



JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

COVID-19 PAROLE PROJECT UPDATE

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In March 2020, PLS implemented an emergency parole strategy due to the risk COVID-19 presents to people in detention. This strategy was subsequently supported by funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney General. The purpose of the COVID-19 Parole Project is to:

- Answer more calls on the PLS prison telephone advice line; and
- Help vulnerable people in prison demonstrate suitability for release on parole by making practical arrangements and legal submissions on their behalf



WHO WE ARE HELPING

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People with a chronic medical condition
- People with asthma or a respiratory condition
- People with a weakened immune system
- People aged 60 or over

SERVICE SNAPSHOT: APRIL / MAY 2020



418

LEGAL ADVICES
PROVIDED



117

INFORMATIONS
PROVIDED



99

PAROLE SUBMISSIONS
MADE



29

PEOPLE RELEASED



68

PENDING OUTCOMES



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CASE STUDY #1 QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS

Greg* is an Aboriginal man who was imprisoned in Northern Queensland. He was granted parole by the Parole Board subject to finding suitable accommodation. Greg found a property which was approved by the Parole Board. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the real estate agency managing the property were unwilling to accept him until he had been quarantined for a period of 14 days following his release from prison. This required Greg to reside for 14 days at an alternative residence which had not been approved by the Parole Board, preventing his release on parole. Other accommodation options in the area were not available because they all imposed similar quarantine requirements.

PLS worked closely with key partners to advocate for Greg's entry to the approved property immediately from prison. PLS obtained a letter from Queensland Corrective Services outlining how COVID-19 had been managed within the prison. This letter was successful in persuading the real estate agency to accept Greg directly from prison. Greg was released on parole and is now living at his parole approved address.

CASE STUDY #2 PAROLE CANCELLATION AND TRAVEL PERMIT

Sam* is an elderly Aboriginal woman from a remote community in Northern Queensland with complex and chronic medical conditions. Sam was in prison because her parole order had been cancelled after she committed a low-level offence while on parole. Due to her complex health needs, Sam was at a heightened risk of serious infection if she contracted COVID-19.

PLS made urgent submissions to the Parole Board advocating for Sam to be released. PLS explained why she was not a risk to the community, the supports she had in place, her vulnerability to COVID-19 and the need for a decision to be made before travel restrictions in her community were enforced. The Parole Board urgently approved Sam's release.

Unfortunately, the escalating COVID-19 response meant that remote community travel restrictions rolled out earlier than the proposed date, while Sam was in transit from prison to her community. PLS worked with stakeholders to arrange temporary accommodation and support for Sam. PLS advised the Parole Board of the circumstances and asked for Sam not to be returned to prison for failing to reside at her parole approved address. PLS then made an application under the relevant biosecurity laws for Sam to receive a travel permit to return home. The application was approved and Sam is now on parole in her community with her family and supports.