



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Peter Cain MLA (Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson (Deputy Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Administration of Bail

Submission Number: 007

Date Authorised for Publication: 29 May 2024

22 May 2024

Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
ACT Legislative Assembly
Inquiry into Administration of Bail

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety,

Wellways Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Administration of Bail in the ACT.

Wellways' is a community mental health and disability service provider. We have a vision for an inclusive community where everyone can imagine their hopes and potential. For the past 10 years' we have been delivering the **Detention Exit Community Outreach** (DECO) Program in the ACT. We are pleased to share our rich learnings with the Committee that can be used to support its bail administration inquiry.

We understand the interrelated and often complex relationship between contact with the justice system and the underlying drivers including intergenerational poverty, homelessness, low educational attainment and unemployment. The DECO program works with people experiencing mental health challenges or a cognitive impairment who have encountered the justice system. Through a blend of outreach and case management, DECO provides social, emotional, and practical supports to people supporting them with the aim to reconnect with their community, and personal empowerment whilst practically supporting access to services such as housing and healthcare.

Whilst the DECO program has been designed to support people with various mental health challenges, addiction or cognitive impairments its learnings and program design can be extrapolated across the broader population. We recommend that the committee draw on the rich learnings of the DECO program to understand effective supports to reduce recidivism and improve community wellbeing outcomes throughout its inquiry into the administration of bail.

More details of the DECO external evaluation can be provided on request. We have attached a copy of recent feedback from a family member of a DECO consumer which clearly identifies the importance of compassionate, strengths based supports.

We commend the ACT government on its strategy of 'building communities, not prisons' and supports its move for justice reinvestment schemes and community-based programs that prioritises restorative, evidence-informed practice including the DECO program.

Kind regards,

Laura Collister, Chief Executive Officer

Wellways

wellways.org | 1300 111 400

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of overlapping, colorful abstract shapes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and purple, along with several small colored circles.

From:
Sent:
To:
Cc:
Subject: Appreciation for Jo Smith

Good morning Zoe,

My name is -- and my partner -- is enrolled in your DECO program. I am writing to you today as I would like to formally and sincerely express my gratitude and appreciation for the amazing work Jo Smith and her team have accomplished.

During a time of uncertainty, sadness and fear whilst my partner was incarcerated, I was given the phone number to your office at Wellways. With no guarantee of any solution or assistance I expressed that my partner's release from custody rides heavily with his involvement and engagement with DECO. I anxiously spoke with Jo whose voice I didn't realise at the time was a voice I so desperately needed to hear.

Jo comforted me and put all my worries at ease. Her ability to understand any situation is remarkable. Jo expressed compassion, empathy, warmth and genuine kindness towards me. Since our engagement with DECO my partner has been released from custody and not once have I ever doubted Jo or her team. Their loyalty, kindness and involvement are impressive and show exceptional discipline and dedication to your company.

I would like to deeply express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for Jo and her team. Wellways are extremely blessed to have her.

Warmest Regards,

--