



Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
23 February 2022

Asked by MR PETER CAIN on 23 FEBRUARY 2022: Mr Gentleman took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Proof Transcript 23 February 2022 [PAGE 60-61]]

In relation to: Justice Housing Program

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mrs Kikkert. We will move on from this line. You will have a chance to come back to it. So I have a fresh line of questioning regarding the Justice Housing Program. How long is the—how many people have accessed this program and how long is the wait list?

Mr Gentleman: Thank you very much, Mr Cain, and the government is committed of course to reducing recidivism in the ACT, so the Justice Housing Program is funded as part of the Building Communities, Not Prisons policy that has been running since May last year and it will be evaluated and expanded as necessary. The government is committed, of course, to expanding those transitional accommodation options and looking after detainees leaving the AMC. With that, I will hand over to our directorate officials. I think Bruno is on the line, who has a good stream of knowledge on this.

Mr Johnson: Sorry, minister, it is back to me at that point and we will confirm those numbers as soon as I can get them to hand. I did think I had them with me, but I will get them to hand any second.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will take that as a question taken on notice anyway, in case you cannot get back to us. So how long is the wait list for the program and are there plans to expand the program?

Mr Johnson: Thank you for the question. The way this varies, of course, depending on what category you might be in and in fact, you know, we have more beds for males than females, but then demand is obviously different between males and females. We are working with Yeddung Mura now to roll out another two residences with four beds, two beds each, particularly focused at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We generally try to work for some time before someone is released so we are not finding ourselves with wait list times, but—and of course, the wait list times will change depending on the time and space, so you could not quantify a particular wait list. The idea will always be to get somebody into justice housing at the time when they need it, which is the point of release.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. And final one from me on this. How many have applied to the program and have been rejected and why were they rejected?

Mr Johnson: I would have to take that on notice. I know that there have been a couple of people who have not been able to enter the Justice Housing Program, but I will need to take that one on notice. I would not have those figures in front of me.

Acting Minister for Corrections: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

The Justice Housing Program (JHP) currently has 10 houses containing a total of 30 beds. A minimum of six (6) beds across eight (8) men's properties are dedicated to men in need of a secure address to be released on bail. The remaining beds are available to eligible men subject to both bail and post sentence order.

Two houses are allocated for women. Beds in these houses are available to eligible clients subject to both bail and post sentence orders.

From commencement of the JHP in May 2020 to 20 January 2022, there were a total of ninety-five (95) occupants accommodated (current and exited) in the JHP. This includes eighty-one (81) men (twenty-three (23) Indigenous), twelve (12) women (six (6) Indigenous) and two (2) transgender persons (one (1) Indigenous).

A further fifty-three (53) detainees for this period were accepted into the JHP, but not accommodated due to court/Sentence Administration Board (SAB) outcomes and/or JHP applications having been withdrawn. This includes forty-six (46) male (fifteen (15) Indigenous) and seven (7) female (four (4) Indigenous).

As of 20 January 2022, there were twenty (20) occupants residing in JHP properties. This included nineteen (19) men (five (5) Indigenous) and one (1) woman. A further thirty-two (32) applications had been assessed and found suitable for the JHP. Of these, twenty-nine (29) are male applicants (seven (7) Indigenous) and three (3) are female applicants (one (1) Indigenous). Allocation to a property will be dependent on court and SAB outcomes, and program vacancies.

Each week the JHP team is processing new applications, resulting in minimal vacancies across the men's properties and timely re-allocation of beds when an occupant exits the JHP. As 20 January 2022, there were ten (10) applications being assessed. Nine (9) of these are male applicants (two (2) Indigenous) and one (1) female applicant (one (1) Indigenous).

In the past six months, approximately seventeen (17) applicants were found unsuitable for the JHP, which included thirteen (13) men (eight (8) Indigenous) and four (4) women (all Indigenous). Reasons for an application not progressing, in addition to court/SAB outcomes, include the availability of other accommodation options (e.g., Housing ACT property); not wanting to live in shared accommodation; wanting to reside with their child; and a history of property damage or violence while residing in a JHP property.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date: 21/3/2022

By the Minister for Corrections, Mick Gentleman MLA