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• Australia's National Prison Newspaper

ISSUE NO. 6 DECEMBER 2024 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

About Time

The Benefits of Prison Pen-Pal Programs

Pen-Pal programs are popular around the world and have been proven to assist with rehabilitation and improved connections.

By Denham Sadler

As Damien Linnane says, receiving a letter in prison can be the difference between a good day and an awful one.

Linnane, who was formerly incarcerated and is the editor of the Paper Chained prison art journal, has seen firsthand how important letters are to those who are incarcerated.

"A little thing like getting a letter can completely change your day and even your week," Linnane told About Time. "It really improves poor mental health, it alleviates boredom.

"Speaking from experience, the worst thing about prison is the lack of things to do. Writing was something I turned to. It really makes a huge difference to your sentence."

One way to help those in prison receive more letters and stay in contact with people in the outside community is through pen-pal programs which connect incarcerated people with those in the community.

Prison pen-pal programs have been found to be hugely popular and successful around the world, including in the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

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Christmas Day Inside Out

One man's account of Christmas inside

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a retired inmate.

It's Christmas Day. My cellie Simmo and I wish each other a happy day as we wake and wearily consume our usual 'no-frills' breakfast of CocoPops, stale white bread with raspberry jam, washed down with prison-ration coffee and the last of yesterday's milk supply. Even though it looks like Santa has forgotten us this year, we both have some ill-defined, unspoken hope that it will be a better day. At muster, the stony-faced guards wish us Happy Christmas as we stand to attention, shoulder-to-shoulder, in our lines in the yard. But that's the only thing that seems different about today. It'll be impossible to get onto the phones, so I have no expectations of calling anyone. Following muster, I have a shower, and then return to the cell.

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Ike Curtis

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Letters

Take Control and Get Your Life Back

By Johnny

Johnny writes from Long Bay Correctional Complex in New South Wales.

Greetings to you all! My name is Johnny and I am currently locked up at Long Bay. Reading all the letters sent by everyone over the past four issues of 'About Time' has been such an eye-opener for me. I've found myself looking forward to the next issue to see and learn from other peoples' experiences that they so bravely share with us! Reading everyone's personal experiences and advice has affected me in such a positive way that I finally decided to put pen to paper and share some of my own experiences over the past three years and the changes I have made that may change your life, as they did mine.

Being in control of my emotions/anger, for me, was the most difficult to control and I'm sure it may be the same for other brothers and sisters incarcerated at the moment. It may even be the reason you're locked up. In 2022, I received charges for two prison fights, and last year I found myself being charged again for another staff assault – all while being on remand for violent offences I received jail time for. Since 2022, I've spent just over 20 months in segregation for my behaviour. 2024 however, has been my best year so far. I've had no violent charges this year and no outside charges. The thing that has allowed me to be this progressive is being in control of my emotions. Being in control of your emotions requires a lot of patience, realising and being alert to what you are feeling in an exact moment, and not letting your emotions make impulsive decisions that you'll come to regret. Being in control allows you to take control of certain situations that may be dangerous or stressful. Once I finally took control, I found myself being so much happier; I stopped my violent habits and behaviours, and relationships with my loved ones bloomed. The main thing I found was that I really understood who I was as a person and it led to an inner peace I'd never experienced before. It has allowed me to think about how my actions might affect others and the consequences I'd bring upon myself.

Ever since I made the change, I really started to see others and how their lack of control led themselves to their own demise, without even the slightest bit of realisation. I've seen how not being in control makes people lash out without thought and places them in worse situations. I also realised that I was once that person and the majority of the troubles I've gone through have all been due to the fact my emotions were making the decisions and not my mind.

The domino effect it has had on my life has been nothing short of transforming! For people like us to last outside and really give it a good crack, being in control of your emotions is the only thing that gives us a fighting chance at not coming back. If there's anything in this world I'd suggest giving a go, it is this. The happiness, freedom and prosperity that comes with it is something that I pray you all experience. I hope it changes your life the way it has with mine!! God bless and soon home to you all!

Regards,
Johnny

Peace on the Inside

By Ronin

Ronin writes from Queensland.

My name is Ronin. I have been in and out of prison multiple times over the last 12 years and have reached a point where some call it institutionalised. The thing is, I love prison. I love it so much that I seem to be constantly on a reckless path when I'm out to either die, or come back to prison.

The last two times I was released, I only managed to make it out for a few months, even though I was really trying to do the right thing and work. But using that energy of mine to constantly chase money left me constantly with none left for my passions. That's why I love prison. It's a place where I can read, paint and exercise in peace. A place free from social expectations, free from the monetary rat race and the place I feel the most freedom to be me. I can do all the things that I genuinely love to do without sacrificing myself towards making money. I have a roof over my head and food in my stomach. I love it so much that this time I'm writing a book about how I found peace in prison. It's called Pri-zen. And like your newspaper, it's a book that I hope will find itself in the hands of my fellow prisoners. To help them learn how to use their time.

Kind regards,
Ronin



Note to readers
Dear readers,

Merry Christmas, happy holidays, happy (incoming) new year.

We hope you're doing okay. We hope, over the next couple weeks, you're able to see or speak to your loved ones, whether they're your family, or friends, or anybody else who means a lot to you.

We wanted to thank you for reading About Time this year.

The idea for the paper came almost three years ago, and it was almost two years of hard work before we were ready to publish.

We weren't sure if people would want to read it; if they'd like the content or have no interest at all.

Six months later, six editions later, we're so proud of what About Time has become.

Every day you send us letters, sharing your stories, asking questions, talking about your goals and dreams and ambitions.

Every month thousands read these pages, across more than 80 prisons in six states and territories.

We hope you've enjoyed what you've read. We hope our newspaper has helped you share your experiences. If we haven't published you just yet — keep writing to us! We'll be sure to publish you soon.

Send us a letter at the details below. Share your feelings about the paper with us. Share your resolutions, your goals for next year and the future. Keep the conversation and the connection going.

We hope you enjoy this special edition, which is full of your contributions. We'll see you in February!

If you would like to write to us, please send your letters to the following 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

Watching Repco Supercars

By Stephen

Stephen writes from Wolston Correctional Centre, in QLD.

Hi there,
My name is Stephen.
I will write to you and try to fill you guys in with what's happening in QLD prisons, especially Wolston. I am in residential and landscaping and my wages are $30.00 per week, my hygiene allowance is $9.81 and TV rental $2.00 per week.

Last week's menu included:
Boiled Eggs (2) – Tea – Roast Chicken Beef Patties – Beef Bolognese – Beef Snags

But our food menu revolves around different meals.

If we want a TV, we must rent one for $2 per week. Over in Rec you get a remote with your TV – in secure you don't.

It is 13 October 2024 and most of my unit are watching the Repco Supercars on 7. In my unit there are six single cells – the Common Room has a main TV and seating. It's Sunday and I am going to watch the race.

Yours,
Stephen

A View From the Inside

By Donna

Donna writes from Adelaide Women's Prison in South Australia.

To the editor,

Firstly, I would like to say how great it is to finally have a nationwide paper focused solely on prisoners and issues relating to prisoners as people, not just prisoners. I look forward to each edition and hope it is here to stay! I am a prisoner at the Adelaide Women's Prison, South Australia. I have served two years and six months of my six year six month sentence.

I thought I could enlighten you on how this prison's day to day works. In the unit I'm in, there are eight jobs available: two unit cleaners, two laundry workers, two meal servers, one milk server and one gardener. There are 20 women in this unit. All jobs except the gardener are six day a week jobs. They all get the same daily rate, $5.14 per day. The gardener job is a three day a week job. The meal servers hand out the meals, lunch and dinner, which is about 10 mins per day, and the milk server hands out the milk at dinner time, about five mins per day. The cleaners vacuum and mop the unit once per day. It's about one hour to one and a half hours of work everyday. Everyone gets paid the same even though jobs like the laundry and cleaner are a lot more work than the other days. Unemployment is $12.80 per week.

On Tuesday, we get "Education" in the afternoon. I study business studies and there is a literacy and numeracy course that runs at the same time. If you attend education you receive $5.64 for that day.

All up, I receive $36.48 a week, before deductions. They then take $2 per week for resettlement (for when we are released), $3 for CIC Levy (court fines), and $11 per year for TV access. Some women come in here for a month, pay their TV access, get out for a month then come back and have to pay for TV access again. Here in SA, we pay $2.50 for a 10 minute call. In the "Secure" area of the prison, on a 'standard' regime you're entitled to 21 calls per week. If you use all 21 by Thursday, you have to wait until Sunday morning to use the phone. If you are fortunate enough to have someone who can send you money, you can receive $200 per month. It must be paid by money order from Australia post, a $15 money order fee applies. Any amount over the $200 goes into your phone account. If the sender doesn't write their name, address and phone number on the back of the money order it goes into a suspense account and the sender must call the business centre with the money order receipt number and details to have the money moved into the general account. If we do get the money through we can spend $50 per week. In all of the secure units there is no microwave, no kettle, no toaster. The only thing you can cook is two minute noodles with the hot tap.

We get yard movement (exercise) for one hour twice per week (as long as there is a yard officer). To progress to the Living Skills Unit (lower security) you need manager's approval. There is only one women's prison in South Australia so if you get stuck in Mainstream/Secure there is nowhere else you can go.

The Living Skills Unit (LSU) is where most women aim to progress to. The LSU holds all of the courses you can do. The cooking course, barista course, construction course, Women's studies, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, Yoga on the Inside and more. None of that is offered to the Secure units.

If you reside in LSU, Edge Church puts on a kids visit once a month and the kids can come and play games and run around, play on the playground and the women can bring food they've made or things they've bought on the buy and spend some quality time with their children. Kids visits are not offered to the Secure units.

I am in the Secure unit, and I constantly have vivid nightmares that I go for a parole interview and they defer my parole until I progress through the institution and do some courses. In my dream I have an infinite sentence. I wake up dripping with sweat, thanking god it was just a dream.

I'm very much looking forward to the next edition of the paper and especially the second part of the Freedom of Information section. Hopefully you get many letters from South Australia.

Sincerely,

Donna
Adelaide Womens Prison

The Cost of Living

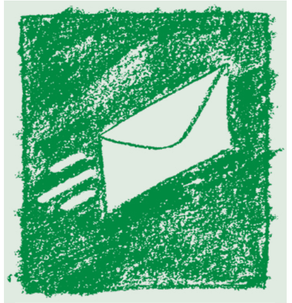
By Rocket

Rocket writes from Wolston Correctional Centre in Queensland.

To Whom It May Concern,

You had an article in the October issue about how someone was getting between $40 to $50 a week when they were working. What about the prisoners that are counted as medically unfit for work? In QLD if that is you, all you get is $17.35 per week, $9.85 for amenities and $1.22 for five days unemployment. Out of that, $17.35 you pay $2 per week. to rent a television and also there is whatever amount you put on the phone. You have to pay for that. As you can see there is not much cash to spend. So there is always someone worse off than you.

Rocket



Send Us a Letter

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to our Letters section, please send your letters 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

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 sixth edition, distributed to all prisons in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. We hope that 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:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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Basic Things From the Buy-Up

By Jeffrey

Jeffrey writes from Wolston Correctional Centre Queensland.

To About Time,

During a long stay of about 6 months in prison, I came across a few fellow inmates who needed help with sorting their pile(s) of mixed documents which were kept in one or two used envelopes. All that was needed were three or four document wallets for separating all their papers eg: Legal, Medical, Parole etc. This would be especially helpful for the inmates who had trouble reading, as when they get a legal letter/document, they could recognise the headings on the front of the document wallets & file the mail accordingly. This would be a relief as they don't then have to search through a mess of papers, and means less stress and anxiety. However, some prisons do not have or do not allow the provision of this stationary. I think we need more things to be available on the buy-up such as document wallets, plastic folders, and magnifying reading glasses.

Thank you for reading,
Jeffrey

Bukks' Musings

By Bukks

Bukks writes from Loddon Prison in Victoria.

Dear About Time,

Hello. Thank you for publishing one of my poems, I was very happy to see it in About Time. I am doing 21 and a half years with a top of 23 and a half and came in way back in 2010. I spent about 13 years at the maximum-security Port Phillip Prison but am now at a medium security, Loddon. I have been here for almost two years now and since coming here have gotten into poetry. I have made three homemade draft books and have almost finished my fourth with the help of a teacher here. I showed a few people who really liked them and now I have written about 235 of them. I like doing it as it keeps me busy and helps me get stuff out.

I am glad you made the newspaper because, as the name says, it's about time! They should have had something like this for a long, long time. Years ago, I read one in the slot at Port Phillip that was from the A.C.T., they have it so different I was amazed. I did actually write to them but they never gave me a reply. Sorry I didn't write when I first sent poems, but I didn't know what to say. It can get so boring that any form of entertainment is good. Plus, it's exciting when it is new. I have a friend who was deported back to Malaysia not long ago and I was telling her all about it as she just missed it. I wish you had been around a lot longer.

I think you should mention the book 'Damage Done' about Warren Fellows who spent 11 years in Thailand. It was the first book I read way back in Tarana/Parkville and it was what got me into reading. Since then, I've read so many non-fiction books both in and out of prison.

This for sure will be my last sentence and I will be at least 50 when I get out. I hear when you turn that age that your chance of reoffending goes down to 2%. I breached my parole with my murder so my chances of actually getting it are probably very slim. I still have a tiny bit of hope that I will get it after doing the few months that I owe.

I've spent so long in prison that I've grown to despise it now, over half my life. They never really give you much help when you get out and, even inside, and it costs me a lot. I never really had any goals or realistic hopes and dreams but I do now. I want to get out, finish my parole and go to Malaysia to visit or maybe live with my lady friend. I have a little money now thanks to the child abuse redress scheme to give me a head start. I also have my own unit unlike a lot of people, but I'm not sure if I will be able to live there as I offended there back when I was 21.

My mum is my biggest support and I am undeserving of all she has done for me. My Dad passed away back in 2022 and I miss him so much; I hadn't got to see him in a while as he was unwell and I couldn't get someone to bring him in for me. I was very lucky to go to the funeral as it was at the end of Covid and I had just had my security rating dropped. My nan is also very old and I don't think she will hang on until I get out. I have missed and lost so very much that it hurts me nowadays. I missed both my sister's weddings, she now lives in the U.S.A. and I will most likely never be allowed to visit her there.

I can't say prison has given me much except a lot of perspective. I've had to go through a lot to be where I am now. I am still very worried I may never get out due to some law change or to do with the S.V.O. laws. I must admit that at times during my sentence I did hate myself for all I have done. When I started writing to my Malay friend at D.P.F.C. my view on everything changed drastically. If not for her I may still be 'stuck in the mud' at Port Phillip with my blinkers on.

Did you know that technically we are not allowed pen-pals that we do not know before our sentence? I think this is a dumb rule and we should have a way to meet people to write as another's perspective can change our own more than we could ever know. In other countries they have a way for inmates to meet people to write to, why are we stuck in the past? I must admit I did not know her before I wrote and she could have easily never replied to me, but I am so glad she did. Jail can be tough and to have someone caring in your life who is not your family is a big thing. I have come so far thanks to her that I couldn't even tell you. I hope I do get to go over and see her when my parole/sentence is finally over. I've been in so long it seems that I've forgotten what it's like to be free. I do get very depressed over it sometimes but what can you do? Just keep on keeping on and try to never give up. Poetry helps me now and is a big thing in my life taking up a lot of time. I'm lucky I can just come and use the computers during the week or all I've written may never have been. I feel like finally after all these years I have found something I am good at. With the internet around out there and so widely available I'm hoping I can use it and words to make a living somehow. I have added a few more poems for you and thanks again for publishing my other one, it feels really good.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and if you wanted to put it in About Time, that's okay too.

Take care and thanks for the paper as it is About Time, true! I wish you all the success in the world and will always look forward to seeing them every month.

Sincerely,
Bukks

Give the Kids a Chance

By CC

CC writes from Port Augusta Prison in South Australia.

To the Editor,

I am writing today to draw attention to Youth Crime, and I'm not meaning 16 and 17 year olds. I'm talking about 10, 11 and 12 year olds.

My nephew who is 12 years old, is currently on 7 different bail agreements, a couple of which are breaches of bail for not being home when SAPol have performed curfew checks. Well, he is never at home. Why? Because his mother is an alcoholic who swings between neglect and outright abuse.

Already I can feel most reading this nodding their heads as it causes reminiscing on your own childhoods. All of these 8-12 year olds who don't want to be home drift together and end up congregating at a central location, be it a skate park, shopping centre, or train station. Within these groups, one or two will undoubtedly have older brothers, who willingly supply a provision of cigarettes, alcohol, weed, etc, and if not initiate, definitely encourage or romanticise bad, anti-social and criminal behaviour.

Children of substance dependent parents long for somewhere to just be that isn't home, and it is of ever more appeal if they can find connections that fill that hole inside of us that is the longing to belong to something bigger than just ourselves, that is to some degree inherent in all human psyches.

These young angry men are gravitating towards each other and their anti-social tendencies are exponentially extrapolated to outright criminal behaviour extremely fast. And this is furthermore perpetuated by further thinking, creating a desire to lead a life as a community member NOT pariah; while offering real support programs to the parents.

An outreach program needn't be fancy. Run from their school, using the facilities after hours to encourage attendance at class prior, and with the aid of donations an amazing program could be successfully run.

Imagine, then what could be achieved using the AUD$90,000 per annum it costs to house these juveniles in prisoners, as well as other court incurred costs that could potentially be redirected. There would be an abundance of funding available to really make inroads with helping parents address their own issues. This could result in making home a welcome and safe place.

Give these kids somewhere to just be. Make it safe, positive and even productive. No one is "just an addict", so address parental dependencies on drugs and alcohol. Let's make our "criminal generation" the one that breaks the cycle of anti-social behavior and criminal offending stemming from an under addressed but fixable root cause.

Yours Sincerely,
CC

Being Deaf in Prison

By Rebecca

Rebecca writes from Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre, in QLD.

Dear 'About Time',

Thank you to all who created 'About Time' and for making it work. I am a deaf prisoner who is quite isolated within isolation. I miss out on small talks such as what other prisoners are really feeling to bigger things such as how to make a complaint against case notes. Deaf Services has been trying to fight to bring tablets in for deaf prisoners in Queensland and it's good to see that the government is slowly introducing tablets into some prisons and that tablets may be possible for deaf prisoners in the future. The newspaper is like a light at the end of a tunnel.

Thank you.
Rebecca

Differences at NSW and QLD Prisons

By Belly

Belly writes from Wolston Correctional Centre, in QLD.

To the editor at About Time,

I am writing today to thank you for all the hard work involved in putting together and 'getting out' the National Prison Newspaper that I received for the first time here in Queensland.

Just a brief rundown on myself:
I am a 42 years young Koori Man, from Wiradjuri & Tharowel country. I recently transferred from Long Bay Gaol to WCC in Queensland to be close enough for my mother to visit me (ie: compassionate grounds). This process took around two years and I had to provide many support letters and a statement of reasons to the NSW State Board of Sentencing.

I have been around the prison system, in and out since 2001, mostly in NSW.

To compare NSW & QLD prison systems I would first take into account that gaol is gaol and problems are always about the same. But here are some comparisons:

- NSW has a larger selection of weekly buy-up options
- QLD food is better
- NSW monthly buy has a larger selection
- QLD STP has better options: clippers, electric shavers, Adidas and Asics shoes and digital radios
- NSW has a parole system that takes into account low risk of re-offending and lack of opportunity to do essential programs
- QLD will not take into account the low risk of re-offending and the waitlist for programs is not a mitigating factor either

The biggest issue is the lack of transparency and continuous changes in direction.

I think that is enough from me for now!
Belly

Prison Libraries and a Merry Christmas

By Jack

Jack writes from Metropolitan Remand Centre, in Victoria.

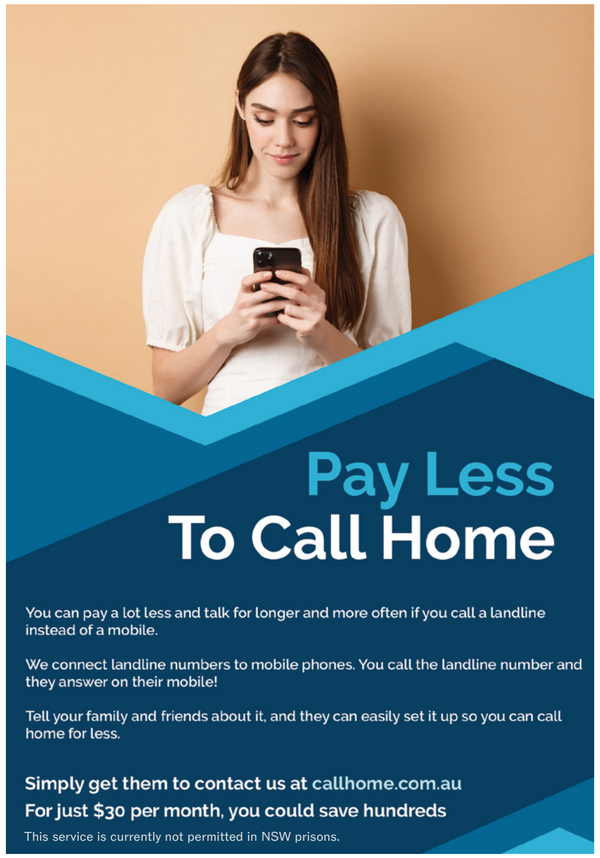
Dear Ruby,

I read your letter in the November Issue of About Time. I'm currently on remand in Victoria at the Metropolitan Remand Centre. You asked about libraries in prisons. We have a library but are not allowed to attend. We have to wait for the library trolley to visit our yards and select a book or request a book and wait for the following week. The book selection here is rather small and sometimes the library trolley doesn't come. When we receive the book we have it for a week, and can rebook it for another week if we need more time. A late fee of $5 is deducted from our accounts if we do not return the book on time. I hope you find this of Interest.

To everyone who writes in please keep it up and encourage others to submit letters, art, poetry etc as myself and I'm sure many others really do enjoy receiving About Time and reading all the fantastic letters, articles etc...

To everyone at About Time, my fellow brothers and sisters and anyone else who reads the paper – Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Remember to be kind to one another over the festive season.

Jack





Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Douglas, Kelly, Alexander, Alex, Rebecca, J, Anthony, Keith, Rahul, Simon, Tony, Gordon, Andrew, Dane, Jason, Oliver, Charles, Ronin, Charlie, Malnight, Asad, Rodney, Jon, Jramaz, Gareth, C.C., Luke, David, Kerrin, Wendy, Marcus, Storm, A.S., Denis, Joey, those who wish to remain anonymous and more!

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

Unfortunately, we are unable to return your letters or 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.

If you would like to contribute to our Letters section, please send your letters to the following 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

News and Investigations

The Benefits of Prison Pen-Pal Programs



Ike Curtis

Continued from page 1.

By Denham Sadler

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

Prison pen-pal programs have been found to improve the health and wellbeing of those in prison, and their rehabilitation, thanks to improved connections with the general community.

They are less common in Australia, where some prison authorities have barred participation in pen-pal programs or require express permission.

Nikita, a member of the Formerly Incarcerated Justice Advocates (FIGJAM) Collective, told About Time that sending and receiving letters while in prison is "extremely important... because phone calls are so expensive, often people are left to just write letters to stay in contact with their family and friends.

"It's important for mental health and community connections and family connections. It's just a healthier experience, and you're much more connected."

Tens of thousands of people in the US and UK participate in prison pen-pal programs, some of which are either formally administered by prison authorities or at least actively encouraged.

The Hardman Trust operates the Prisoners' Penfriends scheme in the UK, which involves about 200 people sending around 3,700 letters each year. The service is available across 90 prisons in England and Wales, with the organisation supervising the program and checking each letter.

A study into the scheme by the University of Warwick found that it improved wellbeing, giving early warning signs of potential self-harm and improved chances of successful rehabilitation.

A quarter of all people taking part in the program did not have any contact with other people in the community, and having a pen pal helped them to feel less isolated, happier and more likely to make changes to their self-identity.

There are numerous prison pen-pal programs across the United States, including the Wire of Hope.

The Prisoner Correspondence Network Aotearoa in New Zealand has been running since 2016. It is the largest pen-pal network in the country, with more than 5,000 members.

In Victoria, people who are incarcerated must obtain permission from the prison general manager to participate in a pen-pal program, and will be allowed to do so only in "exceptional circumstances".

"In exceptional circumstances, certain prisoners without connections in the community may be able to apply for a pen-pal program," a spokesperson for the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety told About Time.

"As part of Corrections Victoria's strict security measures, incoming and outgoing mail is subject to scanning and checks."

There are less clear rules around prison pen-pal programs in the other Australian states and territories, although there are no formal or encouraged programs around the country.

Prison regulations in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia do not mention prison pen-pal programs at all, in contrast to Victoria.

Linnane previously ran an informal pen-pal program for those in prison through his newsletter, which led to it being banned in several prisons in Queensland and Victoria, and removed from tablets in New South Wales prisons.

The NSW ban was believed to be about concerns people on protection were communicating with those not on protection in prison.

Linnane said he was eventually able to have these bans overturned when he removed the pen-pal program from the newsletter entirely.

"I don't know of any other place in the world that has a ban on pen-pal programs," Linnane said. "In the UK and US, prison pen-pal programs are actually actively encouraged."

There have been campaigns for Victoria to overturn its ban on pen-pal programs, and for other states and territories to more actively encourage and facilitate these schemes.

"I think there's a lot to lose by depriving prisoners of that support," Linnane said. "It's something that can improve mental health, and anything that improves mental health can reduce violence, self-harm and strains on the prison system."

We Need Your Feedback!

Are you and your friends receiving the newspaper every month?
We are distributing the newspaper to every prison, and we have asked your staff to provide the copies to you directly. We want to hear from you:

- Are you being told that the paper is available?
- Are there enough papers going round?
- Have you experienced any issues or difficulties getting your hands on a copy?
- If you only have access to a digital copy, would you also like a physical paper?
- What do you like about the paper? What do you want to see differently?

Please send us a letter to let us know if there are any issues, and we can help fix them. Please ask your friends for their feedback as well, and put that into your letter.





Finding Community After Prisons

Platforming the Voices and Living Experiences of People Who Have Been Incarcerated – a Radio show and Podcast.

By Nina

Nina is a series presenter/producer and member of FIGJAM collective.

The Untold Stories of Injustice is a five-part radio series that features a collection of interviews, discussions and events highlighting the experiences of folks who have been incarcerated in so-called Victoria, Australia.

In a society that heavily discriminates against people who have been criminalised, treating them as disposable and unworthy, we wanted to provide opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to be heard and listened to with respect curiosity, empathy and understanding. Normally silenced and stigmatised, it was important to give these voices an opportunity to express themselves and have their say in a safe place.

During the five episodes of Untold Stores of Injustice, you will hear the voices and experiences of the Formerly Incarcerated Girls Justice Advocates Melbourne collective (FIGJAM), otherwise known as 'Fuck I'm Good Just Ask Me'.

FIGJAM is a collective of around 20 folks who have been incarcerated, surviving different forms of violence, particularly systemic state-sanctioned violence. We are a peer-support group, providing a sense of connection and belonging to people who have lived and breathed similar experiences. Our experiences intersect with the criminal in-justice systems, institutions of all kinds, mental ill-health and wellbeing, alcohol and other drugs, homelessness, oppression, trauma, survival, and strength. Experts of our own collective and lived experience, FIGJAM draws on these intersections to engage in research and policy reform, using our collective knowledge to review documents and practices both within universities and the social justice sector. We also give presentations across different domains and issues, attend conferences, and continually highlight the importance of the work of the collective.

Throughout the different episodes in the series, you will be taken on a trip down memory lane. You will listen to the experiences of FIGJAM members, their life journeys, the ways in which criminalisation has impacted them, and hear about what they have been up to post release. The series also explores the therapeutic benefits that sharing their life experiences has had on them, their family, friends and community.

You will also hear from allies and organisations in so-called Victoria, in other states and even some from overseas. They discuss how lived experience is embedded in their organisations, highlighting the importance of having folks who are criminalised in positions of leadership and governance. These organisations understand that when we speak of prisons and unjust systems, folks who have experienced the harm and abuse of these systems must underpin and create the foundations for the work to take place. Nothing about us without us.

Listen:
3cr.org.au/untoldstories
'Untold Stories of Injustice' one episode (5 in total) per hour slot on Saturdays at 1pm. Saturday's 14th, 21st, 28th of December. Saturdays' 4th and 11th of January. On 3CR, 855AM.

Improving Job Options for Women Exiting the Justice System

Women with lived experience collaborate with for-profit organisations to brainstorm employment pathway ideas.

By Cathy Campesato, WAM and FIGJAM member

The journey back to employment for women with a criminal record can be challenging but also transformative. It requires a comprehensive approach that addresses immediate needs, builds skills, provides support, creates valuable employment opportunities and tackles systemic barriers.

So how can we do this? This was the question that The Difference Incubator (TDI) came upon while deciding which group of women in Australia needed the most immediate set of ideas and innovations to provide sustainable employment after incarceration.

The Victorian Legal Services Board Commission (VLSBC) provided funding to TDI to conduct research into this important topic, wanting to create an economy that is regenerative and inclusive. Anthea Smits (CEO) from TDI wanted to create a space for answers to the important question: "What would it take to create decent work for women exiting the justice system?"

TDI asked the early intervention organisation, Women and Mentoring (WAM), to write a report on the barriers experienced by women in finding and securing employment as they navigate moving away from the criminal legal system. After several months of research, including interviews and examination of participant case studies with women who had lived experience, WAM released the report, "They Don't Make It Easy: Unpacking the barriers, successes and possible pathways of women exiting the justice system seeking employment."

This report prompted the development of 3-day workshops where investors, small and big businesses, and social entrepreneurs were asked to consider how we can create more employment opportunities for women exiting the justice system. So, for three days we listened, ideated and sat in the messiness of the innovation process to uncover multiple ways forward in this very important space. Ideas were plentiful, with conversations including engaging with $10 million investment funds and acquiring $2 million businesses!

The four courageous lived experience panel members, Nina Storey, Stacey Elvey, Stacey Stokes and Teegan Hartwick (Kelly) were very insightful and brave in bringing their raw and often heartbreaking stories to the forum. We at TDI, WAM and VLSB are very appreciative of their commitment and passion towards generating many actionable and realistic employment solutions at these workshops.

So, now the move forward begins with exciting times ahead!



• News and Investigations



WA

WA Prison Overcrowding: Experts Warn of "Cruel and Inhumane" Conditions Amid Rising Deaths in Custody

In November 2024, the Western Australia prison watchdog highlighted issues of concern at Hakea prison, which is grappling with extreme overcrowding, understaffing, and unhygienic conditions.

According to the Office of Inspector of Custodial Services, Eamon Ryan, the facility has been under significant stress, with prisoners often forced to sleep on mattresses on the floor due to a 15% increase in the prison population in the past year.

Problems from overcrowding were particularly evident in the 45 consecutive days in 2024 when it operated above 100% capacity, leading to lockdowns, a lack of access to fresh air, exercise, and basic hygiene, with prisoners sharing cramped cells and a single toilet.

The report highlights the prison's role in contributing to a larger crisis in WA's justice system, which saw an increase in suicides, self-harm, and violence, including five deaths in custody at Hakea this year.

Ryan expressed concern about the "cruel and inhumane" treatment of prisoners, noting that the harsh conditions have led to anger, serious mental health issues, and destructive behaviours. He also cautioned that the cycle would persist in the absence of rehabilitation measures.

In response, the Department of Justice has made a committment to implement measures to improve conditions, including the recruitment of 300 new prison officers, and increasing the out-of-cell time for prisoners.

Ryan stressed that "substantial reform is needed to prevent further tragedies and address the systemic issues in WA's prison systems".



VIC

New Tobacco Licensing Scheme

The Victorian Government has introduced a new Bill that creates a strict licensing scheme for the tobacco industry in Victoria. The Bill aims to provide more power to Victoria Police to prevent the illegal tobacco trade and builds on the Victoria Police Taskforce Lunar, through which the police have already seized $37 million worth of cash, vapes and illegal tobacco products.

The Bill will establish a licensing scheme so that tobacco can only be sold by licensed retailers. A licence will only be available for "fit and proper" persons who pass a strict test that includes an assessment of the applicant's known associates and personal history.

The government claims that this Bill will protect businesses from being undercut by criminal syndicates. Through the Bill, the police will have increased powers to search and seize illicit products and they will also assist with the licensee assessment.

A new tobacco regulator will also be established. It will administer and monitor compliance with the obligations contained in the Bill. Any person who sells tobacco without a licence will face serious penalties, with a fine of up to $355,000 or up to 15 years in jail. Businesses who sell tobacco without a licence will face fines of more than $1.7 million.



NT

Prison Overcrowding Leading to Transfer of Prisoners Across the Territory

The Northern Territory Government has begun a series of transfers of prisoners across the territory, with young people at the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre being transferred to the new youth detention centre in Darwin, and up to 36 women already relocated from Alice Springs to Darwin.

Debbie Kilroy, CEO of Sisters Inside, has described the transfer of women from Alice Springs to Darwin as a "direct violation of the women's rights, placing significant barriers between the women, their families, and vital re-entry and support services."

Stolen Generations survivor William Roy Tilmouth has criticised the plan to move young people from Alice Springs to the Darwin detention facility:

"Taking you away from your country, your community, your family, your support group, your language, your identity ... the effects on the children are going to be lifelong and lasting.

"You'll have a lot of angry kids who become angry adults."

The NT Corrections Minister has defended the plan, saying it would create additional beds for adults and enable women to be detained separately to male prisoners.

These moves come at a time of a prison population boom in the Northern Territory that has seen present facilities unable to cope, leading to record levels of overcrowding.



NSW

Record Number of Indigenous Deaths in Custody Met with Indifference

Almost 100 people have died in custody in NSW since the year began, including 23 Indigenous people, according to data collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology(AIC).

The AIC's National Deaths in Custody Program has tracked at least 581 deaths since the royal commission in 1992.

Advocacy group Change the Record's national director Blake Cansdale said that "tracking alone is not enough."

Justice advocates said that these deaths have been met with indifference when they should have sparked a "national outcry".

"These deaths are not just numbers" Cansdale said.

"They represent lives tragically lost, families grieving, and a national failure to uphold the rights and safety of First Nations peoples in Australia."

Long Bay Correctional Centre, located south of Sydney CBD, saw protesters advocating against the ongoing First Nations deaths in custody earlier this month.

Paul Silva opened the protest by lamenting over the hundreds of Indigenous deaths since the royal commission into the matter handed over its final report in 1992.

"We, as First Nations people, have been standing up against the Australian system for 230 years," the Dunghutti man said.

"This system is trying to kill off First Nations people in so-called Australia".



National

Shining a Light on the Needs of Children With Parents in Prison

A recent report has highlighted the unmet support needs of children with parents or caregivers in prison.

Entitled *Living with a Parent in Prison: Learning From Young People*, the report focuses on the lived experience of children who have experienced parental incarceration, acknowledging that the voices and views of these children are largely overlooked.

The report makes a number of findings, highlighting the importance of informal family relationships, children's desire for "normal" activities, relationships of childhood to continue through the incarceration of a parent, and the need to recognise and promote the rights and autonomy of children separate to the rights of their parents or caregivers, including their right to access information and to be heard.

The report also makes a number of recommendations, including:

- developing strategies and resources to provide support to families as early as possible
- investing in ways to strengthen children's broader connections with their communities, including increasing the capacity of school staff (particularly teachers) to provide support
- supporting initiatives aimed at developing a child-focused approach to the work of all relevant agencies, including police, court staff, and legal professionals.

These recommendations and findings echo those of the 2022 Victorian Legislative Council inquiry into children affected by parental incarceration. Key recommendations from the inquiry include the need to more comprehensively consider the needs of children in decision-making relating to the criminal legal and detention systems, and the importance of facilitating and maintaining family and community connections.



QLD

Changes for Queensland Prison Phone Call System

The state government has recently announced changes to the prison phone system. Key features of the updated phone system include:

Cheaper Calls:

- **Local call rates will be 25% cheaper.**
- **National calls will be 20% cheaper.**
- **Calls to mobile phones will be almost halved (reduced by 49%), and charged by the second, to reflect the time actually used.**

The fixed-line local call rate reduction has applied since October. The changes to national and mobile phone calls will be rolled out across correctional centres over the next 12 months.

- More phones across Queensland locations
- Clearer calls: Queensland will change to a digital phone system, so the quality of calls will be higher
- More security: The new system will have higher security measures to prevent offending via phone.

Queensland Corrections stated in a media release that regular phone calls are a key factor to helping prisoners turn their lives around, and hearing the voices of loved ones encourages a better path and reducing likelihood of reoffending.



TAS

Government Stalls on Gambling Reform

The Tasmanian Government has "deferred" its previous commitment to implement significant reform to address gambling-related harm.

Harm related to poker machine gambling is a significant issue in Tasmania, with data showing that losses from poker machines are concentrated in areas experiencing social disadvantage. Recent reports estimate that at least 15% of the Tasmanian population may be impacted by gambling-related harms.

The former treasurer, Michael Ferguson, made a commitment in 2022 to introduce significant changes to the operation of poker machines across the state. Under the new system, players would need to register for a card, with pre-set loss limits and mechanisms including mandatory breaks in play designed to limit gambling-related harms. The proposed changes would also allow players to track their spending on poker machines.

After heavy lobbying by the state's hotels industry, Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliff has walked back his government's commitment, saying recently that there may be a need for a 'more measured approach'. The government recently commissioned a review of the scheme by Deloitte to investigate the potential impact of the scheme on the hospitality sector, with advocates expecting the government to use the report as a cover to water down the most protective elements of the gaming card.

The government has now said they prefer to work with other states to come up with a solution. In making this announcement, they noted that a recent report (from a gaming operator) has revealed likely delays and significant costs related to the proposed scheme. This change in policy has been severely criticised by community groups and advocates.

Advocates are asking the government to remain firm on the commitments they have made to take action on problem gambling, circulating a letter signed by a number of prominent anti-gambling campaigners and community organisations to Tasmanian Members of Parliament. A petition has also been launched calling on the government to introduce the gaming card as originally announced.



SA

New Reforms Strengthen Laws Against Strangulation

The South Australian Parliament has passed reforms to strengthen the state's strangulation laws. The reforms come after a 2023 review found that too many cases had been discontinued due to a lack of clarity around what was required to prove the offence.

Strangulation was made a specific offence in South Australia in 2019. However, the act of strangulation was not explicitly defined in the legislation; instead it relied on a common law position from Queensland, which required proof that the victim's breathing had been restricted.

South Australian Attorney-General Kyam Maher stated that this definition "does not recognise the inherent danger in restricting a person's blood flow to the head, which can be just as harmful as restricting someone's breath".

The reforms passed this week will clarify, expand, and legislate the definition of strangulation.

It will now include instances where pressure applied to someone's neck is capable of affecting the person's breath or blood flow to their head. The reforms also establish an additional offence when the strangulation causes harm by rendering the person unconscious. This second offence may be punished by up to 10 years in jail.

Strangulation is widely recognised as an indicator of a high risk of lethality for women who are experiencing violence from their partners.

These reforms reflect the seriousness of the offence and strengthen the legal response to better hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

• Experiences

My Story, Embracing Change

Heads – I remain the same. Tails – I change and evolve.

By Joey

Joey writes from Metropolitan Remand Centre, in Victoria.



Tramway covered in leaves. Turin, 2021 by Berkey Ekener for Unsplash

In late January of 1970, I came into this world, squawking like a two-bob trumpet. Post haste though, my newborn wailing was easily drowned out by the rhythmic clamour of the nearby FIAT auto assembly plant. Turin – it would appear – was evolving just as swiftly as Italy's other large cities.

Truth be told, the entire globe was heavily invested in the booming industrial revolution. It was a time when governments spruiked change in sectors such as production, finance, industry and emerging sciences. And companies responded with cut-throat corporate tactics and soaring profits.

Although evolution was breeding progress worldwide, unfortunately my folks stuck to tradition, and named me Giuseppe. Yep, that's right: Giuseppe.

'We named you in honour of your grandfather...' – they chortled, both wearing demented grins. My grandfather?! Was that supposed to mean something to me? As far as I could tell, Gramps was an imposing presence. A bloke that sported razor wire intellect and a handshake as welcoming as a polar ice cap. Back in the day, we were all named after our Nonno or Nonna. Hmmm...

So fat chance I was going to score a cool name like Lucas; like Reece or even Xander! Nope. Giuseppe it was; and Giuseppe it would remain until those rubber wheels skidded off the tarmac as we landed bumpily at Tullamarine Airport in mid 1970s. Ironically, it was in Australia shortly thereafter, that 'change' ensued.

It came, as chance would have it, upon my enrolment to St. Ignatius Primary School in Richmond. Due principally to Mrs Fletcher's hilarious linguistic shortcomings in pronouncing foreign names, Giuseppe was soon benched in favour of Joseph. And much like a duck to water, I took to it instantly! Evolution- Phase One. Boom!

Skip forward a month; a year; and an odd decade (or 5), and I realised that without embracing change in our lives (or how we see things) we only risk relegating ourselves to stagnation.

And as my fellow Aquarian naturalist Charles Darwin stipulated in his treatise *'On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection'* – if an organism or system chooses not to evolve or change, it inevitably dies off.

So sliding some coloured beads on my mental abacus, I turned the focal lens onto myself. Onto us in jail. In da joint. Da Big House, as it were.

It became instantly clear that I had a choice to make. A toss of the coin, if you will! Heads – I remain the same. Tails – I change and evolve.

Thus, I threw myself into Gamblers Help. Dived headfirst into drug and alcohol programs. And embraced a multitude of strategies for assisting my fellow jail-birds that GEO Healthcare imbued me for a role as Peer Educator. Evolution, phase two. Boom!

For me, Evolution – Phase Three was to open my heart to Jesus Christ. The dividends that has paid (by me reading the Holy Bible) are breathtaking!

What I'm getting at, is that often in life it is the smallest of changes that yield the most surprising results. Results that despite not being immediately clear to us, may one day lead us to leaving jail... and never return.

Perhaps merely a change of mindset, that in turn leads to the making of better choices; and thus a better life! Or at the very least: a happier life right? After all, isn't that what we all wish for ourselves and those we love?

My brothers, I thank you all for the kindness you've shown in reading my thoughts.

God Bless.



Christmas Day Inside Out

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a retired inmate.

Continued from page 1.

Many inmates come to our door to wish us a Merry Christmas – lots of handshaking, hugs, laughing, a chat, a few chocolates, and multiple cups of tea and coffee. I give away the extra sweets and biscuits I ordered to give to others who've been so good to me since I arrived.

After a very social morning, we have noon muster. Our hot lunch consists of a small portion of roast chicken, a piece of ham, cranberry sauce, as well as a small cupcake pudding with icing and a cherry on top. We put our gaol lunch to one side, as most of us will join small groups and cook our fresh meat orders – either on the barbeque in the yard, or in a limited number of electric frypans which can be borrowed from the guards. While some guys decide to barbeque and eat in the fresh air of the yard, most of us empty our cells of tables and chairs and place them in the wide corridors of our wings where we'll eat and carry on. It's all very al fresco!

Simmo and Hernandez, a Brazilian guy, cook a banquet for about six of us in Hernandez's cell: chicken, ham, salmon, spicy mince, beans, and rice with vegetables. We serve ourselves and eat our fill. It's all very noisy, but everyone is in a festive mood. We distribute the left-over food – of which there is plenty – amongst the other 'guests'.

Just before afternoon muster, we begin the clean-up and replace the chairs and tables back in our cells. I do most of the washing up in the sink in our cell. The muster siren rings. We pour out into the yard for line up and to receive our dinner – a boiled egg salad with pasta. Most people are too full to eat, so it'll be discarded into the toilet or stored for as long as possible. Simmo and I get back to our cell and get stuck into our Lions Club Christmas cake, which we eat with spoonfuls of cold custard. We watch TV until quite late, and then realize that we're 'peckish', so we eat some of our gaol lunch as well as dark chocolate from my buy up. It's a hot night, but well-fed, we finally nod off.



Ike Curtis

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A Dutch Prison Diary

The following is a true account of time recently spent in a Netherlands maximum security prison. The author is a current inmate in the Hunter Valley region of NSW.

Anonymous

This author writes from NSW.

April 2021

Monday: I've spent the last hour at the wing pool table losing badly to some madman from Amsterdam. I didn't imagine there'd be a pool table in maximum security but the prisoners enforce respect for it. No-one wants to lose it because of some idiot. Today is exactly sixteen months since I went into remand, with no end in sight. It's a depressing situation but at least I have some plants in my cell, my own fridge and my own door key, so that's something good I guess. Outside my cell the trees are bursting into flower. But sadly I'll miss yet another summer.

Tuesday: It's 7AM and I'm jolted awake by my door flap sliding open for the morning head check. I wave at the shadowy figure behind and it waves back. This is an ancient cell and it now looks like my old bedroom from when I was a teenager. An old wooden desk, pink wallpaper and art stuff everywhere. I stayed up late last night watching the only English speaking channel on TV, which was an endless re-run of "Homes under the Hammer" and "Tipping Point". Coffee is needed – and then more coffee. I know for a fact that I'll be stuck in here all day so I'll write my diary and munch on the fresh salami and Edam cheese that I got on the weekly buy-up. Lunch will arrive soon. It will probably be beef stroganoff again, but on a real plate and with real metal cutlery. Still, we all complain the knives are too blunt.

Wednesday: My psychologist is here to see me. COVID has really screwed with everyone's head and he wanted to make sure I was OK. People are dropping dead all over the place. Afterward I head to the oval. There's only a dozen of us. One of the guards – an excitable wide-eyed young guy from the north – insists on walking around the oval with me to learn about my experiences living in different countries. He wants to be a world traveller. None of the other inmates raise an eyebrow, seeing as it's in everyone's interest to build such relationships. We all play chess and backgammon with them. We are all called "Mr" and there seems to be very little of the "us and them" attitude here.

Thursday: This is buy-up day and it always screws me up. Eighteen pages of stuff, and all in Dutch. Fortunately, one of the officers usually joins me to smoke cigarettes and talk about religion, so he will help me. I need new summer clothes, maybe some jeans and a light coloured t-shirt. We all have a fridge in our cells so I usually buy fresh meat and veg. There's a whole page of bakery items like cream cakes and fresh baguettes. I think I'll go big on the cheesecake today. Last week I bought a proper stereo system on the buy-up – cheaper than you'd get it in the shops.

Friday: The boss of the wing is called "The Chief" and it's my turn to see him today. We are all encouraged to sit down regularly with the chief in his office, drink coffee and talk about any issues. The communication is good all round. When the Australian bushfires were raging at the beginning of the year they all gave me a "best wishes" card for my family in Sydney. There's an open door policy in the office, meaning we can hang out around the doorway and just chat. Well, they try to chat with me, seeing I speak hardly any Dutch. I've just come back from Education where I teach English to a few prisoners.

Saturday: It's a glorious European spring morning and immediately outside my cell window there's a bustle of Dutch commerce. I watch as people go about their business, downing beers in the café and shouting in Dutch on their mobiles. There is only one prison wall, so all this is happening very close to me. I feel deep sadness.

Sunday: There's a very active church service here on Sundays, partly because everyone gets percolated coffee and home-made carrot cake. I have joined the four-man choir and I play guitar to songs like "Hallelujah" and "You Raise Me Up". The pastor (their version of a chaplain) just spent an hour with me talking about her retirement plans. Sometimes, I could almost like this place.

Send a Christmas message to your loved ones!
Below is a card you can send to your loved ones. Cut it out along the dotted line, write your message inside and send it off in an envelope. Merry Christmas.

The Stress of Parole

"It's been hard work. My advice is to be realistic."

By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender woman who did eight years in a men's prison. She now works on VACRO's lived experience panel, and sits on the advisory boards of Beyond Bricks and Bars, and the Chief Psychiatrist's advisory panel. Stacey runs the T4T support group and writes a Substack called 'Stacey Stokes'.



Earl Wilcox for Unsplash

I was in custody in the male system in Victoria. I am still on parole, so this is an evolving thought process, but what I have experienced so far is a lot of stress.

In my opinion, the system is extremely bureaucratic. I'd explain it with this analogy: you need an OHS risk assessment before you can change the light bulb. Fill out three forms... the forms will be lost. Meanwhile, the room is dark, so someone falls over. In response, more legislation will be passed. And you'll need to fill out four forms. Everything is now fixed.
If parole was ever about rehabilitation, it's not really the feeling I get now. It feels more like an exercise in assessing the risk to the community, not about reintegrating people.

The Parole Board will use a hierarchy of control to assess the risk you pose. If you are a high risk, you will not get parole. If you are low risk, you will get a raft of measures to engineer a sense of control. Many of these measures will interfere with your reintegration.

It feels like it's fine for someone to fail to reintegrate and/or breach parole – as long as the community is blissfully unaware of it. New crimes make the news. People get upset. But getting back on the drugs because you sat at home all day, threw a dirty and went back in – no one cares.

In 2022-23, almost two-thirds (61 per cent) of applications for parole in Victoria were approved (619 people). Of these, 66 went on to breach. I was maybe a year into my parole by the time I got it. Some people get parole with three months left on their sentence. So the odds of them breaching are very low.

So please, don't feel targeted by it all or upset if you breach or get knocked back. It's just how it is all set up. Parole is succeeding at what it was set up to do: make the community and victims' counsel feel safe. I mean, they aren't. They just feel safe. And that's the point.

If the aim was for the community to actually be safe, huge reforms would need to be enacted to keep people in prison/parole all engaged with society. In prison, you lose everything – your job, home and family, then get isolated inside – sometimes for years and years. While isolated, you're never given a chance to fail. Everything is micromanaged for you. Then, you get out on parole with a raft of restrictions. This really sets you up to fail. It needs to be fixed, but that takes political and community desire, a desire that just isn't there.

My parole journey has been what I hope is an outlier. I can't say if it is or not. It's just my journey so far.

I was assessed as low risk to reoffend and told I had no programs to do. Later when I came up for parole, I was ordered to do another assessment. This, I was told, is due to me doing such a long time in prison. A ten-and-a-half-year sentence. They wanted to ensure I was now not a risk due to my long sentence. I was still no risk.

I then had my mother's address knocked back due to her having a serious mental health issue – one she has had her whole life. I lived with her when I was a child. It was fine for me when I was six but apparently not now. My second address was knocked back due to being too isolating. Meanwhile, being a trans girl in a men's prison in regional Victoria is not in fact too isolating. My third attempt was accepted.

I was given an alcohol bracelet to ensure I didn't use alcohol despite taking medication that was alcohol based (my doctor eventually stopped my meds because they were worried I couldn't prove it was my meds, not booze). Then I was told to do AOD counselling, despite not having these things involved in my offending. I asked why and was told it was because the stress of being on parole may cause me to start using substances in order to cope.

So I got out on parole. And every minute of every day I expected the police to breach me for something. I don't know what. But something. It was very unsettling.

About six months into my parole, I was granted permission to move to a new address. A few weeks later I was banned from surrounding streets and the local train station, without explanation. So I had to move.

Honestly, it's been hard work. My advice is to be realistic, don't get your hopes crushed. Or maybe I'm just an outlier. It could be very easy and chill for you!



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• Learn

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Critical Thinking & the Art of Persuasion (Part 2): Rhetorical Ploys

Rhetorical Ploys – Persuasion with bad reasoning

By Daniel Vansetten

Daniel Vansetten spent almost 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study for a law degree. During imprisonment, he developed a peer-led program to teach people in prison the art of critical thinking and why effective reasoning skills are important for the best outcomes in prison.

Rhetoric:
Any communication attempting to persuade someone to do something but without giving good reasons.

Last edition, we showed that arguments are attempts to persuade people to act or do something. For strong arguments, we need true reasons.

When an argument is ‘persuasive’, it requires us to check the validity of an argument, and then test the truth (or soundness) of an argument. To test validity, we ask, ‘if all the reasons were true, would the conclusion also be true?’ If the answer to this is yes, we say the argument is valid. To test the soundness, we check the actual truth of the reasons. If the reasons are proved to be true, we know from the first step that the conclusion must also be true. We call this a sound argument. Sound arguments are persuasive.

‘Rhetorical ploys’ are attempts to persuade using bad reasons. These ploys can be powerful, using reasoning that attempts to draw on our emotions or assumptions to persuade us to act or think in certain ways. But when we have critical thinking skills, we have the power to identify rhetorical ploys and protect ourselves from believing something that is not true!

So, what exactly is a rhetorical ploy? The most common rhetorical ploys are appeals to specific emotions. We can name these ploys by the nature of the emotion they are targeting. For example, an ‘Appeal to Popularity’ and ‘Appeal to Fear’. Other types of ploys use language in a way that seems persuasive but, after proper consideration, is misleading.

People use rhetorical ploys to try to convince you of doing or believing something that benefits them. For example, companies use advertising to convince you to buy the product, as that benefits the company’s bottom line. They don’t care if the advertisement is ‘true’ or not. Similarly, politicians use rhetorical ploys to get you to vote for them. They do not care if their arguments are sound (true). Their only concern is getting your vote! Donald Trump is considered a master at using these ploys! Critical reasoning is therefore important to understand the real, underlying reasons why people are trying to convince you of something. It’s important to keep you independent and smart.

Let’s look at an example of an analysis of an argument made with an Appeal to Popularity.

Appeal to Popularity
Appeal to popularity is commonly seen in advertisements that attempt to persuade us by appealing to our desire to have what others have, and to not miss out on the benefits that other people are already enjoying. Sporting labels can be a good example. People may be tempted to buy Nike Jordan basketball shoes for basketball because the ‘cool people’ wear Jordans. However, if we are going to buy shoes for playing basketball, we should not buy them simply because cool people wear them, we should buy shoes that actually perform well for basketball.



Analysing the Appeal to Popularity argument with critical thinking looks like this:

Argument #1: I should buy a pair of Air Jordans

Breakdown	Proposition
Reason (1)	Cool people wear Jordans for basketball.
Reason (2)	If cool people wear Jordans for basketball, then Jordans must be the best shoes for basketball.
Conclusion	**I should buy a pair of Jordans.**

This argument is valid. That is, if the reasons were true, the conclusion would be true. However, when we check to see if the reasons are actually true (soundness), we find that Reason 2 is not true. The best shoe for basketball is not determined by who wears the shoe, it is determined by how well the shoe performs. Given Reason 2 is not true, this argument cannot be sound. We should not be persuaded by this argument!

This following example shows how the argument can be improved. Maybe you can come up with a stronger argument!

Argument #2: I should buy a pair of Air Jordans

Breakdown	Proposition
Reason (1)	NBA basketballers require the best equipment to perform at an elite level.
Reason (2)	Some current NBA basketballers wear Jordans.
Reason (3)	If Jordans perform well for NBA players, they should perform well for me.
Conclusion	**I should buy a pair of Jordans.**

Appeal to Fear (also called ‘scare tactics’)
This ploy is regularly used by politicians to pass laws that otherwise challenge fundamental human rights. For example, anti-bikie and anti-association laws enacted across Australia were claimed as necessary to ‘keep the community safe from organised crime’, especially from drug-related crime. These laws have been criticised for breaching the basic human right of freedom of assembly.

The fear generated by the government and media was powerful. This appeal to emotion was designed to persuade the public that highly restrictive laws were required for the safety of the community. While motorcycle clubs continue to be targeted by these laws, statistics show that actual motorcycle club members were responsible for a very tiny percentage of actual drug-related crime committed across Australia. In fact, drug-related crime has continued to escalate significantly since these laws were enacted. Let’s see how this looks using critical thinking analysis:

Argument #3: New laws are needed to keep the community safe from motorcycle clubs

Breakdown	Proposition
Reason (1)	Serious drug-related offences create extensive harm to our community.
Reason (2)	Motorcycle-club members are responsible for most of the serious drug-related crimes across Australia.
Reason (3)	Preventing motorcycle club members from associating will prevent harm from the community from serious drug-related crimes.
Conclusion	**Anti-association laws against motorcycle club members must be introduced to keep the community safe.**

This argument is valid. That is, if all the reasons were true, the conclusion would also be true. However, a fact check by reference to official government data shows that Reason (2) is false. The falsity of Reason (2) also makes Reason (3) false. This argument therefore cannot be sound.

Gaslighting
Gaslighting is a rhetorical ploy used to cast doubt on another person’s claims. While slightly different than an appeal to emotion, this is a powerful ploy often used in everyday life. Gaslighting is considered to be unethical and manipulative.

It is most commonly recognised in circumstances where, for example, person A makes a complaint about person B. In response, person B makes a false statement about person A in an attempt to discredit their complaint, and often to make person A look at fault. Successful use of gaslighting will convince person A into believing that they themselves are at fault!

The name itself, gaslighting, is said to arise from an old trick where, before electricity was around, people used gas-powered lights in their homes. Person A would secretly dim the lights to make it hard for person B to see. When person B complains that ‘it’s a bit dark in here’, person A responds by saying, ‘no it’s not, there must be something wrong with your eyes.’ Let’s look at this using critical thinking analysis.

Argument #4: Faulty eyesight

Breakdown	Proposition
Reason (1)	It appears dark in this room to person A.
Reason (2)	This room would only appear dark to a person if either the lights were not working properly or a person had faulty eyesight.
Reason (3)	The lights are working properly.
Conclusion	**I should buy a pair of Jordans.**

An attack by gaslighting can be difficult to defend against. In this scenario, person A would need to test their eyesight, perhaps by walking into another room. They could also get another person to walk into the room to get a second opinion on the lighting.

Gaslighting is often used by people that know it will be difficult for the other person to refute the gaslighter’s claims. A typical example may be seen when a police officer overreacts to a situation and arrests a person without lawful reason. When the person makes a complaint, the police officer simply makes a false allegation that the person had acted in a threatening manner, thereby justifying (or trying to justify) the arrest. If there was no-one else around to witness the event or there was no CCTV footage of the event, it would be extremely difficult to disprove the statement of the officer.

Rhetorical ploys in action
Remember, the most common rhetorical ploy is the appeal to an emotion. We looked at appeals to popularity and fear, however other types include appeals to guilt, compassion, love, status and wealth. Now that you understand what a rhetorical ploy is, listen carefully to the reasoning people give to support their claims to see if you can identify a ploy in action!



Did You Know?

By Word Magazine

These facts were originally published in *Word Magazine*, a prison magazine from Cessnock in New South Wales. Thank you for the contribution!

- In 1931, William Tilden served a tennis ball at a record 263 kilometres per hour.
- The oldest known living tree in the world is a Bristlecone Pine in California. It is more than 4,600 years old.
- Swifts (a bird similar to a swallow) can spend weeks continuously in the air, even sleeping on the wing.
- The Sultan of Brunei's palace has over 1,800 rooms with 260 bathrooms and toilets.
- The driest desert in the world is South America's Atacama, which gets only one millimetre of rain every 5-20 years.
- If all of Antarctica's ice melted, world sea levels would rise by more than sixty metres.
- In 1976, a US Lockheed SR-71A (also called a Blackbird) aircraft travelled at almost 3,600 kilometres per hour.
- The longest known snake was a Malaysian reticulated python that measured over ten metres.
- The hailstones in a deadly 1986 Bangladesh storm each weighed over a kilogram. They punched through car roofs and split people's heads open.
- The Blue Whale is so big that its tongue weighs over four tonnes.
- Tokyo now has fifty per cent more inhabitants than the entirety of Australia, and there are more seventeen year-olds in India than there are people in Australia.

• Health

How To Deal With Anger



Anthony Hortin

An alert siren that we need to understand

By Annalise de Groot

The author is a psychologist at PsychOrium Forensic and Clinical Psychology Services.

Anger tends to get a bad rep. We often think that to be angry means to be aggressive, violent or mean. The ways that we show anger can look like this but those are behaviours, not the emotion itself.

When we see anger only through these harmful behaviours, we can mistakenly think they are always linked. We start to see anger as dangerous, and learn unhealthy ways of dealing with that feeling. Some people push their anger down, some let it explode. In the long run, these paths can make things worse and do not help us feel heard.

So, what is anger?

Anger is an alert siren that tells us when our boundaries have been violated or when our needs have not been met. Healthy anger involves expressing ourselves and working towards a resolution. Sounds simple, right? Unfortunately, this is much more difficult than most people think, especially when no one has shown us what this is supposed to look like.

Dealing with anger in a healthy way is not about excusing anyone else's bad behaviour (or our own). It is about learning to understand why we are angry and choosing what to do with that anger rather than reacting instinctively and doing something we might regret.

To make sense of anger, it is important not to let it build up to the point where it is explosive or reactive.

It can be very easy to blame other people for causing events that have led us to feel angry. Sometimes we have been led to anger by someone else's actions, other times it is due to things out of our control, and of course sometimes it is because of our own actions. The common thread is that our values have been compromised in some way.

Imagine a time when you have felt disrespected by someone. You feel like you don't matter to them, like they are going to hurt you, or cause you to be in danger of being hurt. Maybe you think they will take important things from you, or that if one person gets away with treating you badly then everyone will start doing it. It is normal to want to make sure these things don't happen, and when you are in custody this can be harder than ever.

There is already a power imbalance in the prison environment. There are rules, written and unwritten, that I don't fully understand. Telling you to walk away from a fight could be even more dangerous than I realise. But maybe there is another way to deal with things that make you angry? Maybe violence doesn't solve the problem?

What the hell am I supposed to do with my anger, then?

Communicating anger is not easy to do. The issue that most people face is that anger can be too intense, so they lash out, which is where aggression and violence start to be a problem. It might seem like a copout, but one of the best things you can do with anger is to walk away from the situation causing it. I don't mean ignore it though, just give yourself time to organise your thoughts and reduce the intensity so that you can start to figure out what has led to the angry feeling.

Once you know why you're angry, you can approach the situation in a way that is likely to meet your needs and solve the issue that caused the anger. Ask yourself: how can the problem be resolved? What do I need to feel like I am in control of myself? Try to focus on what the situation has led you to feel, what it has cost you and what has it left you to deal with. Don't focus on the other person; blaming them or plotting revenge does not help to control your anger. Focus on what you need, and how to meet that need in a way that doesn't hurt you or anyone else.

Most of the time, our anger is a response to the need to feel in control of our lives being unmet or violated. It is critical to find ways to regain that control without contributing to the cycle of anger.

Consider these scenarios, both arising from an interaction where Ben* is disrespected by his cellmate Steve*. Ben is furious that Steve has been going through his belongings, and he thinks Steve is stealing from him. In the first scenario, Ben turns his anger into aggression, and hurts Steve badly. Because of this, Ben is put in segro, gets charged, and his chances of having his classo reduced are ruined. Originally Ben was angry because he felt that Steve was violating his right to privacy and dignity. Now, he is angrier because those rights are further violated by the consequences of his actions, and he has lost an opportunity to have his classo reduced.

Imagine if Ben had tried something different. Imagine if instead of hurting Steve, he asked him about his behaviour. Maybe there was more to the story than Steve trying to steal. Maybe he was confused, maybe he lost something of his own, maybe he thought Ben told him it was ok. None of these reasons makes it ok for him to look through Ben's stuff, but they highlight that there are other possible explanations and the problem could have been resolved by talking about it instead of Ben becoming aggressive and hurting Steve.

Ultimately, Ben felt powerless because his rights were disrespected, and tried to regain a sense of control by acting violently. However, this resulted in him losing even more of his rights. If Ben had stopped, thought about it and tried to resolve the issue, he would likely have had a better outcome.

This article is about how to communicate anger, specifically when anger is the most appropriate emotion for the situation you are in. Sometimes anger can be mismatched, and it actually masks deeper emotions. Anger is often seen as a more 'acceptable' emotion to express than other emotions. It tends to give us a sense of control, which can feel more comfortable than being vulnerable. In the next issue of About Time, I will talk about how to manage anger when it is mismatched to the situation.

Additional Note:
Ben and Steve are hypothetical characters, and the story is based on a collection of experiences shared by clients.

Breathe to Cool Down

By The Prison Phoenix Trust

There is no getting around some things – sweltering summer heat for example, or being stuck somewhere we would rather not be. What happens in our lives simply cannot be made to behave exactly the way we would like all of the time, or even very much of the time! Of course far more cruel and unfair things happen besides high temperatures or living somewhere you don't want to for a few months. Part of being human is learning how to heal old hurts, and how to best respond to fresh challenges.

Whether we get thrown off balance or find a cooler way of handling such things depends largely on the state of our nervous system. Your nervous system – including the spinal cord, the brain and all the nerves in your body – has a huge influence not just on how the brain communicates with the rest of the body, making sure all the different aspects of the body work in harmony; it also has a massive impact on how you feel and your mood and outlook. So if you can do anything helpful for the nervous system, you will really be doing something for the quality of your life.

The nervous system controls things like heart rate and sweating. It does this without us needing to be aware. Breathing is also usually controlled automatically this way. The magical thing about breathing is that it works the other way too: control your breath and you change your nervous system.

Tuning into the breath and gently allowing each breath to lengthen allows the body to rest, to cool down, and to heal. You can explore this with a simple breathing exercise.



Place your hands on your lower belly. Breathe in and out. Notice any movement. Explore for 5 breaths.



Rest your hands on your lower ribs. Feel them move outwards and inwards. Explore for 5 breaths.



Bring your hands onto your upper chest. Feel the rise and fall. Take 5 breaths here.



Notice each movement from belly to upper chest as you breathe in and out for 5 more breaths.

Exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.

• Recipes From Inside



Cheese and Bacon Muffins

Ingredients:

- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 2 cups cheese (grated)
- 2 cups milk
- 2 rashers bacon (finely chopped)
- 2 spring onions (finely chopped)
- 1 clove Garlic (crushed)
- Extra grated Cheese

Method:

1. Sift flour into a large mixing bowl. Stir through grated cheese, bacon, onion and garlic. Gently mix in milk, ensuring well combined without over-mixing.
2. Grease and flour 12 cup muffin pan, and divide muffin mixture evenly between 12 cups. Sprinkle a little of the extra cheese on top of each muffin.
3. Bake at 180°C for around 20 – 30 minutes. Check after 20 minutes, as cooking time will depend on your oven. Cool muffins on a wire rack.

Mumgu-dhal Ravenhall

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● Legal Corner

Around the Country: Parole

This section aims to show how parole processes can differ around the country, focusing on when and how someone can apply for parole. Please contact your supports in prison for a more comprehensive outline of the parole process in your state or territory.

By Fitzroy Legal Service, Prisoners Legal Service (NSW Legal Aid), Prisoners Legal Service (QLD) and About Time

What is parole?

Parole is a process that gives some people the ability to get out of prison and serve the last part of their sentence in the community, under the supervision of Community Corrections (which used to be known as Probation and Parole). The relevant authorities consider the safety of the community as the paramount consideration in assessing the suitability for parole.

How and when can I start the process?

The process for parole varies depending on the state or territory where you're incarcerated.

VICTORIA:

Only people who were given a non-parole period as part of their sentence can apply for parole. A non-parole period means the minimum time that must serve in prison before they may be considered for release on parole.

Do I have a non-parole period?

Sentences with a non-parole period have two parts: the head sentence and the non-parole period. For example, 4 years' imprisonment (head sentence) with a non-parole period of 2 years. If you have this type of sentence, you will be able to apply for parole.

Straight sentences do not have a non-parole period. They have one part – the period of imprisonment. For example, 11 months' imprisonment. If you have this type of sentence, you are not able to apply for parole.

Combination sentences (imprisonment plus a Community Correction Order) do not have a non-parole period. For example, 18 months' imprisonment with a 12-month CCO.

When can I apply for parole?

Parole doesn't happen automatically in Victoria – you need to apply. Although you can't be released until your non-parole period is finished, you can start your parole application earlier.

If your head sentence is less than 10 years, you can start applying for parole 12 months before your non-parole period ends.

If your head sentence is more than 10 years, you can start applying for parole 3 years before your non-parole period ends.

The prison should tell you when you are eligible to start your parole application. You should start as early as possible.

How do I apply? What is the parole application process?

The parole application process is long and has several stages. This is a very short version of the stages:

1. Complete a Parole Application Form with your case worker;
2. Interview with the Case Management Review Committee (CMRC);
3. CMRC writes a report and gives it to the Adult Parole Board (APB);
4. APB takes a first look at your application and decides if it should be refused, deferred (put off to a future date), or progressed to the next stage called the Parole Suitability Assessment;
5. Parole Suitability Assessment – Corrections Victoria will write a more detailed report and give it to the Parole Board;
6. The Parole Board will make a final decision about parole.

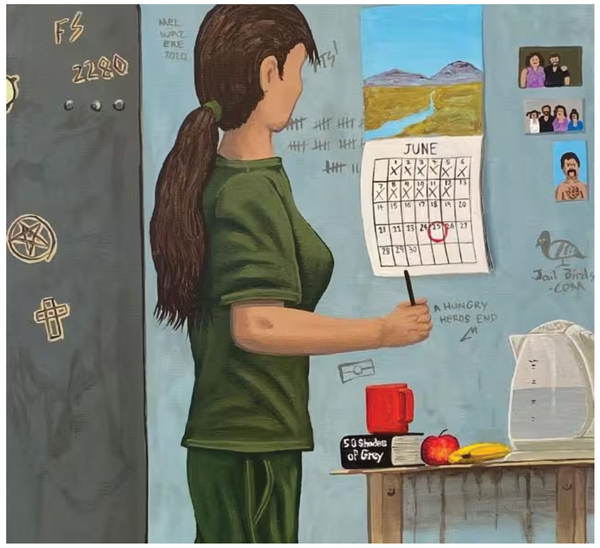
NSW

When can I access parole?

In NSW, people in prison can be released on parole in one of two ways: statutory parole order (court-imposed) or a State Parole Authority (SPA) order.

Statutory parole order – Automatic release

If your gaol sentence is three years or less, you are subject to 'statutory parole' and will usually be released on parole without having to go before the State Parole Authority. Sometimes however automatic release does not happen if the State Parole Authority receives information about you, or your post-release plans, that could put the community at risk. If this happens you will be notified that your parole order has been revoked prior to release – in most cases the State Parole Authority will then set a date for a review hearing so that you and your legal representative (if you chose to have one), can attend the hearing and make submissions in support of your release to parole.



'Marking Time' by Tony, $400, Boom Gate Gallery

State Parole Authority (SPA) order – SPA assessed parole

If your gaol sentence is longer than three years, you can only be granted parole by the State Parole Authority. People in prison in NSW do not apply for their first parole hearing. Instead, legislation requires that the State Parole Authority must start looking at whether you might be suitable for release approximately 60 days before the end of your non-parole period. It must make its initial decision at least 21 days before your non-parole period ends.

The Parole Authority usually makes this initial decision in a private meeting. These meetings are closed which means you and your lawyer cannot attend. At the private meeting, the Parole Authority can make an order granting you parole, or refuse you parole, or refuse you parole but list your matter for a public hearing. At the public hearing you can appear by AVL and have a lawyer represent you – the State Parole Authority will review their decision to refuse you parole at that hearing.

Legal Aid NSW has lawyers that may be able to represent people at their review hearings. This representation is provided by lawyers who specialise in parole applications. This representation does not require an application for legal aid. This means that legal aid will not be granted for a private lawyer to be assigned for your parole review application.

If you would like Prisoners Legal Service to represent you, please tick the box on the Form Two, or you can call us and give us permission by phone to represent you.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA:

When can I apply for parole?

Certain charges carry automatic parole. People with automatic parole do not need to apply for parole. People without automatic parole must apply for parole and can do so 6 months prior to the expiry of their non-parole period. Ask someone in your location to help if you are unsure.

What is the parole process in SA?

In SA, you need to apply for parole to the Parole Board. Here is a very short summary of the process:

1. Complete your parole application by letter. You should get assistance with this from supports in the prison, such as your case management coordinator.
2. Then, ask your case management coordinator to lodge the application with the Parole Board.
3. The Parole Board will, in due course, provide a date to be interviewed or to defer your application pending some other requirement, such as your completion of a rehabilitation program or the obtaining of further reports for consideration.
4. The Board may seek submissions for your application from Correctional Services, the Commissioner of Police, registered victims etc.
5. A decision on whether parole is granted or not is usually provided within 7 days of the parole interview. Such decisions may be to grant parole, deny parole, or defer the application for some specific reason.
6. If parole is denied, reasons must be provided within 30 days.
7. For life sentenced prisoners, any application that is approved may be challenged within 60 days of the decision by the Attorney General, the Commissioner of Police or the Commissioner of Victim's Rights. This challenge will be heard by the Parole Administrative Review Commissioner.

QUEENSLAND:

When can I apply for parole?

Normal Parole:

It depends.

- If you have a "parole eligibility date", you can lodge a parole application six (6) months prior to that date.
- If your parole was previously refused, the Parole Board will decide when you are allowed to reapply.
- If your parole was previously cancelled, and you are not on remand, you can submit a new application straight away.
- If you have court ordered parole, you do not need to lodge a parole application. You should be released on the date set by the court.

Exceptional Circumstances Parole:

You can apply for ECP at any time unless you are a "no body no parole prisoner" who has had a "no cooperation declaration" in force.

What form do I use to apply?

All forms can be requested from Sentence Management.

Normal Parole:

- Form 29 – Parole Application Form
- Form 176 – Accommodation Risk Assessment Request

Exceptional Circumstances Parole:

- Form 28 – ECP Application Form
- Form 176 – Accommodation Risk Assessment Request

What is the timeframe for the Parole Board to make a decision?

The timeframe for normal parole applications and ECP applications is the same.

The Parole Board must decide whether to grant or refuse within 4 months (120 days) of receiving the parole application.

If the Parole Board defer an application because they need more information, they must make their decision within 5 months (150 days) of receiving the parole application.

Exceptional Circumstances parole: What makes my circumstances "exceptional"?

There is no definition of "exceptional circumstances" in the Corrective Services Act 2006 (QLD). However, the Parole Board may consider the following definition when considering ECP applications:

A circumstance which is such as to form an exception, which is out of the ordinary course, or unusual, or special or uncommon. To be exceptional, a circumstance need not be unique or unprecedented, or very rare; but it cannot be on that is regularly, or routinely, or normally encountered.

For example, circumstances that may be considered exceptional might include:

- A prisoner who develops a terminal illness; or
- A prisoner who is the sole carer of a spouse who contracts a chronic disease requiring constant attention.

ECP is *harder* to get than normal parole because you need to show:

- That you are not an unacceptable risk to the community; and
- That you have exceptional circumstances that warrant early release.

An ECP application is more likely to be successful if:

- There is new information that was not before the sentencing judge.
- Your medical condition cannot be adequately managed in prison and there is medical evidence that your condition would be better managed in the community (where an application is based on medical grounds).

However, the Parole Board should consider your ECP application as a whole and take into account your individual circumstances, not just the factors listed above.

If you are already eligible for parole, you do not need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to be granted parole. For this reason, ECP may not be the best option if you are already eligible for parole or if you are in custody for a parole suspension. Instead, you could consider requesting the parole board fast track consideration of your parole due to your personal circumstances.

Can I get ECP to attend a family funeral / Sorry Business?

It is very unlikely you will be granted ECP to attend a funeral or for Sorry Business. In these cases it's better to:

- Apply to the prison for a Compassionate Leave of Absence.
- Request that any parole decision you are waiting for be fast-tracked by the Parole Board so that if you are considered suitable for parole, you can be released before the funeral.

TASMANIA

Can I apply for parole?

- You will be considered for parole if you have a non-parole period.
- The court when sentencing you must set a minimum non-parole period of one-half of the sentence, or 6 months, whichever is greater. They can set a longer one, or make an order that the person is not eligible for parole.
- People who are declared as 'dangerous criminals' are not eligible for parole until the declaration is discharged. If you are a declared dangerous criminal you can apply to get this discharged.

When and how can I apply for parole?

- The Parole Board Secretary will send an Application for Parole to you in prison at least 6 months before your parole eligibility date.
- Your delegated Case Coordinator can assist with the completion of the application form. The completed form is returned to the Parole Board Secretary.
- The Parole Board will request Community Corrections to complete a Pre-Parole Report. A Pre-Parole Report assists the Parole Board in determining whether a prisoner should be released on parole and under what conditions.
- Upon completion of a Pre-Parole Report, the Parole Board Secretary will list a date for the prisoner to appear for hearing.
- The Parole Board may refuse to release a prisoner on parole. The Board may not further consider the release of the prisoner on parole until the expiration of 3 months from the date of the last refusal.

ACT

People in prison at AMC can access parole if their sentence has a non-parole period. A sentence involving imprisonment with a term of full-time custody and a minimum of 12 months must include a non-parole period.

What is the Parole Application Process?

1. Submit application for parole to the Sentence Administration Board within six months of the end of non-parole period. In some exceptional cases, people can apply for parole before the six-month period is up by sending a request to the Board in writing.
2. The Board will then assess the application, which involves reviewing reports from Corrective Services and inviting other submissions, including victim impact statements and psychological assessments.
3. If parole cannot be determined by reports alone and need more information, they may issue a Notice of Hearing, where the person in prison can address any issues.
4. A decision will then be made, and conditions need to be agreed to before release.

Struggling With Debt? Financial Counselling Might Help!

Financial counselling is a free and confidential service offered by not-for-profit community organisations. They often provide services within prisons – ask if financial counsellors are available at your location. You may also be able to access a financial counsellor by phone, either arranged via your caseworker or with the contact details below.

Financial counsellors are skilled professionals who provide advice and support to people struggling with bills and debt. A free financial counsellor can help you explore your options, negotiate with your creditors, put plans in place to manage your debts and get your finances back under control.

Financial counsellors have specific knowledge about the credit, bankruptcy and debt collection laws, social security framework, grants and concessions available to help with cost of living, industry hardship obligations and how to access free dispute resolution through independent dispute resolution schemes. They are also trained in negotiation and counselling.

Financial counsellors CAN assist you by:

- doing a full assessment of your financial situation – including regular income and expenditure, assets and liabilities
- understanding which debts are priorities
- developing a workable budget and money plan with you
- explaining your rights and the pros and cons of different options you have to manage your debts and financial hardship
- advocating and negotiating on your behalf directly with your creditors
- lodging complaints on your behalf to external dispute resolution schemes
- providing advice about what options, rights and responsibilities you may have
- referring you to other services you may need, such as legal services, health services and crisis food and accommodation services

Financial counsellors CAN also provide information and advice about:

- credit and debt related matters
- the rights and obligations of creditors
- how the debt collection and debt enforcement process works
- the pros and cons of bankruptcy and other insolvency options
- how to access other specialist support services, including gambling, family support, personal counselling, legal aid and emergency relief

Financial counsellors DON'T:

- charge any set up fees and/or ongoing fees for their service
- receive any payments or commissions from third parties for their services
- lend money
- complete tax returns
- provide debt consolidation services
- provide investment advice (that's the role of financial planners)

National Debt Helpline – 1800 007 007

The free National Debt Helpline is open from 9:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

When you call, you'll be transferred to the service in your state.

Mob Strong Debt Helpline – 1800 808 488

Mob Strong Debt Helpline is a free legal advice service about money matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from anywhere in Australia.

The helpline is open from 9:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

Small Business Debt Helpline – 1800 413 828

If your business is in financial difficulty, call the Small Business Debt Helpline. The Helpline is open 9:00am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday.

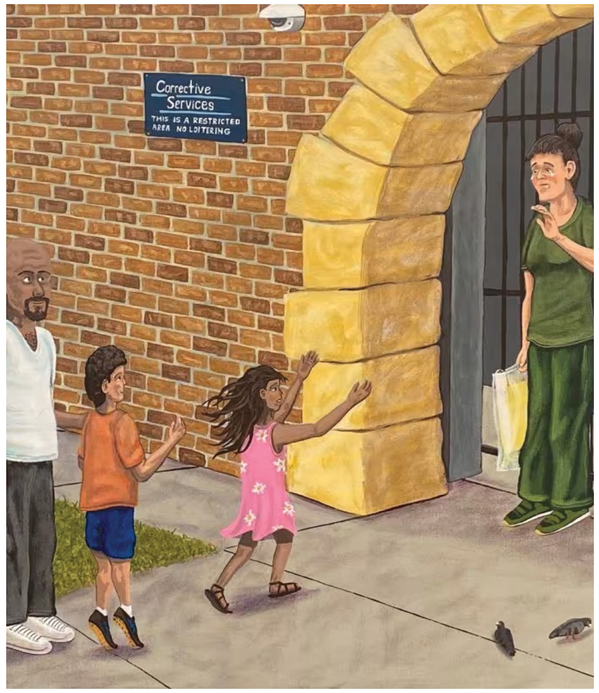
● Reintegration

Dealing With Anxiety and Depression on Release

Helpful tips for managing your mental health when it comes to 'gate fever', release and adjusting to life on the outside.

By Community Restorative Centre (CRC) NSW

CRC is the leading community provider of support services to people affected by the criminal justice system in NSW. All CRC programs aim to reduce crime and break entrenched cycles of disadvantage, offending and imprisonment.



'Going Home Anxieties' by Tony, Boom Gate Gallery

Do you have 'gate fever'?

It's normal to feel anxiety or 'gate fever' as the date of your release approaches. This is more likely the longer you've been inside. As well as feeling excited about your release, you may also be feeling fearful that something will go wrong so that your release will be delayed, or that you won't be able to make it once you're released. You may even notice physical signs of anxiety, like difficulty sleeping, obsessive thoughts or feelings of agitation and restlessness.

Here are some tips about dealing with the emotional side of being released.

They don't know where you've been

You may feel like everyone can tell you've been in prison and that they have you marked out. But after a while you will realise that most people are too busy thinking about what's going on for themselves to pay much attention to any signs you feel may give away where you've been. You will gradually stop feeling so separate and different and worried that people will find out.

It's normal for people to look you in the eye

In prison you learn to look away so no one will get the wrong idea and think you want to take them on. It may feel uncomfortable when people look you in the eye when you get out, and it will likely take some time for you to adjust to this. Remind yourself that it's normal for people to look you in the eye now that you're out.

Not everything is personal

It can be difficult to respond to behaviour that feels personal when you're released, when a lot of what happens on the inside has been personal.

When things don't go your way, it can help to pause and think about what else might have caused the situation, like "they're having a bad day", "they don't know me", or "I know I did what I could". This can help you distance yourself and not take things personally.

You forget how busy and noisy things are

Driving away from prison at 60kph may feel like speeding, and even crossing the road can be a challenge, so take things slowly, and be careful until you get used to it all again.

You can stop watching your back

You may have to unlearn lots of things you did in prison to make sure you were safe. When out in public, you may need to learn to relax, and not check everybody out to see where they are and what they are going to do.

Don't push yourself too fast

Pace yourself and don't try to do everything at once.

It helps to get out of the house

You may feel anxious around other people and not want to go out much. Try going out once a day, even just to go to the shops, or go for a walk, and after a while it may get easier to go to more places and stay out for longer.

You have to learn to make decisions again

This can be anxiety-provoking, as on the inside, most of your decisions were made for you and you may be out of practice. Let others help you and try not to worry too much about getting things right all the time. It can take a long time to get used to having so many choices and deciding for yourself again.

ASK FOR HELP DEALING WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

If anxiety or depression are making it hard to get on with life, see a doctor and talk to them about what you're experiencing and what may work best for you. It may be helpful for you to take prescription medication for a period of time,or to talk through your feelings with a doctor, a counselor or health professional. While using drugs or alcohol may make you feel better for a brief time, they are not helpful or sustainable long-term..

Signs that you may be anxious include:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling restless and agitated
- Feeling sick
- Losing your appetite
- Panic attacks (feeling sweaty, shortness of breath, heart racing).

Signs that you may be depressed include:

- Feeling continually sad and hopeless
- Not being able to enjoy anything in life (it all seems 'grey' or pointless)
- Having a lot of negative thoughts about life and yourself
- Lacking motivation to do anything, even to get out of bed
- Losing your appetite, or overeating
- Being unable to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Thoughts of suicide.

You can expect to have some of these feelings as you adjust to life outside. However, if you find these feelings go on for more than a couple of months, or become so severe that you're unable to function as you normally would (feed yourself, meet parole commitments, etc), then seek help. Talk to your doctor or a social worker you trust. You can also call the services at the end of this article.

KEEPING YOUR COOL

After you leave prison you may have lots of reasons to lose your cool, especially in the first few months when plans might fall through, people don't understand what you're adjusting to, or you have to wait for things you need now.

Keeping your cool can help you keep your freedom. If you can find ways to avoid "getting aggro" with others, it's worth it in the long run. It may help to:

- Remind yourself about what could happen if you lose it
- Take time out
- Take 10 deep breaths
- Stay away from people or places that cause you to get aggro
- Find ways to relax and stay calm
- Anger management courses can help you learn more ways to manage your behaviour.

There's plenty to be frustrated about when you come out of prison. Particularly in the first couple of months, you may find yourself under intense pressure. Things will go wrong, fall through, or take longer than expected. You may feel like you're constantly hitting your head against a brick wall. If you 'lose it' and lash out at someone, whether it's your partner, your kids, a social worker, or someone at the pub who you think is looking at you the wrong way, the consequences may see you end up back inside. Here are some tips from people who've found ways to keep their cool, even when times are tough.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Learn positive self-talk

You just get worked up if you let yourself think things like "they've got it coming to them". Instead, say to yourself "I won't let this get to me", "I can handle this", or just "chill". Positive self-talk can help you to stay calm.

Think about the consequences

Think about what will happen if you lose your cool and remind yourself there's no way you want to lose your freedom. Then when you've walked away, give yourself a little pat on the back for keeping it together.

Time out

Sometimes you'll just have to walk away from the situation. Go somewhere else, or for a walk until you feel calmer.

Take some deep breaths

If you take some deep, slow breaths, it can really help calm you down. If you notice yourself getting worked up because you start breathing faster, stop and take 10 slow, calm breaths.

Danger signs

Learn to read your warning signs, so you can remove yourself from the situation, or if you can't leave, try to calm things down. Warning signs can be when you hear your voice getting louder, or you start to feel hot and sweaty. Knowing how your body reacts, and recognising your response, can help you take action to calm down and stay in control.

True strength

Acknowledge that it takes a really strong person to be in control of their feelings and take charge of their life, and that makes you strong for trying. If you let other people wind you up, you're really just letting them run your show.

Be assertive

Be assertive, rather than aggressive. This means talking about what you want, without shouting at people or trying to scare or threaten them. You don't have to use force to get your point across. Being assertive but not aggressive can lead to people engaging with you more and you getting what you need or want, because they don't feel frightened or threatened.

Do things to help you relax

Find activities that help you relax. This could be working out, walking, swimming, participating in a sport or finding a hobby that keeps your mind and hands occupied, like painting, wood work or gardening. Finding activities that relax you can help you to feel focused and calm, and channel your energy into something positive. Be prepared.

Try to think ahead and avoid problems. If you're already feeling worked up, try to stay away from people and places that might make you feel worse. If you know that you have to go somewhere or do something that might stress you out, take some time to relax first to help you have a clear head and a calm attitude.

Services that can help you:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- Mindspot: 1800 61 44 34
- Head to Health: 1800 595 212
- Mensline Australia: 1300 78 99 78
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- 13Yarn (for Aboriginal and Torres
- Strait Islander people): 13 92 76
- QLife (for LGBTQIA+ people): 1800 184 527

Injury & Compensation Lawyers

- Childhood abuse & National Redress Scheme
- Workplace Injury
- Road Accidents
- Sexual Assault
- Police Misconduct
- Public place injury (Slip, Trip or Fall)

No Win, No Fee

Email: info@yarnlegal.com.au
Web: www.yarnlegal.com.au
Mail: P.O. Box 3231, Broadmeadows VIC 3047

Yarn Legal



Speak directly to our Principal Lawyer Hanina Rind

Call 0478 861 131

Mob

A Voice Behind Bars

By Geoff

Geoff writes from Hopkins CC, in Victoria.

The Voice referendum failed for the following reasons:

1. It did not have the support of Aboriginal peoples.
2. The general public did not understand what they were voting for. Issue was not clear in the questions.
3. It did not enjoy bipartisan support.
4. The Referendum of Voice did not separate the issue of Informed Consent and Aboriginal Sovereignty.
5. Like 1967, the same mistake was repeated, White people deciding what's right for Aboriginal peoples.
6. Truth Treaty Voice was in reverse. A Truth Commission needs to look at Ownership of land post Actions of the Crown, how land was acquired from Aboriginal people.

We need a just and fair process, a National Treaty Debate.

Truth is ownership of the PAST. Other matters need action, including adopting the Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples', National Land Rights and the International Labour Organisation 169 Convention, which recognises Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

Tree of Life

By Johno, Palawa People

Johno writes from Loddon Prison, in VIC.

It is important to me to learn Aboriginal art. When I started doing art I didn't know much about it and I didn't have any skills. Now I have good skills and I can help the other men with their work. It makes me feel good about myself by helping them. I was a billet for four years in the pottery room and was responsible for keeping the art room clean. I learnt to use a wet rag to wipe down surfaces and the floor, as the dust is not good for your health.

The art and pottery rooms are good for us fellas to get together and share a space that is culturally relevant. It helps to strengthen our cultural ties and bond as Aboriginal men in a positive and helpful environment.

I can hand-build with clay and use the pottery wheel now. I have made small animals; large ones too. The large ones are a wombat and an elephant. Before I started pottery I did match-work and Paddle Pop stick-building. I made a one storey house first, then I built a two storey one, then finally a three-storey mansion which was fully furnished and stood one meter high. After these projects I began to make didgeridoos. Firstly, I made them with match sticks and then with Paddle Pop sticks with bark on them. They play and work well.

When I get out of prison, I will be doing match-work and woodwork during the day and at night I will be doing pottery work. I would like my children to be involved with this because I can see the benefits they can get out of being creative.

the torch

All artworks available to purchase at:

www.thetorch.org.au

100% of proceeds go to the artist.

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My Journey
By Bron Jardwadjali
2024

This is the story of my journey of my heritage. The symbol for woman is me at a campfire at one watering hole. At the second connecting waterhole are my Ancestors. At the third waterhole are my children safe in a nest at home. The feet are my journey and the dots in black, yellow and red represent my Koorie heritage.



Rainbow Serpent #2
By Ryder Muli Muli
2024

My past present and future Dreaming. This painting symbolises me and how I see my spirit.

Sand Goanna Painting

By Matthew

Matthew is a proud Dharawal man from a Wadi Wadi clan. He writes from Junee Correctional Center, in NSW.

The story of this painting is of a "Sand Goanna" which is the totem of a brother who has travelled through the "Dark Side" of life struggling on unstable ground.

During the journey of incarceration his spirit has been watching over his children, morally guiding them towards brighter days with family, culture and spiritual understanding of the past events as he moves forward to a better future.





Fractured Dreamin
By Nate S Dja Dja Wurrung
2024

When you just dosed off and think you're still awake, you begin to dream then you're woken up, trying to work out whats going on? You don't remember falling asleep! Trying to out the pieces together but nothing fits.

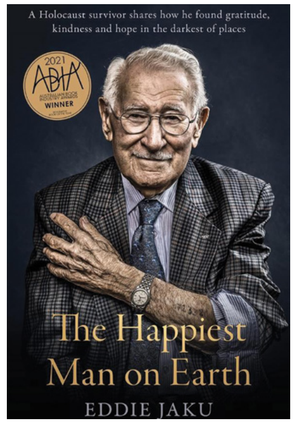


Connection
By Armani Dhudhuroa
2024

This painting was done with a connection to family, culture & land in mind. This is a representation of the journey of a dark time in my life that ended up shining a great light into my life with a deep meaning of spiritual growth.I have realised that my culture, family & land have come together as one. Since I have been incarcerated, I have learned the meaning of this connection.

Learning that my culture goes back more than 60,000 years as the First Nations of Australia bonds me to this land. Through my family, I feel the love from all of my ancestry coming from the Dhudhuroa Mob of the land I am tied to. Through this dark time, I have found the light of my fife illuminating the path on my life's journey.

Culture



About Time Book Club: The Happiest Man on Earth by Eddie Jaku

By About Time

Eddie Jaku, a Holocaust survivor, wrote The Happiest Man on Earth to share his incredible story of survival and hope. Born in Germany in 1920, he endured the horrors of the Holocaust, spending time in several concentration camps, including Auschwitz. After the war, Jaku moved to Australia and rebuilt his life. In his book, he reflects on his experiences, showing how he found happiness despite unimaginable suffering. His message is simple but powerful: no matter how difficult life gets, we can choose to be kind, be grateful, and find joy. The Happiest Man on Earth is a moving reminder of the strength of the human spirit. The book also won the 2021 Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA) Biography Book of the Year.

WHAT DOES THIS BOOK TEACH US?

Happiness is a Choice:
Despite enduring the horrors of the Holocaust, Eddie Jaku learned that happiness is not determined by circumstances but by the way we choose to view the world. He teaches that we can find joy, even in difficult times, by focusing on the positive and cultivating gratitude.

Kindness Matters:
Jaku emphasizes the importance of kindness in both personal relationships and in the world. He believes that small acts of kindness can make a big difference and are essential in creating a more compassionate society.

Resilience and Strength:
Jaku's survival through unimaginable suffering teaches the power of resilience. Even when faced with extreme adversity, the human spirit can endure and rise above the darkest circumstances.

The Power of Forgiveness:
One of the key messages of the book is that forgiveness is a vital step in healing. Holding onto anger and hatred only prolongs suffering, while forgiveness allows us to move forward and find peace.

Gratitude and Perspective:
Jaku's story highlights the importance of gratitude, even for the small things in life. By appreciating what we have, rather than focusing on what we lack, we can lead more fulfilling lives.

Live with Purpose:
After surviving the Holocaust, Jaku made it his life's mission to share his story and inspire others. His life shows that no matter what we go through, we can find purpose in helping others and leaving a positive impact on the world.

REVIEWS:

Lisa Wilkinson:
"A beautiful soul"

Zoe Foster Blake:
"Eddie is a human diamond, and his story of survival, hope and importance of kindness is what. The world needs now"

Heather Morris:
"A beautifully told, poignant story that should become required reading"

Bradley Trevor Grieve:
"Eddie Jaku's story is a beacon of light in a world that often feels dark. His. Message choosing happiness, even in the face of unimaginable suffering, is profoundly inspiring. This is. A book that will make you reflect on your own life and the way you view the world"



How to Write: Reviews

By The Prison Journalism Project

The Prison Journalism Project is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation from the USA that aims to empower incarcerated journalists to be a vital voice in criminal justice reform.

Have you seen a good (or bad) movie lately? Read an interesting book? We need reviews for our Culture section – and we want you to write them! Here are some tips for writing a review, courtesy of the Prison Journalism Project.

What is a review?
Newspapers often feature reviews or brief summaries of popular media, such as books,
films, television shows, musical albums and more.

Why should you write a review?
Reviews keep readers up-to-date on pop culture and help them decide what to read, watch and listen to. As a writer with first-hand experience in the criminal legal system, you are uniquely positioned to offer insightful comment on how books, films, TV shows, songs and other art portray life in prison and other aspects of the criminal legal system. You can tell readers what they got right, what they got wrong, what resonated with you and what didn't.

ELEMENTS OF A REVIEW:

Your review does not need to include all these elements, but try to aim for at least five!

Summary:
The review includes a brief paragraph introducing the book, film, collection of poetry or musical album. It can include the title, author, topic and summary of what it's about.

Major plot points:
The review focuses on a few scenes, poems, or songs that you find to be particularly important. The review includes quotes and specific details but doesn't contain spoilers.

Quality of the text:
Take a small excerpt from the book, the plot or a particular movie scene. Explain why the excerpt is significant, what it got right, what it didn't or how it could be better.

Quote:
The review includes up to three important lines from the work that can help illustrate your points and will give the reader a flavor of the work.

Reflection:
The writer explains why they would or would not recommend it to someone else.

Attribution:
All facts and quotes are attributed to their source, i.e. to the author or another reviewer.

Fact-checking:
The review does not include any unsubstantiated claims. All statements are supported using evidence.

Writing, editing and style:
The review is written and edited so it's clear to understand.

Creative

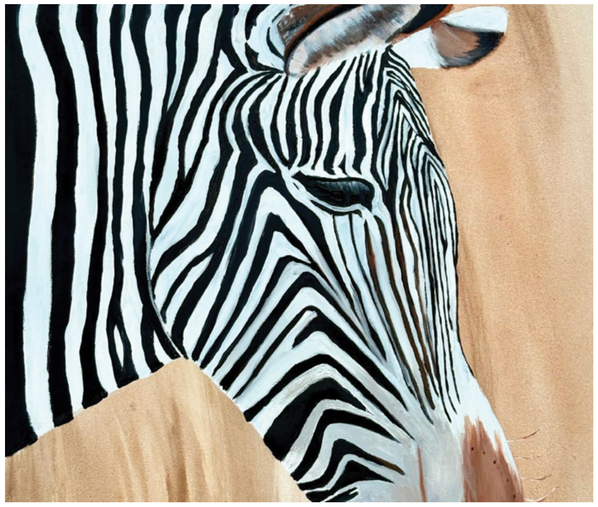
'She'll Be Apples' – Art From Somebody's Daughter

By Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company

Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company (SDTC) began running art workshops with women at Fairlea Women's Prison over forty years ago. Weekly workshops continue with the women at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Women's Prison to this day.

The artwork that emerges communicates a multitude of themes, voicing the women's humanity, vulnerability and dreams. The satisfaction and sense of achievement the women experience can be life changing and in some cases, life saving.

The year's workshops culminate annually in an exhibition of artworks alongside a theatre production woven from the women's life stories delivered with humour, drama and song. The following images are from the 2024 production and exhibition titled "She'll Be Apples." More art to come in future editions!



Conservation Is Key
By Shannon
Oil Paint on Canvas
2023

By the 1930's fewer than 50 cape Zebras remained in the wild.

Fortunately, stricter controls and the establishment of the Mountain Zebra National Park have given the species a reprieve from extinction.



She'll Be Apples
By Sylvie, Jasmine, Emma, Rebecca, Kim and Amelda
Acrylic on canvas
2024

The artists from Tarrengower chose to paint this collaboration with the idea of contributing to the production "She'll Be Apples".

The image was constructed to create an uplifting feeling of safety and freedom, however an element of uncertainty remains (in the form of snake ribbons).



Deep Ocean
By Lanie
Gesso, Acrylic on Paper
2024

I got the inspiration for this while watching a David Attenborough documentary about deep ocean life. I love watching anything David does and I really love the ocean and the life that is rarely seen by humans. The colours of the ocean life are so vibrant and the way the light reflects off them is so amazing.

A Symphony of Joy

By Denis

Denis writes from Beechworth Correctional Centre in Victoria.

In the quiet of my heart, I confess,
A burden of guilt, a silent distress.
I can't forgive the role I played,
For letting you go, for the choice I made.

Yet, in the whispers of the wind, I hear,
You've found joy, and that's so dear.
Your happiness, a melody so sweet,
It gives me peace, makes me complete.

I scanned your face, so soft, so fair,
For marks of our past, a sign you care.
Your lips, a work of art, so divine,
A memory's treasure, forever mine.

Mouth full of pearls, your laughter rings,
A symphony of joy, on angel's wings.
Though you're not mine, I find solace in this:
In your prosperity, I too find bliss.

Mirror, Mirror

By Bukks

Bukks writes from Loddon Prison in Victoria.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is this man I see?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, that man there can't be me?
I don't know him, he is not me, this reflection can't be true?
He seems a little familiar, but the signs of me are few?

Don't recognise the lines I see, don't recognise the grey hair,
When I last looked at you, I was young, how is what I see now fair?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, where did all the time go?
The whole world I've seem to've lost, but how was I to know?

Mirror, mirror on the wall, slow down, I can't keep pace.
In my head I'm still the same, it's you who's changed my face,
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, all I see is just a stranger.
To look at those cold, steely eyes, I can see in them only danger.

If this is me or meant to be, how could the time have gone?
This man that is here looking back, you must have got it wrong.
In this face, all I can see is the loneliness and pain.
If this is me, then my dark eyes are all that do remain.

Mirror, you have taken all my strength and all my youth,
All I liked about myself; now gone, I see the proof.
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, my friends where are they now?
They've married & they've moved on; they've forgot you anyhow.

Mirror, I'm the same but changed, how can this be my story?
My hopes & dreams now stolen, while I'm stuck in purgatory.
The time has got the best of me, left me with only grief,
I'm looking at you, mirror, but I look with disbelief.

Where is freedom, mirror? And who then gets to decide?
You said I'd have a wife, and kids to raise, mirror, have you then lied?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, I can't take this anymore,
My face has grown so old now, while my head is still at war.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, you have me under thumb,
Is all that's good now gone, or is there any good to come?
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is this man I see?
The man who came inside here's not the same man who'll get free!

Only Three

By A.S.

A.S. writes from Goulburn Correctional Centre in NSW.

I think that God is dead, and he really isn't there,
Or maybe he is on strike, and he just doesn't care.
Last night I prayed to God, to spare my daughter Lee,
And to take my life instead, as she is only three.

She is so sweet and tender, she wouldn't hurt a fly,
So please don't take her life, please don't let her die.
They say she has cancer, and her chances are nil,
So if you refuse to help her, then no one else will.

As I tucked Lee into bed, she seemed so unaware,
She put her faith in God, while I was in despair.
But when morning came, my daughter never woke,
As tears fell from my eyes, I recall the words she spoke.

"Daddy, I know and understand, my time has come around,
But I don't want to leave you, I don't want to let you down,"
"Daddy read a bedtime story, and please try not to weep,
Come and hold me close, as I drift off now to sleep."

She never hurt a soul, and she was as helpless as can be,
So God I am asking you why you took my daughter Lee?
She was all that I had left, I have nothing left in life,
Because just two years ago, you took my darling wife.

The Cell

By Rossco

Rossco writes from Loddon Prison in Victoria.

Come in and take a seat,
At long last we get to meet.
I know you are here for committing a crime,
So let's you and I do some time.

I've got something I'd like to say,
I will see you change from day to day.
The thoughts you will have, the things you will feel,
I will be there for your every meal.

You will feel some sadness, and you will feel alone at night,
You will say, "I wish I was home tonight"
Make the best of the time you've got,
And let's hope that it's not a lot.

One day we will part, "Yes" you and me,
That's the day they set you free.
I'm sure you want to know my name?
It hasn't changed- it is still the same.
We are both together in this man made hell,
Glad to meet you, I am your "PRISON CELL"

Treasures Lost

By Joey

Joey writes from Metropolitan Remand Centre in Victoria.

The night is deep. The silence, empty.
And I yearn to hear the voice of God.
At times I weep, for death seems tempting,
A soul burnt out. A broken bod.

Feelings once felt, and lives well lived,
Viewed now through looking-glass;
Like Orion's Belt, and the light it gived
I glimpse a long lost past...

When with blazing majesty, and cosmic wonder,
She streaked across my sky;
To ignite a tapestry, of love and thunder,
So brave, we were – not shy!

And our passions birthed, a wonder-girl,
Like an angel sent from heaven;
Warm sunshine 'earthed' – a perfect pearl,
Alas both, from me, now driven.

Where once I held, a life so charmed,
So clean. So pure. Not odd!
In a lonely cell, my soul lays darned,
As I yearn for the voice of God...

An Ode to Tree Hugging

By Simon

Simon writes from Cessnock Prison in NSW.

In the past, I laughed at tree huggers,
Sandalwood-scented hippy buggers.
But all that hatred was ill-fated
Now that I'm incarcerated.

'Coz I've had a chance for my mood to settle,
After six long years in a sea of metal.
I know the second that I'm free
I'll go straight up and hug a tree!

First World Prison Problems

By Belly

Belly writes from Queensland.

As I strive to read this paper,
I am constantly bombarded with
Various forms of attempted conversation.

From random and extremely unimportant
Questions to idle chit-chat small talk.

Can't you see I'm reading?
All week to talk,
Yet right now you need me.

Take a break and a breath.

So I begin to write, they keep talking.
I wished they'd jog on,
Or practice walking

I'd like to take this paper in the dunny,
But that's frowned upon.

Why me, why now, why, why, why?

Hang on a second... I'm in gaol;
If that's my only problem I'm kicking Goals...

Artists With Conviction

"Just because we don't stem from royalty, doesn't mean we can't bloom like a pretty flower." – Artist's Statement from Walter B

By Sara

"Ever get the feeling you're being watched?" my workmate Elise uttered the other week as we hung the final piece of art at the Long Gallery in Hobart for the annual 'Artists with Conviction' exhibition. Now in its 14th year, 'Artists with Conviction' is an exhibition of art and writing by people at the Risdon facilities as well as people on parole in Tasmania. This year, we had a phenomenal amount of work with nearly 300 creative pieces in the gallery accompanied by a book of poetry and prose. Elise was right, the theme 'Behind These Eyes', chosen by a Risdon resident meant that there were a lot of pupils peeping back at us.

Among these were delicately drawn Floral Iris (Gabrielle P), a beautiful glittery painting of a Club Girl who had "seen it all" (Natalie M), a single large psychedelic eyeball on an oval canvas called What Do You See (Anthony D), eyes-as-eggs in Carton of Eyes (Aaron S) alongside countless sketches, paintings and text exploring the concept of personal perspective.

Not all artists approached the theme literally, but each piece seemed to offer a unique insight into the creator's mind. Woodworker Mark J made a large scale 'Forever Desk' about which one of our judge's remarked "the skill, dedication, beauty, and functionality on display are inarguable. It was very moving to consider the incredible optimism represented by your work – a vision of this desk's presence in your own and your family's future far down the bloodline. It is a deeply beautiful thing in both its form and in its symbolism."

Visitors to the gallery shared that they were impressed with the level of skill on show including many pieces constructed from match sticks including the 46,800 used to make Prison Titanic (Mark A) and cleverly constructed Hand-Made Chess Set (William C).

Elise and I loved the humour in many of the works including 'Picasso with Teeth' that gave the famous artist dentures. It was amazing, and at times quite emotional, to meet friends and family who came to see loved one's creative expression. In total, we had almost 1000 people walk through the gallery doors over a 10-day period. We are grateful for the assistance of Shaun and Aaron who worked with us installing the show over two days. As well as doing the "heavy lifting," both helped curate the look and feel of the show, deciding which works would go together to make each work look its absolute best. Thanks fellas!

Congratulations to all artists and writers who took part in Artists with Conviction 2024. We know it takes guts to share your images, objects, and words.

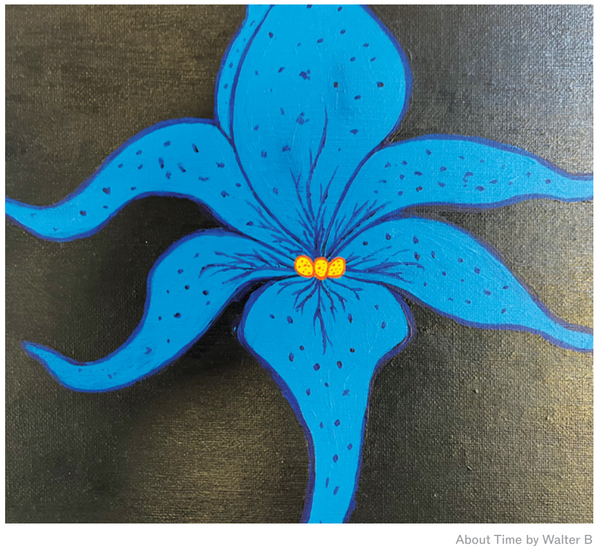
We will be celebrating all artists including prize-winners across facilities at Risdon over the coming weeks.

We hope you enjoy looking at some of the artwork from Artists with Conviction.

As artist Joel G wrote about his work Drippin' Mess: "life is messy but sometimes you can make something good out of the mess...and my life is a mess, but I am going to turn it into something good with the help of art."



Club Girl by Natalie M



About Time by Walter B



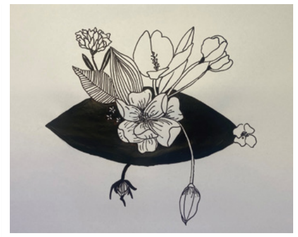
What Do You See by Anthony D



Drippin' Mess by Joel G



Prison Titanic by Mark A (in show)



Floral Iris by Gabrielle P



Forever Desk by Mark J



Hand-made Chess Set by Willam C (in show)

• Play

Quiz

1. Which freezes faster: hot or cold water?
2. Which country is the largest in the world?
3. What is an eight-sided shape called?
4. What actor played Alex Keaton on the '80s TV show “Family Ties?”
5. What is the name of Elvis Presley's Memphis home?
6. The majority of adults have how many permanent teeth?
7. What year did World War I begin?
8. In what movie does Robert De Niro say, ‘You talkin’ to me?’
9. How many reindeer does Santa have?
10. Where did the 2000 Summer Olympics take place?

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. Find the nine letter word.

W	I	T	E	N
N	D	M	A	I
E	A	O	D	C
C	R	N	L	Y
U	M	B	A	F

Bad Jokes

Q: What do gingerbread men use when they break their legs?
A: A Candy canes.

Q: Why shouldn't you lend money to elves?
A: They're always short

Q: What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar?
A: He got 25 days!

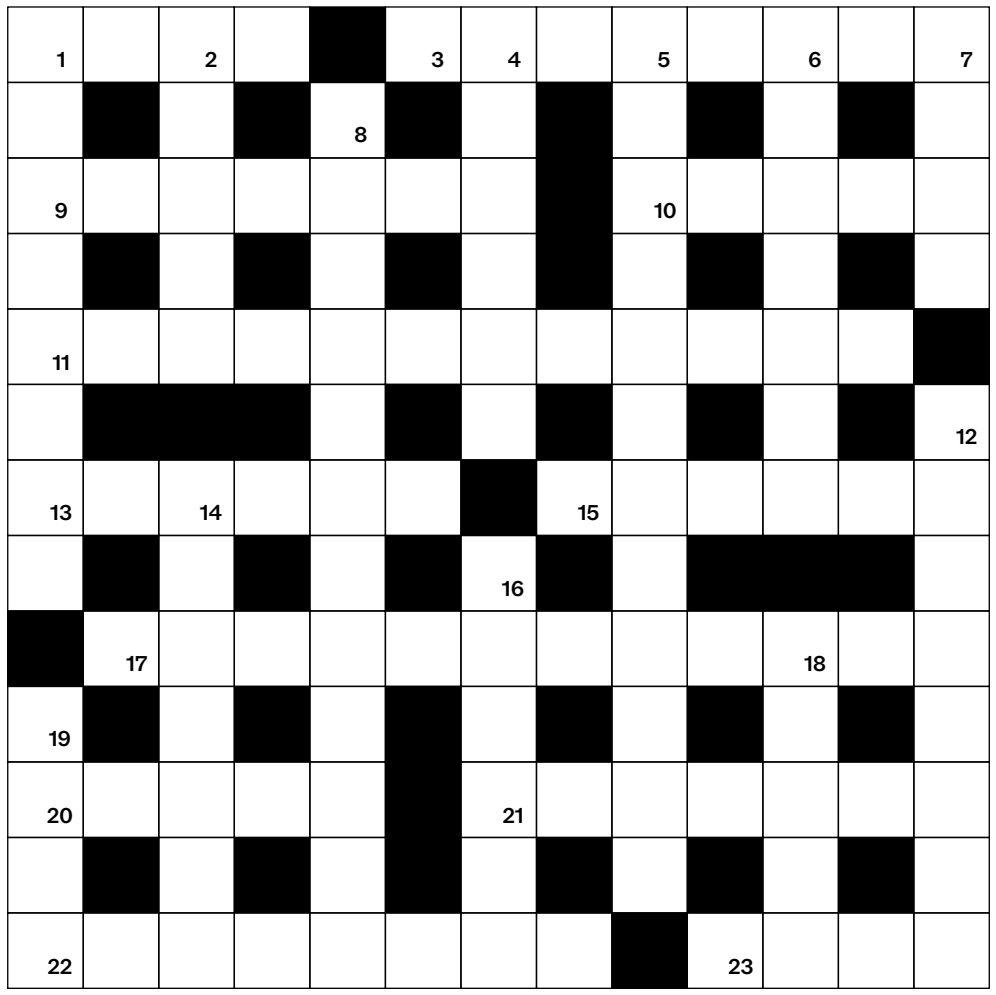
A man goes to the zoo, but there's only one animal there. The animal is a dog, it's a Shih Tzu.

Thank you to Marcus from Risdon for the final joke!

Crossword

ACROSS
1. Soapy froth (4)
3. Get the better of (8)
9. Look something over (7)
10. Jewellery items (5)
11. Numbers for a lock (12)
13. Found on a forest log (6)
15. Done in stages (6)
17. Beginning (12)
20. Rude behaviour (5)
21. Pizza herb (7)
22. Gone (8)
23. Opposite of subtracts (4)

DOWN
1. Drawing templates (8)
2. It may happen during sleep (5)
4. Remove goods from a truck (6)
5. Made tidy or put in order (12)
6. Window covers (7)
7. Duty or chore (4)
8. Skilled at joinery (12)
12. Versions of a book (8)
14. Photo taken from a short distance (5-2)
16. Low chant (6)
18. Large African antelope (5)
19. Move fast in a straight line (4)



Card Game

Crazy Eights

Crazy Eights is a shedding card game for 2 or more players. The first player to get rid of all their cards first is the winner. Gameplay is very similar to UNO. Deal 5 cards one at a time, face down. The balance of the pack is placed face down in the center of the table and forms the stockpile.

The first player sets a card on the table. The next one can top it with a different card from the same suit, or a card with the same denomination but with a different suit. Ie. you can top a Jack of diamonds with any other card of diamonds or a Jack from a different suit. The players can draw a card from the pile whenever they want, even if they have a playable card in their hand. The eights are the special cards of the game. You can play them on top of any card (regardless of their denomination and suit) and choose the suit the next player must play.



Jasmeen Hemmings for Unsplash

Caption This...

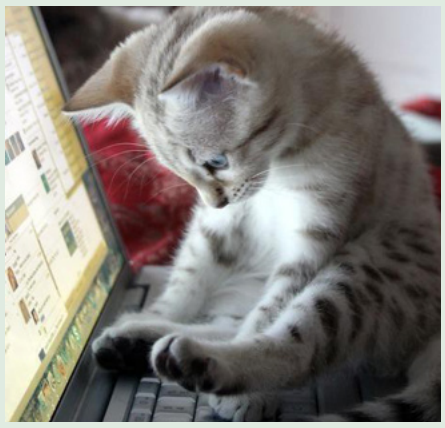
Submit a caption to this photo, and we will print the three finalists (including the winner) in the next edition.

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!
“I wonder who I can catfish today?”
Rachel, Numinbah CC

Runners Up:
Parole Approval Officer
Ollie, QLD

Boggle Nine Letter Word
Candy Cane

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)
1. Suds 15. Phased
3. Outsmart 17. Commencement
9. Eyeball 20. Cheek
10. Rings 21. Oregano
11. Combinations 22. Departed
13. Lichen 23. Adds

Crossword Answers (DOWN)
1. Stencils 8. Cabinetmaker
2. Dream 12. Editions
4. Unload 14. Close-up
5. Straightened 16. Intone
6. Awnings 18. Eland
7. Task 19. Scud

Quiz Answers
1. Hot water 6. 32
2. Russia 7. 1914
3. Octagon 8. Taxi Driver
4. Michael J. Fox 9. Eight
5. Graceland 10. Sydney