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NEW PRISON ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS DESPERATE NEED FOR GENUINE REFORM IN TASMANIA

"Tasmania's criminal justice system is fast approaching breaking-point, with urgent reform required to stop wasteful spending of taxpayers' money, improve community safety, and reduce unnecessary incarceration," said Mia Schlicht, Research Analyst at the Institute of Public Affairs.

As part of the Tasmanian Parliament's *Inquiry into Tasmania Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters*, the IPA will present new research on the true costs of incarceration, which shows:

- **Tasmania spending per prisoner is the highest of all states.** It costs \$204,710 to incarcerate one prisoner for one year, or \$561 per day, which is approximately 40 per cent higher than the national average cost of \$147,890 per year.
- **Since 2015, the state's incarceration rate has increased by 18% - more than three times the national average – and 11 per cent in the last six months alone.** The incarceration rate in Tasmania is now 153 persons per 100,000 of the adult population.
- **Tasmanian prisons are at 88% capacity.** On current trends new prisons will need to be built at a significant cost to taxpayers.
- **37% of Tasmania prisoners have been incarcerated for a non-violent offence.**

"Prison is the most serious form of punishment a government can impose on offenders, and it should be reserved for the people that are a danger to the community. Non-violent offenders who are not a threat should be making a contribution elsewhere in the community," said Ms Schlicht.

IPA research shows the Tasmanian Government could save \$47 million per annum if non-violent offenders were removed from prison and sentenced to alternative justice. Alternatives to prison include offender employment programs, financial sanctions, and technological incarceration.

"Conservative jurisdictions in the United States, such as Texas and Georgia, have shown reducing incarceration of non-violent offenders does not compromise community safety. It also delivers savings to taxpayers, while getting more citizens into work with better life outcomes," said Ms Schlicht.

"As Australia faces simultaneous incarceration and worker shortage crises, many low-risk non-violent offenders could be gainfully employed in the community right now without risk," said Ms Schlicht.

"No one should escape punishment for their crime. However, we need to recognise there are many alternative punishments that can be imposed on non-violent offenders which makes restitution to the community, deters criminal behaviour, while keeping us safe and reducing taxpayer cost."

"Money saved should be re-invested into putting more police on the beat, which evidence shows is the most effective deterrent to violent crime, for both youth and adult alike. It is the fear of being caught and facing any form of retribution which deters offending."

To download the IPA's submission [click here](#).

To download the IPA's research into Australia's incarceration crisis [click here](#).

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