



# **The ‘Perils and Pitfalls’ of Recruiting Former Detainees of the Alexander Maconochie Centre (the AMC)**

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# Gaining Insights of Former Prisoners

- Reliable information and data on the general former prisoner population **is not available** (Baldry et al 2003).
- In the last ten years, there been limited research, following a **qualitative research design**, focusing on the experiences of individuals following their release from prison (Hardcastle et al 2018; Johns 2017; Social Policy Research Centre 2017; Schetzer & Streetcare 2013; Cherney & Fitzgerald 2014 ...)
- What *challenges* might qualitative researchers face in collecting data?

# Ethical and Practical Complexities

- Assumption that 'good research' is clinical, impersonal and *requires an objective, detached relationship* on the part of the researcher (Macintyre 2014).
- Individuals participate in research in expectation of gain of some type... *economic gain* (Faree et al 1995), *access to information* (Smith et al 1998) ... *therapeutic benefit* (Latterman & Merz 2001).
- The development of *rapport and trust* may be affected by demographic features of researchers (Roberts & Indermaur 2008).
- *Former prisoners can be hard to follow-up...* may have no formal reporting requirements and usually *want to avoid bureaucratic contact* (Baldry et al 2003).

On 'the spot'	Difficult to arrange in 'the future'
Consent Form	Information will be kept anonymous Contact details
Trust & Rapport	Information will be kept anonymous 'Soft' referrals
Participant Motivation	Compensation vs Making a change
Positionality of Researcher	Appearance + Experience
Snowball Sampling Method	Social Groups

## Lessons Learnt

- Policy should be informed by the people it most directly affects
- Limited Australian research which includes the voices of individuals with *lived experience* in the criminal justice system.
- Research projects seeking to gain the insights of former prisoners need **an ongoing and supportive relationship** with a range of service providers and Corrective Services.