese origin.

Quin House

40 George Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9419-4874**

Provides supported accommodation for men with drug and alcohol problems. Men are required to engage with a case worker on a regular basis, must attend group meetings and are not allowed to work.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

The following organisations provide short-term accommodation in a crisis situation.

Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation Centre

Cnr King & Roden Streets, West Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9329-4800**

Flagstaff provides emergency and short-term accommodation for men over the age of 18 and must be referred by Home Ground Services in Collingwood, phone **9417 2500**.

Hanover Southbank

Phone: **(03) 9699-4566**

Emergency accommodation line open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are not a "drop in" centre.

Ozanam House

179 Flemington Road, North Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9329-5100**

Crisis accommodation for men. For access to accommodation ring the referral phone number 9300 2977.

St Kilda Crisis Centre

29 Grey Street, St Kilda

Phone: **(03) 9525-4100**

The St Kilda Crisis Centre provides emergency accommodation for men aged 16-25 and women 16-30. It can also provide referral and information for other emergency housing services. They also have a domestic violence team, a young women's outreach team and a primary health centre called "Access Health".

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service

See listing on page 27.

ASSISTANCE WITH RENTAL ISSUES

The following agencies assist people who are in rental accommodation with information about their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

Tenants Union of Victoria

55 Johnson Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9416-2577**

Rooming House Residents Advice Service

Phone: **(03) 9419-2577**

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MANAGERS

See 'Transitional Housing Managers' (page 10) above in this section for an explanation of what Transitional Housing Managers do.

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Community Housing Limited

9 Prospect St, Box Hill

Phone: **(03) 9856 0000**

Salvation Army Social Housing Service Eastcare

31-33 Ellingworth Parade, Box Hill

Phone: **(03) 9890 7144**

16 Church Street, Hawthorn

Phone: **(03) 9851 7800**

Toll Free: **1800 811 916**

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

North East Housing Services

48 Mary Street, Preston

Phone: **(03) 9479 0700**

Provide transitional and emergency accommodation.

Society of St Vincent de Paul

163-165 Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy

Phone: **(03) 9300 2977**

HomeGround

1A/68 Oxford Street, Collingwood

Phone: **(03) 9417 2500**

SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program

122 Chapel St, St Kilda East

Phone: **(03) 9537 7888**

29 Grey St, St Kilda

Phone: **(03) 9593 9913**

Hanover Southern Housing and Support Service

Level 1, 11 Chesterville Rd, Cheltenham

Phone: **(03) 9556 5700**

WAYSS

294-300 Thomas Street, Dandenong

Phone: **(03) 9791 6111**

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

MetroWest Housing Services

218 Nicholson Street, Footscray

Phone: **(03) 9689 2777**

19 Duncans Road, Werribee (must call Footscray office for appointment).

Salvation Army Social Housing Service Western

27 Sun Crescent, Sunshine

Phone: **(03) 9312 5424**

Womens Housing Ltd

6 Otter Street, Collingwood

Phone: **(03) 9412 6868**

9:30-1:30 & 2:30-4:30

BARWON SOUTH-WEST REGION

BAYSA Youth Services

12-14 Halstad Place, Geelong West

Phone: **(03) 5221 4466**

150 Leibig St, Warrnambool

Phone: **(03) 5561 8888**

Salvation Army Social Housing Service (Barwon)

71 Henna St, Warrnambool

Phone: **(03) 5561 6844**

GIPPSLAND REGION

Community Housing Ltd - Gippsland

215 Princes Drive, Morwell

Phone: **(03) 5120 2000** (Intake Service)

Phone: **(03) 5135 6000** (Administration)

Salvation Army Social Housing Service Gippscare

36 William Street, Warragul

Phone: **(03) 5622 1522**

51A McCartin St, Leongatha

Phone: **(03) 5662 6551**

GRAMPIANS REGION

Wimmera Uniting Care

185 Baille Street, Horsham

Phone: **(03) 5382 6789**

Uniting Care Ballarat Parish Mission

105 Dana Street, Ballarat

Phone: **(03) 5332 1286**

LODDON MALLEE REGION

Loddon-Mallee Housing Services

24-30 View Street, Bendigo

Phone: **(03) 5442 4288**

122 Ninth St, Mildura

Phone: **(03) 5023 7243**

HUME REGION (NORTH-EAST VICTORIA)**Rural Housing Network**

13 Stanley Street, Wodonga

Phone: (02) 6024 7146

COMMUNITY ROOMING HOUSES

Aboriginal Hostels

Phone: (03) 9285 6777

Inner East Rooming House Group

Phone: (03) 9853 7501

Prahran/Malvern Community Housing

Phone: (03) 9826 5194

Salvation Army Social Housing Service

Phone: (03) 9653 3228

Southport Community Housing Group

Phone: (03) 9696 1128

Port Phillip Housing Association

Phone: (03) 9534 5837

St Kilda Rooming House Group

Phone: (03) 9534 1809

Yarra Community Housing

Phone: (03) 9419 0009



Dealing with Centrelink

The first step for most prisoners on release is sorting out their Centrelink payments.



CENTRELINK PRISON VISITING SERVICES

Centrelink Prison Liaison Officers provide pre-release servicing in all Victorian prisons. This means you will be:

- provided with information on Centrelink payments, services and requirements;
- able to claim a payment up to 21 days prior to release and, if eligible, receive that payment on your day of release; and
- booked into your Centrelink Personal Adviser or Specialist appointment at your nearest Centrelink office within 14 days of your release. This appointment is compulsory.

To arrange to speak with your visiting Centrelink Prison Liaison Officer, ask your Case Worker or CCO.

If you do not get to speak with a Centrelink Prison Liaison Officer pre-release and have not had your payments assessed, you will need to attend a Centrelink office.



YOUR FIRST PAYMENT

The first payment from Centrelink is called Crisis Payment and is half the amount of a normal payment like Newstart or Disability Support Pension. It can be paid directly into a bank account or in the form of an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card or cheque. At some prisons it can also be paid directly in cash at the prison on the day of release. (You'll need to check at the prison if this applies to you.)

To claim Crisis Payment, there are some requirements. You must;

- have been in prison for at least 14 days;
- apply for the payment within seven days of your release, or up to three weeks prior to release;
- also be eligible for a Centrelink benefit or pension, such as Newstart allowance (the dole), or Disability Support Pension;
- have your prison release papers when you apply;
- be experiencing 'severe financial hardship'; and
- take any ID you have with you to the office when you claim.

Make an appointment at the Centrelink office you will be going to before you are released. If you know which office you will be going to, make the appointment yourself by calling Centrelink on 13 10 21 (Unless this number is on your approved phone list, you will need help from your case worker or CCO to make this call). The appointment can also be arranged by the Centrelink staff who visit your prison. If you are being released outside business hours (e.g. on the weekend), Centrelink can arrange for a payment to be available at certain prisons on the day of release (check with your prison to see if this possible at your location).

You may be able to claim up to half of your first benefit payment in advance to be ready on release, which means you will have a full payment to cover your first two weeks out. However, it also means you will only receive a half cheque the following fortnight. Either way, there will be a two week period in which you'll have to get by on a half cheque.

It is not easy to get by on this amount without extra support. See the listing of material aid agencies (page 42) for services that may be able to assist.



CLAIMING NEWSTART ALLOWANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS

You can apply for your first 'dole' (or other) payment on release, and will receive the first payment after 2 weeks. To claim, you will need to provide sufficient identification. Read *Getting ID* (page 45) to learn more about what ID Centrelink will require, and how to go about getting it.

Most ex-prisoners will claim Newstart Allowance. This means you will need to prove you are looking for work, and/or doing a 'Centrelink approved activity', such as 'Work for the Dole' or the Personal Support Program (see Page 19) However, if you have a significant physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability, you may be able to claim a Disability Support Pension (DSP). The requirements for DSP are very strict. If you think you might be eligible, ask the Centrelink staff who visit your prison for more information.

A Health Care Card is issued automatically to people who receive Newstart Allowance (or other payments). Health Care Cards cannot be issued over the counter at Centrelink Offices. They must be mailed out to the recipient. However, a *Confirmation of Concession Card Entitlement* form, valid for two weeks, can be issued over the counter at Centrelink. This is done for a person who is entitled to a card and

who is accepted as having an urgent need for a particular concession, and who cannot reasonably be expected to wait for the card to arrive. This form may not be accepted for some transport concessions.

You may also be eligible for Rent Assistance. Ask the Centrelink staff who visit your prison about how to apply.



PERSONAL ADVISERS

Centrelink can help you with more than just income support payments. If you are getting a payment like Newstart or Youth Allowance because you don't have regular work, you are generally expected to start looking for work at some time. Centrelink needs to make sure you are getting the right sort of help to get you ready again for work, training, study or other activities.

Personal Advisers are specially trained to provide this help. They are there to help people like you reach your goals – such as returning to work or study, changing careers or getting new skills. They are there to listen, and to help you find positive solutions for everyday problems.

Do I need to see a Personal Adviser?

You will usually need to see a Personal Adviser if you:

- have been in prison for at least 14 days because of an offence; and
- claim Newstart or Youth Allowance within 4 weeks of being released.

Centrelink will let you know if this applies to you.

How can a Personal Adviser help me?

You can talk to your Personal Adviser about your current situation, and what you want to do with your future. They can help you to look at your options for getting a job, or doing some training or work experience. If you're not happy with some of the choices you've made in the past, your Personal Adviser may be able to help you make changes. Whatever you want to do, they can give you a hand with planning your next steps, like getting you the right sort of help out in the community, and helping you to deal with the 'system'.

When will my Personal Adviser interview take place?

Your Personal Adviser may want to see you shortly before your release from prison, or as soon as possible afterwards. If you are coming in to see Centrelink to arrange your first payment straight after being released, your Personal Adviser may need to talk to you on the same day.

If Centrelink has asked you to come to an interview, then you will get a letter which makes this clear – letting you know the time, date and place of your interview.

What if I find it hard to attend Centrelink interviews after being released?

Of course you will have a lot of things to attend to in the first few days after you are released, so your Personal Adviser will try to fit in with you as much as possible. But if an interview is arranged, you will be expected to turn up. If Centrelink has a phone number for you, the Personal Adviser will usually try to call and remind you about the appointment. So make sure you tell Centrelink if you can't come to an interview that has been made for you.

If there is a good reason why you can't make it to an interview, Centrelink staff will be happy to talk about arranging a different time. But if you just don't turn up and don't let Centrelink know, your payments may be stopped or reduced for a period of time. Remember that you can always contact Centrelink by phone (13 28 50) if you can't make it into an office.



PERSONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Personal Support Program (PSP) assists Centrelink customers who are experiencing multiple obstacles finding a job. The PSP will help people who are experiencing a variety of problems, such as homelessness, difficulties with drugs or alcohol, mental health problems and domestic violence.

PSP eligible clients are referred to a PSP provider (that's an agency that provides the Personal Support Program) and given a case worker who gives general support and can assist with referrals to other services as needed.

The program meets the activity requirements for Centrelink payments. This means you do not need to tell Centrelink whether you have been looking for work and, in most situations, you will only need to lodge your form every twelve weeks.

If you are on an activity tested payment such as Newstart or Youth Allowance, you are considered a compulsory participant and must maintain regular contact with your provider in order to receive your payments.

If you are not on activity tested payment, e.g. Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment Single, you are considered a voluntary participant and can leave the program at any time without your payment being affected.

To be eligible, clients must first be assessed by a Centrelink Specialist Officer (a Psychologist, Social Worker or Disability Officer). Ask for an assessment when you attend at Centrelink if you are interested in this program.



CENTRELINK NUMBERS

To make an appointment:	13 10 21
Employment Services:	13 28 50
Disability, Sickness & Carers:	13 27 17
Youth & Student Services:	13 24 90



Getting Support

You may think if you can handle prison, you can handle anything, but many ex-prisoners have said that the first few weeks and months outside were actually harder than the time they spent in jail. Coping with money problems, dealing with other people and feeling like you don't belong in society can take a toll. You may feel depressed and anxious and not want to leave your room. If the stress feels like it's getting too much, it's time to seek support.



WHO CAN HELP?

Below is a list of key agencies that provide counselling free of charge or at a low cost. Ask for someone who has dealt with ex-prisoners before so you can feel confident they will understand what you are experiencing. VACRO, ACSO and the Brosnan Centre specialise in this area.

KEY AGENCIES

VACRO

Level 1, 116 Hardware Street, Melbourne
Phone: **(03) 9602-1366**

VACRO has over 130 years of experience in the prison system. VACRO staff are easy to talk to and there is no charge. As well as providing someone to talk to, they can link you up with other agencies that might be able to assist you. They are also able to provide counselling for the families of offenders.

Aboriginal Advancement League

2 Watt Street, Thornbury
Phone: **(03) 9480-6377**

The Aboriginal Advancement League provides information, referral, advocacy, emergency relief and emergency accommodation for aboriginal people. It is staffed by Kooris.

ACSO (Australian Community Support Organisation)

Ground Floor, 357A Spencer Street, West Melbourne
Phone: **(03) 9320 4000**

ACSO provide a range of services for ex-prisoners, including counselling and referral.

Australian Vietnamese Womens' Welfare Association (AVA)

30-32 Lennox Street, Richmond (head office)

Phone: **(03) 9428-9078**

144-148 Nicholson Street, Footscray

Phone: **(03) 9396-1922**

The AVA provides pre- and post-release support for male and female Vietnamese offenders. Assistance provided includes accommodation and housing support, an employment service, and drug and alcohol counselling.

The Bridge Foundation

126 Raymond Street, Sale

Phone: **(03) 5144 7777** or **0409 556 932**

Postal Address: PO Box 9279, Sale, 3850

The Bridge Foundation provides assistance for ex-prisoners in the Gippsland area to reintegrate into the community. Assistance offered includes practical assistance and support, counselling, advocacy and liaison with agencies, police and the correctional system. They do not provide housing.

CASA (Centre Against Sexual Assault)

See listing on page 88.

Gamblers Help

Phone: **1800 156 789**

Gamblers Help provide free counselling and advice for gambling problems. Free face to face counselling is available in all areas of Victoria.

Lifeline

Phone: **13 11 14**

Lifeline is a telephone help line that is open 24 hours a day. It provides crisis counselling, information and referral to a wide range of community agencies. The number is often busy, so you may need to try several times before you get through.

Mensline

Phone: **1300 789 978**

Mensline offers telephone counselling for men, especially those who are experiencing separation and family breakdown, or who are finding it difficult being a part-time father.

Suicide Helpline

Phone: **1300 651 251**

Provides counselling, information and referral for people considering suicide or affected by the suicide of someone close to them.

Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA)

9 Hillcrest Avenue, Springvale

Phone: **(03) 9562 3266**

SICMAA provides a Family Support Program for Indo-Chinese people with children aged under 18. Support includes family counselling, parenting programs and emergency relief.

The Brosnan Centre

10 Dawson Street, Brunswick

Phone: **(03) 9387 1233**

The Brosnan Centre provides counselling and support for male and female offenders under the age of 23, as well as assistance with housing, employment and drug and alcohol problems. It also offers support for Vietnamese offenders.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL)

171 Smith Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9416 4266**

VACSAL provides support services for young Aboriginal offenders (24 years and under) and Aboriginal women.

Vietnamese Community in Australia

214 Nicholson Street, Footscray

Phone: **(03) 9689 8515**

Provides information, practical assistance, support and counselling for the Vietnamese community. Youth services also available.

WIRE (Women's Information and Referral Exchange)

Phone: **1300 134 130** (9:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

Website: www.wire.org.au

WIRE is a telephone counselling and information line staffed by women for women. It can provide general counselling and support plus referral to domestic violence services, sexual assault and rape counselling, and other community agencies. The Women's Centre provides a referral database, internet access and information brochures for women.

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

210 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne 3000

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria

Phone: **(03) 9377 9600** (Enquiries)

or toll free **1800 015 188** (both numbers 24 hours, 7 days)

Provides counselling, referral and links to women's refuges for women experiencing domestic violence. Provides referrals to an Aboriginal women's refuge and young women's incest refuge. Provides contact details for Domestic Violence Outreach Services and support groups across Australia.



Parole and Legal Issues



WHAT IS PAROLE?

Parole is a period of 'conditional freedom'. This means that your freedom depends upon your complying with the conditions of your parole order. Parole conditions vary, but would usually include:

- regularly reporting to, and being under the supervision of, a Community Corrections Officer (CCO).
- doing programs to address offending behaviour, such as conflict resolution or sex offender programs.

In some cases, other special conditions may be added. The Adult Parole Board (APB) can add to or change the conditions of parole at any time.

Parole is usually divided into a three month 'intensive' period and a following non-intensive period. During Intensive Parole you have more intensive commitments and are required to report more often. You will usually also be required to perform unpaid community work during this time. You won't need to do this if you have more than 20 hours per week of paid employment or you are in full time education.



HOW DO I GET PAROLE?

The sentence you received will determine if and when you become eligible for an assessment for parole. The assessment will occur about six to eight weeks prior to your 'Earliest Eligibility Date' (EED). This date will be the end of the minimum non-parole period set by the judge in your case. The APB will make the decision about whether or not you are granted parole on the basis of a report provided by Community Correctional Services and other information the board requests. In order to create this report, you will be interviewed at the prison by a CCO. The report covers a range of areas, such as your history of offending, substance abuse issues, education and employment history, health and so on. You may also be required to attend an interview with members of the APB.

The APB assesses each prisoner's case individually on its merits. Usually it will consider your:

- participation in prison programs designed to address your offending behaviour.
- overall behaviour in prison, i.e. whether or not you have recorded any 'serious incidents'.
- drug use in prison.

To be granted parole *you are required to have stable accommodation upon release*. This means somewhere you will be able to live for a long period of time, preferably with family, good friends or a partner. Living with co-offenders or others with a history of offending or drug use is not encouraged. Community Corrections will confirm these addresses prior to your release, so make sure you provide accurate information.

It is usually easier to get parole if you are able to stay with family or friends than if you have to go through an agency. This is because most accommodation agencies require a release date before they can offer a place. However you can't get a release date until parole is granted, and this will not happen until you have stable accommodation arranged.



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I AM RELEASED ON PAROLE?

You will be required to report to the specified Community Correctional Service office within two days of getting out. Here you will be informed of your obligations under the parole order, such as where and how often you will be doing community work, urine tests and recommended programs. You will be required to sign a contract to indicate that you understand and agree to abide by the conditions of the order. You and your CCO will draw up an Individual Management Plan (IMP) which reflects what you want to achieve and plans strategies to help you avoid re-offending.



BREACHES

If you fail to comply with any of the conditions of your parole, your CCO may record a breach of your order. The CCO will report the nature of the breach to the APB, who will then decide what action will be taken. Action may include noting the breach but taking no action, issuing a warning, adding to or altering the conditions of the order, or cancelling the order, which means you would be arrested and returned to prison.

Parolees who are returned to custody can be re-paroled at a later date. In most cases the APB will visit you in prison in order to consider the possibility of your being paroled. Alternatively, you can write to the APB and ask to be reconsidered for parole. In this application you would normally give reasons why you think you would perform better this time around. However, this does not mean making excuses for a previous breach. The APB is much more likely to view favourably a person who is able to take responsibility for his or her own behaviour.



MORE INFORMATION...

Contact:

Adult Parole Board

71 Moreland Street

Footscray 3011

Phone: **(03) 9687 8055**



COMBINED CUSTODY AND TREATMENT ORDERS (CCTO'S)

CCTO's require you to complete part of your sentence in custody and part in the community. In custody you are required to complete 24 hours of treatment relating to your offending behaviour. Prior to release, a CCO will interview you to confirm where you will be living after you get out of prison. They will then tell you which Community Correctional Service office you will need to report to.

During the part of your sentence served in the community, you will normally be required to:

- Report once a week to your CCO for supervision.
- Complete drug or alcohol treatment in the community.

Assessment for drug and alcohol treatment in the community will be conducted by a drug and alcohol worker while you are in prison.



OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

If you have legal questions regarding custody of children, outstanding warrants or fines, your rights and so on, the agencies listed on the next page may assist. While you are still in prison, there is legal advice available as part of your local Transition Assistance Program.

AGENCIES PROVIDING LEGAL ASSISTANCE

If you have any legal issues, Community Legal Centres can provide free legal advice.

Federation of Community Legal Centre

Suite 11, first floor, 54 Victoria St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053

Phone: **(03) 9654 2204**

Provides referral to all Victorian Community Legal Centres. Does not provide legal advice directly.

Victoria Legal Aid

350 Queen Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9269 0120**

Or: **1800 677 402** toll free (From outside Metro area)

Legal advice and representation at a cost based on the client's income. Can also refer to local Legal Aid centres.

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

6 Alexandra Parade, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9419 3888**

Free legal advice and representation for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Women's Legal Service

Level 3/43 Hardware Lane, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9642 0877**

Free legal advice and referral for women. Call in times are:

Monday: 10.00am – 1.00pm

Tuesday & Thursday: 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Wednesday: 2.00pm – 5.00pm



Getting a Job

Finding work is a numbers game; the more jobs you apply for, the more likely you are to succeed. Don't take rejection personally. It happens to *everyone*, but with persistence and the right help many ex-prisoners find and keep good jobs.

A criminal record can make things harder but don't fall into the trap of thinking the world is against you. It is important to stay positive and remind yourself that every job application increases your chances of *eventually* finding work. Be realistic about the work you apply for. It is a waste of time and energy applying for jobs for which you are not qualified or experienced. On the other hand, don't underestimate yourself or become so discouraged that you stop applying for jobs altogether.



THE CSEP (CORRECTIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM)

As part of an employment assistance program, community agencies can help prisoners and offenders at the following locations to get work:

Prisons: Fulham, Loddon, Dhurringile, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, Tarrengower and Barwon.

Community Correctional Services Sites: Morwell, Sunshine, Ringwood, Hume, Dandenong, Reservoir, Frankston, Shepparton, Bendigo and Geelong.

The community agencies will:

- Help you develop your job search skills
- Help you work out what job, or area of work might suit you best
- Provide job search materials such as newspapers, electronic job listings and details of employers
- Help you write a resume (a piece of paper that advertises your skills to potential employers)
- Take your job applications to employers
- Prepare you for job interviews

After you are released, you can continue to get help from these agencies. An employment case manager will help you work towards getting a job. The help they might offer could include:

- Talking to potential employers to 'sell' your skills

- Training (i.e., paying for you to do a course that will help you get a job)
- Assisting with job-search related expenses, such as public transport to job interviews.
- Referral to other employment programs

The program is aimed at different groups of prisoners, so check with your case worker to see if you can apply.



JOB NETWORK

Job Network is the new system for job-seekers. It replaces the old CES. Job Network has lists of available jobs. They can also help you to write a resume, and provide training in how to look for work. Some agencies may also be able to pay for you to do a training course that will help you to get work. See *Agencies* in this section (page 38) for contact details.



DO I HAVE TO TELL MY EMPLOYER ABOUT MY CRIMINAL RECORD?

If your employer asks you if you have a record, it is an offence to lie. If you get the job and your employer finds out about your criminal record, you may lose your job and be charged. So always tell the truth if you are asked. However, if you are not asked, you do not need to tell your employer.

Many employers will run a police check on everyone they consider for a job. This does not mean that you won't get the job if they find out about your record. However, you should not expect to get a job driving an armoured car if you have a history of armed robbery, or to work directly with cash if you have been convicted of theft, for example.



DO I HAVE TO PUT MY TIME IN PRISON ON MY RESUME?

A resume is a way of advertising yourself to possible employers. It is not a life history. Everything you put on your resume must be the truth, but you can leave things out that aren't going to help your chances. If you have certificates from courses you have done in prison, you can put them on your resume without saying that you studied in prison. But again, remember that you must tell the truth if you are asked. An employment support worker – either in prison or outside - can assist you to prepare answers for these sorts of questions.

Job Network can help you to put together a resume that will present you in the best light to potential employers.



KEEPING YOUR JOB

Finding a job is only the start of the challenge. The next part is keeping it. If you have spent months or years in prison, it can be difficult waking every morning to go to work. Employers expect you to turn up to work *every day*, on time. It is your responsibility, no matter how difficult at first, to get yourself up in time for work. It does get easier with time.

The difference between prison work and work on the outside may also cause problems. An employer in the 'real world' may have higher expectations than the prison did. You will be expected to work hard all day, only taking breaks at permitted times. An employer won't 'carry' a lazy worker for long. Remember you are being paid a lot more than you were in prison for these greater demands.

Ex-prisoners might also find it difficult taking orders from a boss. In prison orders from officers are given every day. Having a boss telling you what to do can make you feel like you're back in prison, only now you can walk out. Walking out means being out of work again, so remind yourself you are not in jail, and that it is normal for a worker to be told what to do by the boss. The better you become at your job, the less supervision you will need.



DIFFICULT WORK SITUATIONS

It is not uncommon for workers to be offered cash for casual work. Needless to say, payment of this kind is not usually put through the business' books, and is illegal. However, it can be tempting to work for cash to supplement your Centrelink payment without declaring it. Beware. If you are caught, the penalty will be substantial, and you may be charged and imprisoned if significant amounts of money are involved. Also, if you work for someone on this basis, you will have zero rights. It is not uncommon for unscrupulous employers to fail to pay their 'unofficial' employees for work done. They know you won't complain to anyone because of your situation.

In some circumstances, it is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of a criminal record. If you feel you are being treated unfairly or harassed on the basis of your criminal record (or for any other reason), the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission may be able to assist you. Jobwatch is also a useful contact for all legal matters related to employment. See *Agencies* (page 38) for contact details of these organisations.



VOLUNTEER WORK

Doing voluntary work may sound like a strange idea when what you need most is money, but there are some good reasons for considering it:

- Working voluntarily can prepare you for paid employment in a number of ways. You get used to dealing with straight people again and get some workplace experience.
- It 'gets you out of the house', which helps you feel less isolated and builds your confidence.
- If your last work experience is voluntary work at the RSPCA, for example, it looks better on your resume than if it was cleaning inside prison. It shows an employer you are serious about working.
- Voluntary work can sometimes lead to paid employment in unexpected ways, particularly if you do your job well.

Finding voluntary work is not always easy. Charitable organisations are often your best bet. Here are a few examples:

- Neighbourhood Houses (look them up in the White Pages under the local council name)
- The RSPCA has a large volunteer program. You need to attend information sessions first.
- The Salvation Army, Brotherhood of St Laurence and St Vincent de Paul (enquire at your local office).
- The local council may have ideas about voluntary organisations in your area.
- Environmental organisations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Wilderness Society use volunteers.



OTHER IDEAS

The Big Issue is a magazine sold on the streets by unemployed people. The vendors keep half the sale price of each magazine sold. Training to sell the magazine is short and easy, so you can start earning a few dollars quickly. It won't make you rich, but if you're short on cash, it's worth considering.

The Big Issue also sometimes runs other programs such as creative writing classes, art classes and other groups that are free and worthwhile.

Phone: **(03) 9663 4533**

AGENCIES

CSEP EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM COMMUNITY AGENCIES

VACRO

Level 1, 116 Hardware Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9602 1366**

VACRO provides job search assistance for male prisoners (Loddon and Dhurringle prisons; Bendigo and Shepparton CCS offices).

ACSO (Australian Community Support Organisation)

Ground Floor, 357A Spencer Street, West Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9320 4000**

Provides employment assistance for male prisoners (Barwon prison and Geelong CCS office).

The Brosnan Centre

10 Dawson Street, Brunswick

Phone: **(03) 9387 1233**

The Brosnan Centre provides job search assistance for male and female offenders under the age of 25.

Brotherhood of St Laurence Employment Services

109 Victoria Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9419 0888**

Brotherhood of St Laurence Employment provides a range of employment-related assistance, including Intensive Assistance for the long-term unemployed and assistance for people with disabilities. To apply for Intensive Assistance, you need to be referred by Centrelink.

Djerriwarrh Employment and Education Services

93-95 Main Road West, St Albans

Phone: **(03) 9310 7428**

Assist job seekers and deliver training and education to people wishing to extend their skills to enhance job prospects.

Education Centre – Gippsland

Cnr Smith and Albert Streets, Warragul

Postal Address: P.O Box 249, Warragul

Phone: **(03) 5623 6075**

Employment Focus

1st Floor, 73 Burgundy Street, Heidelberg

Phone: **(03) 9458 2511**

Specialised services for those who have multiple barriers to employment.

Melbourne City Mission

214 Nicholson street, Footscray

Phone: **(03) 9687 4997**

Provides employment assistance for female prisoners.

Youth Projects

6 Hartington Street, Glenroy.

Phone: **(03) 9304 9100**

Specialised services for those who have multiple barriers to employment.

OTHER USEFUL AGENCIES

Australian Vietnamese Women’s Welfare Association (AVA)

See listing on page 23.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Phone: **1300 369 711**

Assists with matters related to harassment and discrimination.

Jobwatch

Phone: **(03) 9662 1933**

Website: www.jobwatch.org.au

Provides free advice for all legal matters related to employment, such as rates of pay, conditions and rights.

**Employment Services Information Line
(used to be called Job Network)**

Phone: **13 62 68**

General information about Job Network, and referral to your nearest Job Network centre.

VACSAL Jobfutures

117 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 8415 0961**

Koori employment agency.



Getting Around



TRANSPORT ON THE DAY YOU ARE RELEASED

Transportation from the prison on the day of your release needs to be prepared in advance. Speak to prison staff for help. Make sure family or friends know where and when to collect you.

The points to remember are:

- your prison will provide transport to the nearest railway station if you request it *in advance*;
- if you are released from a country prison and have less than \$50 the prison will provide you with a ticket to Melbourne; and,
- if you need to travel to a home town in the country, the prison may assist, but only if you have no money to pay for the ticket yourself.



GETTING AROUND AFTER YOUR RELEASE

Transport can be expensive. A standard adult ticket for inner Melbourne for one day will cost \$5.10 at the time this booklet was written. If you don't have a current Health Care Card, you will have to pay this amount. Dodging the fare could cost you a \$100 fine for the first offence, and there are many inspectors out there. \$100 could make the difference between re-offending or not.

You can buy a ticket on trams and buses after getting on. However, be aware that you will need loose change, as these ticket machines will not accept notes. Remember also to *validate* the ticket after buying it (put it in one of the validating machines on the tram or bus).

Many train stations can be unstaffed, so you will need to buy a ticket from the ticket machine before boarding the train. Ticket inspectors do not accept the excuse that you intended to buy a ticket at your destination.

If you need to travel a lot, for example to meet the conditions of your parole, travel costs can add up. Many material aid agencies provide travel tickets, or other aid to offset the cost of transport. See the list of material aid agencies on page 48 for a list of services that may be able to assist.

AGENCIES

Traveller's Aid Society

Southern Cross Station (corner of Bourke and Spencer Streets, Melbourne)

Phone: **(03) 9670 2873**

As a last resort, the Traveller's Aid Society can sometimes assist with part payment of fares for stranded travellers.

The Salvation Army

69 Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000

Phone: **(03) 9650 4851**

The Salvos can assist the homeless in the city area, and can sometimes assist with travel costs in an emergency. There are many regional offices, and you will need to look up the one closest to you in the White Pages.

Met Link (used to be VicTrip)

Phone: **131 638**

Information about public transport in metropolitan Melbourne (timetables etc).

V-Line

Phone: **136 196**

Information about public transport in rural Victoria.



Money Matters



MAKING YOUR MONEY GO FURTHER

It's tough living on a government benefit. It's even tougher surviving the first few weeks and months post release, when you may face many one-off costs such as paying a rental bond, fees for getting ID, setting up accommodation and so on. Here are a few tips to help you weather the storm until things settle.

- **Make a budget.** A budget is a spending plan taking into account all your expenses. Make a list of everything you are likely to have to pay for and then work out whether your benefit will cover it. If it won't, then you need assistance from a material aid agency (see the list on page 48). If you don't know how to make a budget, a financial counsellor can help (see page 49).
- **Limit spending on cigarettes and alcohol.** Cigarettes and alcohol are expensive habits. Consider placing a limit on yourself of a certain number of cigarettes per day, and avoid the pub if you know you're likely to spend up on alcohol.
- **Don't gamble.** Gambling can be a temptation, not only as an imagined solution to money problems, but as a way of blocking out reality. However the odds are heavily against you, and the longer you gamble, the more you will fall behind.
- **Always buy the cheapest product available.** Do your shopping at budget stores.
- **Buy fresh food and cook it yourself rather than eating junk food.** It'll work out a lot cheaper. Avoid eating out as much as possible. If you have to eat out, consider cheap options such as Crossways (see page 49).
- **Get a Health Care Card.** A Health Care Card will give you concessions on a lot of items. Ask for one from Centrelink as soon as possible.
- **Avoid unnecessary fines.** Parking fines, fare evasion fines and other minor penalties are easily avoided, but can become a major headache. If you can't pay them, they can set you on a downward spiral towards re-offending.

- **Avoid using mobile phones whenever possible.** Mobiles are convenient, but the calls are very expensive. You may not realise how much you're logging up until the bill arrives, or you can purchase a pre-paid ticket and only spend as much as you can afford each time.
- **Find a support agency that will allow you to make some of your important calls from their office.** See *Getting Support* (page 21).
- **If you can't pay a bill, call the company and explain.** You should be able to get the cost spread out over a longer time.
- **Avoid excess bank fees.** Make sure you understand the terms of your bank account. Withdrawing from a 'foreign' ATM (that is, one from a different bank than the bank you have your account with) can attract a fee as high as \$2.00. If you make more withdrawals in a month than your account allows, you will pay more fees. Make sure you have the type of account that best suits your needs.
- **Above all, use your common sense when it comes to purchases.** That CD player or new lounge suite can wait. Buy second-hand rather than new, and wait until you're back on your feet before you consider buying any luxury items.



MATERIAL AID

There are many agencies in Melbourne that offer material aid, including food or food vouchers, clothing, furniture and small amounts of money in an emergency. Agencies differ in what they offer. It is impossible to provide a complete guide. The following list of key services will help point you in the right direction. Note that material aid agencies have limited resources and have to make choices about who they help. Be polite and take refusals graciously. Don't 'burn bridges' you might need to cross later. Aid in the form of direct cash is rare. More commonly, your costs can be offset by food vouchers or other assistance that reduces your overall expenses.

MATERIAL AID AGENCIES

Salvation Army

The Salvos provide a range of material aid services. To get help, you need to go to the nearest branch. Look up 'Salvation Army' in the White Pages.

Community Information Centres

Community Information Centres (previously Citizen's Advice Bureaus) often provide limited material aid, usually in the form of met tickets or food vouchers. Community Information Centres can also provide referrals to other useful services, including free or low-cost meal services in your area. To find the nearest one to you, look up 'Community Information Centres' in the White Pages.

The Smith Family

The Smith Family provides general welfare assistance including money for food, clothing, financial counselling and advice on welfare entitlements and services. The number to call depends on your area.

For all Melbourne areas apart from the Western suburbs:

68 Cambridge Street, Collingwood

Phone: **(03) 9419 8500**

For outside Melbourne:

Phone: **1800 808 915 (toll free)**

For Western suburbs:

128 Hampshire Road, Sunshine

Phone: **(03) 9312 6900**

Society of St Vincent De Paul (SVDP)

SVDP provides a range of material aid. Look up your nearest centre under *St Vincent De Paul Centres of Charity* in the White Pages (you'll need to look under 'Saint' not 'St').

Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA)

See listing on page 23.

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

Credit Helpline

Phone: **(03) 9602 3800** or
outside metro area **1800 803 800** (toll free)

The Credit Helpline can provide general advice about credit and debt related problems, as well referring you to a free financial counselling service in your area.

FREE AND CHEAP MEALS

The following list is not complete, and only lists services in the inner Melbourne area. The local Community Information Centre should be able to help you find other cheap and free meal services near you.

Prahran Mission

211 Chapel Street, Prahran

Phone: **(03) 9692 9500**

Provides cheap meals and snacks. Call for details of meal times. Also offers Day Rehabilitation Programs, Home Based Outreach Support and community services.

Hare Krishna Temple

197 Danks Street, Albert Park

Phone: **(03) 9699 5122**

Daily vegetarian meals free of charge (or donation).

Chaitanya's (Hare Kirshna) Liardet Community Centre

Cnr Nott & Liardet Streets, Port Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9699 5122**

Vegetarian meals free of charge (or donation) to Health Care Card holders. Call for meal times.

Crossways (Hare Krishna)

123 Swanston Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9650 2939**

People without money may negotiate to do some work at the café in exchange for a meal. Otherwise, meals are at a low cost. Lunch hours 12 noon-3:00pm weekdays.

Ozanam House Meals Service

268 Abottsford Street, North Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9329 6733**

Open 9.00am-2.30pm daily. Lunch is available from 12.00pm-1.00pm at a cost of \$2.00. If you can't afford the \$2.00, ask to speak to a case worker.

Missions of Charity

Women: 101 Gore Street, Fitzroy

Men: 69 George Street, Fitzroy

Free evening meal every day (except Thursday) at 5:30pm

St Mary's House of Welcome

165-169 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9417 6497**

Free breakfast, cheap lunch, free afternoon tea daily. Call for times.



Getting ID

To open a bank account, obtain a driver's licence, or claim payments from Centrelink you will need proper identification.

Getting ID can be complicated and may cost money. The catch is that to get ID you often need to provide ID. However, it is possible to build up a bit at a time.

Start arranging ID while you're still in prison, rather than waiting until you get out when you'll be under more pressure.



WHAT IS THE 100-POINT SYSTEM?

The 100-point ID system is a system used by banks, Centrelink and other organisations. Different forms of ID are given a points rating. To have sufficient ID, the points must add up to 100 or more.

Here is an example:

Birth Certificate		= 70 points
Driver's Licence		= 40 points
Total points	70+40	= 110 points

Unfortunately, different organisations award different forms of ID a different number of points. There is no single 100-point system that applies wherever you go.



CENTRELINK ID

For most Centrelink payments, you need to provide proof of birth in Australia or proof of arrival in Australia (a birth certificate, passport or citizenship certificate) *plus* 100 points of identification from an approved list of documents. Release papers or prison ID will not count, nor will a reference from a lawyer or Community Corrections Officer. The points value of some documents are listed in the table on page 47. (*Note: If you have received payments from Centrelink in the past, the ID requirements are somewhat less.*)



ID TO OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT

Different banks may have slightly different ID requirements. To open a bank account with the Commonwealth Bank, it is sufficient to have your birth certificate plus a reference from the prison verifying your identity. If you have both of these, *you can open an account from inside, with help from VACRO's prisoner banking service.* (VACRO can only open a Commonwealth Bank on your behalf.)



HOW DO I APPLY FOR MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

You need to write to:

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
595 Collins Street, Melbourne
Postal Address: PO Box 4332, Melbourne 3001.
Phone: **1300 369 367**

You will need to provide your full name, date and place of birth and the full names of your parents. You will also need to provide some proof of who you are. Prison staff can assist you with this.

It will cost you \$25.80 to apply for your certificate. You can request that the fee be waived if you are in financial hardship by calling or writing to the Registry. You will need to complete some forms which the Registry will send you. Or you can find the forms on the website at www.dvc.vic.gov.au



WHAT OTHER KINDS OF ID ARE USEFUL?

Another useful form of ID that is easy to get is a *Medicare card*. It is worth 20 points of ID for Centrelink claims. If you also have your birth certificate and a bank account and statement, this will be enough ID to claim a benefit. Go to any Medicare office with your release papers and apply for a card.

If you have a child under 18 years of age, a *copy of his or her birth certificate* is worth 40 points of ID to Centrelink. A copy can be obtained by writing to The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the same way you apply for your own birth certificate (see above).

A *marriage certificate* is also worth 40 points to Centrelink, and is also available from Births, Deaths and Marriages.

A *current driver's licence* is worth 40 points to Centrelink. If you have an expired licence, you can arrange a new one by going to a Vicroads office and paying the renewal fee. If your licence has lapsed by more than five years, you will have to sit your driving test again. The renewal fee at the time of writing is \$43 for three years or \$146 for ten years.

An *electoral enrolment card* is worth 10 points for Centrelink and is easy to get. It confirms you are enrolled to vote in Australia. It is free and no additional ID is required. However, you must have lived at an address for more than a month, be 17 years of age or older and be an Australian citizen. You can apply for an electoral enrolment card by picking up an application form at any post office.

Educational certificates and *trade certificates*, including any you have gained in prison, are worth 40 points for Centrelink purposes.

Other forms of ID which can be useful include: Student ID cards, Health Care Cards, gas, phone or electricity bills showing your name and address, other licences (e.g. forklift), car registration papers, tenancy agreements, employment records including references from a former employer, school certificates, citizenship certificates and divorce papers.



TAX FILE NUMBERS

It is important to have a tax file number. If you don't, your Centrelink payments or wages will be taxed at the highest tax rate, which will leave you with a lot less money to live on. You can apply for a Tax File Number (or enquire about an old one you have lost) by calling the Australian Taxation Office after you get out. Get your ID sorted before applying, as you will need it for your application.

Phone: **13 28 61** (Australian Taxation Office)



KEYPASS

A keypass is a form of photographic ID provided by the police. To get one, you need a birth certificate or equivalent proof of your date of birth. You also need to have two passport v taken and then have someone such as a doctor or solicitor who has known you for more than two years sign the photos to prove that they really are photos of you. In addition, you need some form of ID which shows your address such as a gas or electricity bill. The cost is \$50 if the application is sent in by post or \$60 if the application is made in person and wanted that same day.

The benefit of a keypass is that it is *photographic ID*, which can help in many situations. To sign a cheque, you will often be asked for photographic ID.

A keypass is worth 20 points to Centrelink.



AN ID CHECKLIST

Type of ID	ID required to get it	Points value for Centrelink	Points to open a bank account
Birth certificate	Prison staff can assist you with this	None, but required	70
Reference from prison, CCO or lawyer who has known you for more than two years	None	0	40
Medicare card	Release papers	20	25
Marriage certificate	Prison staff can assist you with this	40	0
Birth certificate of your child (under 18)	Prison staff can assist you with this	40	0
Electoral enrolment card	None	10	0
Drivers licence	None, if you have an expired licence	40	40
ATM card or passbook	100 points	40	25
Current bank account statement	None, once account is opened	40	0
Reference from an ATSI organisation (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)	None	20	40
Keypass	Birth certificate, signed photos, plus proof of address	20	40
Educational certificate/ trade certificate		40	0

Note: this is not a complete list.



Dealing with Community and Government Agencies

There are many agencies that promise a range of services. Hearing about a service that seems to offer just what you're looking for can raise hopes. It's disappointing to find out that, for whatever reason, you can't use that service. A lot of agencies only help people who live in a particular region. Others might only help if you're a woman (or a man), or a drug user, or in a particular age group. All this is necessary, because agencies have limited funds, and if they tried to help everyone, they'd quickly run out of money. Still, it can be frustrating to be told you can't get help because you live on the wrong side of a particular road, or are one year too old.

Here are a few tips for getting your needs met:

- Try to arrange a referral to an agency from one of the agencies listed in this booklet, rather than ringing or dropping in at the first place you hear about. The referring agency will do its best to send you to a place that can help.
- Make sure you find out exactly what the agency offers before you visit. It will save a good deal of frustration.
- Don't rely on the 'prison grapevine' for accurate information about agencies. *It's not reliable.* False rumours and half-truths about what agencies can provide are common in prison. Always check your information.
- Build a relationship with one particular worker who you trust, and rely on them as a first point of support and information. If one worker gets to know you and your situation, you won't have to repeat yourself over and over. Also, workers are human, and may go to more trouble on your behalf if they know you well.
- Don't have unrealistic expectations. Society doesn't put offenders high on its list of priorities. Funding to assist ex-prisoners is limited and community agencies are under great pressure. Accept the help you are offered; don't reject it because it's less than what you hoped for.

- Be polite. Don't abuse workers if they tell you they can't give you what you want. Workers, like anyone, will respond better to someone who treats them well. Don't burn your bridges
- Don't waste energy arguing with an agency which says they can't help you. Instead, ask for a referral to someone who can.
- Government organisations such as Centrelink are huge and operate according to strict guidelines and rules. There's no point arguing with the person at the counter. You have enough on your plate without taking on government organisations. Accept the rules and there will be fewer headaches all round.

Above all, *use the help that's out there.*



Drugs and Alcohol

If you want to avoid (or control) using or drinking when you get out you will need to put a realistic support plan in place now. The same temptations and opportunities to use are still out there, so if you intend to stay clean, then the following information may help. If you are likely to inject drugs when you get out, the next section provides important information on how to do so as safely as possible.



METHADONE AND BUPRENORPHINE PROGRAMS

An appointment with a methadone/buprenorphine doctor should be arranged at least two weeks before your release. That way you stand a better chance of getting the doctor you want and the pharmacy of your choice. Prison health care staff can organise this appointment for you. If you delay making these arrangements, you may have to wait a week or more after you get out before you can see someone. A lot can happen in a week. Direct Line (see agencies below) can organise an appointment for you for the day of your release (or the next working day) if you give them two weeks' notice. To re-register on a methadone or buprenorphine program you will need a passport photo. Some doctors will charge a fee (around \$80), so make sure that the doctor you see can 'bulk bill'. This means you won't have to pay anything.

Methadone or buprenorphine is expensive at around \$5.00 a day, especially if you're not working. If you're planning to go on the 'done', then be sure to read the '*Money matters*' section of this booklet (page 41).



LIVE-IN REHAB PROGRAMS

Live-in drug rehab programs can be useful if you don't think you'll be able to cope with the temptation to have a 'taste' once you're out. They provide a roof over your head as well as help with your drug problem. However, you need to be serious about staying clean, because most rehab programs will kick you out if you use. See the list of rehab programs on page 65.



WITHDRAWAL (DETOX) PROGRAMS

You can usually get into detox more quickly than into a residential program, but the wait is still a week or more. There are different ways to detox, some easier and slower, some quicker but more difficult. Direct Line (see page 53) can provide information on different services in your area, how much they cost, and so on.



NA AND AA MEETINGS (NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS AND ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS)

NA and AA meetings can help you cope with the temptation to drink or use, especially if you attend regularly and find a good meeting. Some meetings may be more helpful than others, so don't be put off if you don't like your first meeting. NA and AA are based on the '12 step' system, which requires you to admit you are an alcoholic or a drug addict and be committed to abstinence. That means you aim not to use or drink at all. AA and NA do not believe you can drink or use 'a little bit'. You can still go to meetings if you 'stuff up', but you must aim to give up altogether.

Direct Line (page 64) has details of where and when the nearest AA or NA meetings are held.

If you would prefer to control your drinking or drug use rather than stopping altogether, or if you simply find the 12-step meetings unhelpful, consider counselling as an alternative.



DRUG AND ALCOHOL COUNSELLING

Drug and alcohol counselling involves sitting down with a counsellor and talking about your drug or alcohol problem. The counsellor may give you tips and strategies for dealing with the urge to drink or use, work on a 'relapse prevention' plan with you, and help you look at the way you use drugs or alcohol to block bad feelings. Usually you would see a counsellor once a week.

Once you have detoxed, counselling can help you deal with the temptation to relapse into using again. Detox is only the start. The hard part is not using when things go wrong in your life, or when you are in a situation of temptation (for example, when you meet 'old friends' from the drug scene). A counsellor can help you cope with these situations. If you do use again, your counsellor can help get you back on track again.

Counsellors do not tell you not to use drugs or judge you if you 'stuff up'. Counsellors know that most people need more than one try at stopping, and will not reject you or criticise you if you have a few ups and downs along the way.



PREGNANCY AND DRUG USE

See the information about the Royal Women's Hospital Chemical Dependency Unit on page 64.



MORE INFORMATION?

The Fitzroy Legal Service has a guide for drug and alcohol users, listing most drug and alcohol related agencies in Victoria, as well as information about drugs and safer drug use. The guide is free and can be obtained from:

Fitzroy Legal Service
124 Johnston Street
Fitzroy 3065
Phone: **(03) 9419 3744**

AGENCIES

Direct Line

Phone: **1800 888 236**

Direct Line is a good number to call for any drug and alcohol related information. They can provide the phone number of detox programs, drug and alcohol counselling services and supported rehab programs. They also provide information about different drugs, and can offer counselling over the phone. Don't feel that you can only call Direct Line in a crisis. They can provide referrals and general information about drugs and alcohol at any time.

Stepout

Stepout is a program for prisoners on straight release who want support to deal with a drug or alcohol problem after they get out. You need to organise an appointment before you are released, if possible a month in advance. This is done either through a D&A counsellor or a Transition Assistance Program co-ordinator at the prison. This person can arrange an assessment for the Stepout program.

You need to contact your counsellor within 24 hours of your release for your first counselling session. Further counselling sessions can then be arranged according to your needs and where you live.

ACSO/COATS

ACSO/COATS provides drug and alcohol treatment services for people on parole or CCTO orders. Referral to ACSO/COATS is made through Community Correctional Services if there is a drug or alcohol treatment condition on your order. You can't refer yourself to the service.

Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association (AVA)

See listing on page 25.

Ngala Willumbong

93 Wellington Street, Windsor

Phone: **(03) 9510 3233**

Drug and alcohol information and support for aboriginal people.

LIVE-IN REHAB PROGRAMS**Odyssey House**

660 Bridge Road, Richmond (Administration)

Phone: **(03) 9420 7600**

You cannot go directly from prison to Odyssey House. First you need to go to a support group meeting and then have an assessment. If they decide the program is suitable for you, you will then need to go to preparation group meetings. When they consider you to be ready, you will then be offered a place in the house. All this takes some time, and you will need to be strong enough not to use while waiting to get into the house. If you want to get into Odyssey, you should call them 1-2 weeks before you get out of prison.

SHARC (Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre)

Phone: **(03) 9573 1700**

SHARC provides residential drug rehabilitation for people aged 16-24. To apply, you can call SHARC and arrange an assessment. This should be done at least a month before you are released. The assessment is done over the phone, and takes an hour. If you can't get a whole hour on the phone without interruption, you can break it into two half hour calls. If SHARC decide that their program is suitable for you, you can go directly to SHARC from prison on the day of your release. However, if you spend any time out of prison before going to SHARC, you will need to produce two clean urine tests. SHARC requires you to be completely drug and alcohol free in order to stay on the program.

Quin House

Phone: **(03) 9419 4874**

Quin House provides short-term (approximately three months) supported accommodation for homeless men with drug and alcohol problems. Full board and lodging are provided at a cost of \$250 per fortnight. It is a 'dry' house, and random urine and breath tests are carried out. Because you are free to come and go from the house, and support is only provided by workers from 9am to 5pm

weekdays, you need to be strong and very motivated not to use. It is not a rehab program, though counselling and relapse prevention groups are provided in-house. Independent living skills and a readiness to participate in group programs are required.

Windana Society

Phone: **(03) 9529 7955**

To apply for a place at Windana, you need to go through a drug and alcohol worker at your prison. There is a waiting period of approximately 12 weeks, so make sure you apply early if you wish to have a place when you get out.

Galiamble

66 Gray Street, St Kilda

Phone: **(03) 9534 1602**

Drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Koori men aged 18 and up.

Winja Ulupna

14 Charnwood Crescent, St Kilda

Phone: **(03) 9525 5442**

Drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Koori and non indigenous women aged 18 and up.

Percy Green Memorial Recovery Centre

Tollamba Road, Mooroopna

Phone: **(03) 5826 5217**

Drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre for Koori men aged 18 and up.



Safer Injecting

There is no such thing as totally safe injecting. However, there are ways to reduce the risk of OD's (overdoses) and infections from injecting drug use. Your tolerance to drugs will be much less than it used to be when you were hitting up regularly. This means there is a *very high risk of overdose*. Even if you have used in prison, the change of environment increases the risk of an OD. A quarter of people who die from overdose in Victoria are ex-prisoners, many soon after release. Unless you are careful, it could be you.

AVOIDING AN OD

ODs can happen because of reduced tolerance to heroin, because you haven't been using, or because of differences in the quality of the gear you use. Not all hits are equal, so be careful. It's particularly dangerous to go for a 'big hit' because 'now I'm out and it's party time.' If you haven't used for more than a couple of weeks, your tolerance will be close to zero (the same as a first-time user). Start with a small dose and see how that affects you.

Don't shoot up alone. Make sure someone else is around, so if there is a problem, they can call for help. But be careful. If your friends are totally wasted, they won't be much use. Make sure your friends know how to tell if you've overdosed, and what to do.

SOME FACTS ABOUT OVERDOSE

- Narcan is the heroin-blocking drug that paramedics ('ambos') give to people who have overdosed. *Only* Narcan can revive someone who has OD'd. Cold baths and showers, coffee, speed, ice, injections of lemon juice or water, walking someone around and so on, are all useless.
- Ambulance drivers will only call the police if they are threatened at the scene, or if the OD is fatal. *Don't fail to call the ambos because you think they will bring the police.*
- The major cause of overdose is mixing drugs. Mixing benzos, alcohol or methadone with heroin is very dangerous. These drugs all increase the chances of overdosing. Be aware that drugs can hang around in your system and affect your hit 24 hours or more after you took them.

- Narcan won't protect you from a second overdose if you hit up again shortly after being revived. The Narcan wears off in half an hour to an hour, and you could drop (fall unconscious) again. Narcan won't affect benzos or other drugs you have taken apart from heroin.
- Just because someone doesn't drop immediately doesn't mean they haven't OD'd. Overdoses can occur quickly or slowly, and the person may go into and out of unconsciousness several times.
- People die from overdose because they stop breathing. The brain starves of oxygen and eventually dies. Brain damage will occur within 3-5 minutes of a person ceasing to breathe, which is why you must call an ambulance immediately, and know how to give mouth-to-mouth (see page 70).



SIGNS OF OVERDOSE INCLUDE:

- Not responding when talked to
- Blue lips and fingernails
- Convulsions
- Cold, clammy skin
- Snoring or gurgling sounds



WHAT TO DO IF A FRIEND OVERDOSES:

- Talk to them and try to get a response.
- If they don't respond, call 000 and ask for an ambulance, *immediately*. A person will die quickly once they stop breathing.
- *Don't* waste time trying to bring them round yourself.
- Lie the person on their side and clear their mouth of spit, vomit or anything else. Tilt their head back slightly to clear their airway. Snoring noises indicate the person's airway may still be partially blocked. Tilt the head further back.
- If the person is not breathing, give them 'mouth-to-mouth' (see page 70)



HOW TO GIVE 'MOUTH-TO-MOUTH'

- roll the person gently onto their back.
- tilt their head back by lifting up their jaw. This clears the airway.
- pinch their nose to block the nostrils.
- place your mouth over their open mouth.
- gently blow into their open mouth.
- make sure their chest rises and falls. This indicates the air is getting into their lungs.
- give them one breath for each breath you take (about one breath every four seconds).



AVOIDING INFECTION AND OTHER PROBLEMS

Sharing injecting equipment (this includes needle, syringe, swab, tourniquet, spoon, filter and even your hands), puts you at risk from blood-borne viruses such as Hepatitis B and C and HIV, the virus which causes AIDS. Needle and Syringe Programs (see page 59) can provide clean 'fits', as well as information and education about how to inject safely. Even with new syringes, if you don't inject properly you place yourself at risk of bruising, 'dirty hits', blood poisoning and abscesses (collections of pus under the skin). The following are only some basic tips. You should speak to a Needle and Syringe Program worker about the safest method.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before injecting.
- Make sure all your equipment (swabs, water, spoon, tourniquet, filter, fit etc.) is *new and sterile*. Don't share any part of your equipment, even a tourniquet. Hep C can be transmitted by tiny, unseen amounts of blood on hands or equipment, if it comes into contact with another person's bloodstream (e.g. through contact with the injecting site.) Take extra care with group mixes.
- If new, sterile equipment is impossible, at least make sure your equipment is as clean as possible (see next section for procedure for cleaning fits).
- Sterile water is better than boiled water, but boiled water is better than straight tap water.
- Use sterile alcohol swabs to clean the spoon and the injecting area. Allow the spoon or skin time to dry after wiping.
- Don't use filters from tailor-made cigarettes to filter your drugs, as these contain glass fibres which can damage your heart and veins if injected.
- Use a tourniquet that's easy to release and make sure you release it before injecting the dope.
- After injecting, keep your arm straight and apply pressure to the injecting site with a tissue for a couple of minutes to help reduce bruising.

- Always dispose of your used fit in a 'sharps' disposal bin. It's best to rinse your fit in clean water after you use it.
- Clean up any blood with a tissue and soapy water.
- Throw away old swabs and filters. Don't reuse them.
- Wash your hands after each hit.
- Rotate injection sites.
- Rubbing Pergalin, Lasonil or Hirudoid cream into your arm after about ten minutes will help reduce bruising and swelling.
- Injecting into the wrong place can be extremely dangerous. Speak to an Needle and Syringe Program worker about safe injecting sites.



CLEANING FITS

You should *always* use a new fit. There is no completely safe way to clean a used syringe. However, if you are going to share a needle, you should clean it as follows:

1. Draw clean water up into your syringe and flush it out again. Repeat until no trace of blood is visible. Use fresh water each time.
2. Take the syringe apart and soak in a container of full strength bleach for at least two minutes. If you can't soak it, fill it with bleach and shake it for at least 30 seconds (count *slowly*), then flush it out again. Repeat this at least once.
3. Re-fill the syringe with clean water and flush out again to rinse the bleach out of the syringe. Repeat this flushing procedure at least six times.

If you don't have access to any bleach, at the very least follow the above procedure using soapy water instead of bleach. This won't kill all the germs, but is better than nothing. Remember that even the bleach is not guaranteed to eliminate the risk of infection.

AGENCIES

VIVAIDS

128 Peel Street, North Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9329 1500**

Provides information on blood-borne viruses, transmission prevention, and overdose prevention. Also provides advocacy, support and referral for IV drug users.

NEEDLE AND SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS (NSEP)

There are over 200 Needle and Syringe Exchange Programs (NSEP's) in Victoria, providing clean fits, syringe disposal, information and advice, and referral to treatment or other services if requested. Some NSEP's are located in Community Health Centres, pharmacies or other agencies.

NESP's with outreach services can also pick up used fits and deliver clean ones. You can find out the location of the nearest NSEP from Direct Line (**9416 1818** or toll free **1800 888 236** outside Melbourne).



Health



HEPATITIS C (HEP C)

What is it?

Hep C is a virus that affects the liver. It is passed on through blood-to-blood contact, such as through sharing injecting equipment. It can also be passed on through unsafe tattooing and body piercing. It is unlikely to be passed on sexually, although this can occur if blood is present during sex.

What are the symptoms?

Hep C affects everyone differently. Some people will not experience any symptoms or only mild symptoms while others may experience more severe effects. It takes an average of 13 years for symptoms to start developing. Symptoms can include pains in the liver area, tiredness, nausea, abdominal bloating and flu-like symptoms. There are a range of ways that symptoms of the disease can be managed or treated. About one in five people with Hep C will develop cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver although the severity of the scarring differs from person to person. In a small percentage of cases, Hep C eventually results in liver failure or liver cancer.

How careful do I need to be?

Hep C is a resilient virus. For example, it can survive in bloodstains on a tourniquet. It can be passed on through tiny amounts of blood that are too small for you to see, if the infected blood comes into contact with another person's bloodstream (for example through a cut, sore, or injecting site). For this reason, it is important to be 'blood aware'. This means being aware that *all* blood outside the body could be infectious and treating it accordingly.

There are several different 'strains' (types) of Hep C, and the disease may be worse if you are infected with more than one strain. Therefore, you need to continue to be aware of the risk of re-infection even if you already have Hep C.

Should I have a Hep C test?

Given the high number of prisoners with Hep C, you may wish to consider having a test for the disease if you have not already done so. Knowing that you have the disease allows you to take steps to limit the damage it causes. Lifestyle changes, including a 'liver-friendly' diet, may help to relieve symptoms and reduce further damage to the liver. Some people are able to clear the virus from their body entirely, although why some people are able to do this and others aren't is not known.

If you are considering having a test, the Hepatitis C Council or Hepatitis C Helpline (see *Agencies* below) can provide counselling to help you make this decision. Testing can be done pre- or post-release.

Vaccines are available for Hep A and Hep B (not Hep C). Vaccinations are recommended for anyone with Hep C, or in an environment where Hep C is common, such as prisons.

The Melbourne Sexual Health Centre offers free Hepatitis C testing and pre and post test counselling. They also offer free hepatitis A and B vaccinations for people with hepatitis C. Normally the vaccinations cost about \$60.



HIV/AIDS

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It is passed on through blood-to-blood contact. Unsafe sex and sharing of injecting equipment are the most common means of transmission. See the *Safer Injecting* section of this booklet (page 56) for advice about avoiding infection through unsafe injecting practices. Safe sex means correct use of a condom and water-based lubricant during penetrative (anal or vaginal) sex, using condoms or dental dams during oral sex, and wearing latex gloves when penetration with the hands or fingers occurs.

You can be tested for HIV/AIDS free of charge at specialised services where counselling is provided and confidentiality guaranteed. Call AIDSLINE or the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (see below) for referral to your nearest service.



DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

A 'disability' is something that prevents or limits someone from doing something. Some disabilities, such as a physical disability, are obvious. For example, someone may have difficulty walking due to an accident but with a walking stick can get around without much problem. However, some disabilities are not so obvious. These disabilities, which may not be so easy to spot, include intellectual disability, acquired brain injury or sensory disability such as hearing loss.

For information about disability support services, see the listing for 'Disability Intake and Response Service' under 'Agencies' below.

Acquired Brain Injury

An Acquired Brain Injury is a disability caused by injury to the brain. Having an Acquired Brain Injury can result in a physical disability, or it may affect a person's ability to think clearly or remember things. If you are aware you have an Acquired Brain Injury, you may want to get specialist advice or support.

However, some people can have an Acquired Brain Injury without knowing it. If you answer 'yes' to any of the following, you may wish to consider being assessed for Acquired Brain Injury:

- Have you been unconscious for more than 24 hours?
- Have you been a heavy drinker over a long period of time?
- Have you suffered a stroke, tumour, or an illness affecting your brain, such as meningitis?
- Do you have difficulty remembering things or planning things you need to do?
- Have you lost oxygen during an accident, overdose, suicide attempt or assault to your head?

For more information contact Headway Victoria (see the listing under *Agencies*, below)

Mental Health

If you have a mental illness or were a patient of an Area Mental Health Service before coming to prison, then the prison health service should follow up with that service for you, or make sure you have the contact details of that service. If you have a psychiatric disability or are at psychiatric risk, the prison health service should refer you to the appropriate Area Mental Health Service.

If your doctor has prescribed you medication for your mental illness, it is important that you keep taking it unless your doctor advises you to stop taking it or changes it for you. If you need help with your medication or illness, contact your Area Mental Health service, general practitioner or your nearest hospital. The Mental Health Foundation can provide referral to your nearest mental health service (see *Agencies* below).



PREGNANCY AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

See the agencies listed in under *Women's Health* (page 64), for information about services that can assist with drug use and pregnancy, pregnancy termination, birth control advice, and other women's health issues.

AGENCIES

AIDSLINE

Phone: **1800 133 392** (toll free, for callers outside Melbourne metro area)

Counselling, information and referral for HIV/AIDS related issues.

Disability Intake and Response Service

Department of Human Services

Phone: **1800 783 783** (toll-free)

Provides information about services and supports available for people with a disability, and their family and carers.

Headway Victoria

2/12 King Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9642 2411**

Advocacy ceases in December 2006 though will continue to provide information for people with an Acquired Brain Injury.

Hepatitis C Council

Suite 5, 200 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Phone: **(03) 9380 4644**

Or: **1800 703 003** (toll free)

Provides information kits, referral and support for Hep C related issues.

Hepatitis C Helpline

Phone: **1800 800 241** (toll free, for callers outside of Melbourne metro area)

Vietnamese information line: **1800 456 007**

Support, counselling, referral and information for anyone who may have concerns about Hep C.

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

580 Swanston Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9347 0244**

Provides confidential consultation, examination, treatment, counselling and referral for sexually transmitted diseases.

Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria)

270 Church Street, Richmond

Phone: **(03) 9427 0406**

Provides information and referral for people with a mental disorder, their families, and carers. Does not provide medical services.

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

186 Nicholson Street, Fitzroy

Phone: **(03) 9419 3000**

Provides medical, dental, mental health and a range of other health-related services to Aboriginal people. Community, Family programs and financial counselling is provided.

Victorian AIDS Council and Gay Men's Health Centre

6 Claremont Street, South Yarra

Phone: **(03) 9865 6700**

Or: **1800 134 840** (toll free for callers outside of Melbourne metro area)

Provides information and advice about treatment options for HIV/AIDS, counselling, support groups, HIV/AIDS legal service and a range of other services related to HIV/AIDS and gay men's health.

Positive Living Centre

51 Commercial Road Prahran

Phone: **(03) 9863 0444**

WOMEN'S HEALTH**Women's Health Victoria**

Level 1, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9662 3755**

An independent statewide service run by women for women, providing health advocacy and information.

Chemical Dependency Unit, Royal Women's Hospital

264 Cardigan Street, Carlton

Phone: **9344 2363** or **9344 2180**

Cares for pregnant women with a current or past history of alcohol or drug use. An inpatient methadone program is available for women with a heroin dependency. A range of health care workers including dietitians, social workers and doctors can advise you about options and provide support.

Choices Clinic

132 Grattan Street Carlton (Outpatients Department,
Royal Women's Hospital)

Phone: **(03) 9344 2183**

Provides advice about birth control options. Intrauterine devices can be fitted and sterilization procedures organized where appropriate.

Pregnancy Advisory Services

Phone: **(03) 9344 2259**

Counselling, information and clinical services for pregnancy termination.



Returning to Family

Prisoners returning to their family often look forward to this reunion more than anything. However, many prisoners have told VACRO that once the 'honeymoon period' has worn off things do not always go smoothly. VACRO knows how difficult it may be to come from prison back into the family and can provide support. Contact details are at the end of this section.

Below are some tips on how to deal with some of the problems that might occur.



RETURNING TO YOUR PARTNER

What do you expect of your partner after you are released?

Picking up where you left off in a relationship may be more difficult than you expect. While life might have seemed 'on hold' for you, it has continued for your loved ones. They have adjusted to your absence just as you have to prison life. It would be understandable for you and your partner to feel anxious about the reunion.

The key is to *talk* to your partner about the expectations you have before you get out, and *keep talking* after your release. It is difficult to be realistic about life outside when you're in jail. It's easy to get carried away with unreal fantasies about how things are going to be. If your partner tells you you're being unrealistic or getting carried away, *listen*. He or she is probably more in touch on this score than you are.

It is also important to remember that the problems that existed in your relationship before you went to prison are likely to still be there when you get out. If, for example, your relationship was violent, you may have unrealistic expectations about how things will be different this time after you are released. If things don't work out this way, it is important to seek help. If you are the victim of domestic violence, the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (see page 27) can help.

Did you start your relationship while in jail, or a short time after you went in?

Prison relationships can be intense. The restrictions the system places on the relationship tend to make the feelings seem stronger. You may feel you know each other inside out, but the truth is when you come out, you will find there is more to learn. You're going to have a lot of time together to get to know each other 'warts and all'. This can place great strain on your relationship, particularly if your expectations are unrealistic.

Prison may have changed you in many ways. Your feelings and behaviour may not make sense to you.

Being withdrawn, mood swings and angry outbursts are common. It's all part of the difficult process of re-adjusting from prison life to family life. Suddenly you are faced with a whole new set of demands. Think how different the survival requirements of prison are to the requirements of a good relationship. In jail, violence and intimidation are often used to 'solve' conflict. At home, those tactics could destroy your relationship with your family and even land you back inside. The skills of *listening* and *open communication* are essential to a good relationship.

If you do find yourself having problems, relationship or family counselling can help sort things out. Don't wait until the relationship is on the rocks or your family is falling apart to seek help. It's better to see someone early, when things are easier to sort out.

There may also be relationship and family programs available to you while you're still inside. Take advantage of them.

**RETURNING TO YOUR CHILDREN****Will you have part or full custody of your children when you leave prison?**

Your children may be extremely happy to have you back but sometimes they feel upset that you were away for so long. It doesn't matter that you didn't *mean* to go to jail. They may still feel that you let them down. Remember that they need to hear from you that you do love them, and try not to be too hurt if they give you a hard time. Listen and be understanding rather than defensive. Their anger will pass if you are prepared to be patient to regain their trust.

Have you thought about how your children will react when you try to be their parent again?

A cause for anger among your children may be your coming back into the family and attempting to resume a parenting role. Like anyone, children don't like major changes to their lives in which they have no say. Be prepared for these feelings and try to accept them. Perhaps some other family member took on the parenting role while you were in prison. There may be a difficult period of adjustment as you and the person who has been looking after your children work out the roles each of you will play in your children's lives.

Be prepared for the noise and mess that children make.

In prison, the one thing you have control over is your cell. If you were in the habit of keeping your cell in a spotless condition, you can expect to find it difficult to cope with children who leave toys around and yell and scream. Remember this is *normal* behaviour for children. You can teach them to tidy up after themselves, but you don't want to stop them behaving like children. Insisting on having complete control over your environment will only create more stress for you and for them.

Will you be a single parent after you are released?

This can be very challenging. It can be hard enough to look after yourself in the early days post-release, let alone a demanding child. Some children may become particularly 'clingy' when their parent returns home from prison. This may be due to their fear of being separated again. It is important to *get support* if you feel you or your children aren't coping. Don't wait until things build up to the point where you lash out at the children, take drugs or do something else that might hurt you or your children. See the list of agencies below that can provide parenting support.



RETURNING TO PARENTS

Living with parents after release can have practical, emotional and financial advantages but it can also be stressful.

Parents of ex-prisoners often worry their son or daughter is going to re-offend or use drugs again. They often try to control them or monitor their behaviour in various ways. This is because they care about you. However, feeling that you are being watched over, or that

your parents don't trust you can be hard. You can even feel tempted to 'do something' just to break out. Remember that the decision not to re-offend (or use) is about what *you want for your life*. You're not doing it to please them.

Tell your parents what is helpful and not helpful for you in terms of support. It may be useful for them to hear from you how what they do affects you. Remember that while you live in your parents' house, it is reasonable for them to expect you to live by their rules. If you can't do this, then you'll need to look for your own place.

VACRO runs a support group for the parents of offenders. If your parents are finding it hard coping, this may be of assistance. Call (03) 9602 1366.

PARENTING ASSISTANCE SERVICES RELATIONSHIP AND FAMILY COUNSELLING VACRO

Level 1/116 Hardware Street, Melbourne
Phone: **(03) 9602 1366**

VACRO knows the difficulties faced by people released from prison and the families they return to. They offer counselling, support groups for parents and post-prison debriefing for ex-prisoners and their families. All VACRO services are free.

LifeWorks

LifeWorks provides relationship and family counselling as well as a range of other programs including individual counselling, anger management groups for men and women and parenting education. Fee for counselling is based on income, with a minimum charge of \$20. LifeWorks is regionalised; you will need to look up the nearest service to you under LifeWorks in the White Pages.

Parentline

Phone: **13 22 89**

Parentline is a 24-hour information, advice and referral helpline for parents of children under 18 years of age. They can provide counselling and advice if you are feeling stuck, and refer you to appropriate services, such as parenting courses in your area. They operate from 10am-10pm weekends, 8am-midnight weekdays.

Children's Protection Society

Phone: **(03) 9458 3566**

Can provide parenting advice, as well as referral to appropriate parent support and education groups, courses etc.

Anglicare

Anglicare can provide assistance with parenting, as well as relationship and family counselling at a low cost depending on your income. Anglicare is a regionalised service, which means you need to call the office in your area. Look up the branch closest to you under 'Anglicare' in the White Pages.

Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA)

See listing on page 26.

Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres often provide parenting courses. You can find the one nearest to you in the White Pages under Community Health Centres.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA House)

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

3rd floor, 210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Phone: **(03) 9344 2210** Crisis Counselling 9am-5.30pm

Phone: **1800 806 292**

Statewide, 24-hour telephone counselling for victims of sexual assault. Face to face counselling also offered to residents of Northern and Western suburbs. For residents of other areas, referral to a local counselling service will be made

Men's Referral Service

Phone: **(03) 9428 2899**

The Men's Referral Service can provide information about agencies and groups that can help you deal with your violent behaviour. The line is open 12pm to 9pm weekdays.

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria

See listing on page 27.

SEPARATION, CUSTODY AND CHILD SUPPORT ISSUES

Child Support Agency

Phone: **13 12 72**

Helps separated parents manage their child support responsibilities by working actively with parents to help them make the best arrangement for them and their children.

Family Court of Australia

305 William Street Melbourne

Phone: **8600 3800**

Website: **www.familylawcourt.gov.au**

Mediation, dispute resolution and counselling for couples going through separation. Assists separating couples to reach agreement on custody, child support and other arrangements without going through the courts.

Victoria Legal Aid

See listing on page 30.

OTHER AGENCIES

Link-Up Victoria

139 Nicholson Street, East Brunswick

Phone: **(03) 8388 1855**

Offers assistance and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, separated from their families under past practices and policies of Australian Governments, to trace and reunite with their families.



Isolation and Loneliness

Isolation and loneliness can be serious problems for ex-prisoners without families. Some end up re-offending just to return to prison where they know people and don't feel out of place. Paranoia and feeling 'different' is common for ex-prisoners (see the section on *Coping with Anxiety and Depression*, page 75) and can result in you lacking the confidence to meet people and make new friendships.



YOUR 'PRISON SELF'

Your 'prison self' is the image you learned to project when you first went in: showing other inmates that you were not an easy target, acting tough, hiding your feelings and weaknesses. That image is the armour you wear to keep you safe inside. The problem is that on the outside, wearing all those defences is not only unnecessary; it makes things worse. Instead of protecting you, it scares people off. What you need to 'make it' in the community is the very *opposite* of what cuts it inside. Being open and friendly is more likely to get you what you want than behaving as you would in prison.

Now you're so used to wearing that 'prison armour', it's hard to take it off. You may even think you *are* your prison self. Don't make this mistake. Everyone needs other people. To get your needs met on the outside, you're going to have to slowly learn to take a few risks and open up to people.



SMALL TALK

Talking about the weather, the football or what you did on the weekend doesn't happen in prison much. In fact, what passes for normal conversation in the general community can seem trivial and annoying when you've spent time in prison, where survival was the main concern. Learning what people in the community talk about takes time, and feels strange. It's all about learning to be friendly rather than wearing that 'prison mask'.

It will take time to get used to the different social rules that operate outside prison. Listen to other people. How do they start a conversation? What gets talked about? You'll get the hang of it. Don't forget that most people, 'squareheads' included, feel shy or don't know what to say from time to time.



OLD MATES AND NEW MATES

A lot of prisoners who want to go straight when they come out worry about seeing old associates from criminal or drug-using circles.

They know if they hang around those people, there's a strong chance that they will end up re-offending. On the other hand, if they don't see any of their old associates, they'll have nobody. At least with their old connections they feel comfortable and know the score.

There are no easy answers to this one. Building up a new circle of friends is not easy, but it can be done. Here are a few tips:

- If you're going to meet someone who still uses drugs, think about how and when you have contact. It might be better to see a person in a café rather than in their lounge room, where it's all too easy to light up that bong or have that hit.
- Make it clear to your associates that you don't want to fall back into old ways, but *don't rely on them to make it easy for you*. People who are still using or breaking the law are more likely to want to drag you back down than wish you well in your new life. That's reality. After all, if you succeed, they might feel uncomfortable about their own lives.
- Be selective about who you keep in contact with. It's not hard to tell who is good for you, and who mean trouble. Another person who is also committed to staying out can be a great help. Build on your contacts with those prisoners who you believe are likely to stay out and who are serious about going straight.
- Form a relationship with a support worker whom you trust. Although workers are professional people who are paid to help you, a real bond of trust can develop. Look in the '*Getting support*' section of this booklet (page 24) for numbers to contact.
- NA, AA and other 12-step programs have a 'sponsoring' system in which more experienced members of the program provide support and guidance to newer members. If you have drug or alcohol problems, attend a meeting and see if there is someone there who you like who may be able to sponsor you. Contact Direct Line on **1800 888 236** for a referral to your nearest meeting.

- Consider the following ways of meeting new people:
 - Neighbourhood or community houses often run programs and groups either for free or at a very low cost. These can be a good way to meet people. You can find the nearest one to you by looking up the white pages under the name of your local council.
 - Sporting clubs. It takes some confidence to walk into a club where you don't know anybody and introduce yourself, but if you have an interest or ability in sport, this can be a great place to start meeting people. You'll feel uncomfortable at first (*everyone does*, not just ex-prisoners), but this will pass if you don't give up.



Coping With Anxiety and Depression



DO YOU HAVE 'GATE FEVER'?

The longer your sentence the more anxious you are likely to feel as the date of your release approaches. Anxiety is simply fear, but it is the kind of fear that hangs around in the background so you may not recognise it for what it is. Pre-release anxiety or 'gate fever' is the combined result of a build-up of anticipation and excitement, the fear that 'something has to go wrong' to stuff up your release, and doubts about your ability to make it out there.

It's important you make practical plans for your release, but you should avoid spending too much time fantasising about what you're going to do and how it's going to be. Stay focused on the here and now. Recognise that sleeplessness, restlessness and agitation, feeling sick and being unable to eat are all just signs of anxiety, a normal response to your situation. Stay calm and focus on preparing yourself mentally and emotionally for the day of your release.



PARANOIA AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT

After months or years of living in confinement it can be overwhelming to be in the city again, with no walls and crowds of strangers everywhere. You may feel different from everybody, because of your experience. And because you *feel* different, you might imagine that this difference is obvious to everyone around you. You might feel they can tell you've just come out of prison and that they're judging you.

There are two things to remember here: firstly, it is *normal* for people to look at one another in the outside world. It's only in prison that people avoid eye contact for fear of getting into a blue. Secondly, nobody can tell where you've just been. Out in the world most people are too busy with their own lives to bother looking at you too closely. The feeling of being separate and different will slowly pass over time as you readjust to life outside.

Feeling inferior or somehow marked as 'a criminal' can make you misread other people's words or actions. You can imagine they are having a go at you or judging you when they're not. Sometimes if someone seems a bit funny it's because they've had a bad day, or they're just a rude person. Don't take everything personally.



CARS AND CROWDS

After you've been locked up for a while, you forget what a busy, noisy, fast-moving world it is. It can be quite overwhelming. Travelling in a car at 50 or 60 kilometres per hour can feel like you're going at breakneck speed. Crossing a busy road can be a frightening experience. You haven't had to judge speeds and distances while you've been away, so you're going to be rusty at first. Take it slowly, and *be careful*.

Prison is a dangerous environment. For your own safety you had to be constantly aware of everything going on around you. If you try to do this outside, *it will drive you crazy*. Yet it may be hard to stop doing, because you relied on it for your survival inside. You have to expect that it's going to take some time to re-adjust. However, don't fall into the trap of trying to avoid the world altogether. Withdrawing into a room somewhere will only make the problem worse. Try to get out at least once a day, even if it's only for a short walk. That way you'll slowly get used to your new environment and learn to let go of those prison defences.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

For a newly released prisoner, particularly one who has been in for a long time, making decisions can cause great anxiety. For the period of your imprisonment, nearly all decisions have been made for you. It's like not using a muscle for a long time. After a while, your decision-making 'muscle' gets weak, and needs to slowly be exercised back into condition.

The kind of simple decisions that most people make without a thought, like what to eat for lunch and when to get out of bed can be a struggle for an ex-prisoner. You can be tempted to make your family into replacement 'prison officers', leaving them to make your decisions for you. They can then end up feeling frustrated, and you feeling resentful that they're 'bossing you around', even though you set it up that way.

Start with small decisions and don't worry about making the 'right' one. There may be some choices in life where there's a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to go. But most of the time, they're just that: choices. After all, that's what being free is about.



TIPS FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Here are a few quick tips on how to deal with post-prison anxiety:

- Remember: *They can't tell and they're not looking at you.*
- Don't avoid situations that create anxiety, but confront them in doses you can handle.
- See a counsellor (See the Getting support section of this booklet (page 24). A counsellor who understands post-release issues can help you sort out your fears from reality.
- If you think you may be having a 'panic attack' (sweating, short of breath, extremely anxious), try to focus on your breathing. Make your breaths slow and even, and breathe into the bottom of your lungs. Short, shallow breaths will create more anxiety. Talk yourself down: "I'm safe." "It's OK." "I was warned about this. It's just anxiety."
- There are medications that can help reduce anxiety. See a doctor if you feel the anxiety is getting on top of you. It's better to get medical help than try to drink your anxiety away, or use. Using alcohol or other drugs can make you feel emotionally bullet-proof for a brief time, but you are placing yourself at risk of addiction and relapse into crime.



DEPRESSION

Depression is a common reaction to coming out of jail, for both the ex-prisoner and his or her family. Signs that you are depressed include:

- Feeling continually sad and hopeless
- Not being able to enjoy anything in life (it all seems 'grey' or pointless)
- Having a lot of negative thoughts about life and yourself
- Lacking motivation to do anything, even to get out of bed
- Losing your appetite, or over-eating
- Being unable to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Thoughts of suicide



Experiencing some of these symptoms for a short period is to be expected. However, if you find these feelings go on for more than a couple of weeks, or become so severe that you are unable to function properly (feed yourself, meet parole commitments etc), then seek help. The best treatment for depression is a combination of counselling and anti-depressant medication. See the *Getting support* section of this booklet (page 24) for counselling services that can assist. Your local doctor can prescribe appropriate medication. 'Drowning your sorrows' or having a hit are bad ways to deal with depression, as both alcohol and heroin are *depressants* that in the long run will only tend to make things worse.



Keeping your cool

There's plenty to be frustrated about when you come out of prison. Particularly in the first couple of months, you may find yourself under intense pressure. Things will go wrong, fall through, or take longer than expected. Anger may build up slowly if you feel you're constantly hitting your head against a brick wall. If you 'lose it' and lash out at someone, whether it's your partner, a worker, or someone at the pub who you think is looking at you the wrong way, then the next stop may be the divvy van.

The following tips may help you stay cool in a crisis:

- **Positive self-talk:** Notice your own thinking. Your own thoughts can either work you up more or calm you down. Saying something to yourself like "I won't let this get to me", "If I do something here, I could ruin my parole", "I can handle this", or just "Chill" can help take the edge off your anger. Telling yourself how much the other person deserves to 'get it' is like pouring petrol on a fire.
- **Consequential thinking:** Imagine the consequences of being aggressive or not. Your freedom is not worth risking. On the other hand, you can pat yourself on the back for a job well done if you walk away with your cool intact.
- **Time out:** Get away from the situation for a while. Go for a walk, smoke a cigarette, or do something else for a while until you've calmed down enough to deal with the situation. If you have to return to the anger-provoking situation, consider how you're going to solve the conflict before you go back.
- **Breathing:** Notice how you're breathing. Rapid, shallow breaths will tend to wind you up even more, whereas s-l-o-w, deep, relaxed breathing will tend to calm you down. Focus on taking ten of these slow, calm breaths.
- **Danger signs:** Notice the physical warning signs that you are losing your cool. These include: getting hot, tensing your muscles, sweating, having an 'adrenaline rush', shaking or shouting. Get away from the situation as soon as possible, or if you can't, use the other suggestions here to calm down.

- **Self-control = Strength:** Don't fall into the trap of thinking you have to prove to your mates that you're not 'weak'. It takes more real strength to master your own emotions and put your life in order than it does to blue with someone whose trying to wind you up.
- **Assertiveness:** Try being *assertive* rather than *aggressive*. Being assertive means calmly and clearly stating what you feel or want, without using shouting, intimidation or violence to get your way. It's also different from being *passive*, which is putting up with stuff you don't like because you feel you have to. If someone is doing something you don't like, or that violates your rights, you have a right to stand up to them and state how you feel. But you don't need to use force to put your point across. Many anger management courses include training in assertiveness skills.
- **Relaxation:** If anger is building up, include some activities into your day that help you relax or blow off steam. Swimming, going for a walk, working out, doing yoga or meditation, anything that makes you feel good and is good for you can help. Drinking may relax you, but it will also tend to let the lid off your anger, so you're actually much more likely to become violent.
- **Preparation:** If you're feeling worked up, don't put yourself in situations that are likely to make things worse. If you know you will be going into a stressful situation, do something relaxing first so you go in with a clear head and a calm attitude.

AGENCIES OFFERING ANGER MANAGEMENT

Men's Referral Service

Phone: (03) 9428 2899

The men's referral service provides referrals to programs for men who wish to stop their own violent behaviour.

LifeWorks

Provides anger management groups for men and women, as well as a range of other services. See entry on page 87 for details.



Release Day

Release day can be hectic and overwhelming. Use this checklist to help you plan your day in advance.

- Who is going to pick you up? (If no one, how will you get where you need to go?)

- At what time?

- Where are you going to go?

- What must you do that day?

- Where are you going to stay?

- What are you going to do for money?



Pre-release Planner

Things I need to organise for my release	What do I need to do to achieve this/ Who do I need to see?



Notes

Business cards

