

Turning homes into prisons

Victoria's new home detention program is alarming. Electronic home detention has the potential to turn homes into prisons and families into prison wardens.

Creating prisons in the home assumes that family members, especially female family members, will be available, willing and able to take on the role of prison warden. It is a quick (and relatively cheap) fix that relies on families to undertake unpaid work for which they have no training or expertise.

If offenders are considered 'safe enough' to be confined in their own homes, it seems more appropriate for them to be on a community sentence, not a prison-at-home sentence. Families are not equipped nor qualified to provide professional support and rehabilitation to offenders.

Electronic home detection does not address the problems within our prison system. It merely shifts the burden, and the expense, to the family home. Although prisoners will be protected from the jail system, this initiative may cause serious damage to relationships within families. We need to reflect on the impact such an initiative will have for women and children in their homes

In the past few years, we have turned homes into hospitals. Now we are turning homes into prisons. These cost-cutting changes place increased burdens on families. They also provide legitimacy for neglect.

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