

**Prisoners Aid (ACT) seeks increased funding to expand our role in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of detainees and former detainees, strengthening community safety in the ACT through early intervention and trusted guidance.**

Since 1963, we have supported detainees, former detainees and families across the ACT. For many people entering or exiting the justice system, our offices at the ACT Magistrates Court and the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) are the first, and sometimes only, point of practical support.

Across these two locations, we provide:

- Direct support for clients, including victims of crime and witnesses
- Assistance for visitors and detainees at the AMC
- Practical guidance on securing accommodation, finding employment, applying for government benefits, obtaining identification, opening bank accounts and maintaining family connections
- Immediate assistance for people experiencing severe hardship; some of our clients are simply hungry and lack money for food.

### **Our Impact**

In 2024–25:

- Over **4,000 client contacts** were made, and **8,500 service requests** were handled
- More than **\$5,000 in travel assistance** enabled families to maintain contact with detained loved ones
- **150 Christmas hampers** were assembled and delivered to clients

### **Why Further Funding Is Needed**

Released detainees leave custody under significant pressure, often without stable housing, income or identification. The period immediately following release is widely recognised as a high-risk time for reoffending, homelessness and family breakdown. We focus on **early, relational intervention** at precisely this point. Our staff:

- Build trust with clients and their families
- Provide non-judgmental guidance and practical problem-solving
- Refer clients to appropriate government and non-government services
- Work closely alongside the courts, police, ACT Corrective Services, Legal Aid, Everyman, Argyle House, the Aboriginal Legal Service and other non-government organisations

Without our support, many individuals fall through service gaps, with consequences not only for them and their families, but for community safety more broadly. Much of our impact relies not on large grants or direct financial assistance, but on the time, skill and patience of our staff, volunteers and

student interns. Rising costs and increasing demand have significantly constrained our ability to meet need.

### **Current Limitations**

- We operate with the equivalent of **one full-time and two casual staff** members covering both offices; volunteers provide additional support when available.
- Limited staffing restricts continuity of care, weekend coverage and proactive family engagement.

### **Proposed Staffing Model & Investment**

Optimal model

- **A full-time staff member** at each office, supported by casual staff
- **Executive Sustainability:** Two full-time roles would relieve the volunteer Executive Committee of daily operations, supporting continuity and strategic governance
- **Staff Wellbeing & Compliance:** Regular clinical supervision for staff to address vicarious trauma and psychosocial risks
- **Specialised Training:** Professional development for staff to ensure high quality service delivery
- **Data & Impact:** Investment in an improved client data management system to enhance reporting and track longitudinal client progress.

We are currently most under-resourced at the AMC, particularly on weekends, when demand is highest and additional client support is required.

### **The Human Difference**

Our experience shows that effective reintegration depends less on direct financial assistance and more on **skilled, trusted guidance at the right moment**. What makes the greatest difference is:

- Someone who listens
- Someone who does not judge
- Someone who helps navigate complex systems
- Someone who has no authority or power over the individual

This human connection, combined with strong referral pathways, often enables former detainees to stabilise their lives and avoid re-entering the justice system.

### **Funding and Impact**

- In 2024/25, employment costs represented **83% of our approximately \$267,000 budget**, with 12% allocated to direct client support and 4.5% on administration

- Additional funding of **\$150,000 per annum** will
  - Fully staff both offices, including weekends at the AMC
  - Support staff wellbeing and clinical supervision
  - Provide specialised training
  - Fund an improved client data management system

**We believe our model represents a modest, cost-effective investment with significant returns: supporting some of the ACT's most marginalised residents, reducing the risk of reoffending and strengthening community safety for all Canberrans.**

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