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• Australia's National Prison Newspaper

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About Time



Ike Curtis

The Campaign to Make Prison Phone Calls Free

The high costs of making a phone call from prison are preventing many inmates from remaining in contact with their support networks, damaging their prospects for successful reintegration post-release.

By Denham Sadler

There are renewed hopes that phone calls in Australian prisons will soon be more affordable or completely free, with campaigns advocating for the change ramping up around the country.

The "exorbitant" cost of making a call from a prison in Australia has been criticised by human and civil rights groups, legal organisations, parliamentary inquiries and those with direct experience of the situation.

The high cost of these calls – far higher than what it costs to make a phone call in the wider community – is hampering efforts by those in prison to maintain connections with family and friends on the outside, and placing further financial strain on those with an incarcerated loved one.

Numerous recent inquiries have recommended that all calls from prisons be made free, or at the very least, far cheaper than they are now.

Prisoner rights activist Joanna Scriven runs New Directionz, a charity providing support and assistance to those leaving prison in NSW. She regularly contacts people in prison and sees the impact that expensive calls are having – both on the inside and out.

"It's critical to have outside contact yet they make it so expensive for families," Scriven told About Time. "It's feeding the poverty cycle. There are people that can get money put in their account and people who can't. If you don't get phone calls and you don't have the money, you just have to languish in your cell."

The price of making a phone call from prison in Australia varies widely around the country, but across the board, it is far higher than in the general community.

In Victoria, it costs about 57 cents per minute to call a mobile phone from a public prison, or $7 for the maximum 12-minute phone call. Those working in prisons in the state earn between $3.55 and $9.60 per day, meaning those on the lowest wage would need to work two full days to be able to afford the 12-minute phone call.

Calls are cheaper in New South Wales prisons, where it costs about 24 cents per minute, and are cheapest in Western Australia, where it is 10 cents per minute.

In the ACT, it costs 50 cents per minute, and in the Northern Territory it is 40 cents per minute.

These rates are comparable to what a household in the general community would have paid for phone calls about two decades ago.

In Victoria, VACRO has been campaigning for free prison phone calls for several years, after its participants began raising concerns about the high costs.

"Unless people have got family or loved ones on the outside who are able to put money in their account, then they have to choose between phone calls and other things in buy-up," VACRO senior policy and advocacy advisor Abigail Lewis told About Time.

"We were contacted by incarcerated people who were organising with their loved ones to talk to each other about how to afford phone calls and how to get the message out about how damaging it is that phone calls are so expensive.

"The reason I'm fighting really hard for this is because of what we hear from people who are incarcerated themselves, and their loved ones. We'd really encourage everyone who is currently in prison to keep speaking out. People are listening on the outside and advocacy on the inside is driving change in community attitudes and in policy."

A number of people currently incarcerated have also raised concerns about the quality of phone calls, with many reporting that poor connection lines have left them unable to conduct a conversation. Despite these issues, the full cost for these phone calls is still imposed.

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The Campaign to Make Prison Phone Calls Free

By Denham Sadler

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One person currently inside described the call quality as like using an "old tin and string phone", while another said that an echo is so bad that they can't hear anything on the other side.

Scriven says providing money to a loved one in prison so they can communicate with the outside world is placing pressure on people in the community, and is another reason why these calls should be free.

"They really can't afford it," she said. "They can put money in for them but the pressure is then on them. Then they can't afford to feed themselves – they go without. It puts unseen stress on you."

There is some movement on the issue from Australian politicians.

The Victorian state government has pledged to push for cheaper phone calls as part of negotiations over a new contract with a private company to provide these calls next year.

Phone calls in Victorian prisons are provided by private company Comsec TR on a six-year contract worth $26 million. This contract comes to an end mid-next year, with the state government to negotiate a new deal with that company or select another to coordinate the prison phone system.

Victorian Corrections Minister Enver Erdogan has committed to investigating the cost of prison phone calls, and said the hunt for a new provider will provide an opportunity to reduce these costs.

The NSW Greens have launched a petition pushing for free and secure calls for those in prison by the end of the year. "It's an unacceptable cost imposed upon people who, too often, come from families who are already making the impossible choice between keeping food on the table and gifts for the people they love," the petition said.

"We know that meaningful connection during a prison sentence makes reoffending less likely, because nobody can get their life back on track without the love and support of family and community. Access to free and secure calls will improve and literally save lives."

A number of studies, reports and inquiries have also added to the growing call for phone calls to be made cheaper.

In Victoria, a cultural review of the prison system criticised the "prohibitive costs" of prison phone calls. "The combination of very low daily wages for employment within the custodial environment means that people in custody may not be able to remain in contact with family and community," the Cultural Review of the Adult Custodial Corrections System said.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission recommended in an interim report last year that First Nations people in prison be allowed to "make telephone calls for free or at no greater cost than the general community".

Led by VACRO, a number of advocacy, human rights and legal groups wrote an open letter calling for more affordable phone calls. "These costs create an unacceptably high barrier to contact between people in prison and their families, including children, and damage people's prospects for successful reintegration into their community post-release," the letter said.

The Australian campaign has been buoyed by progress on the issue in the United States, where a number of states have moved to make prison phone calls free or significantly cheaper.

The US Federal Communications Commission recently reduced the price of a phone call from a prison from about $17 ($US11.35) for 15 minutes to as low as $1.30 (US90c) for the same time. US Congress last year passed legislation giving the Commission power to reduce these costs, with the new rates imposed to help address the "unconscionable rates families of the incarcerated pay for communications".

This means that a phone call from a Victorian prison will be about five times more expensive than one from many prisons in the US, and three minutes shorter.

Denham Sadler is a freelance writer based in Naarm/Melbourne, focusing on criminal justice reform.



Welcome South Australia!

To our new South Australian readers: welcome to About Time!

This is the first time Australia's new national prison newspaper is being distributed in your state. We hope you enjoy it. Please contribute and share your thoughts with us about what you'd like to see in the paper.

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Letters

About Time will dedicate many of its pages to publishing the letters of people in prison, as well as from their family and friends. This is the centrepiece of the paper: a platform for people to share their experiences and learn from each other.



My Time in Here Will Not Define Me

By Storm

Storm writes from Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison (MHWP) in Tasmania. She sent us several poems and a song, some of which we intend to publish in the coming months.

12 months into being remanded in custody. I'm still yet to be sentenced – hence I can't see the end at all. I'm trying hard to make something of my time here, writing A LOT, doing heaps of artwork, studying at uni, doing literally ALL the therapy available to me here and any other short courses I can get into. I had a clean record before this but could get anywhere from 2-9 years for my major charge.

I'm trying to advocate for change within this flawed system and have been using my lived experience to write to many external entities about the state of affairs in here. Often that means my time is made somewhat harder. But

I only hope that in the future other inmates feel confident that they too have a voice and that their time is made easier.

I plan to continue with uni inside and outside and pursue a Law degree so I'm more able to try to implement positive changes for people incarcerated and to advocate for myself and others.

I hope to not let my time here define me, but to make good use of this time to better myself as well as the system which keeps me here.

I urge everyone to do the same. Stay on the up and up, no matter how hard it gets, no matter how long you're here – make it count for something and do better in the future — for yourself, your family and for your community around you.

Love + respect. From Storm.

Reflect and Change

Anonymous

The author is writing from Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre in Silverwater, New South Wales.

I'm an inmate who spent the last 20 months in MRRC. I was 24 when I was under arrest. During this time, I lost everything I valued before. I lost my reputation by news, which made lots of friends leave this 'horrible' me. I borrowed and spent all my money on a lawyer, I also was expelled from school in my senior year. I went to the worst situation of my life.

I know there are many brothers who also struggle in the same or worse situation as me, but I got something many brothers didn't get during this time. It's changing from reflection.

Nobody would like to be pushed to change, including me. Sometimes reflection and changing won't make life easier, even harder. We have to come out from our comfortable zone to some strange and unfamiliar lifestyle. We have to put in a lot of effort. But you have to know all this hard time is temporary.

First, nobody wants to come back in jail again. You have to do the 'surgery' and 'cut off' your issue. Of course every surgery is hurt, but without hurt we could never be better. So it can also help us to come back after jail. That's how reflection and change benefit us.

Who else would benefit after we change from reflection? It's people around us. Family and friends also could get a good inspiration.

Yes, we may have a bad history but it doesn't mean we cannot have a good future.

Treating others well is a big step for a new 'nice guy'. We could make our family and friends get some relief, their life is also tough because of us. Please remember this, we should use our good behaviour to treat them well. How to behave well? That's from reflection and changing.

Last, life is a long journey. As I said, there will still be a good future for us. Everyone's journey will get setbacks, so do we. Please learn from this experience.

What doesn't kill us makes us stronger no matter what situation is in front of us.

We have a responsibility to our life. It's never too late to make change. We should make our future better, that's why we have to reflect and change for our long life journey.

Brothers and sisters, please believe in me, and believe in us. We could make a big change for our beautiful life in the future from reflection. Some of us lost everything. We got nothing to lose, but to try and change from reflection.

Good luck.

About Time

Australia's National Prison Newspaper

We are the new national newspaper for people in prison across Australia. We want this to be a paper for people who are incarcerated, by people who are incarcerated. Our aim is to distribute the paper to every person in every prison and detention facility across Australia. This is our third edition, distributed to all prisons in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. We hope that Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory will join us soon.

Our team is made of a group of passionate individuals from around Australia, some of whom have been incarcerated, and others who have worked and volunteered in criminal justice, law and journalism for many years. We are always looking for others to join us.

Write to Us

If you would like to contribute to any of the sections of our paper, or if you would like to correspond with us or provide comments, please write to us at:

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Art Can Change the World

By Henry

Henry writes from Middleton Correctional Centre in Victoria.

Good day,

I was glad to come across one of your publications which caught my attention, and I decided to write and inform you that I am an artist who expresses his emotions through Art.

The maximum security prison facilities across Victoria, I believe, do not see the need to rehabilitate inmates through Art therapy/programmes, for most prison staff's mentality is that of the prisoners, totally institutionalised. Most of them do not see themselves as workers of change, but as screws who would rather obstruct inmates from reaching their full potential in life. They are obstructionists and not mentors for rehabilitation.

I am a strong believer that any inmate, no matter their creed or background who wishes to express him or herself through Art, should be able to do so. Art in essence would provide an inmate with a mental focus, hope, confidence, tangible reward and also a sense of purpose.

It would also help inmates to appreciate every individual day which could empower them to help their fellow inmates, kids or loved ones on the outside.

Permit me to share briefly about my own journey;

My first brush stroke on a canvas was in 2021 at Port Phillip Prison, which was so magical and meaningful to me and which absolutely swayed me to start believing in myself.

It also gave me the fortitude to navigate trouble free in prison. Throughout that time till this moment, I have produced more than 300 paintings, some of which I had painted for my fellow inmates, who have also benefited from the skills that I have developed during those hard times.

My Art embodies the tradition of Art making and each one is crafted with a strong passion to recognise those men and women who have contributed immensely in shaping our world in a more positive way. My style of painting is called Symbolic Realism. I do play around sometimes with different styles of painting such as Portraitures, Abstraction, Surrealism and Landscape.

I would encourage your magazine to highlight more on this subject, because I am a testament to how Art could help create a different world for most of our destabilised brothers and sisters who are stuck in such a dreadful environment. It is also imperative to inform your readers that reaching smaller goals such as painting, writing songs or even reciting poetry would inspire inmates to have, not only a sense of self-worth, but also a sense of tangible rewards, self-development and progress.

There are too many stories I have left untold in this Article. I would write a book on each situation I got myself into through the power of Art, but I will leave them for another day. My long-term goal is to continue creating Artworks and also to use it to empower all the inmates around the world, who are on the path of re-establishing themselves through Art.

I am very much happy to help your magazine in any possible way I can, and I am pleased to answer questions from any inmate who is interested in knowing more about the practical guide to visual Art and different styles of painting. I strongly believe this is the best way I can make my own self and the entire world a better place.

Response from About Time:
Dear Henry. Thank you very much for your letter. It sounds like creating art while in prison has been very transformative for you, and it's exciting to think about the positive impact it could have on others in prisons across Australia as well. If you would like to write an article with some practical tips for how other inmates might start their art journey, we would love to publish it.

I'd Like to Learn More About Re-Integration

By Gabrielle

Gabrielle writes from Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison in Tasmania.

Around a month ago, our prison was supplied with several copies of your newspaper in our rec room and they were an instant hit! I personally enjoyed reading about what different states' rules were on prison-related things, such as: how people can put money into inmate's accounts, how much money different prisons allow inmates to have, and visit processes. I also thoroughly enjoyed reading about what different states offered regarding things such as housing for the homeless. We're really hoping to continue getting access to the papers!

Something I was hoping to contribute/ask the question about, was what do other prisons or states have on offer regarding reintegration/re-entry? Here in Tasmania this is something that lacks tremendously. Generally, inmates are sent back out into the community with no re-integration and it's an extreme shock to them. Our prison also has not equipped inmates with employment to date, and regularly releases inmates to homelessness. Tasmania's housing issue is extreme and inmates generally do not get their chance at parole unless they have a friend/family member with no recent criminal records.

I was sentenced 6 years 6 months, with half for parole. My eligibility for resocialisation is not going to be considered until 6 months before my parole eligibility date. These socialisation leaves are also not a given and are highly unlikely to occur, based on no one being trained in doing them, being told that lockdowns or lack of staff would mean no leave and the fact that no resocialisation leaves have occurred within the past 8+ years. We can, however, attempt re-integration leave at 12 months to volunteer or study, and this did happen a few years with one inmate. That's something... I guess.

I am already at the 2-year mark and I am highly institutionalised. I have severe anxiety and depression and the prison takes on a 'one size fits all' approach, due to it being too much work for them. In our prison we generally have around 40-70 women.

I am extremely interested in what other states and prisons have on offer regarding re-integration and resocialisation with family approaching parole dates. I have read that in some states, inmates are often allowed to do home detention before their parole begins, this sounds brilliant!

Hopefully this makes it through to you.

Warm regards,
Gabrielle

Response from About Time:
Dear Gabrielle. Thank you for your letter. It can definitely be difficult to find this kind of information. Every state and territory is different, so it would be difficult to answer your question here, but each edition of the paper will have a Reintegration section that will detail various programs available to the different jurisdictions.



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Henry, Gabrielle, Simon, David, Malsnight, Joseph, SKS-7K2, Josh, Al, Daniel, A.S. Henry, Lance, Joe, Storm, Sasha, Kevin, Kelly, Aalayah, Sean and Julian. We know there are many more!

Thank you for writing to us in response to the first and second editions. You have told us about your life and time in prison; you have sent us requests; and you have shared poems, artworks and comments.

While we cannot respond directly to all letters we receive, we will aim to publish as many as possible.

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide legal advice. If you need legal assistance please contact your local community legal service, legal aid, or your legal practitioner.

We encourage you to keep writing to us, and to encourage your friends to do the same.

Hope and Solidarity – a Freakin Buzz!

By Joe

Joe writes from Metropolitan Remand Centre in Victoria.

I write to extend feedback – re: your monthly paper. I must say that it was with more than the usual measuring spoon of interest that most here @ MRC welcomed its arrival. Upon finding it in our respective mailboxes, it caused a stir. A tad like the discovery of gold in Ballarat: a freakin buzz!

Some leafed the pages; quietly absorbed by its content. Some flocked together applauding the contents. A small, tidy group of Indigenous fellas loudly (and proudly!) celebrated the inclusion of the artwork of a dear friend of mine Chris at the top, right corner of page 11. In short, conversation thrived! The overall reaction across the board: favourable!

Could it be I'm 'reading' too much into it, if you'll pardon the intended pun? Nay, say I. For the reason is simple. For most of us, About Time rekindles the hearth flames of hope.... and solidarity.

It also served as a semi-tabloid sized platform many choose to use as a way of expressing the beauty they've shielded within since time immemorial.

This beauty, be it artistic or linguistic, or even just humanistic, will finally sprout from the nutrient-poor soil of imprisonment.

As one of the two peer educators for both Burnside & Belbridge at MRC, I interact with dozens of inmates daily. Without reservations, I can say your paper has had a positive influence on all and sundry. And that's tickety-boo!! Quite soon, I imagine you'll be navigating a flood of correspondence into all areas of expression you graciously invite feedback and/or input.

If you would be so kind as to grant me a little leeway in sending you an occasional short story, or a poem, or even an observational anecdote: then I'd be totes chuffed!

At age 54, I was a 1st timer to prison at almost 53. An enormity of life experience has meant I am able to assist my peers here in various ways. Principally though, I guide their journey to accept that they are more. Much more (!) than their crime or transgression.

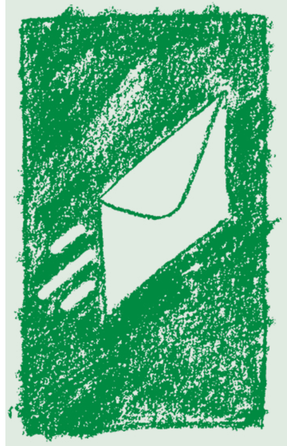
The will to change begins with the humblest of realisations. Like dropping certain habits. If I can at times be the trigger for that, then I am happy. Mostly, people are good inside. A famous author once said: men's natures are alike. It is their habits that set them apart...

Hence I surmise that moving away from unhealthy habits (and habitats!!) prompts a kind of reboot... a reset to those original god-gifted settings we were born with prior to nibbling or gorging the 'poison apple'.
Ok; best I wrap it up before I bore the starch from your crisp, clean shirts. In closing I'll say this:

Your monthly publication offers us not only hope and solidarity – as I stated pages and pages ago ;) – but also a sense of dignity. And that is something that some have never experienced.

Consequently, I bid you genuine thanks!! In recognition of your efforts, I extend my sincerest regards.

Response from About Time:
Thank you so much for your letter, Joe. We would love for you to send us the occasional short story, poem or anecdote. We have shortened and edited your letter slightly for clarity – we hope you don't mind.



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• News and Investigations

Each edition will contain news articles and investigative pieces. These are topical stories that will usually be about prisons and criminal justice. We will also summarise the latest criminal justice news around the country, focusing on the states where the paper is currently published.





VIC

Victoria backflip on raising the age of criminal responsibility

In April 2023, the Victorian Government announced that it would raise the age of criminal responsibility in Victoria from 10 to 12 years old in 2024, and to 14 years old by 2027. However, on 13 August 2024, the Victorian Premier announced a suite of suggested legislative changes that will undo that commitment. The age of criminal responsibility will still be increased to 12 years old this year. However, the Government has abandoned its commitment to raise it any further.

Eleanor Bourke, the chair of the Yoorook Justice Commission, has described the decision as contrary to evidence, and said that it will cause a 'tsunami of disappointment'. Similarly, Change the Record, the group behind the national Raise the Age campaign, has expressed its disappointment with the decision, declaring that is not consistent with the minimum standards set by the United Nations and is contrary to evidence that show the earlier a child ends up in jail, the greater their risk of reoffending later in life.

The Victorian Parliament is now preparing to debate the proposed amendments.

About Time will have more on this story in coming editions.



NT

New youth detention center to open in Darwin in October

A new $130 million youth detention centre is set to open in Darwin later this year. Detainees at the Don Dale Youth Detention center, where in 2016 the ABC's Four Corners reported on evidence of torture, are set to relocate to the new 44-bed facility in Holtze in October. The center will be run under a 'therapeutic' model of care. The NT government describes this approach as follows:

A therapeutic approach in youth justice settings frames young people as vulnerable and in need of support and healing, as opposed to punishment or fear. It recognises that most young people who offend have complex needs arising from their background, environment, and experiences of past trauma. The focus of a therapeutic approach is on supporting behavioural change and personal development for young people so they can sustain meaningful growth beyond their time in the youth justice centre.

The placement of the facility has been criticised, with the new centre to open next to the existing adult prison.

In 2022, the NT government reported that in September 2021, 50 young people were in detention, with 94% were Aboriginal; 87% male; 70% had previously accessed child protection services and 89% were likely to have a severe neurodevelopmental impairment.



ACT

Canberra Liberals propose policing boost

The opposition party, the Canberra Liberals, released a new 'tough on crime' policy this month. If elected in the ACT elections on October 19, the Liberals have promised to 'boost community safety' by investing in 200 more police officers, a $5 million upgrade to the Woden police station, a new police station in Civic, and continue the transition of the Gungahlin fire, police and ambulance centre into a dedicated police station.

The Liberals also outlined significant changes to the judicial system, including legislating to remove the presumption of bail for those charged with assaulting frontline workers and a standalone offence for breaching bail.

Proposed reforms also include introducing electronic monitoring ankle bracelets for serious offenders, implementing tougher penalties for dangerous driving and 'coward punch' attacks, and introduce 'wanding laws' which allow police further powers to scan people for knives and other weapons.



NSW

All prisons in NSW now have access to 'virtual' medical care

All prisons, courts and youth centres in NSW are now equipped with tools to implement 'virtual' care for eligible patients. This comes at a time when prison healthcare is under scrutiny across the country (see Around the Country: Tasmania).

Justice Health NSW Chief Executive Wendy Hoey hopes that by improving access to virtual care, transfers to hospital emergency departments will decrease.

"Patients in correctional settings have unique needs and often worse health outcomes than those in the wider community," said Ms Hoey.

"Advances in multipurpose medical cameras and scopes are now enabling us to provide high-quality virtual care to better support this vulnerable population.

"Early assessment and treatment planning through virtual care can reduce the need for more urgent care further down the track."

About Time will have more on this story to see if the virtual care program is functional or whether it causes other issues, and welcomes submissions from people imprisoned in NSW on this topic.



SA

Protecting the vulnerable: SA moves to outlaw claim farming

An exploitative money-making scheme that seeks to profit from the suffering of victims would soon be outlawed under the new proposed laws from the South Australian government.

A draft legislation is under consultation with the government that aims to ban 'claim farming' – a predatory practice where people receive kickbacks for referring victims to law firms.

The practice often targets vulnerable individuals, although most recently highlighted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to child sexual abuse were the victims of child sexual abuse receiving unsolicited mails from alleged law firms claiming compensation.

The proposed law would impose fines of up to $50,000 for those engaging in claim farming and potentially lead to disciplinary action against legal practitioners involved.

This move follows similar efforts in Queensland and is part of a broader push to address this issue nationwide.

SA Attorney General, Kyam Maher, said that a number of predatory, exploitative operators have sought to take advantage of vulnerable victims by entering the 'survivor advocacy business' – "seeking to make a quick buck off someone else's trauma."

"They often treat vulnerable cohorts or communities, and use high pressure tactics that often equate to harassment or intimidation. They may use misleading or dishonest tactics to discourage victim survivors from using the freely available legal assistance services which take a trauma informed approach."

While the practice is not commonly practiced in South Australia, there are concerns that increasing regulations in other jurisdictions are seeing these unscrupulous operators look to establish themselves in locations where the practice is still legal, which is why it is imperative we act now."



QLD

Queensland government launches investigation into Wolston Park's dark past

The Queensland government has announced an investigation into Brisbane mental health institution, Wolston Park, following reports of historical allegations of abuse at the facility.

Former patients spoke about the alleged abuse they suffered in Wolston Park for the first time in an investigation by the ABC. They also expressed difficulty accessing their medical files, which have now been unsealed after 100 years. Dr Adele Chynoweth is the author of Goodna Girls, a book about former wards of the state placed in Wolston Park.

"[The women I spoke with] talked about... solitary confinement, rape, torture... the lack of any kind of education, socialisation [and] this punitive, chemical straight-jacketing experience they endured," she said. Wolston Park closed in 2001, but has been surrounded by allegations of physical and sexual abuse, as well as chemical restraints from the 1950s to 80s.

"It is my understanding that previous inquiries may have not have properly captured the experiences of all people impacted, including the experiences of children or adult patients who were not considered wards of the state," Health Minister Shannon Fentiman told the ABC.

Fentiman had directed the Mental Health Commissioner to launch an investigation into the health services provided by Wolston Park between the 1950s to 1990s.

While the investigation would not "undo the harm caused", Fentiman hoped it would allow those impacted to "share their experiences and to heal". The investigation is expected to take about six months.

"There are powers under the Queensland Mental Health Commission Act for the mental health commissioner to conduct a special investigation... in a trauma-informed way," said Fentiman. "I have no doubt that some of the key findings and recommendations will be made public. I think that's a really important part of the truth-telling and healing journey for these former patients."



TAS

Questions around adequate healthcare in custody

Reports from the Tasmanian Custodial Inspector have raised serious and significant concerns about custodial conditions and access to adequate health services for inmates.

In July, the Custodial Inspector released reports into the health and wellbeing of adults and children in custody. Serious and ongoing health concerns were identified in the reports, including the ongoing use of 'lockdowns' (where prisoners are kept in their cells for extended periods of time), as well as a lack of access to adequate health services. Mental health care for children in custody at Ashley Youth Detention Centre was also raised as a significant concern, with the report finding there had been no meaningful increase in the access to mental health services since the previous report had made the recommendation for these services to increase.

A further report was released in August which found prisoners at Risdon Prison are frequently being held in 'dry cells', constantly lit spaces with no running water or external windows.

This is a practice which breaches the United Nations' standards for the treatment of prisoners and can lead to serious health and safety concerns.

Advocates are calling for immediate action to end the practice of dry cells, to uphold the rights of detainees and improve the health and safety conditions of inmates and staff.



WA

Pressure on WA government to act on 'systemic failures' in youth detention following inquest into death in custody of Cleveland Dodd and new report

Pressure is mounting on the Western Australian government to act on the state's youth detention system.

On 15 August 2024, the Commission for Children and Young People report on youth detention was tabled in parliament. The Hear Me Out report contains testimony from children as young as 10 about their experiences of incarceration. Many children interviewed had complex needs, including intellectual disabilities and neurodivergence.

They speak of racism, use of force, lack of programs, severe understaffing and lockdowns. One child described his experience as "being in a zoo."

The report presented 16 recommendations to parliament, and an update required on progress by November.

The inquiry was commissioned following the death of 16-year-old Yamatji boy, Cleveland Dodd, in October 2023.

Dodd tragically passed away after attempting to take his own life while incarcerated in Unit 18, which was then a temporary youth detention facility within Casuarina Prison, a maximum-security adult jail. It's the first reported case of a juvenile death in custody in the state. No closure date for Unit 18 has been set. The coronial inquest into his passing finished in August this year, and About Time will keep readers informed of the findings.

The Case of Ron Brierley, Healthcare and Elderly Prisoners



Marcelo Leal

News and Investigations

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a retired inmate.

Ron Brierley's case is the tip of a very large iceberg when it comes to elderly people and healthcare in prison.

In December 2019, then 82-year-old Brierley was detained at Sydney International Airport following an anonymous tip-off.

On 1 April 2021, Brierley pleaded guilty to three counts of possessing child abuse material.

On 14 October 2021, Brierley was sentenced to 14 months in jail, with a seven-month non-parole period.

Discovering skin cancer

On the day of his imprisonment, Brierley complained of a "sore" on his left leg. More than a week later, Brierley had not yet seen a doctor or received a health assessment. Brierley's solicitor sent an email to Justice Health. No response was received.

Eleven days later, Brierley was seen by a doctor in jail who showed concern, and he was placed on a five-month waiting list to see a doctor at Prince of Wales hospital.

As Brierley became increasingly anxious, he discovered a new lump at the same site of the sore. Following urgent representation by his solicitor – to which Justice Health also did not reply – Brierley was transported to Long Bay Prison on 16 November 2021, and a biopsy of the lump was carried out on his leg. The biopsy confirmed skin cancer.

Upon returning to his cell, Brierley experienced regular bouts of heavy bleeding from the biopsy site, requiring pressure bandages. Brierley also began to suffer a severe urinary tract infection. It took 10 days for him to be prescribed antibiotics. He went on to suffer recurring urinary infections.

Surgical removal of his skin cancer took place on 8 December 2021.

Although his dermatologist recommended a three-week period of hospitalisation to allow appropriate time to heal, Brierley was immediately transferred back to jail to recover.

In his cell, Brierley's wound bled frequently and urinary tract infections continued. Bed rest was almost impossible.

Throughout his imprisonment, Brierley developed a fear of falling in the shower, as the facilities had no hand railings or non-slip tiles. He chose to shower just once every 10 days because of his unsteadiness. Brierley had a moderate degree of vascular dementia and heart disease prior to his imprisonment.

On 28 December 2021, the stitches around Brierley's leg wound broke down, resulting in an uncontrollable haemorrhage and emergency hospital admission. An attempt was made to admit Brierley to the Kevin Waller unit at Long Bay hospital, but the 26-bed ward was already full.

Challenging the sentence

In February 2022, the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal allowed Brierley's legal team to challenge his sentence. The court was told that Brierley's health had deteriorated since his imprisonment and the conditions under which he was incarcerated were "onerous". Brierley was re-sentenced to 10 months jail with a four-month non-parole period. He was released from jail on 13 February 2022.

Justices Beech-Jones, Harrison and Fagan agreed that the sentencing judge, Judge Huggett (as she was then known), made no error in law when she sentenced the former Brierley to jail.

However, the Court found that there was a "striking" discrepancy between the conditions Judge Huggett had been led to believe Brierley would be subject to, and the actual conditions he faced as an 84-year-old inmate in deteriorating health at Long Bay jail.

The Court found that contrary to the assurances Justice Health provided to Judge Huggett on sentence, Brierley was not assessed by any form of healthcare practitioner until 11 days after entering jail, nor had Brierley received an aged care assessment for three weeks, which was an unusually long time to wait. Ultimately, he was never admitted to an aged care facility in jail.

Their Honours found that there had been a "seriously deficient provision of welfare for a prisoner in this class" and that the evidence "supports a conclusion that Corrective Services, in conjunction with Justice Health, is not able to provide conditions of imprisonment to the reasonable standard of safety and humanity that her Honour evidently understood would be provided when the sentence was passed".

The author's view — Ensuring equitable care

Brierley's case demonstrates how elderly inmates are treated within a system that does not safeguard the healthcare needs of its prisoners.

As older inmates represent an increasing percentage of the total prison population, it is likely that they will continue to receive suboptimal and inappropriate care, unless the "system" undergoes significant quality improvement.

Brierley's case also showcases why sentencing judges should very carefully consider the relevant medical histories of older offenders, and in particular, the inability of Correctional Services and Justice Health to accurately and promptly assess and offer older inmates appropriate care.

The case serves as a wake-up call for urgent reforms to the prison system, including:

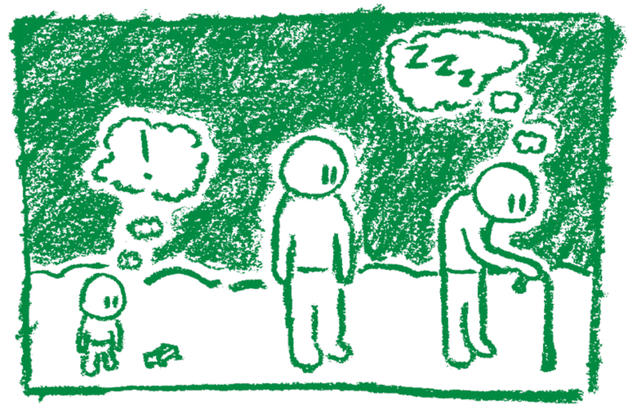
- **Dedicated facilities:** Increased investment in specialised facilities for elderly prisoners, equipped with appropriate medical care and support services.
- **Comprehensive healthcare:** Improved access to quality healthcare, including mental health services, for all prisoners, with particular attention to the needs of older inmates.
- **Staff training:** Training correctional officers and medical staff to understand the specific needs of elderly prisoners.
- **Regular assessments:** Mandatory health assessments for all elderly inmates upon entry and at regular intervals.
- **Compassionate release:** Consideration of compassionate release for elderly prisoners with terminal illnesses or severe, debilitating conditions.

It is imperative that steps are taken to prevent similar situations as Brierley's from occurring in the future.

Experiences

This section publishes stories about individuals' experiences with the criminal justice system.

There are so many ways that people have interacted with the system, and so many stories to tell. Experiences aims to tell those stories, presented as beautiful feature articles.



Chalking Up the Wins

An interview with Paolo Lobosco

By Daniel Vansetten

Daniel Vansetten spent around 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study a Bachelor of Laws at university. He uses his lived experience and study to advocate for prison reform, providing volunteer services to prison reform advocates across Australia.

Paolo Lobosco is of Aboriginal and Italian descent, with strong ties to the Ngarrindjeri people of the Point McLeay Mission, which they call Raukkan. Paolo is a valuable member of his community, particularly through his involvement with cue sports, such as 8-ball, the discipline of pool played with sixteen billiard balls. While he has been imprisoned on three separate occasions, 8-ball has given Paolo the focus and sense of community to move forward on the right path.

"I played 8-ball all my life, but proper competition started in 2016. I started changing my life then," Paolo said. "I'm all clear now, trying my best, putting one foot forward at a time, taking every day as it comes."

Paolo began playing at his local football club in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, where he started his own 8-ball team. "I was playing in local knockout competitions at local pubs every Thursday or Friday. Whoever lasted the longest would get the prize money."

As Paolo found success, he also found a community. "I won a knockout one night and had a random person [named Warren] and his son invite me to play with their team," he said. "I joined their team and helped them win a grand-final. That was 2017. I became good mates with Warren over the years that followed."

Paolo hit a setback after returning to prison in 2021. Importantly, he did not lose sight of his goals. "Cue sports has been a big part of me staying focused and staying positive," he said. "It's a gentleman's sport too, a real respectable sport. You call your own fouls, you don't talk between shots to not put the other player off, you always shake your opponent's hand at the end of a game. You need a clear head as well. You can't be playing when under any pressure – you just won't play as good. You need a clear mind and to stay focused. It's like chess but on a pool table."

Paolo understands that even with a clear mind and good intentions, things do not always go to plan. After he was released on parole in 2022, Paolo was returned from prison for breaching a location restriction while visiting his mother. "I informed my parole officer I was going to see my mother, and nothing was said. So, I went," he said. "I hadn't seen her for a while, plus I took my kids to visit their grandmother. I [later] had the police knock at my door and breach my parole. I ended up doing another twelve weeks waiting for the parole board to let me out again."

Warren stood by Paolo when it counted most. "After my 2022 release from prison he'd become president of the South-West Metropolitan 8-ball Committee," Paolo said. "He offered me a position on the committee ... we were good mates and he believed my involvement would help me stay structured and have things to do."

As a committee member Paolo has a range of important responsibilities. "I organise and host events, prepare flyers, hold barbecues to raise funds, and organise the people – including from all around Australia," he said.. "We have an Australian calendar event, where players are welcomed from all Australia. 128 players attended last year's event. I hope to get more this year."



Indigenous involvement in 8-ball has been low in South Australia but Paolo hopes to change that. "To be honest, I had never heard of any Indigenous involvement," Paolo said. "After winning the grand final with a mate's team, I brought my own team into the competition. My team is called the 8Ball Bruthaz4Life. Any person could be a member, but I strongly encouraged Indigenous. We are now a good part of the 8-ball community in South Australia."

Paolo has also had the opportunity to represent his culture and heritage on the national stage. "I was [recently] asked to come up with an Aboriginal design for the Australian shirts," he said. "They usually hold an Indigenous versus Australia event at the Nationals. I think they'll do that at the Australian Cup International Rules 8-ball tournament ... in October in Western Australia. That'll be my first Indigenous versus Aussie event."

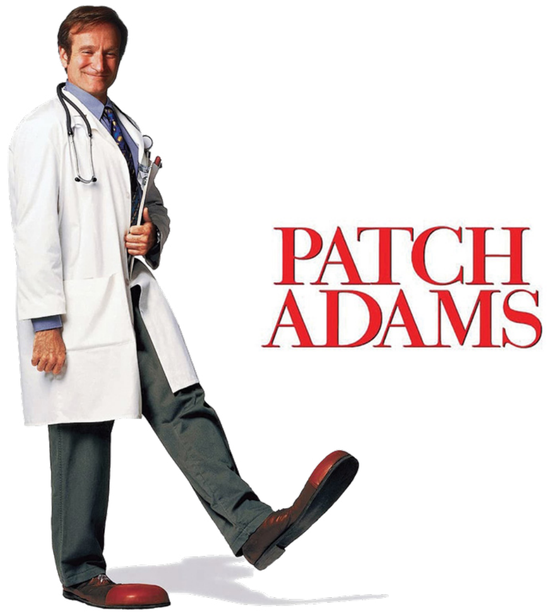
Building on this design experience, Paolo is now looking to create his own clothing brand. "My brand is Shadezwear Indigelicious," he explains. "Most players in the 8-ball Community in South Australia know me by the nickname Shadez because I wear my glasses on my forehead when I play. It's like an omen, I can't play without them! I thought that would be good to have my business name as Shadezwear. Indigelicious is something I fathomed when I was 16. 24-years ago. It means a good-looking Indigenous person. Delicious and Indigenous!"

While Paolo has found success as a committee member and designer, he remains committed to playing 8-ball and striving for new achievements. "I finished 9th in the Empire Johnny Walker Classic, and 29th from over 350 contestants at the Berri Open in the Riverland," he explained. "That was a personal best".

Paolo is currently playing in the IPA World League competition. "It is four events over 1-year. Each event lasts three days, from 9am until, sometimes, 1am the next morning."

Even in challenging conditions, Paolo seeks to learn and improve with every match. "I faced some tough opponents in the second event. I was beaten by a couple of frames every match. It wasn't heart wrenching. I still have plenty of potential!" Paolo thanked me for the opportunity to share where he'd come from and what the future could hold, for him or for anyone that can stay on the right path. I think it is Paolo who deserves the credit for sharing his experiences.

Lessons From ‘Patch Adams’



Movie poster for ‘Patch Adams’, directed by Tom Shadyac, distributed by Universal Pictures

By helping others, we forget our problems.

By Lee

Lee writes from a NSW prison. They are a Chinese national imprisoned in Australia.

Last Sunday night I watched a movie called Patch Adams. It’s a comedy about a man called Patch Adams, played by Robin Williams, and his journey through medical school and becoming a doctor. He decides to become a doctor after his own experience in a mental hospital. He was depressed and experiencing suicidal thoughts, but found recovery through humour and connections with other patients, rather than through traditional medical interventions. He quickly left the hospital to pursue his dreams of becoming a doctor and develop his different humour-based approach to medicine.

When Adams was a student, his teachers and fellow students thought he was just a clown and that jokes could not change a patient’s situation. But by the end of the movie, he made medical breakthroughs with his patients, especially those who were dying. Adams used happiness to treat their grief, and became a great doctor who excelled in treating physical illness through caring about their inner world.

The movie reminds me of my own experience in jail. We are like medical patients sometimes. We expect care from our lawyers or doctors, but lawyers always only focus on the case and doctors are often very busy. Like in Patch Adams, it is the other inmates, or patients, who help bring me happiness.

I also like to help other inmates. I’m an English teacher to many Chinese inmates who don’t speak English. I help them with English words and grammar. I help them with daily language in jail. It’s difficult to live here with a huge language barrier and when you don’t have any local friends. You cannot join any activities, you don’t know what’s on the buy-up list and you cannot understand what’s on TV. It would be very lonely. I’m also an interpreter to help them put in forms or talk to officers or nurses. Maybe we are different kinds of people but it’s always a pleasure to help others. Any help is valuable if someone really needs it.

In the movie, there is a meeting to decide if Patch Adams could hold his medical degree because of “unusual” behaviour and treatments. He said he works the way he does because of his own special experience in a mental hospital.

He said, “the doctors didn’t help me, the patients helped me. By helping them I can forget my own problems, and that’s why I wanted to become a doctor.” That’s what I feel like in prison. Helping others, I forget my own problems.

I want to continue to help people after prison. If I can stay here in Australia, I hope I can provide services in prisons, like social work for Chinese inmates to help them understand how to get help. If I go back to China, I would like to help people there too. There isn’t an effective social service system in China so far as I know. I’d like to build a new system based on what I’ve learnt, that provides help and services to those who need it. No matter if it’s across the whole country, a city or just in one neighbourhood, it’s a win. I just want to use what I have learnt and my enthusiasm to do something for my community. It’s a small goal, also a big goal, a long journey, but it’s what I’m made for. I’m ready for God's plan for me.

I know what I have done in prison is not on the same scale as Doctor Adams, but when I reflect on his story, I have motivation to help others. Doctor Adams wasn't limited by his background. I won’t be either. I’m an inmate, but I can also give my positive teachings to the world. I will face many difficulties because of my identity, but I know every effort will have its rewards. That’s also part of my redemption from what I did.

Working for the whole community, just like what Doctor Adams did, will help more people make positive changes in life and experience happiness; all because of the new me.



Write to Us

We are a new paper; a new idea. We welcome all of your thoughts about how we can make this as successful as possible. Is there something you want removed from the paper? Something you want added? Let us know.

And also, please let us know if the paper is being circulated properly in your prison. Is everyone receiving a copy, or are there issues with distribution?

We want to hear from you. Write to us via the below postal address:

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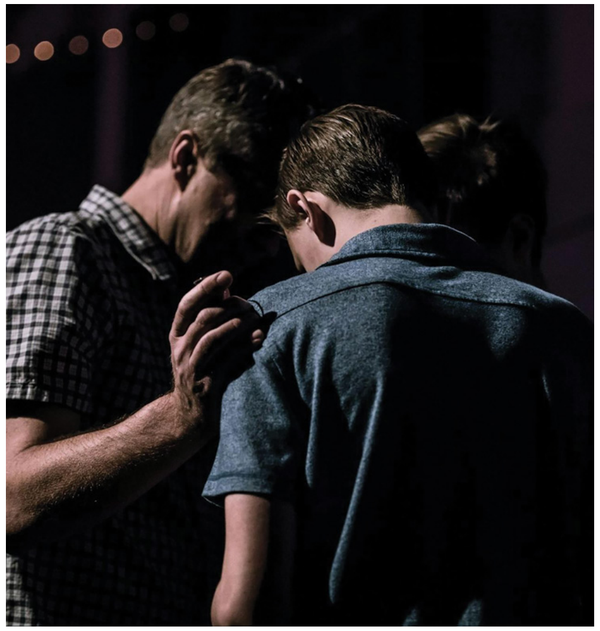
An Unlikely Mentor



Jack Sharp

My Grandad’s friendship with a man in jail for murder

By Ruby

Ruby lives by the sea and can mostly be found reading or knitting or writing. She is passionate about community as the gateway to healing.

As a young person, I admired my grandfather so much that I feared him. He is the kind of man that commands respect; a military man who doesn’t put up with any funny business. With Grandad, you need to try your damned hardest, always. And after you do that, you should have another go. Squeeze the last drop out of that lemon. Wedge it into your mouth and suck it. Grate every last bit off the rind.

So it surprised me that my conservative, God-fearing and law abiding grandfather would make time for a man incarcerated for murder and manslaughter.

It was around the start of the new millennium when Mark first walked into Grandad’s church. At the time he was released on bail and awaiting trial, and his local church in Queensland had opened their doors to serve a free meal for the local community (in exchange for a Bible study, of course).

There was something about the way Mark spoke that caused my Grandad to pay attention. “God calls a spade a bloody spade,” he remembers Mark saying to the group, leaning back in his chair, arms folded. Of course, Grandad would call it a divine intervention, a “real ‘on the road to Damascus’ revelation”, but either way, something happened. There was a connection. A spark.

Mark was convicted soon after, sent away for a long and punishing sentence, but during this time, a remarkable friendship blossomed. Every month Grandad and his wife would visit Mark, driving over two hours to walk through the gates of the maximum security prison and sit in those hard, plastic seats.

Mark took an interest in theology, and Grandad and his wife sponsored his studies. When he was released on parole some years later, they housed him until he found his feet and could stand in a church and watch his now-wife walk down the aisle. Grandad was at her right arm, walking proudly, all smiles.

Five years on, Mark and Grandad still see each other a couple of times a year. Mark works as a groundskeeper and a handyman, and he has churches and community groups lining up to book him for speaking opportunities. Grandad continues to advocate for Mark as a friend and a father figure.

It was, and still is, an inspiring and unlikely friendship. But what this brief story doesn’t show is just how challenging it was for Grandad and Mark to maintain their friendship. How much friction the system places on the incarcerated and their visitors. How much one is at the whim of offices and their moods.

“From the visitor's perspective, visiting high security prisons is not a nice experience,” Grandad writes. “Many visitors are down-graded to non-contact or some are cancelled because a trace of drugs is detected on the visitor. Mark’s son and girlfriend were refused entry many times... Mark’s partner and I spent many hours disputing decisions.”

To Mark and to Grandad, many of the decisions affecting the rights of incarcerated people are arbitrary and unjust. The injustice continues, of course, upon release, whereby a free person is shunted out of the gates and into the world with little support.

“A prisoner released after 15 years is a non-person”, Grandad writes. “He has no identification, driver’s licence or medicare card. He is unknown to Centacare. He has no transport. He has no references or employment history to offer an employer.” In the end, it was up to Grandad to help Mark obtain a vehicle and a driver’s licence.

The prison system has a habit of chewing people up and spitting them out, of making it difficult to maintain strong connections to community, of inhibiting integration after years behind bars.

It was pure chance that Mark and Grandad met, and that Grandad wasn’t willing to be deterred by the difficulties.

Just like my Grandad, ordinary folk can do a lot to help reintegrate incarcerated people back into society. As Jesus (whom my Grandad loves to quote) said: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

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Reintegration

This section is intended to assist readers who will soon be released. We want to help prepare you for the outside. We will rely on relevant experts to provide monthly themed educational content about reintegration services and opportunities.



Survival on the Outside: Family and Children

Tips for managing the challenges of reintegration with family

By Community Restorative Centre

The Community Restorative Centre is the lead provider of specialist throughcare, post-release and reintegration programs for people transitioning from prison into the community in NSW.

Are you returning to your family?

If you're returning to your partner:

- It's normal to feel anxious about living together again
- Talk about your hopes and plans before release
- Keep talking once you go home
- Listen to them
- Get help early if you're having relationship problems.

What do you expect of your partner after you're released?

Picking up where you left off in a relationship may be more difficult than you expect. You and your partner will have adjusted to living apart, so it's understandable that you both may feel anxious about living together again. You may not be sure how to get started with everyday things like having sex and working out money.

The key is to talk to your partner about your thoughts and any uncertainties you have before you get out, and to keep talking after your release. It's easy to get carried away inside prison with ideas about what your lives will look like when you get back together; if your partner tells you you're being unrealistic or getting carried away, listen!

What if you had relationship problems before you went to prison?

Any problems you had in your relationship before you went to prison will probably still be there when you get out.

If, for example, your relationship was violent or there were lots of arguments, you may find these patterns return after your release, even though you may have hoped things would change. If things aren't working out, it's important to seek help.

You can contact Relationships Australia at 1300 364 277 or Interrelate at 1300 473 528. They provide relationship and family counselling, couples counselling and family counselling and mediation.

1800 RESPECT is also a 24 hour national service for domestic or family violence and abuse. Contact them on 1800 737 732.

Did your relationship start while you were in prison?

A relationship that starts in prison can be very intense, because you often have a lot of time to focus on it, and very few distractions. Even if you know each other really well, spending more time with each other outside of prison means you will learn a lot more about your partner; maybe some things that you weren't expecting.

You may feel prison has changed you, or you may be confused by your feelings and behaviour. Being withdrawn or having mood swings and angry outbursts are common after being released. It's all part of the difficult process of readjusting from prison life to family life. Suddenly you're faced with a whole new set of demands, which may impact your moods.

It's important to know that what helps people survive in prison may be unhelpful back home. In prison, violence and intimidation are often used to 'solve' conflict. At home, those tactics could destroy your relationship with your family and land you back inside. Having the skill to listen and communicate openly are essential to maintaining a good relationship with your partner, family and friends.

If you do find yourself having problems, relationship or family counselling can help. Don't wait until your relationship is on the rocks or your family is falling apart. It's better to see someone early, when things are easier to resolve.

Are you returning to live with your parents?

- Parents may keep checking up on you because they're worried that you may use drugs or reoffend.
- It can help to remember they're checking up on you because they care about you.
- Let them know how you feel, and what they can do that you find helpful.
- If you and your parents can't agree on expectations, you may find it better to move into other accommodation.
- Programs in prison may help you work on communication skills.

Living with parents after your release can have practical, emotional and financial advantages, but it can also be stressful. Parents of people released from prison often worry that their child is going to reoffend or use drugs again. They often try to control them or monitor their behaviour. If your parents do this, remember, it's because they care about you.

However, feeling that you're being watched over, or that your parents don't trust you, can be hard. You can even feel tempted to do something rash just to break out. Remember, the decision not to reoffend or use drugs is about what you want for your life. You're not doing it for them.

Tell your parents what's helpful and not helpful for you in terms of their support. It may be useful for them to hear from you how their actions are affecting you. Remember that while you live in your parents' house it's reasonable for them to expect you to live by their rules. If you can't do this, then you'll need to look for your own place.

People often really look forward to returning to their family after prison. But many people say that after the 'honeymoon period' is over, it can be difficult.

Are you returning to your children?

- Be prepared for your children to take a while to get used to you being back at home.
- Try to be patient and understanding – they aren't old enough to understand how you feel.
- Remember, children are often messy and noisy – this is normal, although it may take time to get used to.
- You may need to rebuild trust with your children and the people who've been caring for them.
- Ask for help early if you're finding it difficult to cope.

Will your children be living with you all or some of the time after your release?

Children can react in lots of different ways when a parent comes home from prison. They may be extremely happy, but they also may be upset and confused because you were away for so long. Younger children may not remember a time when you were at home with them. Older children may have taken on family responsibilities, and for a time

may resent the changes that come with their mother or father returning home.

Remember, they need to hear from you that you love them. Try not to be too hurt if they give you a hard time. They won't understand that you didn't mean to go to prison, and they may feel that you've let them down. Listen and try to understand how your children feel rather than being defensive. They'll settle down if you can be patient and are prepared to work to regain their trust.

Perhaps some other family member took on the parenting role while you were in prison. You may need to regain their trust, as well as your children's, as you and the person who has been looking after your children work out exactly what roles each of you will play in your children's lives.

If your child was placed in their care through a court order, you may benefit from legal advice to find out what steps are involved in resuming care for your children.

Be prepared for the noise and mess that children make

In prison, the one thing you have control over is your cell. If your cell was always spotless, you may find it difficult to cope with children who leave toys everywhere and make a huge mess. It can help to remember that this is normal behaviour for children.

Remember though, while you can teach children to tidy up after themselves, you can't stop them behaving like children. While you may have had control over the sound level in your cell, insisting on having complete control over your environment will only create more stress for you and your children.

Will you be a single parent after you're released?

It can be hard enough to look after yourself in the early days post-release, let alone a demanding child. Some children may become particularly 'clingy' when their parent returns home from prison. This may be due to their fear of being separated from you again.

It's important to get support if you feel you or your children aren't coping. Don't wait until things build up to the point where you lash out, take drugs or do something else that might hurt you or your children.

Reach out to family and friends, and/or access professional support. If your children are school-aged, contacting their teacher or a school counsellor may be helpful.

Who else can help me?

There are many services out there and we recommend finding organisations and/or people you feel comfortable with (if you can).

Parentline (1300 1300 52) is a free telephone advice and referral helpline for parents of children under 18 years of age. You can ring between 9am and 4.30pm for telephone counselling and advice if you're feeling stuck, and they can refer you to other services, such as parenting courses, in your area.

If you're needing assistance with separation, child support and child support issues, this can be very complex and daunting.

You can reach out to your local community legal centre or legal aid, to see what legal support is available to you.

The Child Support Agency helps separated parents manage their child support responsibilities by working actively with parents to help them make the best arrangements for them and their children. Call 13 12 72.

The Family Court of Australia provides mediation, dispute resolution and counselling for couples going through separation. They assist separating couples to reach agreement on custody, child support and other arrangements without going through the courts. They can also make orders for children to live with other family members where child protection isn't involved.

If you're in NSW, you can contact CRC's Telephone Information and Referral Service (TIRS) on (02) 9288 8700 to find services in your area for all the above situations.

ABOUT TIME FOR JUSTICE EST. 2020

About Time for Justice supports and advocates for survivors of institutional child abuse through peer-support, advocacy and mental health resources. Should our clients wish to initiate a litigation process to receive possible compensation for what they have been through, ATFJ provides support throughout what can be a confusing and difficult process to make it easier and to minimise the negative impacts this process can have. We want you to find justice and start healing so you can put it all behind you.

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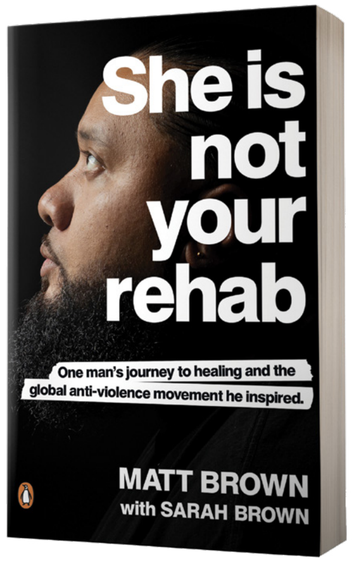
• Health

Inner Healing: Breaking the Cycle of Violence

An interview with Sarah Brown, Co-Founder, *She is Not Your Rehab.*



By Felicia Zsha' Mirzze

Felicia is a woman with a conviction history and walks side-by-side with the people she serves. She has lived experience of trauma, violence and the justice system. She uses this lived experience every day in her work to connect with, mentor and advocate for people who find themselves at the intersection of crime, violence and incarceration.

"Trauma may not be your fault, but healing is your responsibility."

Today, I sat down with Sarah Brown from *She Is Not Your Rehab* to discuss intergenerational trauma and the healing work she does with her husband, Matt Brown.

The *She Is Not Your Rehab* movement began in Matt's barbershop, where he would host anti-violence workshops and support groups alongside cutting and styling hair. This soon expanded to construction sites, prisons and Indigenous spaces. The official *She Is Not Your Rehab* campaign launched in 2019 and encourages men to take responsibility for their healing, confront their pasts, and create better futures for themselves and their families. Together, Matt and Sarah have helped people, both inside and outside of prison, to start healing and break the cycle of violence.

Can you share what you believe is your soul's purpose and how it guides your work?

Our soul's purpose comes from our life experiences and it is to break the cycle of violence that has existed in and around our communities for generations. Matt is a New Zealand-born Samoan, and grew up in a household where there was domestic violence and alcohol abuse. His father, an immigrant from Samoa, was in and out of jail and was abusive towards his mother. In Matt's childhood there was a lack of positive role models. These experiences have shaped our life's purpose, to support those who perpetrate violence in their healing journey, to redefine masculinity and in turn create violence-free communities.

What inspired you and Matt to start the '*She Is Not Your Rehab*' movement, and how do you think it can help those of us who are currently incarcerated?

Our movement asks men to acknowledge their own childhood trauma and take responsibility for their healing, rather than projecting their pain onto others, especially the women in their lives. The inspiration for the movement came not only from Matt's childhood experiences, but also from visiting his own father in prison, which gave Matt a unique perspective on the impact of incarceration on families and children. Later in life, Matt returned to prisons not as a visitor, but as a mentor and teacher. In between teaching men how to cut hair, he began working with men and teaching them how to be vulnerable, how to confront their pasts, and how to envision a different future for themselves and their families.

What obstacles did you encounter when trying to get men to talk about their childhood traumas and take responsibility for their own healing, and how did you overcome them?

It is a common belief amongst many of the men we work with, who grew up in environments where violence was normalised, that expressing emotion was a sign of weakness. Matt himself struggled with these beliefs, having grown up in a household where violence was the norm and positive male role models were not around to teach him otherwise.

We had to create spaces where men felt safe to be vulnerable. The barbershop became that space; where men could talk openly without fear of judgment. We also knew that we had to lead by example. Matt often shares his own story of trauma and healing in order to show other men that it is possible to break the cycle of violence. By modelling what it looks like to confront your past, we have been able to break down the barriers that prevent men from opening up about the things that have happened to them.

Why is the power of storytelling in teaching important?

We have always believed in the power of storytelling to communicate difficult messages. Matt shares his own story of growing up in a violent household, and the impact it had on his life. By sharing his story, he gives men permission to share their own and, in doing so, helps them begin their own process of healing. We have also created a book club in prisons, where men can read She Is Not Your Rehab and discuss it with the people they are inside with. This program has had really good outcomes, as it allows men to see their own experiences reflected in the stories of others and also helps them understand their own traumas.

The *She Is Not Your Rehab* book has been distributed in prisons. What kind of changes or impacts have you seen in the lives of people inside who have read it?

We get letters every week from men in prison who have read the book and felt inspired to change their lives. One told us he read the book five times whilst inside. He was involved in domestic violence and gangs and didn't know any different. He had been addicted to meth for years. He said, "I am together with my wife and kids because you have helped me to understand my relationships and why I was having volatile relationships."

One woman told the story of her dad being in prison most of his life. "My dad never said he loved me in his whole life, then one day I got a letter from him saying he loved me and that he wanted to have a relationship with me and my brother. I had given up hope and thought he would just keep going in and out of prison. He now calls regularly."

For people trying to work on their mental health and healing while in prison, what advice or strategies would you suggest to support them on their journey towards self-improvement and breaking the cycle of violence?

Our advice to those working on their mental health and healing while on the inside is to use the time to work on your inner world. We believe that the most important work a person can do while inside is the work they can do on themselves. This means confronting the traumas of the past, taking responsibility for your actions, and committing to a path of healing.

It is important to understand your emotions, particularly anger. Matt often talks about how anger is a secondary emotion, a response to deeper feelings like rejection and abandonment. He encourages men to explore these deeper emotions, to understand what they are really feeling, and to learn how to master their own minds. By doing this inner work, we believe people can break the cycle of violence.

What do you want the world to know? What is the best piece of life advice you have ever been given and why?

Trauma is not your fault, we are able to hold empathy and compassion for the child victim that sits within the man without condoning his actions. Compassion with accountability. Your inner world will directly reflect your outer world when you get out.

We want the world to know that intergenerational trauma is real, but so is intergenerational healing. We have lived this truth, and we are living proof that it is possible to break the cycle of violence and create a better future for the next generation. The best piece of life advice we have ever been given is to take responsibility for your own healing.

Trauma may not be your fault, but healing is your responsibility. This advice has guided our work and our lives.

Questions to reflect on from Sarah and Matt:

- How would I like to be known by my children?
- When I leave this earth what do I want my children to think of when they think of me?
- What do I want the people closest to me to think of me and does that align with the current experience of me?
- Do I want to be someone who master's my own mind? Or someone who lets anger control my actions? When anger is the boss of me, I have lost control.
- What emotion do I struggle with?
- What is the most unbearable feeling for me that I would rather be violent and terrorise my family, or numb out, rather than feel it?

I will leave you with one of Sarah's favourite quotes:

"As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison." – Nelson Mandela



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Hold Still to Get Stronger

The Benefits of Holding Exercises

By Gary Bultitude

When it comes to exercise, we often focus on the movement – the squats, lunges, and bicep curls. But there's another type of exercise that deserves some recognition: holding positions, also known as isometric exercises. These involve maintaining a static posture for a set amount of time, and they offer a surprising range of benefits.

Building strength and stamina:
As you hold a pose like a plank or a wall sit, your muscles are constantly engaged to maintain your body's alignment. This isometric contraction helps build muscular strength and endurance, especially in targeted areas.

Improving mind-muscle connection:
Holding a position requires focus and awareness. You'll become more attuned to subtle shifts in your body and how different muscle groups are working together.

Enhanced stability:
By holding poses that target your core and stabilizer muscles, you'll develop better balance and coordination, reducing your risk of injury in everyday activities.

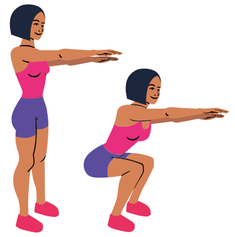
Greater flexibility (with a twist):
While isometric exercises aren't typically known for increasing flexibility, holding certain poses can actually help improve your range of motion.

Holding exercises are a valuable addition to any fitness routine. They can be done almost anywhere, require minimal equipment, and offer a variety of benefits. So next time you're working out, add some isometric holds to your routine. You might be surprised at how strong and stable you can become by simply holding still.

Ready to hold?
Here are some beginner-friendly isometric exercises to try:

- Squat Hold.
- Push-up Hold.
- Plank to side plank.

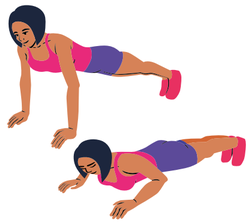
Remember, proper form is key. Start with shorter hold times and gradually increase as you get stronger. And, as always, consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new exercise program.



12 x Squat Hold

- Stand tall, feet shoulder- width apart, core engaged.
- Squat back as if sitting, knees tracking toes. Hold for 30-60 seconds (beginners).
- Press through heels to stand, core tight, back straight.

Tips:
Proper form over depth, weight in heels, breathe normally, listen to your body, start short and progress.



12 x Pushup Hold/Triceps Push-up Hold

- Start in a high plank with hands shoulder-width apart and core engaged.
- Lower chest to just a few inches off the ground, elbows tucked.
- Hold for 5-10 seconds, back straight, core tight, hips down.
- Breathe normally. Modify by doing a plank on your knees if needed.

Focus on form over time:
You can increase the hold or lower yourself further as you progress.



12 x Plank to Side Plank (each side)

- Start in high plank, core engaged.
- Rotate to one side, stacking feet or staggering for balance. Hold a side plank for a few seconds.
- Reverse the movement to return to high plank.
- Repeat on the other side.

Focus on form:
Straight line from head to heels, hips lifted, core tight. Modify by kneeling if needed. This works core, obliques, and shoulders. Adjust hold time and reps as you progress.

Yoga Where You Are

By The Prison Phoenix Trust

If you are looking to build a healthy body and peaceful mind, try these yoga postures which use your wall as support. In each posture, notice the support from each surface through your body and your steady, even breaths. See if you can stay in each challenging position for up to 5 breaths.



Mountain:
Stand, eyes closed, for 10 breaths.



Chair pose:
With feet hip distance apart, feel your back rest on the wall for up to 5 breaths.



Forward fold:
Relax your upper body, head, and neck. Stay for up to 5 breaths.



Warrior 1:
Right leg forward for up to 5 breaths. Then move into –



Intense stretch:
Forearms or palms rest on the wall for 5 breaths. (Repeat 4 & 5 on other side).



Warrior 2:
Right hand and outer edge of foot connect with the wall for 5 breaths. Then move into –



Peaceful warrior:
Reach left arm and upper body towards the wall for 5 breaths. (Repeat 6 & 7 on other side).



Downward dog:
For 5 breaths. Heels rest on the wall or floor.



Boat pose:
For 5 breaths. Lift chest and engage abdominals to protect your lower back.



Seated twist:
For 5 breaths on each side.



Legs up the wall:
Rest with legs up the wall or on your bed for 30 slow, deep breaths.

Seated meditation:
Sit upright for 5 minutes with your attention on the breath.

All exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.

● Culture



Clodagh Kilcoyne / Reuters

Aussies Bring Home the Gold at the 2024 Paris Olympics

By Mia Abrahams

Mia Abrahams is a writer based in Naarm/Melbourne.

The 2024 Paris Olympics started with a splash (literally). The Opening Ceremony featured 90 boats, filled with country teams waving flags, all floating down a rainy river Seine, as the crowd of 300,000 cheered from the riverbanks.

From the beginning, the atmosphere in Paris was a contrast to the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo, which were held under strict Covid pandemic restrictions and saw athletes competing in empty stadiums and without their family, friends, or support teams along for the ride. This year, record-breaking numbers of fans lined the streets and stadiums of Paris to cheer on the athletes.

By the end of a busy two weeks, including 32 different sports and over 460 Australian athletes, the Aussies walked away with 18 gold medals — the most in our history — and 53 medals overall, the fourth in the overall tally behind the USA, China, and Japan. Here are some highlights:

Aussies rule the pool:
As always, the Aussie swim team "The Dolphins" showed up to defend their titles in the pool, and gave US rivals something to chase. Kaylee McKeown, the 23-year-old backstroke expert from Queensland, became the first Australian athlete across any sport to win four individual gold medals, defeating the US and Canada in 100m and 200m backstroke, as well as securing silver and two bronze medals in the team medley relays. As for what's next for McKeown, she told reporters she hasn't gotten there yet: "I just want to enjoy my moment, enjoy what I've done." After her stellar performance in the pool, it seems only fair she takes her time soaking up the moment.

Family affair for the Foxes:
Australian flag-bearer Jess Fox came to Paris off the back of four medals in Tokyo, including gold in the canoe singles — an event which sees paddlers take off at high speeds down perilous man-made rapids, avoiding obstacles and making hairpin turns. After a shaky start in the semi-finals, Jess came back with determination to win a gold medal in both the Kayak and Canoe races. But the Fox family didn't stop there, with Jess's younger sister Noémie winning a surprise gold in the Kayak Cross, a hair-raising race where four kayakers speed down a white-water track to the finish line.

When winning isn't everything:
With the whole nation watching, the pressure on athletes to perform can be immense. But winning isn't the only way to make Australia proud. Boxer Harry Garside's raw and emotional admission that he "felt like a failure" after losing his first match triggered an outpouring of support for the 27-year-old, who has been open about his mental health struggles in the past. Garside later said for those young people watching at home: ""It's important for young people to see life will knock you down... a lot of it is out of our control at times too and I think it's important for young people to see failure is part of life."

Generation Alpha dominates the skate park:
Appearing in its second ever Olympics, skateboarding took its place this year as a must-watch event. As competitors got ready to carry out gravity-defying tricks, all eyes were on 14-year-old Gold Coast skater Arisa Trew. After becoming the first woman ever to land a "900", a two-and-half rotation in mid-air first attempted by Tony Hawk twenty-five years earlier, Trew was more than ready to take on the Olympic stage. She told reporters, "I just need to think it's another skate comp and have fun with all my friends and skate my best." Dominating her final run in the finals with speed, style, and technique, Trew did just that, taking home the gold medal, and making history by becoming our youngest ever gold medalist. What's next for Trew? Her parents promised that if she won, she could finally get the pet duck she'd been asking for.

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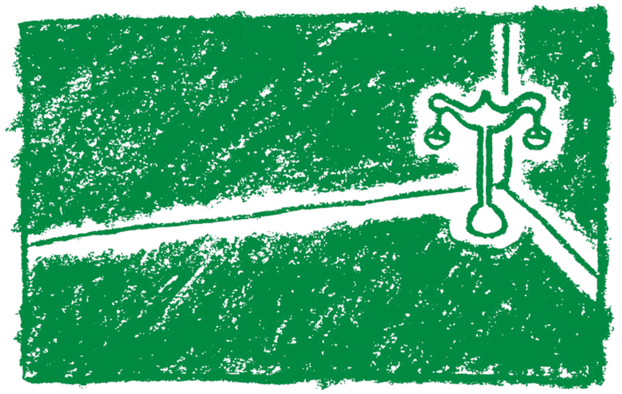
Legal Corner

This section provides information on relevant areas of law. The articles are written by lawyers. If you have any questions about how the information might relate to your case, you should contact a lawyer for tailored advice.



Bail: Common Questions Answered

By Meg Tait and About Time (with help from Uther Webster & Evans Solicitors and Daniel Vansetten)

This is information and not legal advice.

What is bail?

Bail is a promise you can make that you will return to court. It means you can stay in the community (instead of jail) until your legal matters finish. If you are being held in custody and you haven't been found guilty, you may be able to apply for bail. If you are not granted bail, you will be remanded – to be 'on remand' means you are waiting in prison for your legal matter to finish.

When you are first taken into police custody, the police may decide to release you on bail. If they don't release you from custody, they must take you before a bail decision-maker within a certain timeframe. In the first instance, you may apply for bail before a bail justice or justice of the peace – this often happens if you are taken into custody at times courts are not open/operating (for example, at night or over the weekend). If the bail decision-maker does not agree to release you on bail, you will then be presented before a court.

APPLYING FOR BAIL

When can I apply for bail?

When you are first taken into custody, you would have had the opportunity to ask to be released into the community on bail. The person who decides whether you can stay in the community may be a justice of the peace, a bail justice, or a magistrate. The person making the decision will hear about what the police say you have done and information about previous times you have been in trouble with the law.

I've been refused bail once. Can I apply again?

Yes.

If you were refused by a bail justice, you can apply for bail from a magistrate.

If bail is refused by a magistrate, the law for applying again varies slightly depending on the jurisdiction. In practice you can apply again, but you'll likely need new material information and/or a change in circumstances to be allowed to do so (and to be successful).

What is "material information/facts" or a "change in circumstances"?

There's no definitive answer, but these could include:

1. Availability of new conditions/services to reduce any 'risk': often bail can be refused because the decision-maker thinks there is too much of a risk that a person will keep getting into trouble when they're back in the community. If you are able to sign up to a service or program that addresses this risk, the court may reconsider whether you should be able to wait in the community instead of on remand. These programs/services might include things like:
   a. Being able to sign up for an ankle bracelet or some kind of electronic monitoring regime;
   b. Acceptance into a bail support program (these often involve supervision by people who work for the court);
   c. Acceptance into a residential rehab or similar intensive support program;
   d. Acceptance into a supervised housing program (particularly if you were sleeping rough/homeless before you were placed on remand)
2. Big changes in your personal circumstances: if something has really changed in your family/work/personal life since you last applied for bail, then you can apply for bail again so the Court can hear about how this change is impacting you. This might include things like changes to your health, changes to the health of a family member, or changes to your employment.
3. Big changes to your case: often a first application for bail is made when the evidence against you is still being prepared by the police. In some cases, big changes relating to your case or the evidence against you will mean you are able to apply again for bail – this might include things like:
   a. The police agreeing to withdraw certain charges because they don't have enough evidence against you;
   b. New material being provided to you/your lawyer which changes the case;
   c. Your co-accused being granted bail (although this will not always mean you will get bail);
   d. Your court case being delayed.

How to prepare a second or subsequent bail application?

If you think any of the above may be relevant to you, it is recommended you seek advice from a lawyer. In practice, the challenge is not only to show the Court that there are new facts or a change in circumstances, but also that the change is so significant as to overturn an earlier ruling. If you do have a chance, your legal preparation must be comprehensive and backed by evidence.

Appeal to the Supreme Court

There's also an option to appeal or review a magistrate's decision to the Supreme Court. The application will be treated as a fresh application. If the appeal to the Supreme Court is unsuccessful, you can still make further applications for bail. You just need to provide new material or a change in relevant circumstances.

GETTING BAIL

What will make a judge or magistrate say yes to bail?

The rules about bail are different depending on which state you are in. You should talk to your lawyer so they can give you advice about what rules apply to you.

The person deciding about your bail will be thinking about many things, including:

- Will you come back to court? They will be unlikely to say yes to bail if they think you are going to abscond (run away).
- Will you stay out of trouble with the police if you stay in/return to the community? They will be unlikely to say yes to bail if they think you will commit more crimes while you are waiting for your legal matter to end.
- Will you pose a danger to people in the community if you are released from prison? They will be unlikely to say yes if they think you might hurt someone or make other people unsafe.

You will also have the chance to talk about things relating to the connections you have in the community:

- Your job, training or education
- Your family responsibilities
- Your address and what support you have in the community
- Any programs (including bail support programs) you will be able to participate in



Willy Pleasance

Information for Aboriginal people applying for bail

You should make sure any bail decision maker (police officer, judge, bail justice, magistrate or justice of the police) are aware of your Aboriginality when you are asking to be released on bail.

This is information the decision-maker can take into consideration when making the decision about whether or not you can be released from custody.

The police should also notify the relevant Aboriginal services in your state or territory if you are being held in police custody. You may also be able to get free legal advice from your local Aboriginal legal service – contact details are below.

BEING RELEASED ON BAIL

Being released on bail can be a stressful and confusing time. Here are some answers to common questions – and where you can get more information about your bail conditions.

What will I have to do if I'm released on bail?

When you are released on bail you might be subject to certain 'conditions' – these can be things you have to do (such as living at a particular address), or things you can't do (such as being out after a specific time at night).

What you must and mustn't do depends on your conditions. These will be read out to you at your bail hearing and a copy should be provided to you when you leave custody. Your lawyer should also send you a copy and will be able to answer questions you have. The police and the court will also have a copy of your conditions.

Even if you have been on bail before, you must check your bail conditions carefully as they probably will be different to the last time you were on bail. You should speak to your lawyer as soon as possible after your bail application to make sure you understand the conditions.

How long will I be on bail for?

This depends on your case. Usually, you will remain on bail until your case is finished (when the charges are withdrawn, you plead guilty, or are found guilty/not guilty).

How can I change my bail conditions?

Your bail conditions are a court order – this means to change them, or have conditions taken away, you must apply to the court. This means a magistrate or judge will be the person who decides whether you can change your bail conditions.

If you want to change your bail conditions, you should speak to a lawyer immediately. They can help you send the paperwork to the court and let the police know you would like a change.

Often it takes several days to get a court date. It may be faster if the police are planning to say yes to your change. You should ask your lawyer to speak to the police about the change to see if they will agree or disagree with what you are asking for.

What happens if I can't follow my bail conditions?

You can be charged with another offense every time you don't do what you are meant to do on bail. You can also have your bail 'revoked', which means you may return to custody. This is why it is very important to let your lawyer know if you are having any issues while you are on bail.

If you don't have a lawyer but would like legal advice, please contact either the legal aid commission of the state and territory you are in, or the Aboriginal legal service if you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

If you have any further questions, please send them to us and we will endeavour to answer them! Note we cannot provide individualised legal advice, only information.

Future content:
If there is a topic or area of law that you would like us to write on, please reach out to us!

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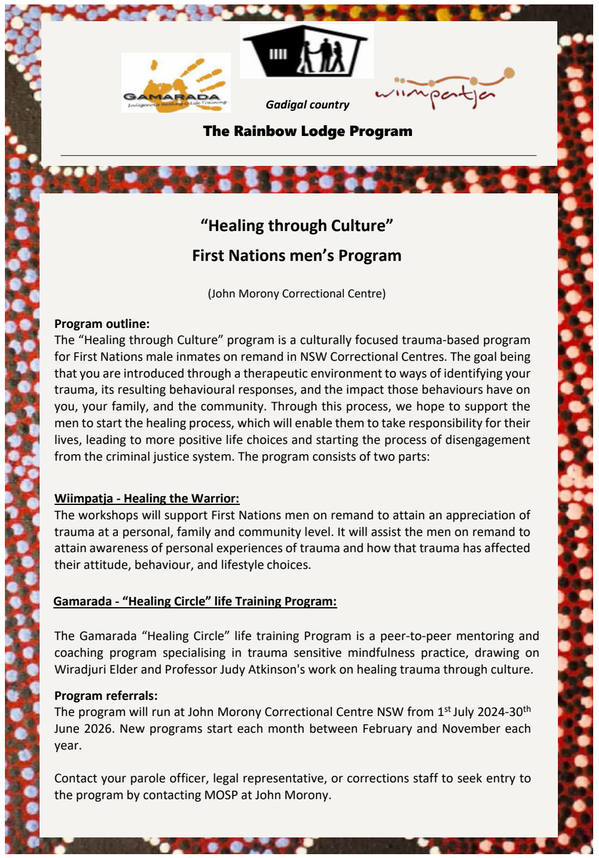
Until next time.



Creative

This section will publish creative contributions mostly from currently and formerly incarcerated people. It will include short-stories, poetry, creative nonfiction, art, and much more. If you have something creative to submit to us, we would love to read it, or see it, and publish it in About Time.



Beyond the Bars

By Codey

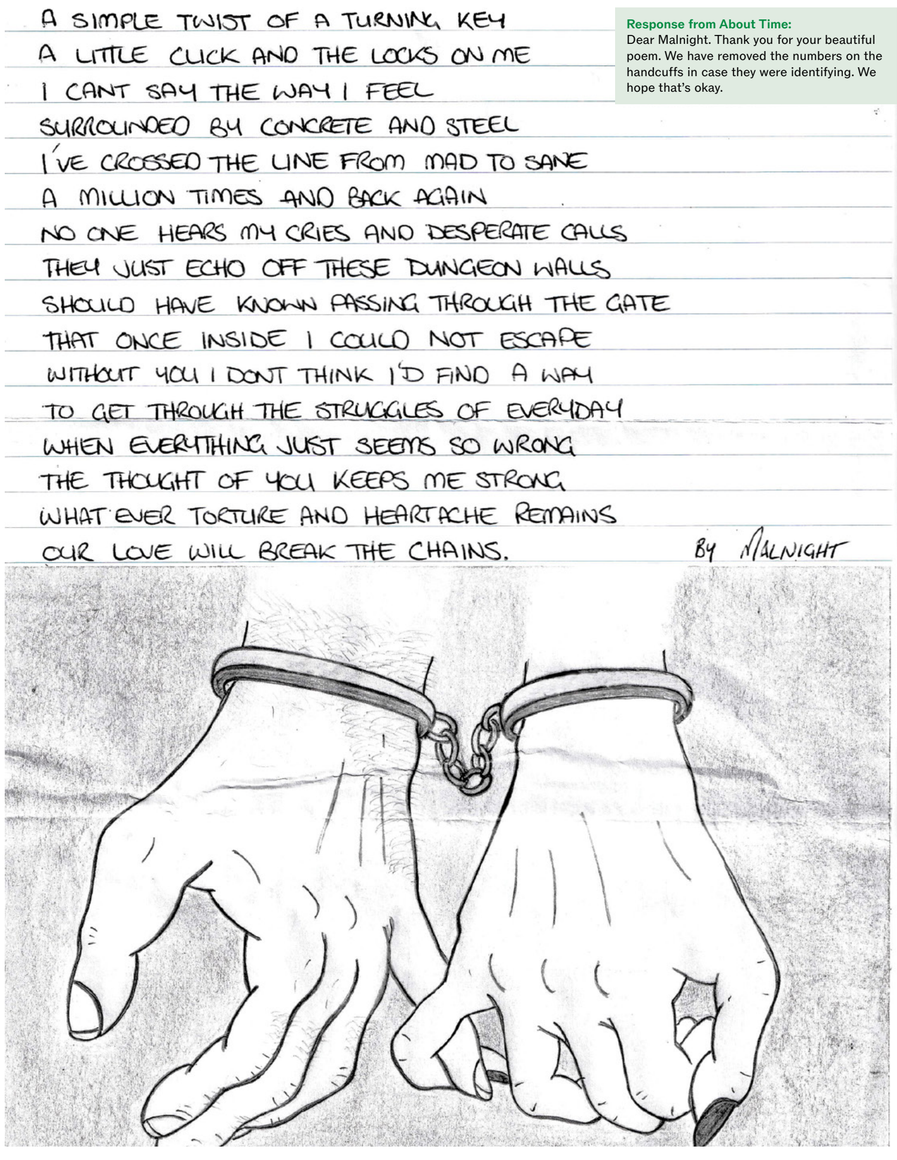
Codey writes from Metropolitan Remand Centre in Victoria.

Beyond the bars, I sit and think about the past
Beyond the bars, I wait and watch the time pass
Beyond the bars, I barely ever see the stars
Beyond the bars, I'm alone in the dark.

Beyond the bars, I try to make my dream last
Beyond the bars, I learnt to walk my own path
Beyond the bars, I always wonder where you are
Beyond the bars, I still remember your laugh.

Beyond the bars, I want to make a fresh start
Beyond the bars, I fear I've played my final card
Beyond the bars, I try to focus on my art
Beyond the bars, I wanna hold you in my arms.

Beyond the bars, I do laps in the yard
Beyond the bars, I know that I can go far
Beyond the bars, she came and stole my broken heart
Beyond the bars, I will become a better man.



Response from About Time:
Dear Malnight. Thank you for your beautiful poem. We have removed the numbers on the handcuffs in case they were identifying. We hope that's okay.

I Cannot Write Poetry

By A

A writes from Goulburn Prison in NSW.

I've tried to write poetry, but I find it hard to do,
I'd like to say in pretty words, just what I think of you.
And what I would like to say, would be something like this:
You make my heart run wild, with just one little kiss.

When I am holding you close, my heart beats like a drum,
And the sparkle in your eyes shines brighter than the sun.
The tenderness of your lips, is much safer than air,
And there is nothing to match the beauty of your hair.

This love I have for you, I cannot tell of its worth,
Itt means so much to me, it equals nothing on earth.
For the feeling that it brings, I have never felt before,
The pleasure and joy only makes me want you more.

But I cannot write poetry, I find it so hard to do,
So for now I will simply say: I love you.

Legal Dogma

By SKS – 7K2

The writer, who uses a pseudonym, writes from Lithgow Prison in New South Wales.

Obey you must O'feeable citizen, do you dare to cross the line?

March in formation and resist temptation, only in film can you live those golden lives.

Transgress not the legal Dogma, For it is not your place to play.
That arena is for the daring and the ones that got away.

It will burn away at your psyche, then maybe should you try?
Or will you cower away from elation, the only true freedom lies in alibi.

It is not without great stigma, and tormenting time away.
But you will only read of it in books? Or gamble courage without delay.

Will you die a dim lit lantern or blaze with fury for what you believe?
Because those that command you of their bidding, are the ones who decree masks to deceive.

Make no mistake in knowing, that the truth is rarely told.
It's those that break the rules who have Platinum, Diamonds and Gold.

Incarceration builds character, you will wear it with pride & glee.
Know you would much prefer it, then to fade away into obscurity.

We are the noble outlaws, our moral compass free to roam.
Harm wished upon no one, except Tyranny that mans the throne.

Do not point your finger at us, for we are who you crave to be.
True criminals evade your senses, while they tax you in harmony.

Inside/Outside

By Joshua

Joshua is an incarcerated person.

Outside these prison walls exists real life,
Going daily about their business in haste.
The hustle and bustle, too busy to stop,
Lives synchronised, and no time to waste.

Mothers with tired children in tow,
Screaming, crying, wanting to go home.
Men in smart suits walking with purpose,
Others oblivious to all, chatting on their phone.
The train station bursting with passengers,
Waiting to board for their trip to work.
Annoyed, frustrated with another day at the office
A young lad on a skateboard, being such a jerk.

A drunken man, filthy clothes, hungry and begging,
No one stops to pander to his feeble please.
So many different faces, voices and religions
A collage of wide and varied nationalities.
All these people have lives of meaning and purpose,
Busy, full, entertaining and hectic lives.
Bonded together by the common thread of family,
There for each other, in times of good or strife.

But inside these prison walls, lives are broken,
Chastened by a system that abhors crime.
Their souls hardened by years of hatred and anger,
No meaning, no purpose, just doing their time.

The clock never stops, while doing their time.

Paradise or Prison

By Joseph

Joseph writes from Hopkins Correctional Centre in Victoria

Our faces are seen above uniforms of green,
We parade in this prison, all shaven clean.
"Another day in paradise", we sarcastically wink,
"We fake it till we make it", we tell our shrink.

We feel like stock on a bar-coded shelf,
Stored, then shifted between warehouses of wealth.
At the mercy of 'sirs';, kids with keys,
Who are half our age, who we need to please.

On our hilltop horizon, some silhouettes appear.
Marching black cattle, grazing on the clear.
A trinity of eagles, wind-surfing thermal waves,
They see both sides of the hill as slaves.

In our prison tents, we queue, single file,
But over the hill, you shop in the same style.
While we crave to return to your 'greener' side,
The eagles see a truth that we all try to hide.

You crave an idyllic pine tree sojourn,
But our star-lit escape costs more than you earn.
You crave spinning windmills where regal eagles reign,
We crave spinning steering wheels and aeroplanes.

You see this tent as Her Majesty's prison,
But the eagle's lens sees a symmetrical prism.
While we bemoan an injustice miscarriage,
You may bemoan a miserable marriage.

Why wallow my walls of incarceration,
Within bedroom walls – your divided nation.
Between each brick you add cement,
When you let the sun set while your heart resents.

We're unleashed when we reach the sentence full-stop.
While you're life-bound to shackles you cannot chop.
Our hill orates its' sermon on the mount,
When we're down, we gaze up at this wisdom fount.

Are you a slave to the debts that never forgive,
While our temporary tent gives us temporary reprieve.
Eagles see paradises, and prisons without bars,
On both sides of the hill, where there's no greener grass.

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You can provide any contribution at all: letters, short-stories, poetry, artwork, puzzles, games, jokes, cartoons, investigative stories, reflections, advice, or anything at all.

• Mob

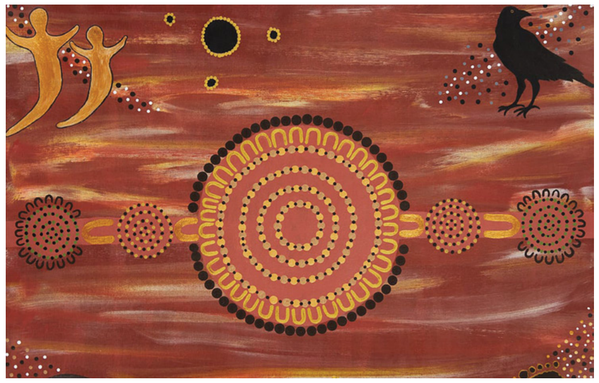
Welcome to the Mob section!

This section is written by Mob for Mob. In this edition we have paintings from the Torch and a piece on Treaty, written by Ngarra Murray, Co-Chair of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. If you'd like to contribute to this section, please don't hesitate to write to us, send us your art, poetry etc! Please also let us know if there's anything you'd like to see here.



My Journey #1
By J.Rozynski
Gunaikurnai
2023

This is my journey so far. It simplifies where I've been, where I'm stuck and where I am going. The water represents smooth sailing in my past, and the circles/dots represent my life burning down and almost losing everything. The cross-hatching represents a new beginning.



Strength
By D.Kerr
Yorta Yorta
2024

Strength we draw from our Ancestors. Strength within ourselves. Strength of community and Mob. Strength and tenacity of all of us to fight on. Strength of our voices to be heard. Strength to be seen as people of this land. Strength of all Aboriginal people alone and together. Our strength is golden.



Flyin Free Aussie Maggies
By Chriso
Gunaikurnai
2024

I did this painting because it reminds me of a time before jail when I was young and free, enjoying life without any fears or bad dreams!



My People Visit Me in Spirit
By Fleetwood
Wotjobaluk
2024

After my people pass away I feel their souls, they're next to me. I feel their presence and at times they talk to me. Keep the Fires Burning.

Treaty for Mob

By Ngarra Murray

Hello, my name is Ngarra Murray. I'm a Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta, Dhudhuroa and Dja Dja Wurrung woman based in Melbourne on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.

I'm one of the Co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria alongside Gunditjmara man Rueben Berg. We sit on the Assembly together with 31 other Traditional Owners elected by their communities.

Our task is to create the first Treaty in Australia's history.

Treaty has been talked about for generations. Whether it be our Elders, or the legendary Yothu Yindi in 1991.

But now after years of work in Victoria it is here. It's actually happening.

While it's an honour and a privilege to be tasked with the negotiations, it's also one of great responsibility. Responsibility to our families and our nations and clans, and to our Country, land and waterways.

We know we have an opportunity to profoundly improve things for our peoples.

This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Our lands right across the country hold the markings of our history. The very first fires, the ceremonies, the middens, the scar trees that made the canoe, and the coolamons that carried our ancestors. This is Country that has felt thousands of generations of footsteps and was crossed by our families.

But our ancient Aboriginal way of being was violently disrupted with the arrival of the colonisers and the subsequent invasion.

Our people were massacred. Our way of life was threatened as our languages were forbidden, our families torn apart and our people rounded up and herded onto missions. So many aspects of our lives were controlled – where we could live, who we could marry.

Fortunately, we are strong and resilient people.

Our people have a long and proud history of activism and fighting for our rights.

We fight for a better life, a healthier country, equal rights and greater opportunities for our children, our families, and our people.



First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria / Leroy Miller

Everyone knows that people thrive when they can set their own course in life and can make choices about what works best for them and their families based on their own needs, experiences, talents and aspirations.

When it comes to Aboriginal communities, cultures and lands, the experts are, of course, Aboriginal people. The more this fact is respected and embraced, the more our communities will thrive.

Treaty is about providing Aboriginal communities with the power to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level – from using local knowledge to care for land and keeping culture strong to improving the way services like health and education are delivered.

So how will it work?

We've set up a framework that embeds the principles of self-determination in everything we do.

Traditional Owner Treaties across Victoria will make sure local knowledge can inform decision-making at a community level.

Meanwhile a Statewide Treaty will strengthen the First Peoples' Assembly so it can drive positive structural change to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

It's going to put decision-making power back into Aboriginal hands. Mob making decision for mob.

With negotiations for the Statewide Treaty set to begin in November, the Assembly is continuing to yarn with mob all over the state to gather ideas and feedback about our plans.

We're still finalising the priorities that we'll take into negotiations, but we have some key concepts that we know will play a big part in the talks.

Firstly, we'll be looking to agree on a process and timetable for providing the Assembly with real decision-making powers about Aboriginal matters.

We'll want to expand the Assembly's roles and responsibilities, so that in addition to the new decision-making powers, it could also provide advice to government on a range of issues that affect First Peoples, and ensure accountability for promises made and standards set.

We will seek to find ways to ensure First Peoples' cultures and languages are recognised and respected, and celebrated by everyone.

And we'll be looking at how key recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission's truth-telling process should be implemented.

There's still time to have your say and the Assembly will continue to keep our communities updated throughout the journey and seek your guidance.

Treaty is ultimately for all our mob. Regardless of your living circumstances, where you are in life or where you've been.

That's why we've been visiting every prison in Victoria to make sure everyone can walk with us on the journey to Treaty. I want to thank all of the mob who have yarned with us and shared their stories, ideas, needs and hopes about Treaty.

History shows that change begins with people. Whether we're realising our human rights, fighting racism, or standing up for our lands and waters, it is everyday people who can drive change. People like you and me.

What was a dream for our Elders will be a reality for our children.

For all the brothers and sisters outside of Victoria I hope you stay deadly and continue the fight that our ancestors started. Hopefully the journey in Victoria offers some inspiration about what's possible.

Thank you very much for reading this piece.

• Play

Quiz

1. What hand-held puzzle was popular in the '80s?
2. True or False: Some dinosaurs were as small as chickens.
3. The band Nirvana had a breakout hit in 1991 with which song?
4. In the human body where is the femur located?
5. What are the six colours of the South African flag?
6. Name the highest mountain peak in North America.
7. Name the actor who starred in the movies Yes Man and The Cable Guy.
8. What is the name of the cafe in Friends?
9. True or False: A baby giraffe is 6 feet tall at birth.
10. Name the largest sand island in the world, located in Australia.

Boggle

Discover as many words as possible. A word can only be formed if each letter is side-by-side, above or below, or on the diagonal with the next.

G	I	F	A	K
W	Q	E	F	E
U	D	A	X	A
I	B	T	E	M
N	T	E	P	T

Word Morph

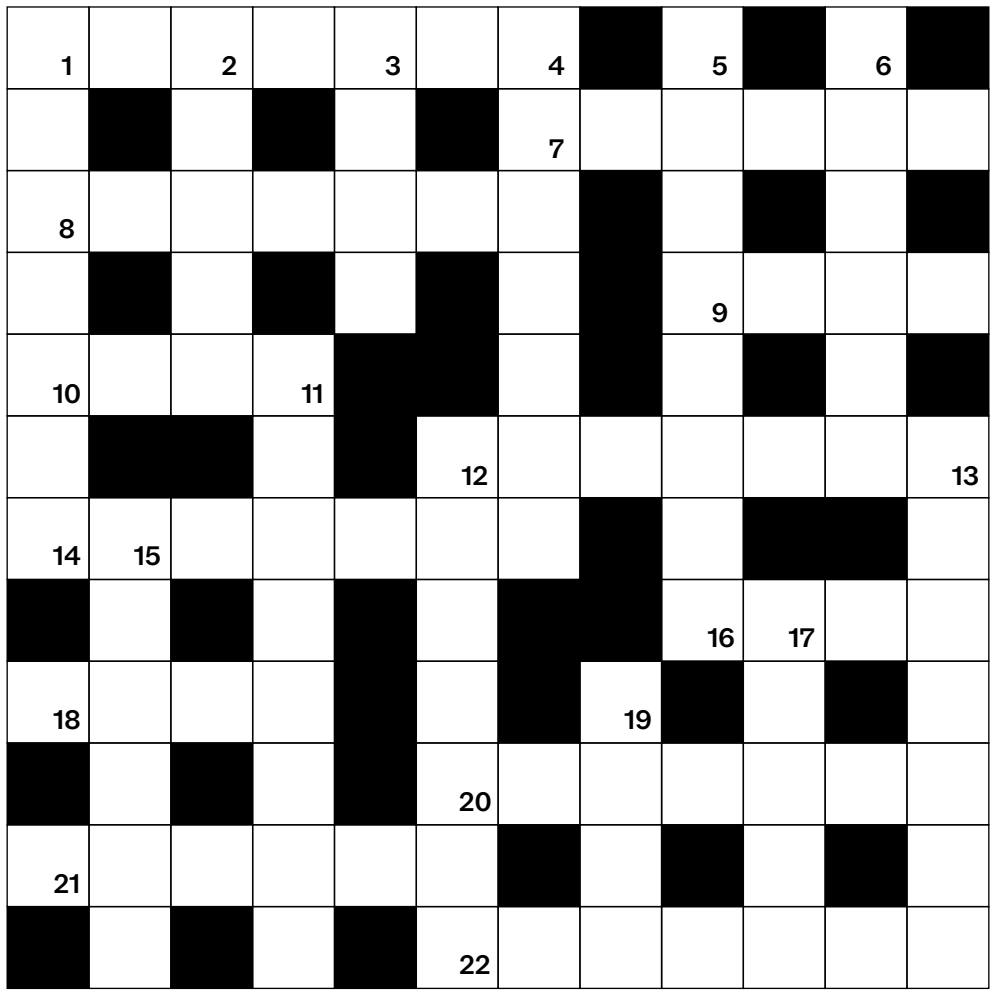
Morph one word into another by changing one letter at a time.

①	CRANK
②	
③	
④	
⑤	FLOCK

Crossword

ACROSS
1. Covering the entire surface
7. Lone word in a text
8. Take flight
9. Uses a spade
10. Edible crustacean
12. Stutter
14. Supermarket item
16. Cribs
18. Couple
20. Obstinate or stupid
21. _____ Ramsay, chef
22. Storm

DOWN
1. Fruit
2. _____ Evangelista, model
3. Solemn promises
4. Kings, queens, etc.
5. Fast-spreading disease
6. Flock of geese
11. Capital of Serbia
12. Navigational instrument
13. Regard
15. Motive
17. Delay or postpone
19. Movie



Dad Jokes (Happy Father's Day)

Q: How do you make a tissue dance?
A: Put a little boogie in it.

Q: Why did the scarecrow receive an award?
A: He was outstanding in his field

Q: What are two things you can't eat for breakfast?
A: Lunch and dinner.

Q: How much does it cost to swim with sharks?
A: An arm and a leg.

Q: Why can't leopards play hide-and-seek?
A: Because they're always spotted.

If you have a better joke please send them to us!



Caption This...

Submit a caption to this photo, and we will print the three finalists (including the winner) in the next edition.

Submissions:
Please send your submissions to the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

Or, if you have access to email, you can email us at:

contribute@abouttime.org.au



Last Month's Submissions:
Thank you for your entries into last month's caption competition!

WINNER!
'Many hands make light work.'
Harro, VIC

Runners Up:
'I always knew that my third arm would come in handy one day'
Kevin, TAS

'Never underestimate a real tri-athlete'
Joe, VIC

Word Morph Answers

1. CRANK
2. FRANK
3. FRACK
4. FROCK
5. FLOCK

Quiz Answers

1. Rubik's Cube
2. True
3. Smells Like Teen Spirit
4. Thigh
5. Green, yellow, white, red, blue, black
6. Denali, Alaska
7. Jim Carrey
8. Central Perk
9. True
10. K'gari (Fraser Island)

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. All-over
2. Runaway
3. Digs
4. Crab
5. Stammer
6. Orphan
7. Cots
8. Pair
9. Asinine
10. Gordan
11. Tempest
12. Trolley
13. Belgrade
14. Sextant
15. Reason
16. Respect
17. On Ice
18. Film
19. Gaggle
20. Royalty
21. Epidemic
22. Vows

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Apricot
2. Linda
3. Vows
4. Royalty
5. Epidemic
6. Gaggle
7. Lone
8. Take flight
9. Uses a spade
10. Edible crustacean
11. Capital of Serbia
12. Navigational instrument
13. Regard
14. Supermarket item
15. Motive
16. Cribs
17. Delay or postpone
18. Couple
19. Movie
20. Obstinate or stupid
21. Ramsay, chef
22. Storm