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Results of periodic detention orders

A Periodic Detention Order (PDO) is a community based sentencing option available to New South Wales courts that allows an offender to live within the community most of the time, keeping their job and family contacts, while serving a two day a week detention period, for up to three years (McHutchison 2006). As part of a PDO offenders may be required to undertake community service activities. PDOs are considered an important sentencing option for the courts as they can offer more reparative and rehabilitative opportunities than full time incarceration (McHutchison 2006). Not only does full-time incarceration often mean loss of employment, housing, and personal property for the offender, the cost of keeping an offender in prison was estimated to be \$240 per day in 2005–06 (SCRGSP 2007).

A study by the NSW Department of Corrective Services analysed how often PDOs in NSW were completed successfully, and identified factors associated with failure to complete the orders (McHutchison 2006). The study found that almost 70 percent of offenders sentenced to periodic detention completed their sentences. Although the rate of completion was lower than the 76 percent for Community Service Orders (CSOs), this was to be expected, as those on a CSO generally have committed less serious offences and/or have less of an offending history, and conditions are not as strict or onerous as a PDO. The following risk factors were found to be associated with non-completion:

- offenders younger than 35 years
- property offences
- robbery offences
- deception offences
- prior experience with two or more CSOs
- prior experience of incarceration
- sentenced in local court (although this could be the result of the different types of offences and offenders dealt with by the respective courts)

Young offenders were also less likely to attend for their PDO and slower to complete it. A previous finding that Indigenous offenders were less likely to complete a PDO was not supported by the study.

The results indicate that regular monitoring of PDO outcomes and actions to address the risk factors, such as closer mentoring of young offenders would be beneficial.

References

McHutchison J. 2006. *Outcomes for NSW periodic detention orders commenced 2003–2004*. Research publication no. 48. Sydney: NSW Department of Corrective Services.

SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision) 2007. *Report on government services*. Melbourne: Productivity Commission