



**Submission To:** Victorian Legislative Council, Legal and Social Issues Committee

**Submission Regarding:** Inquiry into Children of Incarcerated Parents

**Submission From:** Harm Reduction Australia (HRA)

The Secretary  
Legislative Council, Legal and Social Issues Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002  
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29 April 2022

## Inquiry into Children of Incarcerated Parents

Dear Secretary,

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) welcomes this inquiry and the decision by the Victorian Parliament to investigate the priority issues for children with incarcerated parents.

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) is a national organisation committed to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws. HRA's approach is grounded in justice and human rights. Our members are primarily people working in harm reduction, public health and related sectors, but also includes a wide range of individuals interested in the continuation and expansion of harm reduction and drug policy reform measures in Australia.

As an organisation, HRA understands the complexities associated with drugs and drug policy matters, and advocates for safe, effective ways to protect the wellbeing and human rights of people who use drugs and, that of their families and wider communities. HRA aims to ensure that drug policies in Australia first and foremost do no harm and provide real benefit to Australian society through evidence-based, non-judgmental and humane responses to drug use in society. HRA's key goals are:

- To develop and maintain a national network of individuals and organisations dedicated to achieving and maintaining best practice harm reduction and effective and humane drug policies in Australia.

- To educate the public, decision makers and those who influence public opinion (including the media) about the efficacy and legitimacy of harm reduction and human rights-based drug policies and programs for redressing some of the harms associate with current drug laws and policies.
- To work collaboratively to ensure reform to current drug policy with the primary aims of ending criminalisation, incarceration, stigmatisation, discrimination and human rights violations against the people who use or have used drugs.

As an under-resourced organisation, HRA recognises that collaboration and partnership are critical to achieving our ambitious goals. Thus, rather than making a dedicated submission to this inquiry, HRA has opted to fully endorse and support the excellent submission being made to this inquiry by the **Students for Sensible Drug Policy at the University of Melbourne (SSDP UniMelb)**. To this end, HRA would like to express our support for both the substantive commentary and the key recommendations made by our colleagues at SSDP UniMelb in relation to the Inquiry Key Term of Reference:

*(b) what policies exist and what services are available, including consideration of those in other jurisdictions.*

Specifically, with reference to the above ToR, HRA supports and endorses the following 7 recommendations made in the SSDP UniMelb submission including recommending that:

1. Victoria's criminal justice system move toward a model of drug decriminalisation to decrease the likelihood of children and their parents suffering the long term consequences of a parents' incarceration.
2. Victoria's criminal justice system establish needle and syringe programs inside correctional facilities to reduce the likelihood of blood-borne virus transmission, damaged veins and the development of chronic health issues amongst prisoners.
3. Victoria's criminal justice system implement harm reduction 'care packages' to prisoners upon discharge, including take-home naloxone to avoid unexpected overdoses.
4. Family-inclusive treatment options be provided to parents caught with small quantities of currently illegal drugs, including assertive outreach, home-detoxification programs.
5. Social housing providers be prohibited from evicting tenants if they have only been charged, but not convicted of a crime.

6. Parenthood and familial situations be more formally taken into consideration when granting bail.
7. The government establish a dedicated service for children of incarcerated persons.

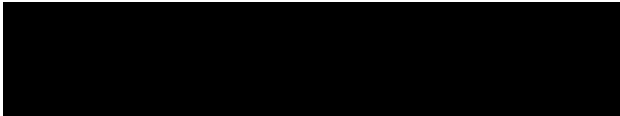
HRA urges the Legal and Social Issues Committee to take up the above recommendations.

Further, HRA would also welcome the opportunity, should it arise, to provide oral evidence to the Committee and expand upon our organisational position on these critical policy issues.

For more information on HRA and our key policy positions please visit us at:

<https://www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au/>

Yours sincerely



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