

The Liberal Party recognises the importance of an effective prison system as part of an effective and integrated National Offender Management Service (NOMS). It identifies the recent increase in the prison population to 84,450 as being a cause for concern. The current prison population is 92 percent greater than the 1993 prison population. Given that there has not been a similar increase in the general population this indicates that we are currently incarcerating a higher percentage of our population than we did in 1993. Such an increase is an indication of a failure in the judicial and penal system.

The Liberal Party sees the purpose of the prison system to be the rehabilitation of offenders rather than as a form of punishment! It is the courts who punish offenders by imposing the loss of liberty upon them. The prison system enforces this loss of liberty but have a duty to do this humanely with the aim of rehabilitation of the offender and reducing further offending. Prisons need to be given appropriate assistance to prevent the offender being caught in the vicious cycle of being in and out of custody throughout their lives.

The Liberal Party believes that in a humane liberal society the level of incarceration should be kept to a minimum and wherever possible alternative methods should be used to deal with offenders.

The Liberal Party sees the primary aim of Offender Management as implemented through NOMS as the rehabilitation of the offender and the reduction in offending and re-offending, done in a form that protects and supports the protection and security of the public. It is the position of the Liberal Party that NOMS and the Prison Service, in particular, are failing in this duty.

The current prison system has a poor record for reducing re-offending, with 46 percent of adults are re-convicted within 1 year of release, this rises to 60 percent for those serving a sentence of less than 1 year.

48 percent of women leave prison are re-convicted within 1 year of release, this goes to 77 percent for women who have had 11 consecutive short sentences. 68 percent of under 18s are re-convicted within 1 year of release.

Short prison sentences are less effective than community sentences at reducing re-offending, they are 7 percentage points higher for re-offending than an offender serving a community sentence and they commit more offences than those on community sentences.

Re-offending costs the taxpayer billions per year between 9.5 and 13 billion per annum of which 7 to 10 billion are spent on short sentence prisoners.

The use of release on temporary licence in 2012 only 26 cases involved prisoners being arrested on suspicion of committing an offence, that is a 99.95 percent success rate. Lately sadly RoTL are 37percent down being used and SOE employers say they have received no one on RoTL saying that though when used it still is 99.93 percent success rate.

The Liberal Party will look to address the causes why people offend, offenders to have a planned care plan to help with drug addiction debt and gambling addiction programmes to be run. Mental health treatments to help offenders cope and manage their conditions. The goal of these reforms is to prevent people entering a lifestyle of crime and, if they

have to prepare the person to live an offending free life when they have served their sentence.

Prisoners to be given the opportunity to undertake meaningful education, employment, day release to work at actual companies, training and effective offending behaviour courses so that on their release they have qualifications and experience for potential employers or if they wish to become self-employed advice and support to be given to them.

The Liberal Party calls for the current prisoner pay structure which imposes a positive disincentive to prisoners undertaking education, training or offending behaviour work to be revised so that prisoners undertaking such activities are not at a disadvantage with respect to earnings.

The Liberal Party to look at decriminalizing certain victimless offences from acts of criminality such as prostitution related offences.

The Liberal Party calls for all custodial sentences of less than twelve months in duration to be abolished and replaced with non-custodial community offending behaviour programmes and rehabilitation services. We want to see short prison sentences that are applied to petty criminal activity used to fund drug dependency replaced by mandatory drug rehabilitation programmes.

New or young offenders to not be put in the general prison population but placed away from seasoned and hardened criminals who may coach and mentor these green inmates and encourage them not to better themselves but turn to a life of crime.

Prison officers to have the appropriate training so they can become effective mentors and role models to the offenders they care for. Prison officers are to be given the recognition, rewards, protection and tools to continue the hard work and the service they do for society.

The Liberal Party calls for the number of prison officers to be increased to a level where they are able to provide a safe and caring environment within the prison system and maintain a safe working environment for themselves.

The Liberal Party calls for the upgrading of the prison estate to a standard that will ensure that every prisoner has a cell with single occupancy and with direct access to sanitary facilities twenty-four hours a day, without restrictions.

Proposed by Colin France  
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