

How abolishing suspended sentences in Tasmania could cost \$20 million per year

length of sentences imposed in Tasmania 2002-2004 (days)	number of suspended sentences	number of days suspended in total	total cost of suspended sentences, if served in prison (\$m)
A	B	C (A x B)	C x \$382
45 (Supreme Court)	26	1,170	0.446
135	93	12,555	4.796
225	59	13,275	5.071
315	29	9,135	3.489
450	29	13050	4.985
630	5	3,150	1.203
900	2	1,800	0.687
15 (Magistrates Court)	51	765	0.292
45	302	13,590	5.191
75	238	17,850	6.818
105	222	23,310	8.904
150	121	18,150	6.933
210	62	13,020	4.973
300	22	6,600	2.521
360	10	3,600	1.375
Total cost over 2 years			57.684
cost over 1 year			28.842
cost over 1 year (with 30% reduction)			20.189

Methodology used:

1. The 2008 report from the Tasmanian Law Reform Commission on sentencing¹ brought together data on the length and number of sentences imposed by Tasmanian courts over the two years from 2002 to 2004.
2. Regarding length of sentence (column A above), the Commission collected data on sentences imposed within bandwidths. e.g. 3>6 months, 6>9 months and so on. For this purpose we have assumed each sentence fell at the median length for the bandwidth. i.e. for the bandwidth 3>6 months we assumed a sentence of 135 days (half way point between 3 and 6 months = 135 days). The two courts had differently spaced bandwidths, hence the different numbers in column A for Supreme versus Magistrates Courts
3. Regarding number of suspended sentences (column B), the Commission gave a percentage of all sentences that were wholly suspended. e.g. it reported that 56% of the 167 sentences imposed by the Supreme Court in the 3>6 month bandwidth were

¹ Page 107: http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/283810/completeA4.pdf

wholly suspended. Thus, we calculated that 93 of the 167 sentences were wholly suspended (167 X 0.56). Adopting a conservative approach, this calculation process has not calculated or added the cost of *partly* suspended sentences.

4. The 2014 Report on Government Services² reports that the total cost per prisoner per day in Tasmania in 2012/13 was \$382 (column D), including both operating expenses such as salary of prison guards and capital costs.
5. A 30% reduction in cost has been applied to take account of the fact that:
 - (a) some of the people sent to prison will be granted parole and will leave prison before their full sentence is served. Publicly available figures are not available to predict precisely what proportion of sentences will not be served due to parole;
 - (b) the Tasmanian Liberals policy would legislate for new sentencing options that Magistrates and Judges may make use of. While the 'take up rate' amongst the judiciary is hard to predict, i.e. the number instances in which the judiciary would make use of the new sentencing options such as home detention, periodic detention, intensive correction/supervision and additional problem solving/therapeutic alternatives, there is the possibility these will cost less than full imprisonment figure of \$382 per day.
6. Finally, we have made the following assumptions:
 - (a) the number and length of suspended sentences has not changed significantly from 2002/2004, until 2014
 - (b) abolishing suspended sentences will not greatly reduce the crime rate. This is based on Tasmanian research by Dr Lorana Bartels and re-cited in the Commissions report that found suspended sentences were effective in reducing the reconviction rate of offenders.
 - (c) in the main, if the courts are prevented from imposing a suspended sentence they will instead impose the same sentence and require it be served in prison.

² Table 8A.7 http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/132324/rogs-2014-volumec-chapter8.pdf