

Research paper

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Court Ordered Parole in Queensland¹

This paper provides the findings of an analysis of the trends and impact of court ordered parole since it was introduced in August 2006 with the *Corrective Services Act 2006*.

The introduction of court ordered parole has ensured more offenders are under active supervision in the community. This order type is a high volume order; more than 5,515 orders were made in 2012 and more than 3,000 offenders are in the community on court ordered parole at any one time. Approximately 40% of those who receive court ordered parole are paroled straight from court. Offenders on court ordered parole generally serve shorter sentences with 66% serving a sentence of 12 months or less in duration. This group could potentially have received wholly suspended sentences with no community supervision.

Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) has a strict regime when supervising offenders in the community to identify and facilitate appropriate responses to risk. An examination of the data, with particular focus on the suspension and cancellation rates, demonstrates that:

- approximately 300 offenders per month are suspended and returned to prison (most common reason is an unacceptable risk of further offending);
- almost 1,800 prisoners in custody are there for a violation of court ordered parole (order suspended or cancelled); and
- reoffending accounts for half of the orders cancelled by the Parole Board.

The introduction of court ordered parole aimed to address the over-representation of short-sentenced, low-risk prisoners in QCS facilities; such prisoners were responsible for a high degree of turnover in the prison population. Prior to the introduction of court ordered parole, prisoner numbers were forecast to grow. However, this order type stabilised growth in prisoner numbers from 2006 until recently. This suggests that court ordered parole has reversed the growth in short sentence prisoners, delaying the need to invest in prison infrastructure. Overall, court ordered parole is QCS' most successful supervision order with approximately 72% of orders successfully completed without cancellation or reconviction.

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**Queensland
Government**

Queensland Corrective Services

COURT ORDERED PAROLE IN QUEENSLAND

Court ordered parole was developed following a review of the *Corrective Services Act 2000* by the then Department of Corrective Services which identified a number of shortcomings in existing arrangements for early release of prisoners.

Court ordered parole was designed to ensure that short-sentence prisoners released prior to their full-time discharge are subject to supervision by corrective services, either in prison or in the community until the expiry of their sentence.

Prior to 2006, a short-sentence prisoner (serving two years or less of imprisonment) who was granted early release could not be supervised by corrective services in the community for the remainder of their sentence. Early remission allowed the chief executive to administratively reduce the length of a prisoner's sentence by authorising the release of the prisoner from custody for good behaviour while in custody. These decisions however, could not be based on considerations of community safety. The prisoner could not be monitored nor could their risks upon release be addressed and supported through case management.

The *Corrective Services Act 2006* (the Act) established parole as the only form of early release from custody. The Act abolished remission, phased out conditional release along with two types of community-based release (release to work and home detention) and introduced court ordered parole, a new sentencing scheme for prisoners who have been sentenced to short periods of imprisonment for non-violent and non-sexual offences.

The Act amended the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* to provide that if a prisoner is sentenced to three years or less imprisonment, and is not a sex offender or serious violent offender, the court must fix a parole release date. This is the date upon which the prisoner must be released to parole, unless the prisoner has been remanded in custody for further offences.

In contrast, a prisoner, who is a sex offender or serious violent offender, or serving a

sentence of more than three years imprisonment, must apply to a parole board to be considered for release to parole.

The implementation of court ordered parole occurred concurrently with additional investment in a newly configured Probation and Parole Service and a consolidation of the Parole Boards into a Queensland Parole Board and two regional Boards. QCS undertook a subsequent program of work from 2010 to further improve its management of offenders in the community by introducing new case management tools and a more targeted approach to managing offenders according to their risk of reoffending. These changes also aimed to give the judiciary increased confidence in QCS' capability to successfully manage offenders in the community and decrease growth in prisoner numbers.

Authority for Release Decisions

Court ordered parole was also designed to support the principle that the point at which a prisoner is released should be determined by either the sentencing court or an independent parole board.

Community consultation during the legislative review found general support for prisoners being released into a community based order at a point in time that is fixed by the sentencing court. Many respondents favoured automatic release on parole at the point in time nominated by a sentencing court or after a statutory determined period for prisoners serving a period of imprisonment under five years.

Prisoner Numbers

At the time the 2000 legislation was under review, Queensland had experienced a 143% increase in prisoner numbers over the previous decade since 1993. Without intervention, significant growth requiring new prison infrastructure was expected. Data at the time indicated a high proportion of prisoners were serving short sentences. Almost one-third (29.1%) of all Queensland prisoners incarcerated as at 30 June 2004 were serving a sentence of two years or less. Approximately 70% of prisoners received into custody were serving short sentences and between 55 and 65% of this group were

serving sentences of less than six months. Short sentenced prisoners were therefore responsible for a high degree of turnover in the prison population.

In conjunction with the new Probation and Parole Service, the introduction of court ordered parole also aimed to address the over-representation of short-sentenced, low-risk prisoners in QCS facilities. It was intended that court ordered parole would be used as a mechanism to divert these low-risk offenders from custody, whilst ensuring post release support and supervision.

The Management of Offenders on Court Ordered Parole by QCS

QCS' case management of offenders in the community is underpinned by ongoing assessment and planning, individualised intervention and review to facilitate appropriate responses to risk.

For those exiting prison to court ordered parole, the first appointment (induction) to the order occurs pre-release to increase reporting compliance by ensuring they understand the conditions expected while on parole. Following induction the offender will then enter an assessment phase to determine and plan for their rehabilitation needs in the community.

On the day of release to court ordered parole, the prisoner has one business day within which he or she must report to a Probation and Parole office where a parole order will be issued. The parole order contains a set of statutory, standard conditions, including that the offender:

- be under QCS supervision until the end of the period of imprisonment;
- carry out lawful instructions;
- give a test sample (urine/breath) if required to do so;
- report and receive visits as directed;
- notify QCS within 48 hours of any change of address or employment; and
- not commit any offence for the duration of the sentence.

QCS uses a six-level case management model to ensure that higher risk offenders receive higher levels of service and are

supervised by the most experienced officers who are able to dedicate more time to each offender. Assessments of risk are conducted for each offender using best practice, evidence-based assessment tools. Offenders are allocated a level of service which will determine the intensity of their case management. The levels of service are: compliance; low risk; standard; enhanced; intensive and extreme.

Offenders receiving standard to extreme levels of service are supervised using a Dynamic Supervision Instrument (DSI) which guides case managers to assess any changing risk factors at every visit. Risk factors may include:

- Accommodation
- Employment
- Substance abuse
- Mental health
- Relationships
- Attitude
- Order conditions

The supervising officer will assist the offender to settle back into the community and monitor compliance with the order conditions. The offender is expected to follow their Offender Management Plan, which will include specific requirements related to the needs of the offender, such as attending drug counselling or other programs and finding employment. QCS will monitor the offender's progress and take action if the offender fails to comply with their order.

If the offender fails to comply with a condition of their order, is charged or convicted of an offence, or is an unacceptable risk of further offending, QCS has a number of contravention options available to ensure the safety of the community.

Case management options include increasing surveillance (office visits, home visits, drug testing) and/or referring the offender to an intervention program or external support service.

QCS can also temporarily amend the conditions of the parole order if the offender has failed to comply or requires further restriction to be appropriately managed.

Formal contravention actions include issuing a verbal warning, written censure, temporarily

suspending the parole order and returning the offender to prison for up to 28 days or referring the offender to a Parole Board for suspension or cancellation.

If QCS suspends the offender's parole order, a warrant is issued for their arrest and the offender is located by police and returned to prison. The period between the warrant being issued and the offender's arrest, 'time at large', is not counted as time served against the sentence. The Parole Board is notified and the Board must determine what action to take, which can include cancelling the parole, order or directing that the offender continue on parole.

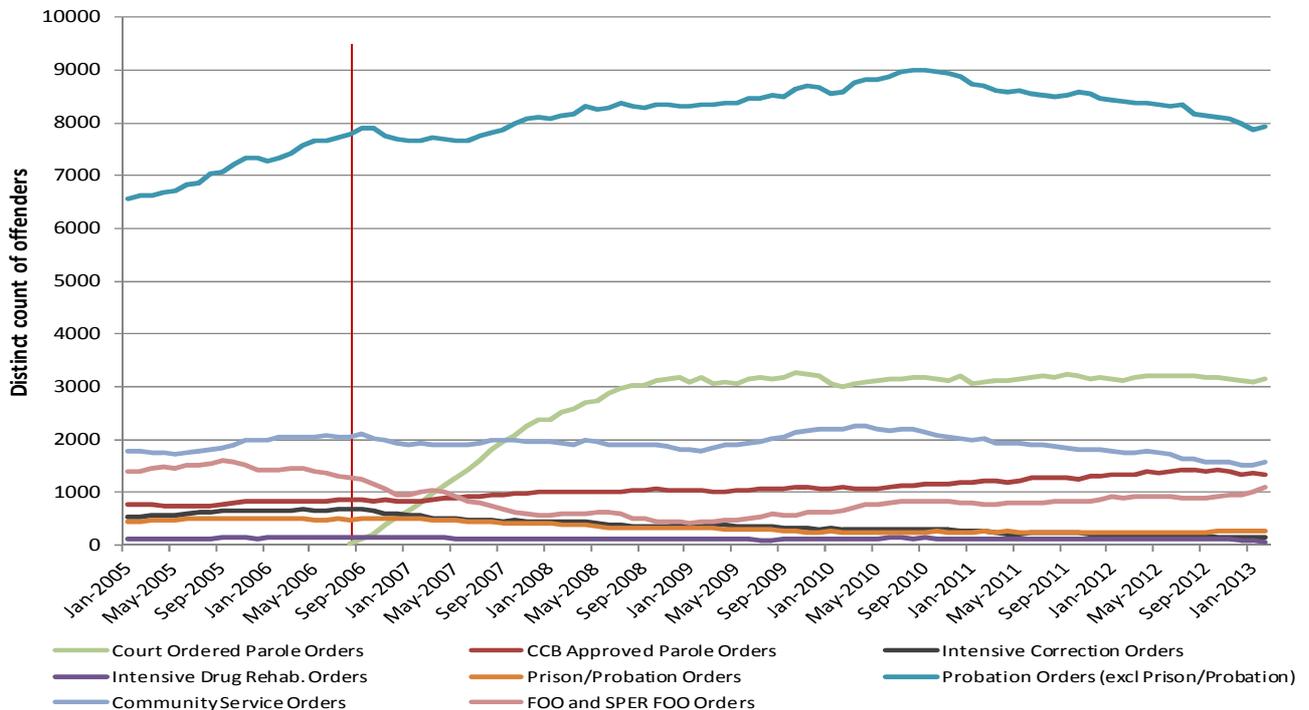
If the Board determines to cancel a court ordered parole order and the offender wishes to be considered for further release to parole, an application must be lodged with the relevant Parole Board.

The following data provides an analysis of court ordered parole trends since introduction.

Court Ordered Parole Trends

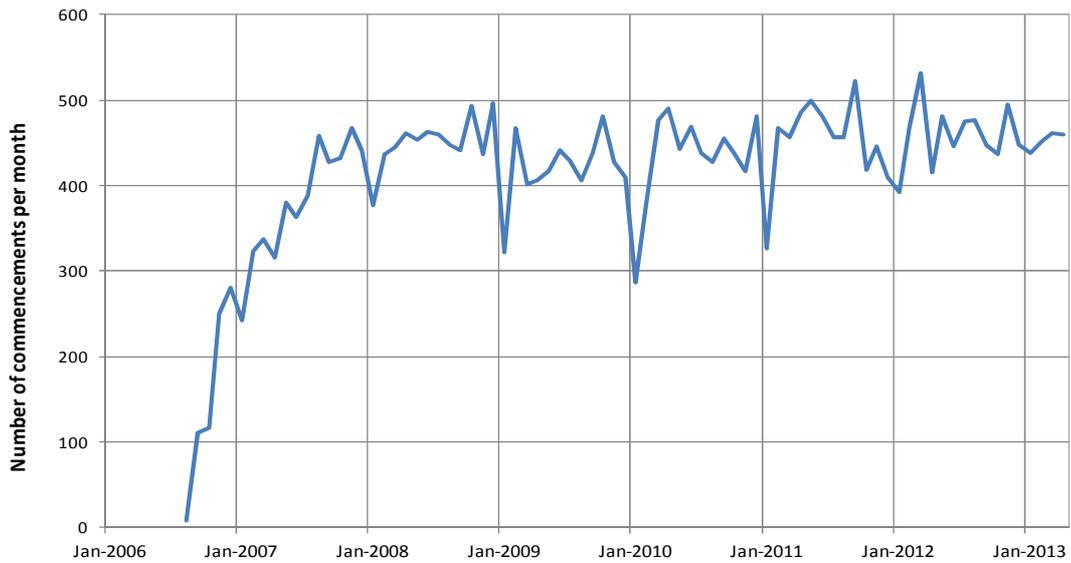
Figures 1 and 2 below show the rapid growth in the number of offenders in the community on court ordered parole, following its introduction in 2006. This growth also coincided with an increase in Probation Orders and contributed to growth in the overall number of offenders supervised in the community.

Figure 1: Trends in community supervision since the introduction of court ordered parole



Data represents the distinct count of offenders within each order type at the end of the month. Red line indicates introduction of court ordered parole

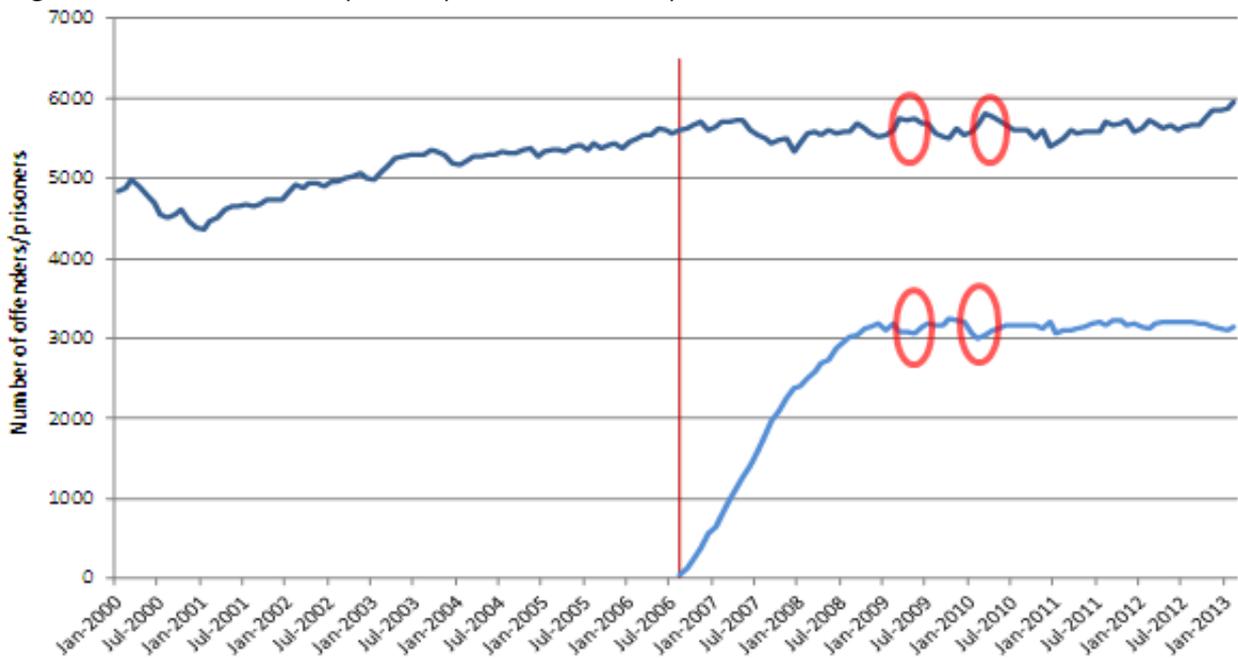
Figure 2: Number of court ordered parole commencements, August 2006 – March 2013



Court ordered parole numbers continued to grow until late-2008 when the number of offenders finishing parole began to balance the number of offenders released to court ordered parole. Figure 2 shows that between 400 and 500 offenders are admitted to court ordered parole each month in the community. This growth curve is typical for the introduction of a new sentencing option and reflects the dynamic nature of the offender population and the flow of offenders in and out of corrective services supervision.

There is some evidence of an inverse relationship between prisoner numbers and the number of offenders on court ordered parole. Over time, some increases in prisoner numbers (for example, in early 2009 and early 2010) have coincided with decreases in the number of offenders on court ordered parole. Figure 3 shows as the number of offenders in the community increased, total prisoner numbers stabilised, and remained at approximately 5,500 through to mid-2012 whereas prior to the introduction of court ordered parole, prisoner numbers were forecast to continue the growth trend experienced since the early 1990's.

Figure 3: Prisoner numbers pre and post court ordered parole introduction



Distinguishing between shorter and longer sentences provides a clear view of the impact of court ordered parole. The average daily number of prisoners serving sentences of three years or less declined from approximately 2,300 in July 2006, prior to the introduction of court ordered parole, to a low of just over 1,800 in January 2011 before beginning to trend upwards (see figure 4). These findings suggest that court ordered parole did reverse the growth in short sentence prisoners, delaying the need to invest in prison infrastructure.

Figure 4: Trend in short-sentence prisoner numbers

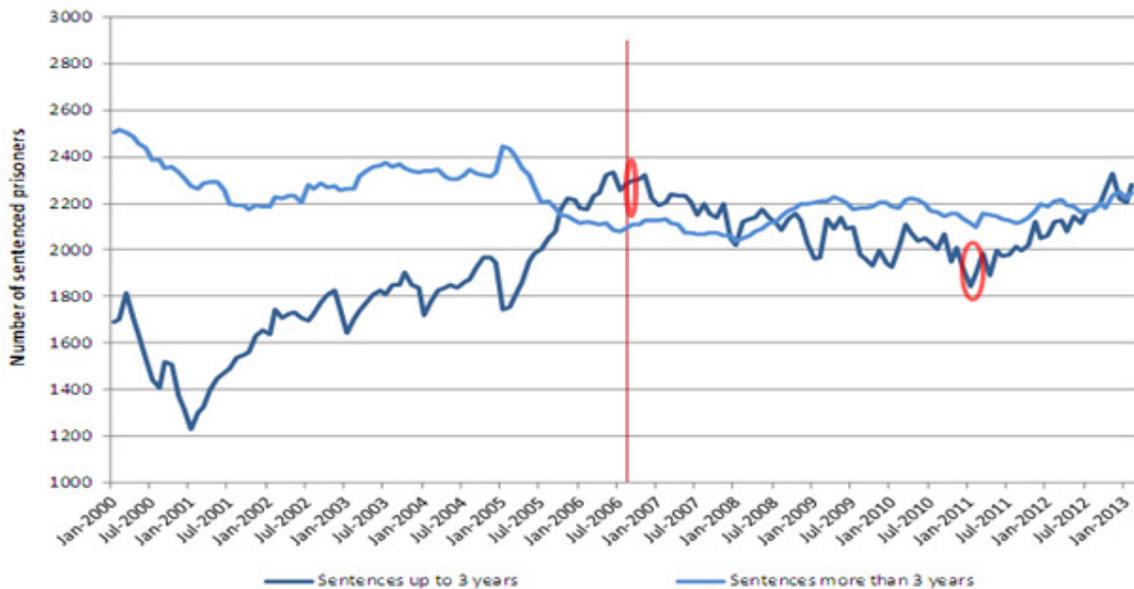
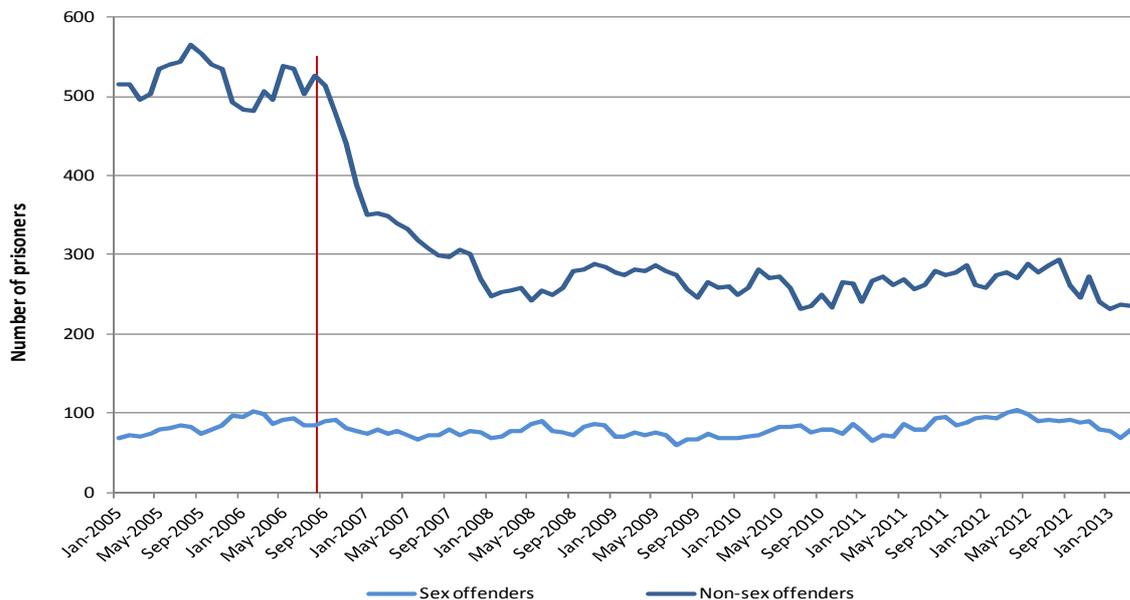


Figure 5 shows that one of the most significant effects of court ordered parole was the impact on court decisions regarding partially suspended sentences. The number of prisoners on partially suspended sentences sharply declined from approximately 500 before the introduction of court ordered parole to 250 by January 2008 and has since been relatively stable.

As sex offenders are not eligible for court ordered parole, the number of sex offenders in custody with a partially suspended sentence has been stable since 2006. Short sentenced sex offenders remain unsupervised in the community upon release.

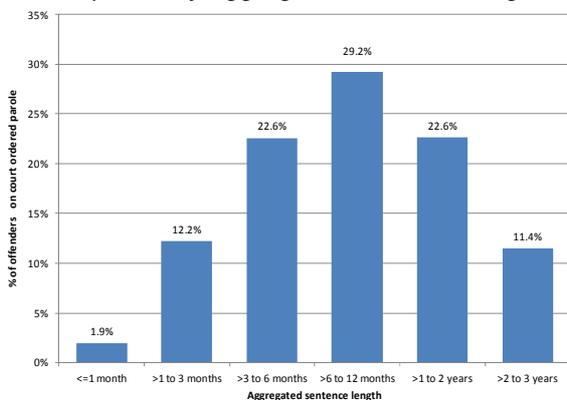
Figure 5: Trend in partially suspended sentences



This suggests that, where permitted by legislation, courts generally prefer imprisonment with court-ordered parole over a partially suspended sentence. Both orders allow the courts to fix the date of release, but a partially suspended sentence does not have the benefit of a period of community supervision by Probation and Parole to monitor the prisoner post release.

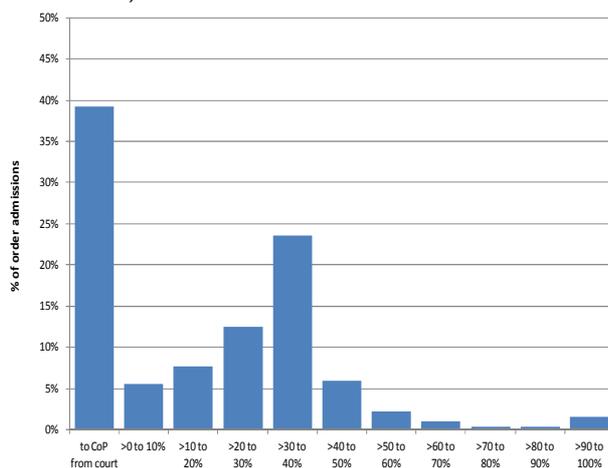
Figure 6 demonstrates that offenders on court ordered parole generally serve shorter sentences with 66% having an aggregated sentence length of 12 months or less.

Figure 6: Percentage of offenders on court ordered parole by aggregated sentence length



Close to 40% of offenders sentenced to court ordered parole are paroled straight from court (see figure 7). That is, they will not go to prison unless they commit further offences or breach their order and have their parole suspended or cancelled. It is possible that without court ordered parole these 40% would be sentenced to partially or wholly suspended sentences and receive no community supervision and the benefits research indicates this has in reducing reoffending.

Figure 7: Time in custody to parole eligibility date (2011-2012)



Court ordered parole gives the sentencing court absolute discretion in setting the proportion of prison versus community supervision in a sentence. The portion of the sentence offenders spend in custody varies considerably, with a significant number going to court ordered parole directly from court. As the length of the sentence increases to over 12 months, the less likely an offender is to be released straight from court to court ordered parole. For example, while over 50% of offenders sentenced to 1 to 3 months are paroled from court (that is, do not go to prison unless their parole is suspended or cancelled), less than 20% of offenders sentenced to greater than 2 years are released straight to parole. Therefore, the data indicates that release from court to parole decreases as the length of sentence increases (see figures 8A – 8F).

Figure 8A: Aggregated sentence length: less than 1 month

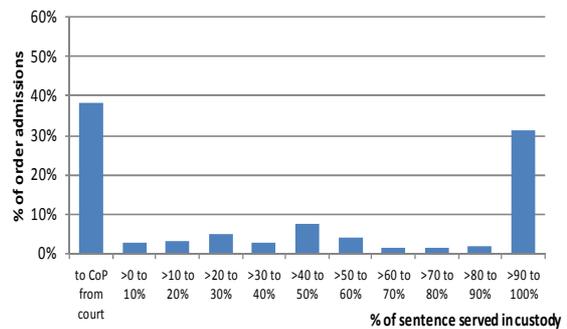


Figure 8B: Aggregated sentence length: >1 to 3 months

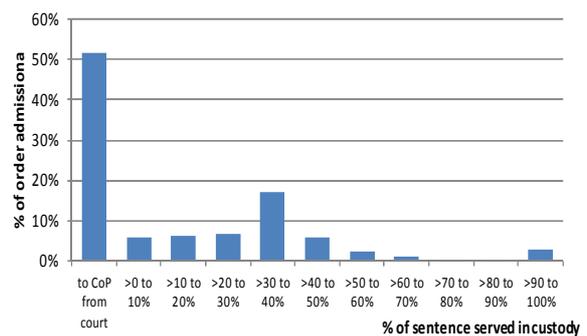


Figure 8C: Aggregated sentence length: >3 to 6 months

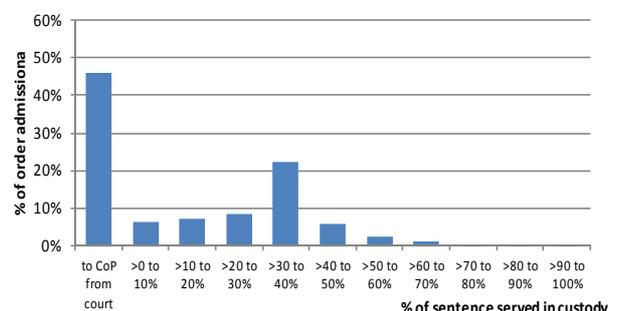


Figure 8D: Aggregated sentence length: >6 to 12 months

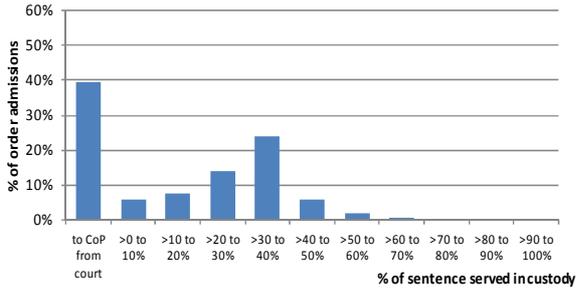


Figure 8F: Aggregated sentence length: >2 to 3 years

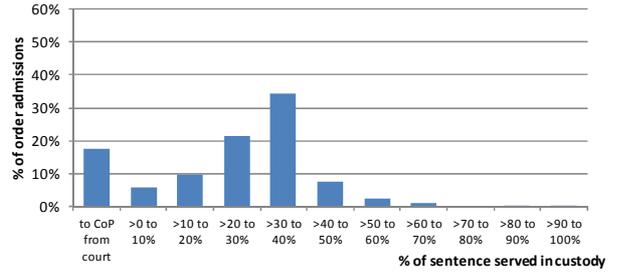
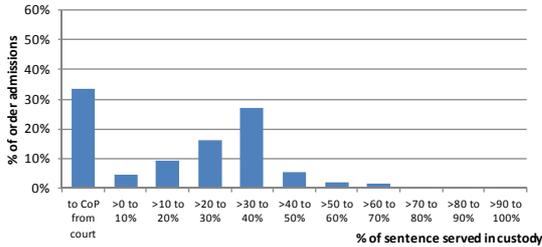


Figure 8E: Aggregated sentence length: >1 to 2 years



Court Ordered Parole Suspension

QCS has implemented a strict regime when supervising offenders in the community, including those on court ordered parole. This includes ongoing assessment, planning, close monitoring and appropriate responses to any change in risk levels. Figure 9A shows the trend in order suspensions since the introduction of court ordered parole. From mid-2011 to February 2013, approximately 900 offenders per quarter were suspended and returned to prison (300 per month).

Figure 9A: Trend in court ordered parole suspensions per quarter

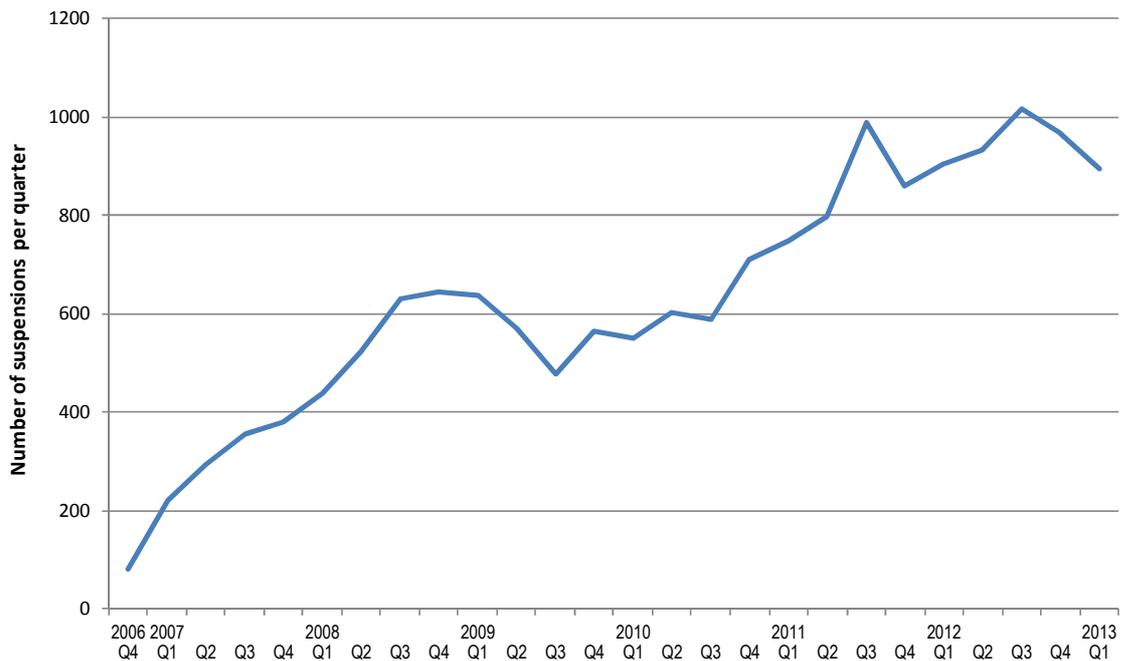
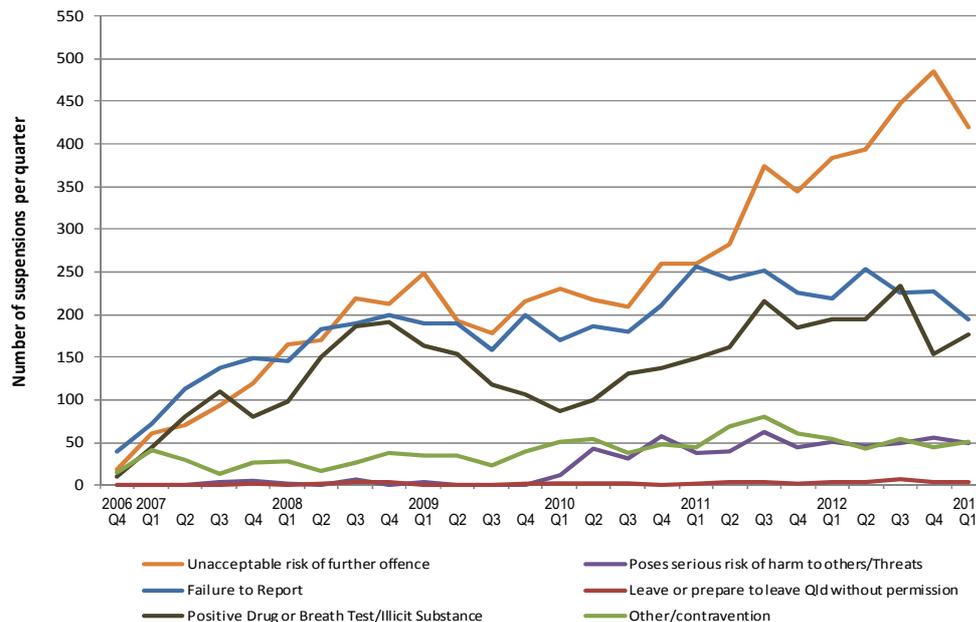


Figure 9B shows that the most common reason that an offender has their parole suspended is because Probation and Parole assess that there is an unacceptable risk of further offending. This can be because Probation and Parole are alerted that the offender has been charged with an offence or because there has been an increase in risk factors associated with the individual's offending pathway. For example, these could include the offender losing their job or their accommodation or a separation from their partner or support person. As noted previously, Probation and Parole have a number of compliance and risk related factors to assess progress on an order.

Data indicates that between 2011 and 2013, the number of court ordered parole suspensions for being assessed as having an unacceptable risk of further offending has increased. This is likely to be a result of the strengthening in QCS risk assessment and associated responses as well as increased liaison with Queensland Police Service to share intelligence information.

Figure 9B: Reasons for court ordered parole suspensions by number of suspensions per quarter



When an offender on court ordered parole fails to comply with the conditions of their order, a number of contravention options are available to QCS. As noted earlier, these can include case management options (e.g. increased surveillance); making a temporary amendment to the order; or formal contravention actions (e.g. verbal warning, written censure or referring the offender to the parole board which may result in suspension or cancellation of the order).

An offender who receives a suspension on their court ordered parole is still eligible to successfully complete their order. That is, continue supervision to the end of their sentence. The supervising officer will continue to monitor and assess the offender's dynamic needs to identify any potential increase or change in risk factors and ensure that they are managed appropriately.

Factors Related to the Successful Completion of Court Ordered Parole

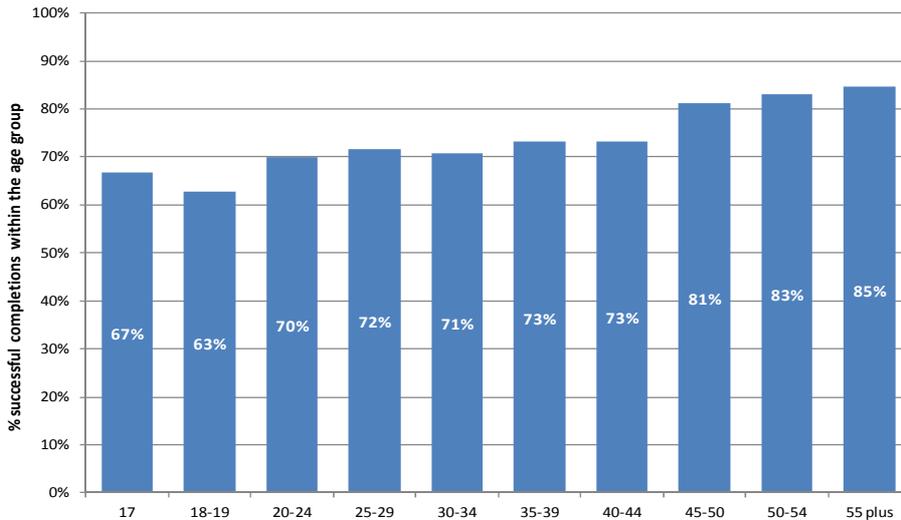
Court ordered parole is QCS' most successful supervision order. This order type has shown higher successful completion rates (72%) in 2012-13 year to date in comparison to probation (70%) and board ordered parole (65%). Court ordered parole has consistently had the highest successful completion rates over the last three years. A number of factors have been identified as being related to increasing the likelihood of completing court ordered parole and these are discussed below.

Age of Offender

Figure 10 shows that as age increases the likelihood of successfully completing court ordered parole also increases. Specifically, offenders aged 45 years and over have the highest successful completion rates ranging from 81% to 85%. The percentage of successful completions for offenders aged between 25 and 44 are relatively similar ranging between 71% and 73%.

In comparison, youthful offenders, aged between 17 and 24 years, have the lowest successful completion rates for court ordered parole ranging from 63% to 70%. This finding reflects the dynamic nature and complex needs of youthful offenders.

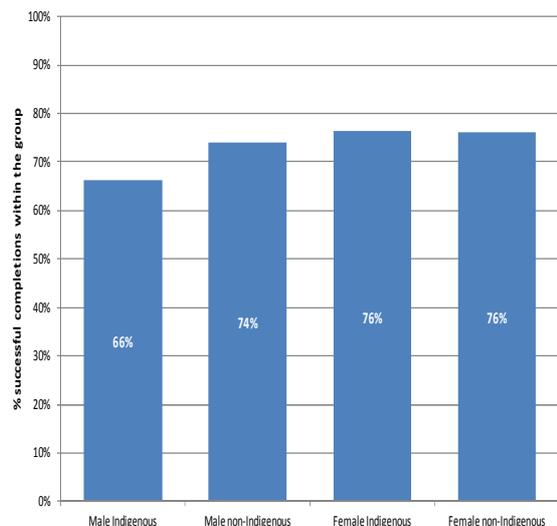
Figure 10: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole in 2012 by age



Gender and Indigenous Status

Figure 11 shows that female offenders are slightly more likely than male offenders to successfully complete court ordered parole. However, when comparing the completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders, it is evident that male Indigenous offenders are less likely to complete court ordered parole successfully (66%) in comparison to non-Indigenous male offenders (74%). There is no difference in the successful completion rates of female Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders.

Figure 11: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole by gender and Indigenous status

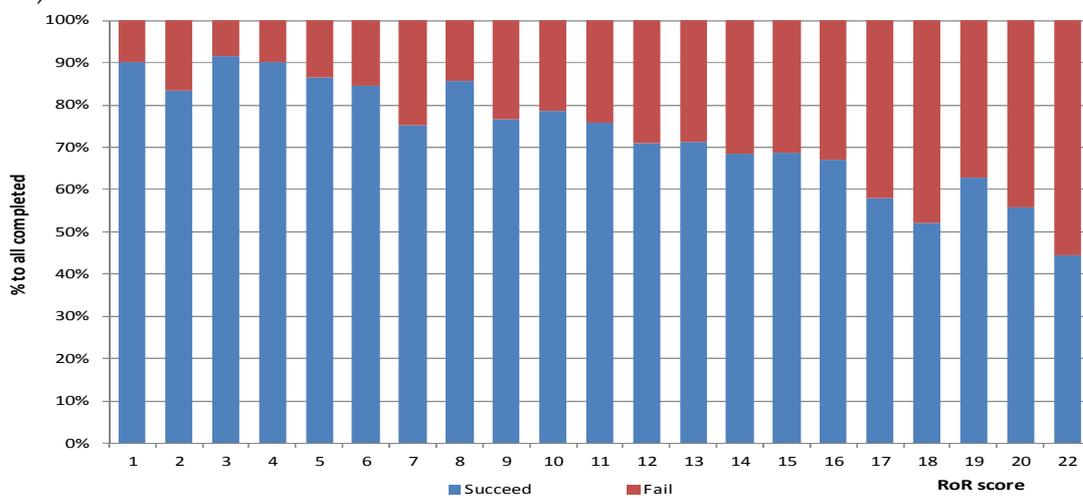


Risk of Reoffending (RoR) Score

Every prisoner is assessed by QCS using the Risk of Reoffending (RoR) screening tool. These tools provide QCS with a score between 1 and 22, with 1 indicating a low risk of reoffending and 22 being at highest risk of reoffending (Probation and Parole version 1 - 20). Offenders who score 16 or greater, are considered at high risk of reoffending. As a result, these higher risk offenders receive more intensive levels of supervision and rehabilitation resources in adherence with the principles of the Integrated Offender Management Strategy and QCS' Next Generation Case Management.

Figure 12 shows that lower risk offenders are more likely to successfully complete court ordered parole compared to higher risk offenders. It is only at the highest risk level that the percentage of offenders who failed court ordered parole is greater than those who successfully completed court ordered parole.

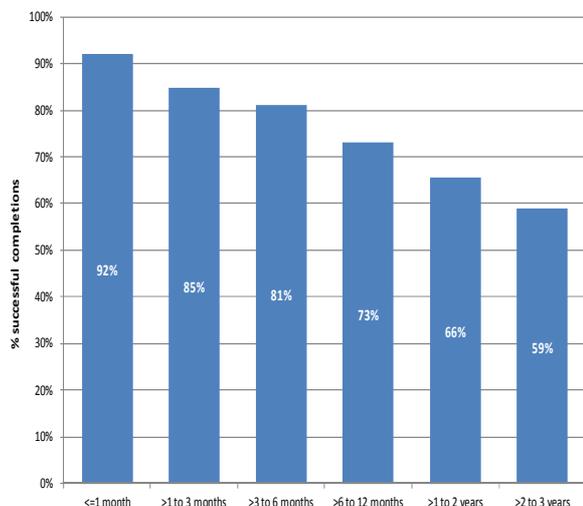
Figure 12: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole by RoR score (March 2012 – February 2013)



Sentence Length

Offenders with shorter sentence lengths have a greater prospect of completing their order successfully. Figure 13 shows that as sentence length increases, the percentage of offenders successfully completing their court ordered parole decreases.

Figure 13: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole by sentence length



Over 70% of offenders with sentences between 6 and 12 months (most common order length – see figure 6) successfully completed court ordered parole. This drops to 66% being successfully completed by offenders serving sentences of more than 12 months to 2 years and 59% being successfully completed by offenders serving more than 2 to 3 years.

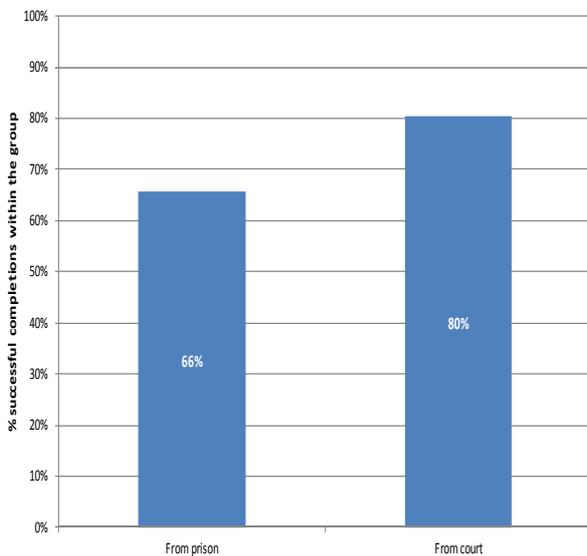
Location of Release

The location of the offender prior to their release on court ordered parole also contributes to the likelihood of successful completion of an order.

A comparison of successful completion rates between offenders released directly from court to court ordered parole and those released after serving time in custody demonstrates that those released directly from court were significantly more likely to successfully complete their court ordered parole.

Specifically, figure 14 shows that between January 2012 and December 2012, 80% of offenders released straight from court to court ordered parole successfully completed their order. In comparison, only 66% of offenders released to court ordered parole from custody successfully completed their order. This is to be expected given earlier data showing shorter sentence prisoners, who are likely to be lower risk, being more likely to go direct to court ordered parole from court.

Figure 14: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole orders based on location on release (01 January 2012 – 31 December 2012)

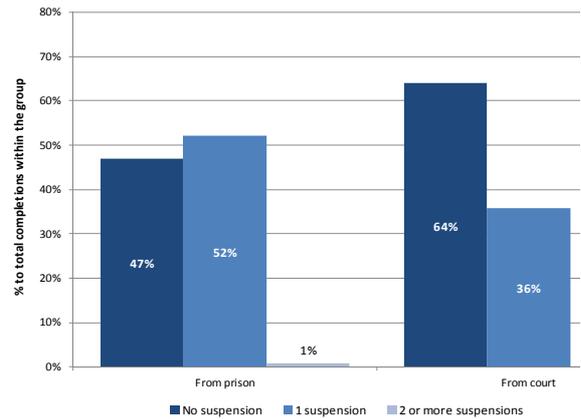


Location of Release and Number of Suspensions

Offenders released from court ordered parole straight from court are not only more likely to successfully complete their order, but are also less likely to receive a suspension of their order.

Figure 15 shows similar trends to those in the preceding figure. That is, of all offenders who completed court ordered parole in 2012, those released from court straight to court ordered parole were more likely to complete their order with no suspensions (64%) than those released from prison (47%).

Figure 15: Successful completion rates of court ordered parole orders based on location on release and number of suspensions (01 January 2012 – 31 December 2012)

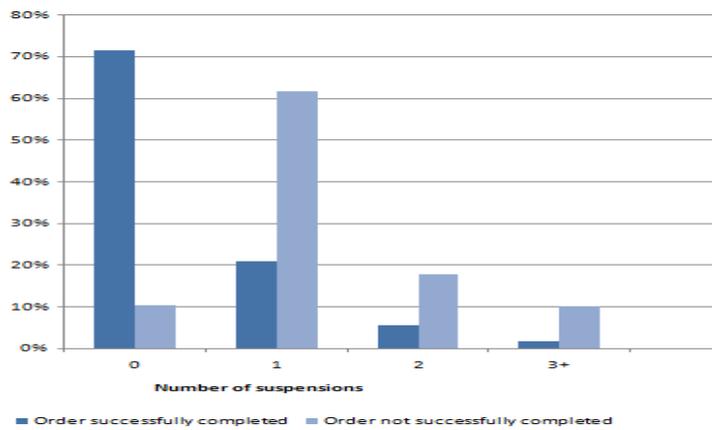


Suspension and Completion Rates of Court Ordered Parole

Whilst offenders who receive a court ordered parole suspension are still able to successfully complete their order, figure 16 shows that as the number of suspensions increase, the likelihood of the offender successfully completing their court ordered parole order decreases.

Of the 3,923 offenders who successfully completed their court ordered parole in 2012, approximately 70% (n = 2,805) were not brought before a parole board for a suspension at any time during the order. In comparison, of the offenders who did not successfully complete their court ordered parole order, 90% (n = 1,339) appeared before a parole board one or more times prior to their order being cancelled. Just over 60% (n = 922) received one suspension and a little under 20% (n = 266) received two suspensions before the cancellation of their order.

Figure 16: Percentage of completions (successful and not successful) based on number of suspensions (January 2012 – December 2012)

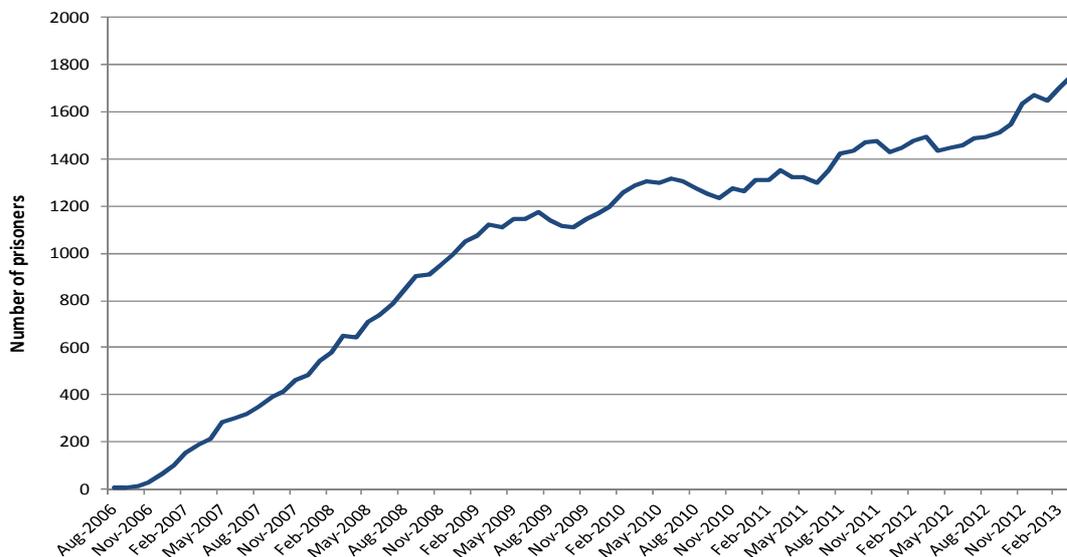


Impact of Court Ordered Parole Suspensions or Cancellations on Prison Numbers

It is apparent that court ordered parole has produced a number of favourable effects including evidence that approximately 72% of orders are successfully completed without cancellation or reconviction. However, the effect of court ordered parole suspensions or cancellations on prison numbers should also be considered.

The number of prisoners in custody as a result of court ordered parole suspension or cancellation has continued to grow over time (see figure 17). As at February 2013, just under 1,800 prisoners were in custody for having their order suspended or cancelled.

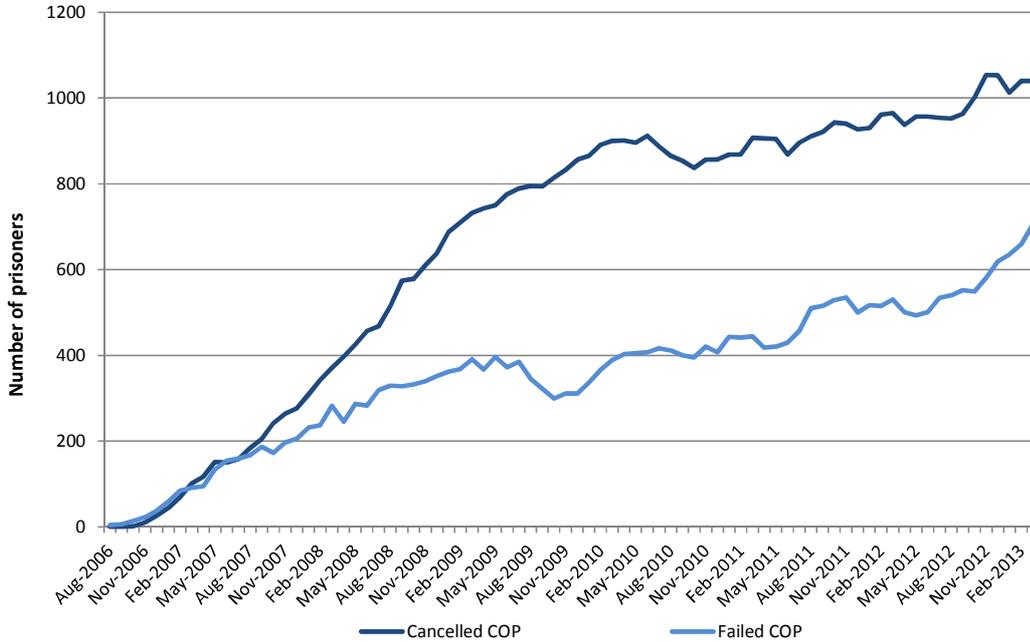
Figure 17: Trend in the number of prisoners in custody due to court ordered parole suspension or cancellation



It is noted that the number of offenders in custody for having their court ordered parole suspended or cancelled is lower than the number of short sentence prisoners prior to the introduction of court ordered parole. In July 2006, prior to the introduction of this order type, approximately 2,300 offenders were in custody serving short sentences of three years or less (see figure 4). This is comparatively higher than the number of offenders in custody as at February 2013 for having their court ordered parole suspended or cancelled (slightly less than 1,800).

Figure 18 shows that the number of prisoners who have had their court ordered parole cancelled exceeds the number in prison for a suspension. As at February 2013, the number of offenders in prison for court ordered parole cancellations was just over 1,000 whilst suspensions accounted for approximately 700 prisoners.

Figure 18: Number of offenders in custody for court ordered parole suspensions and cancellations



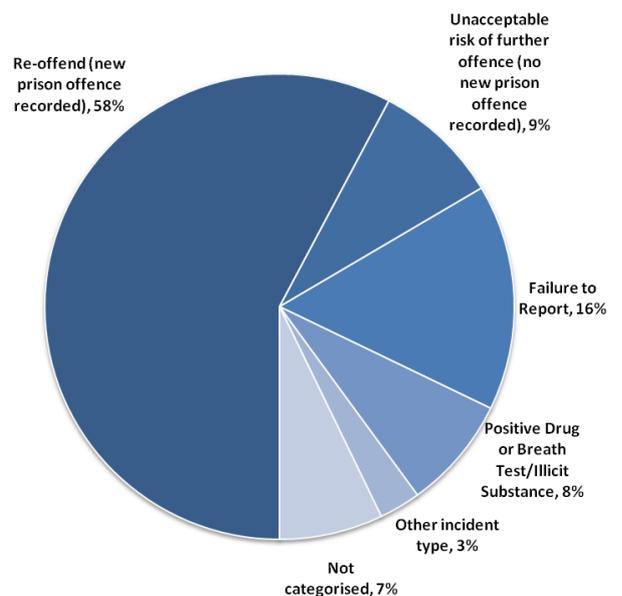
The *Corrective Services Act 2006* provides for a prisoner’s court ordered parole order to be cancelled if the prisoner:

- has failed to comply with the conditions of the order;
- poses a serious risk of harm to someone else;
- poses an unacceptable risk of committing an offence; or
- is preparing to leave Queensland, other than under a written order granting the prisoner leave to travel interstate or overseas.

Under the Act, a prisoner’s court ordered parole order is automatically cancelled if they are convicted of an offence and sentenced to a period of imprisonment while they are on court ordered parole. Any offender returned to prison after the cancellation of their court ordered parole order must apply to the relevant parole board for release to parole. At sentencing for a new offence, the court may provide these offenders with a parole eligibility date, but not an automatic parole release date.

Figure 19 shows that between January 2012 and December 2012, 58% of court ordered parole cancellations were as a result of reoffending with a subsequent new prison offence recorded.

Figure 19: Reasons for court ordered parole cancellations (January 2012 – December 2012)



DISCUSSION

The *Corrective Services Act 2006* established parole as the only form of early release from custody. The introduction of court ordered parole aimed to provide a sentencing option that ensures offenders are subject to supervision for the full duration of their sentence, either in custody or in the community with Probation and Parole. Court ordered parole was also designed to manage the growth in short sentence prisoners.

Trends in the utilisation of court ordered parole and the suspension, cancellation and completion rates of this order type were examined to highlight some of the key findings since it was introduced in 2006.

Court Ordered Parole Trends

Total prisoner numbers have stabilised following the introduction of court ordered parole. Prior to the introduction of this order type prisoner numbers were forecast to grow; however total prisoner numbers from August 2006 until mid-2012 remained relatively stable at approximately 5,500.

Court ordered parole has also reduced the number of prisoners serving shorter sentences (i.e. three years or less in duration). In July 2006 (prior to the introduction of court ordered parole) 2,300 prisoners were serving shorter sentences. However this declined to a low of just over 1,800 in January 2011.

There has also been a significant decline in the number of partially suspended sentences. The numbers of partially suspended sentences has halved from approximately 500 before the introduction of court ordered parole to 250 by January 2008. This figure has remained comparatively stable since suggesting that, where permitted by legislation, courts generally prefer the ability to set the release date to court ordered parole and be assured the offender will be supervised in the community. However, there has been no decline in the number of partially suspended sentences for offenders who are ineligible for court ordered parole (i.e. sex offenders).

Typically, offenders on court ordered parole serve shorter sentences with 66% having an aggregated sentence length of 12 months or

less and close to 40% are sentenced to court ordered parole straight from court.

Court Ordered Parole Suspension

Probation and Parole have a number of compliance and risk related factors to assess progress on an order. If the offender is not compliant this can result in the suspension of their court ordered parole. Approximately 300 offenders per month have their court ordered parole suspended and returned to prison. The most common reason for an order suspension is because the offender has been assessed as posing an unacceptable risk of further offending.

Factors Related to the Successful Completion of Court Ordered Parole

Approximately three-quarters (72%) of all offenders granted court ordered parole successfully complete their order without cancellation or reconviction. Further, this paper has identified a number of factors that are related to the likelihood of an offender successfully completing their court ordered parole.

These factors include: being older in age (specifically, not being a youthful offender - i.e. between 17 and 24 years of age); being a lower risk offender (as indicated on the RoR-PV or RoR-PPV); having a shorter sentence length (12 months or less); being released straight from court to court ordered parole; and not receiving a court ordered parole suspension.

Suspension and Completion Rates of Court Ordered Parole

Offenders who do not receive a court ordered parole suspension are significantly more likely to successfully complete their order. Of the total number of offenders who successfully completed their court ordered parole, approximately 70% did not receive a suspension, and return to prison, throughout the duration of their order. However, as the number of suspensions increase, the less likely an offender is to successfully complete their order.

Impact of Court Ordered Parole Suspensions or Cancellations on Prison Numbers

The number of prisoners in custody as a result of court ordered parole suspension or cancellation has increased over time.

Examination of the data demonstrates that the majority are in prison for a court ordered parole cancellation versus suspension. Reoffending with a new prison offence recorded accounts for just over half of all order cancellations and being assessed as an unacceptable risk of reoffending accounts for a further 9% indicating an effective response to ensure community safety.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that court ordered parole is Queensland Corrective Services' most successful supervision order with approximately 72% of orders being completed without cancellation or reconviction.

This order type has stabilised total prisoner numbers through reducing the proportion of short sentences whereas prior to the introduction of court ordered parole they were forecast to grow. As a result, the need to invest in prison infrastructure has been delayed.

It is possible that without this order type, those sentenced to court ordered parole would have been sentenced to partially or wholly suspended sentences. Consequently, these offenders would not have received community supervision and the known benefits this has in reducing reoffending.

However, whilst this order type has shown positive effects, analysis of the data also demonstrated a sharp increase in the number of offenders returned to custody between 2011 and 2013 due to their order being suspended as a result of being assessed as an unacceptable risk of reoffending. The increase in suspensions of this type is likely to be the result of strengthening in QCS' risk assessment procedures and efficient responses to changes in an offender's individual risk factors associated with their offence pathway.

Between January 2012 and December 2012, 58% of court ordered parole cancellations that occurred were as a result of reoffending (new prison offence recorded). A further 9% were cancelled due to the offender being assessed as an unacceptable risk of committing a further offence. The ability to suspend or cancel an offender's court

ordered parole order based on an unacceptable risk of reoffending demonstrates a strong commitment to community safety.

Overall, it is evident that a large number of offenders on court ordered parole successfully complete their order. However, it is clear from the analysis that a proportion of offenders on this order type have their order cancelled as a result of reoffending or being assessed as an unacceptable risk of reoffending. This suggests that further consideration may need to be given to managing offenders on court ordered parole more effectively and efficiently.

Possible changes could include adjusting eligibility criteria, for example to include sex offenders to ensure they receive community supervision post release. Alternatively changes could be made to allow for the sentencing court or QCS to set a parole eligibility date rather than an automatic release date to court ordered parole in particular cases (e.g. violent offenders) which would allow the Parole Board to assess risk prior to granting release.

However, court ordered parole is a high volume order and any changes to the eligibility criteria for this order type or the proportion of time spent in custody versus community supervision would have an impact on prisoner numbers.