

If you think you may be going to prison, there are certain things you should try to do before going in because everything is much harder to get done once you are inside.

- 1. Sign a “power of attorney”** – this is so the person you nominate (a family member or a friend) can manage your financial or legal tasks for you while you are inside.
- 2. Put away your belongings** – it is best to put your things somewhere safe, perhaps in storage, so they don't disappear or get damaged. Also arrive in clothes you don't mind being thrown out because it is not guaranteed that you will get them back.
- 3. Cancel any contracts** – you do not want to be paying for something you can't use so make sure any regular payments or contracts are cancelled.
- 4. Sort out debts** – again, you don't want to be paying interest while inside. Consider requesting forgiveness for interest accruing on current debts by approaching the company directly and telling them what is happening.
- 5. Do your taxes** – you don't want there to be any reason for you to go back to prison.
- 6. Go to the doctor, dentist and optometrist** – the prison only provides very basic medical care so it is better to see a doctor before you go in if you need to. Consider getting glasses instead of contacts because it may be hard to get contact solution in prison.
- 7. Consider a joint account** – do this with someone you trust so they can sort out any money issues for you, like banking cheques or paying debts. You can also organise for people on your visits list to put money in your prison account. It might make it easier if you nominate who that will be before you go in.
- 8. Pay your rent in advance** – to hold on to your place. This also goes for post office boxes. You can keep your Office of Housing place if absent for less than six months. If you are a sole tenant in prison without any income, you will be charged a flat \$15 per week. If, however, there are remaining household members or you receive an income, rent is assessed on that income. If you will be absent for more than 6 months and voluntarily give up your tenancy during this first 6 months you can apply for an early housing transfer if you reapply within two years of giving up the tenancy.
- 9. Renew your drivers' licence** – do it for as long a period as possible.
- 10. Organise things to do inside** – you will have a lot of time to fill in so it might be a good idea to write a list of names and addresses for people to correspond with (there is no internet in

prison). You can then have the list mailed to you once you are inside. People can send you books and magazines, but you are not allowed to receive books from a book club or magazines directly from the publisher through a subscription. You are not allowed to have hard covered books if you are in a High Security Unit without the permission of the General Manager of the prison. You can have hard covered books at all other locations.

**11. Induction** – the Metropolitan Remand Centre produce an induction booklet called “Prisoner & Visitor Information Booklet” which lists information such as your rights, the prison and visits rules, property, money, etc. Ask for a copy and make sure you read it – you should be involved and responsible for standing up for yourself and others.

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### ***Further information***

This fact sheet contains general information only and is not a substitute for obtaining legal advice. If you would like advice regarding a specific problem please contact one of the legal services listed in [contacts](#) or contact the Law Institute of Victoria's Legal Referral Service on 9607 9311.