YOU ARE WORTHY
Jessica on LGBTIQ+ solidarity in prison
2–4. LETTERS

HANGING WITH AC/DC
Simon's memories of jamming with the band
10–13. EXPERIENCES

Q&A: DRUG DEPENDENCE
Why medication can be so hard to get
14–15. HEALTH

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING
An interview with Uncle Robbie Thorpe
20–21. MOB

About Time

• Australia's National Prison Newspaper

ISSUE NO. 7 FEBRUARY 2025 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

A Voice From Beyond the Fence

The feeling that I exist and am cared for by someone I thought I had lost carried meaning far beyond words

By Troy

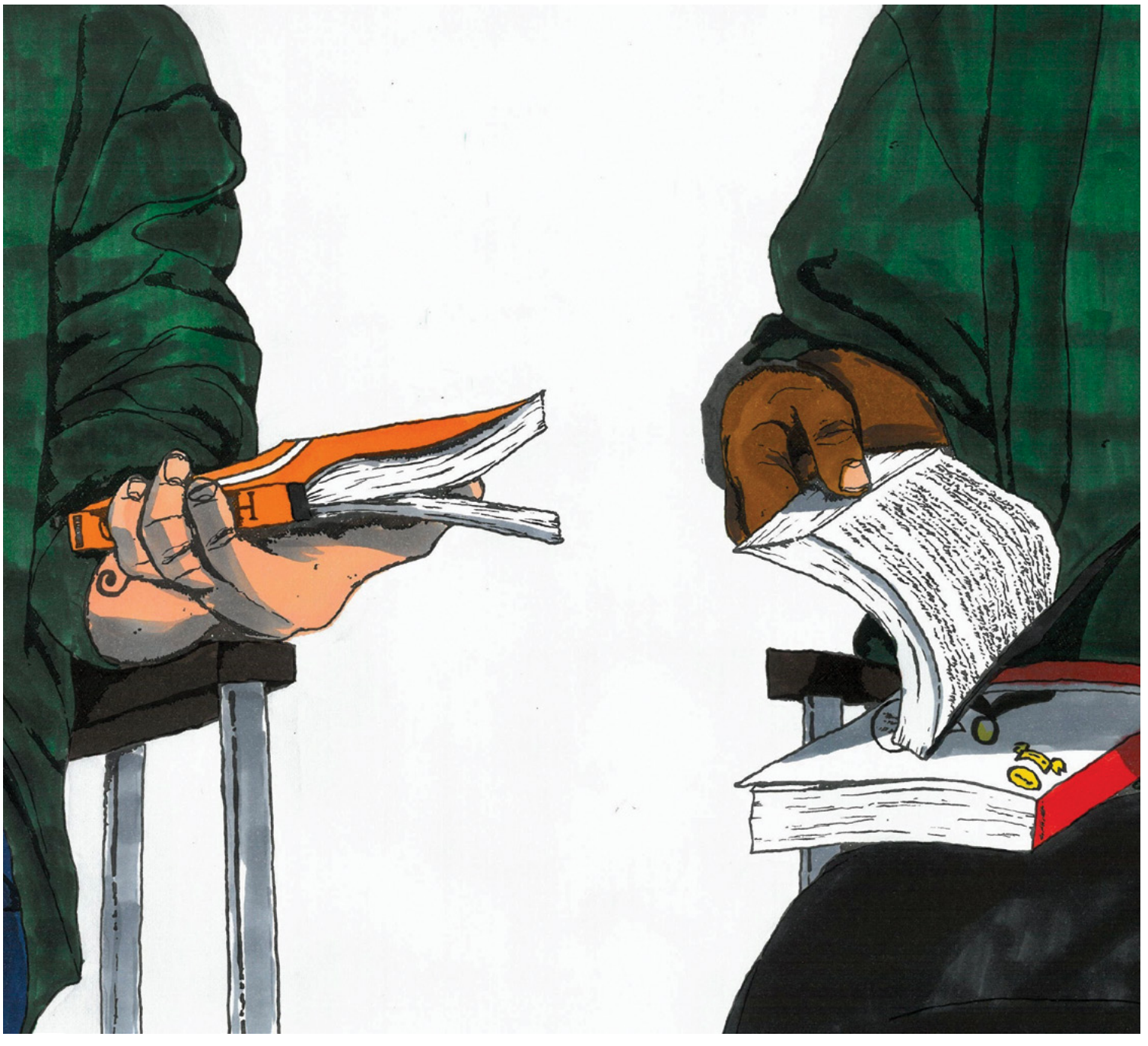
Troy writes from Cessnock Correctional Centre, NSW.

It was just another typical day in jail when word arrived. As soon as my name was called and the paper handed to me at morning muster, mixed feelings of surprise and anticipation began welling up inside. "This is unexpected today," I thought, before quickly turning to "Who's it from I wonder?" Flipping over to the sender it leapt off the paper: the letter was from a distant friend.

And like so many of my fellow inmates, I felt a sudden fear I was about to be rejected.

Memories instantly flooded my mind: the last time we had seen each other; the last time we had spoken; the last text. I had been quietly hoping for this, yet had pushed it deep and far away as it had been ages since there was any contact between us. I retreated to my cell to reveal what the letter had in store.

Continued on page 10.



Ike Curtis

"It Opens Up a Whole New World": Book Clubs in Prison

Several new programs are starting to improve access to books in Australian prisons, following the success of similar initiatives in the US and UK.

By Denham Sadler

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

When a flyer was put up in the NSW Dillwynia Correctional Centre for a new book club last year, the program was filled in just three hours.

Established by Australian author Bri Lee in collaboration with the Women's Justice Network, the fREADom INSIDE project has been running since November 2021 and has seen $30,000 worth of books sent to women's prisons around NSW.

Continued on page 6.

Contents

2 – 4 LETTERS
Experiences of the incarcerated
1 – 3 MIN READ EACH

6 – 9 NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS
'It Opens a Whole New World': Book Clubs in Prisons
5 MIN READ
Future Shapers Program
5 MIN READ
The latest in criminal justice around the country

10 – 13 EXPERIENCES
A Voice From Beyond the Fence
3 MIN READ
'Parole Pending Housing': An Impossibility
6 MIN READ
We Are The Change
5 MIN READ
Hanging Out With AC/DC

14 – 15 HEALTH
Medications for Drug Dependence: Why Can It Be So Hard?
7 MIN READ
When Anger Hides the Truth
Recipes from the inside

16 – 17 LEGAL CORNER
Do You Have a Right to Legal Representation?
5 MIN READ
Travel While on Parole

18 LEARN
Critical Thinking & the Art of Persuasion – Forceful Arguments
6 MIN READ

19 REINTEGRATION
Starting Fresh: A Journey to Reintegration and New Beginnings
6 MIN READ

20 – 21 MOB
Keeping the Fire Burning
7 MIN READ
Aboriginal Art in custody

22 CULTURE
Book Review: The Stoning by Peter Papathanasiou
3 MIN READ
Back to Black

23 CREATIVE
Poetry, art and creative writing from behind bars

24 PLAY
The monthly quiz, crossword and more

Letters

Fences Inside and Around Me

By D.

D writes from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, Victoria.

It's my first time being inside. My anxiety, fear, depression and mental health are heightened with extra volume.

I have a wall similar to the Gaza wall that keeps me inside and fences that are all around me. A cell that gets locked everyday and 'count' that is three times a day, where I must be ready with my ID and be quiet. How the routine of my life has changed.

People make mistakes, we all do. We are humans. And when the system is a broken one, as are yourself...it fails you, and you fail yourself.

Remember: when the mind has been darkened by grief, loss, betrayal – rational thought sometimes loses the battle and mistakes are made. But mistakes are part of us all trying to get back on our feet after everything that has thrown us down!

Great Ideas for Prisons

By Kerrin

Kerrin writes from Marngoneet Correctional Centre, Victoria.

To About Time,

My name is Kerrin, currently in Marngoneet. I have a couple of great ideas that really should be implemented in Australian prisons, even worldwide and they are:

A few years back, I wanted to give blood but wasn't able to as I was a cigarette smoker. In prison I am a non-smoker, healthy drug-free ie. a perfect candidate to give blood. What if there was a way for prisoners to give blood, what if for say one day remission off our sentences. I would think that 90% of prisoners would definitely sign up for such a structure. I'd think that amongst us we'd have every blood type available. It'd benefit everyone involved, we'd be saving lives, giving back to the community, there would be no blood shortages ever again and we'd only be asking for one day in return off our sentences. What a great idea, why isn't this implemented yet? I think it's an ingenious idea, it'll look good for prisoners in court or for parole. We are all healthy, non-smoking and it could be a game changer. We could be saving lives everywhere and I believe we could fill them blood banks everywhere.

Look at the bare roofs across our jails, put some solar panels on all of them and turn them all into power stations, effectively reducing power bills everywhere! Prisoners don't have access to any prison roof, it only makes sense to catch all that sun and if water is an issue, even catch the rain. Imagine all the power that could be put back into the grid.

That's all from me for now, I don't understand how nobody has thought of these ideas yet.

Regards,
Kerrin

P.S. This paper is getting better with every edition. On behalf of prisoners everywhere, thank you.

Response from About Time:
Thank you so much for your suggestions Kerrin – great ideas! We just want to note that due to higher rates of Hepatitis B and C and HIV in prisons, Lifeblood (the blood-donor health service) says that if you have been locked up for more than 72 hours, you need to wait 12 months before donating. This does unfortunately prevent many people who would otherwise be eligible from donation.

You Are Worthy

By Jessica

Jessica writes from Shortland Correctional Centre in New South Wales.

Dear About Time,

My name is Jessica and I have been reading About Time since issue one and I'm loving it so far.

I just read issue 5 November 2024. There was an article titled "Bodies in Cages: Trans Experiences in Prison". Being a trans woman myself, I wanted to share my story of experience in custody.

I came out in 2019 whilst at the South Coast C.C. What followed was a painful process. A Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) Policy outlined a set of guidelines of my rights and things I can access, things like hormones, cosmetics and female clothing. As well as addressing me by my preferred pronouns and female name etc, the policy made it sound simple in terms of accessing various services, however it wasn't.

I had to deal with my gender dysphoria on my own with no support around gender related issues from psychologists, so my mental health suffered and still does to this very day. In 2019, I applied through Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health for access to hormone replacement therapy. It took three years fighting through poor mental health to finally be able to receive such therapies, but not without the help of writing to the then Health Minister Brad Hazzard for resolution. I have experienced the same trouble this time around requesting an increase in HRT in October 2022. I had the appointment with the endocrinologist in September 2024 only to still be waiting to get seen by the GP. It's really upsetting, there's all this talk from the top about telehealth making shorter wait times and ease of access yet 25 months and 6 days and counting and I've not been seen or had the increase as advised by the endocrinologist. I've navigated the prison system and have been so shocked by the amount of transphobia I've experienced and heard of is really upsetting, not just from fellow inmates but officers too, it doesn't help you feel secure or safe.

I feel as though the CSNSW Policy on transgender and intersex people gets overlooked at times and I really do wish that the people in from the top would work with someone like myself to help foot a program for new CSNSW recruits to engage in a program aimed at educating an understanding of LGBTIQA+ minorities needs. I know I'd love to help them foot a program, or better yet run it.

I could go on and on about my experiences in custody but we'd be here forever.

In closing, if you're a trans woman going through a hard time in prison I want you to know that together we can create change.

Don't let this system win. You are worthy, you are loved and you can get through.

Lots of Love and Hope,
Jess. XXOOXX

Note to our South Australian readers:
Due to unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to distribute the last edition of the paper in South Australian prisons. We're doing our best to ensure this will not happen again. We apologise for the disappointment.

"I'm Innocent! I Didn't Do It!"

By David

David writes from Long Bay Correctional Centre, NSW.

Self-honesty – "I'm innocent!"
The truth – "I didn't do it!"

How many times have you heard these words?

How many times have they been used "to get away with it?" or not wanting to accept the consequences of one's behaviour?

At 14 years of age my teacher, at Blacktow Patrician Brothers, gave me 'six' of the best [the cane] for something I did not honestly do – I was innocent!

I was hurt, angry, furious, resentful and looking for justice – revenge! What I wasn't going to do to that teacher. At home I complained to my Dad.

He said, "Son, if you come home tomorrow and whinge for getting punished for something you didn't do, I'll give too 'six more!'"

Shocked, I said: "That's not fair. Why?" Dad: "The 'six' I give you will be for the many times you got away with it?" This I realise now, is wisdom.

I'm now self-honest. Internally free. I cope with injustice.

David

Never Too Old To Learn

By Jack

Jack writes from from Wolston Correctional Centre, Queensland.

Dear About Time,

Thank you so much for the paper. It has been quite the eye opener for me, eight months into a two year sentence.

Among the views expressed, many about their time, reflecting on boredom, lack of resources and so on, and I thought to add my older prisoner view simply because so many of your readers here at Wolston are older men, though I assume many of the same or similar issues happen to women as well.

A couple of months ago I began attending education here and found a program called "BK SB", which brings students' ability to manage English and maths up to scratch.

I left school in 1971 and have done a few bits and pieces since, with certificates in veterinary care and social welfare, but those were years ago.

My first introduction to education inside came from an officer who felt I was a bit of a loose end and asked if I'd like to talk to someone about what was available here at Wolston. She organised another officer to see me and I did an ACER test, which assessed my level of literacy and numeracy, both of which were quite high.

I stood back for a while but when I moved to residential I was able to go to school for several sessions and fell in love with learning. I was also able to assist other students in my group, which I also loved doing.

So, for you older folk, education may be an opportunity for you to find out more about your abilities and even help others who have never had much of an education and who knows where that could head.

Thanks for reading.

Jack



What Happened to Christmas Dinners?

By Rocket

Rocket writes from Wolston Correctional Centre.

My name is Rocket. I am writing this letter from Wolston Correctional Centre.

I would like to say something about the Christmas lunch that was served here.

I am nearly 72 years of age, and I have been in a prison or institution for all but eight or ten years of my life. So I would know a bit about Christmas lunch in the prison system.

In 1995 when I came to prison, Christmas dinner consisted of a serve of cold chicken, a slice of ham, and salad. You do also get some plum pudding with custard, you do not see that anymore. Where have those days gone?

The Christmas dinner that was served at Wolston was some sort of rice dinner. What has happened to the Christmas dinners we used to get in the prison system? Go back to the old days any time. They would have been preferred.

Rocket

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 seventh 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:

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PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

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“Use Your Time”, Don’t “Do Your Time”

By Ronan

Ronan writes from Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre in Queensland.

Before anything I am a human being. As I’ve learnt, this is quite important to remember. Because labels don’t really matter in the end. They are just illusions. They create division amongst us. Artificial social statuses and worldly belongings that are temporary. All can be lost and forgotten at any moment. I know this all too well. What matters is what we do and who we are when we are stripped of all those “things”. That is what connects us all. It doesn’t matter about this relation or that nationality, man or women, beyond them all we are human first. If we remind ourselves of this first and foremost, it connects us all. Going beyond any differences between us. What matters is what you do today, and the impact you have on those around you.

There is something special about prison. It’s a chance to step away from our lifestyles and families. Things that we become so attached to. Here, stripped of everything you thought made you who you are. You can build upon who you really are.

Instead of focusing on all the things that are out of your control or reached; focus on what is possible with the time you have. Learn how to “use your time” not “do your time”. Pick up a book, get to training, become organised. Everyday, make votes towards the person you aspire to be.

The last thing you want to do is walk out those gates and say “I should have done more”.

You Forget How to Love

By Dave

Dave writes from Melbourne Assessment Prison, Victoria.

To About Time,

I was recently at Barwon Prison when I saw this paper for the first time. I didn't know it was going on, so thank you. I’m not sure where to start as I have heaps to say. I am a proud Aboriginal man. I have a son who I love to death. I have been in jail this time since 2021 and doing 14 years. I have been in and out of jail my whole adult life. Now about jail and what it does to you inside: you learn to suppress your feelings and show your anger or bravado. But what happens then to you? You forget how to love. I have a great partner, she is amazing. She stands by me and is as loyal as can be. She taught me how to love again and how to be happy and accept things from a different point of view. Sometimes though, she thinks things are massive, but I think they are small – it can cause some fights. But I love her either way and she is amazing. Her name is Justine and one day I want to thank her for everything she has done for me and for so many other prisoners in Victoria.

The next thing I want to say is at Barwon you’re treated with respect by staff. Yeah, they can be the enemy, but who will lock up the animals at night? I am missing Barwon so badly it hurts. I left some good friends behind, people I call my brothers. When you live with people for seven years, day in and day out, then moving prisons – it’s like being locked up all over again. At Barwon, they even allowed us to get Playstation 2 and games dropped off by family due to mental health.

One more thing – in jail, there are three money accounts including compulsory savings, which means every week the jail takes one day’s wage and puts it there for the day you go home so you have money. The second account is ‘available spend’ – money you can spend at the canteen. The third account is set aside for ‘special spend’ like runners and stuff. Why can't the jail put your money into a high interest account or even let you buy shares or invest so when you do go home you will have money to move on in life? $3 or 4K isn’t much with the cost of living, but also to restart with clothes, phone, food, rent etc. When I get out, $3K will be lucky to buy a meat pie and a can of coke!

I love seeing The Torch artwork in here – they do so much for the Mob in jail. Keep up the good work. Happy New Year to all the Black Mob behind bars.

Dave, Yorta Yorta & Ngarrindjeri

An Impossible Choice

By Wendy

Wendy writes from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria.

My name is Wendy and I’m currently incarcerated at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

I’ve been here since May 2023 and as a mother with 6 kids and no support on the outside. I’m only able to earn $48 per week from my work, which I have to use a majority of these earnings to support myself in here with items such as soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors etc.

I have to make the hard decision of whether to put my money on my phone account to make calls or the items I really need.

Here, the phone calls to mobiles is roughly around $8, it’s 3 cents per second and I just cannot afford to make a lot of calls let alone to pick which child to ring. I have three older kids who are dependent and three younger children that live with my Dad and Mum. So I pretty much have to pick and choose who I ring because it costs way too much money to ring each of my kids. I do try to save/budget where I can or usually I ring the eldest daughter and she relays any information that needs to be given to them.

This can be frustrating and sad at the same time, why should I have to make a choice? I do understand where I am, but the most important things we look forward to as mothers are updates from our kids and if they are okay out there. It warms my heart when I call my eldest and all I hear in the background are the squeals and echoes of all my children saying they ‘Hey Mummmmm we love and miss you’. Our contact with family and friends is all we have to keep us going and we are already missing out on so much. So to make things a little easier, I know a lot of us mums, daughters, sisters, grandmas and aunties would welcome a reduction in an already expensive world, it would make such a huge difference and less heartbreaking on having to choose who to call...

I hope this letter helps you to understand just how hard things can get even being in jail.

I know I would give anything to be able to ring each of my kids and let them know Mummy loves them more...

Kind regards,
Wendy



• Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Justin, Spooner, Stephen, Jason, Bryan, M, Robert, Sam, George, Rodney, Gavin, Mark, Benson, D, A, Greg, F, Bo, Craig, Lance, Steven, Vincent, Christopher, Storm, David, Julian, Kyle, Micky, Patrick, Sam, Bilal, Caitlin, BC, Anthony, Alexander, Konrad, Wendy, Jessica, Kerrin, David, Jack, Rocket, Ronan, Dave, A.S., Belly, LV 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 also cannot facilitate pen pal connections.

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:

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News and Investigations

"It Opens Up a Whole New World": Book Clubs in Prison

By Denham Sadler

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

Continued from page 1.

The group is now running a series of book clubs in NSW women's prisons, with the first round taking place in December 2024.

This saw 10 women at Dillwynia meeting each week to read and discuss a particular book, run by two facilitators.

One of these facilitators is the Women's Justice Network's Frances Drake, who has lived experience of prison. Drake ran the series of book clubs at Dillwynia in December, and said the feedback has been amazing.

"The reaction has been really fantastic – it's been more than what we envisioned," Drake told *About Time*. "It's amazing just how much they've actually taken from it. This is a group of women who probably wouldn't hang around together or necessarily associate together, and here they were.

"They were just so eager to learn and soak up this education and the words."

Drake has now run four book clubs at the prison, focusing at first on actress Miriam Margolyes's autobiography, *This Much Is True*. At the meetings, the group of women read from the chosen book and discuss certain themes and words.

Throughout just one month of book clubs, many of these women have come out of their shells and gained confidence and reading skills.

"We are in awe of these women and how they were supporting each other," Drake said. "Certain people were struggling with the reading and even though they didn't know each other, the encouragement the other women were giving them was really heartwarming.

We couldn't believe just how well it was accepted and how much they were looking forward to it. We had a full house every single week we went in."

The group plans to expand its book club program at Dillwynia this year, and will also be launching the program at Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre.

Access to books and reading while incarcerated is an important way for people in prison to keep occupied and to learn while they are incarcerated.

Daniel Vansetten, who was formerly incarcerated and is now completing a law degree, is well aware of this, and has now launched a program to provide people in prison with study resources.

"It's incredibly important," Vansetten told *About Time*. "Prison is essentially just day after day of chronic boredom, and having access to books is really important to try to alleviate some of that boredom.

"It can give people a sense of meaning in life, it can help with rehabilitation and help them to avoid substance abuse and mental health issues. It puts you on a really positive path, and on top of that it can help people have a sense of agency over their own rehabilitation and express themselves when they come across issues."

Vansetten launched the Books Behind Bars program late last year, with support from the Global Freedom Scholars Network. The program will initially run in South Australia, and will see donated books, including legal education materials, being distributed to those in prison in the state.

"The plan is to get hold of the books and start engaging with people in prison and hopefully be able to donate the books to those people to start self-directed learning while in jail," he said.

"Anyone in prison can request to have a book sent to them. I can give instructions on how to send requests to me to get hold of a specific book, and I can send that book."

Vansetten has directly experienced how difficult it is to access books while in prison. "When I attempted to purchase a dictionary for myself in prison – the most basic of learning materials and important for all sorts of things – the prison authorities prevented me from accessing it," Vansetten said.

He was eventually able to gain access to the dictionary. He still has the *Macquarie Australian Dictionary* on the outside, and is now using it to help with his studies as part of the law degree.

"It's a prized possession," he said.

There are a number of popular prison book clubs and programs around the world.

The Noname Book Club was founded in 2019 in the US and now operates 12 book club chapters around the country. More than 1,300 people in prison in the US receive books twice a month as part of the program, which now sees more than 33,000 books sent to more than 400 prisons.

There is also the Prison Reading Groups in the United Kingdom, a charity which helps to start, fund and support reading groups in prisons. In 2023 the charity ran 84 reading groups in more than 60 prisons in the UK, and supplied more than 5,000 books. The organisation was awarded the Longford Prize for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Prison Reform.

Book Clubs for Inmates is a registered charity that organises volunteer-led book clubs within prisons in Canada, with more than 40 book clubs now running around the country.

Drake has urged organisations around Australia and Corrections authorities to help facilitate more book clubs and better access to reading materials.

"My message would be to get to the library and have a look at the authors that are there and things that you might be able to take away," she said.

"If you're not a confident reader, put your name down for this if you're able to – there's no pressure for you to read, but these are skills that are going to help you for the rest of your life.

"It opens up a whole new world ... they would never have read that book if they hadn't had the opportunity – now they have, it has opened up a whole new way of life.

It's a journey just on its own. We have a ball – we have a real laugh and we have a great time."

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The Future Shapers: Connecting Between the Divide

A truly unique experience that helped Stacey feel less anxious about her transition from custody back into the community

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. While incarcerated, Stacey was invited to be a participant in the Future Shapers program.



Future Shapers participants, The Committee of Ballarat

A program in Ballarat, Victoria is connecting regular community members with people in prison. The program, 'The Future Shapers,' conducts tours of local prisons and sit-down group interviews with inmates.

Launched in 2006 by the Committee for Ballarat, the leadership program draws together emerging leaders from Ballarat and the surrounding region. The Committee for Ballarat is a visionary membership body that develops innovative leadership with a strategic, long-term focus to encourage progressive change across government.

The program goes for three months. During this time, participants engage in numerous activities designed to help develop their leadership skills. The hallmark experience is the prison visit, which is designed to take the participants outside of their comfort zones.

For most people, visiting a prison is not something they would ever experience. For the inmates of these prisons, visits by the community never happens.

Normally, access to the prison system and its population by community members is strictly controlled and limited to contractors, officials and legal consults.

Access to the community for inmates is also extremely limited, as prison purposefully separates people from the general public.

Due to this separation, the opinions formed by both sides can be born in isolation. People can be ignorant, fed only by the information they're exposed to by circumstance, such as a specific news source and the opinions of family and friends. Unfortunately, inmates often form the view that society hates them. Meanwhile, the community often sees inmates as monsters just waiting for another chance to strike again.

The program works to challenge this, and these prison visits allow for the reality to be seen by both groups.

So how does it work?

The participants attend the prison and are given a tour of the facilities, including the cells and industry areas of the prison. They are also given the chance to talk to the custodial staff and ask any questions. Each participant is vetted before they are allowed to enter the prison.

They are then settled into the visit centre where they are seated at various tables. The inmates are brought in to introduce themselves to the group. Each of the five or so inmates then sits at a table. What follows is similar to speed dating, or 'speed friending'. Participants are able to ask questions to the inmate at their table, and after a certain amount of time, the inmates swap tables.

At the conclusion of the 'speed friending' part of the night, the group are given the opportunity to tell each other how they feel the night went. Usually, the feedback is positive for everyone. Participants are then asked to write a letter about the night and hand it to the facilitator, to be read out to the other group at a later date.

The letters from the program participants to the inmates will often focus on individual's stories that have stood out to them. These letters don't just serve as words of encouragement to inmates, but also as letters of hope.

For inmates, reading genuinely kind letters from members of the community is a sign that society maybe doesn't hate them, and that they are not seen as a monster by everyone.

The letters from the inmates to the program participants help humanise people in prison, showing that they are not just CRN numbers; they are people – people who will be asking for a job, a rental property, maybe even help one day.

From this experience, each group has a better understanding of the other, and an understanding rooted in personal experience rather than theory. Maybe these future leaders will be deciding policy one day and they will remember the people they met in prison.

Do readers think that this is something we should see more of in other regions? Can this help reintegration? Can this help affect change? Or do you not like this idea?

Let us know by writing in. Write to us via the below postal address:

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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.



News and Investigations



VIC

Bonuses worth thousands offered to new prison officers

On 7 January 2025, the Minister for Corrections, joined by the Corrections Victoria Commissioner, announced significant financial incentives to prospective prison officers across all Victorian prisons. The purpose of the financial incentives is to drive recruitment for a system that is already suffering from staff shortages.

The Western Plains Correctional Facility, set to open mid-year, attracts the most lucrative incentives.

New recruits at the facility will receive an $8,000 sign-on bonus and five weeks of annual leave.

If they are moving to the Geelong region for the job, they willl also be eligible for up to $10,000 to support their relocation costs.

Hopkins Correctional Centre, in western Victoria, is also offering $8,000 sign-on bonuses. For all other prisons in Victoria, new recruits will receive $5,000 sign-on bonuses.

Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan said, "Our corrections staff do an amazing job every day keeping Victorians safe, using skills a lot of people learn in other jobs. I'd encourage people to consider a job in our prisons – it may be a better fit than you might think."

Tradies, teachers, healthcare workers, retail and customer service staff are listed as examples of the careers with skills transferable to working in Victoria's prisons.

Larissa Strong, Corrections Victoria Commissioner, offers this encouragement to future recruits: "Victoria's prison officers work in a challenging and fulfilling environment where every day presents new opportunities to make a difference."



NSW

Grafton Goal gets a new upgrade catering towards growing health needs

The Grafton Gaol Hospital Redevelopment has received a significant boost with the NSW Government investing $263.8 million to upgrade the old property.

Two administrative blocks within the former minimum-security portion of the former Grafton Gaol site will be acquired to provide contemporary administrative and training support facilities. The redevelopment aims to enhance the health outcomes and meet the growing needs of Grafton and surrounding communities.

The new project includes a three-storey acute services building, featuring a new emergency department, medical imaging, and inpatient unit.

Additionally, the existing day surgery and operating units will be expanded to accommodate two additional operating theatres.

The former Grafton Gaol is listed on the state's heritage register, which was in use from 1893 to 2020. The site's adaptive reuse ensures that its heritage significance is preserved by being in line with the conservation management plan.

Minister for Regional Heath, Ryan Park, emphasised the importance of the redevelopment, stating that it will improve healthcare capacity and provide better services of care for the local community. The refurbishment works at the former Gaol site are set to commence this year, with construction timeframes for the full redevelopment to be confirmed soon.



ACT

ACT Corrective Services improve parole processes

The ACT Ombudsman released a report in December 2024 noting the "significant uplift" of ACT Corrective Services' (ACTCS) policies and procedures to support parole processes, including "a new information management system, and [embedding] arrangements with Housing ACT to support the Justice Housing Program."

The ACT Ombudsman's report relates to actions taken by ACTCS in response to a review conducted by ACT Ombudsman in November 2020. The review disclosed a number of concerning issues with ACTCS policies and procedures relating to parole processes, including recordkeeping, poor planning and administrative failures. ACTCS has implemented 14 of the 15 November 2020 review recommendations. The last recommendation to be implemented requires ACTCS "to ensure programs are more accessible to detained people, including those on remand" which ACTCS notes it is working to fulfil.

ACT Policing now able to detect cocaine in drug driving testing

The new year brought changes for drug driving offences, with

ACT police now able to issue charges to drivers for allegedly driving under the influence of cocaine.

"Each roadside drug test is now able to detect cannabis, methamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine," an ACT Policing spokesperson said.

"While penalties for possession of certain illicit drugs have changed and cannabis possession has been decriminalised, it remains an offence to have any of those drugs present in your system while driving."



TAS

Report on wellbeing within Tasmanian prisons released

The Tasmanian Custodial Inspector has recently welcomed changes to improve the safety and wellbeing of adults in prison.

A report released in December 2024 from the Office of the Custodial Inspector made several recommendations to improve the wellbeing of people in custody, with the Custodial Inspector noting that most recommendations were supported by the Department of Justice. Some recommendations had already been implemented – for example, the Custodial Inspector emphasised the positive impact of pay increases for people in custody, as well as the reduction of canteen prices.

However, the report also highlights the negative impact of ongoing practices such as lockdowns and the use of 'dry cells' (cells without running water), and acknowledges that these practices are inconsistent with international legal obligations in relation to the rights and wellbeing of those in prison.

The report also highlights that while access to Aboriginal cultural supports were improving, they remained extremely limited and insufficient to meet the needs of the prison population.

These concerns were echoed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service, who are calling on the Tasmanian Prison Service, the Department of Justice and the Tasmanian Government to increase the supports available for Aboriginal people in custody, as well as the need for changes to reduce the continued overrepresentation of Aboriginal people within the prison and legal systems.



QLD

Recent changes to parole laws in Queensland

In 2024, the Corrective Services Act 2006 was changed to extend the time that the State Parole Board can make you wait to reapply for parole after receiving a parole refusal decision. Please note that these changes only concern applications for state parole, and do not apply to federal parole.

If your parole application is refused, the Parole Board will decide when you can reapply. It will make this decision at the same time as a parole refusal. The maximum time frame the Parole Board can make you wait to reapply for parole following a refusal is now:

- five years if serving a life sentence;
- three years if serving 10 years imprisonment or more for a single offence; and
- one year for all other prisoners.

In deciding how long you must wait before reapplying for parole, the Parole Board must now consider:

- the nature, seriousness and circumstances of each offence you are serving; and
- the reasons your parole application was refused.

In making this decision, the Board may also consider:

- the likely effect that a further parole application may have on an eligible person or victim; and
- the public interest.

Different timeframes may apply if you are serving sentences for federal offences or if you are subject to special provisions in the Corrective Services Act 2006 about 'no body, no parole', 'restricted prisoners' and 'links to terrorism'.

This section is written by Prisoners' Legal Service (PLS), a not-for-profit community legal centre that is dedicated to providing information and advice to people in Queensland prisons. PLS is unable to assist people who are imprisoned in or on parole orders from other states or territories in Australia. This information is intended to provide legal information only and is no substitute for legal advice.



SA

Increase in electronic monitoring for people on bail

In an attempt to enhance community safety, the South Australian government is increasing the number of electronic monitoring devices for the surveillance of people on bail.

The Minister for Correctional Services, Dan Cregan, recently announced an $8.1 million investment, including an additional 220 electronic monitoring devices, 24/7 tracking and dedicated Corrections staff monitoring.

The investment is in line with the state's strict bail laws, which includes regulations of mandatory electronic monitoring for any defendant accused of breaching a domestic violence-related intervention order through physical violence or the threat of violence.

The use of electronic monitoring devices in South Australia has increased 24 per cent since 2001. In the youth justice system, it has increased 73 per cent since 2000. According to police data, charges for breaches of bail increased by 7 per cent in the last year.

Minister Cregan spoke to the necessity of the program, saying "Stronger laws and real-time monitoring ensure alleged offenders on bail face stricter conditions and community safety is prioritised. The hard fact is we are requiring offenders to walk a narrower line on bail than governments before, especially where domestic violence is involved. Those who flout their bail conditions can expect to be caught, and that is showing up in the data."

The government has also invested in rehabilitation and early intervention programs for criminalised youth. The announcement includes significant upgrades to the Kurlana Tapa Youth Training Centre and $1 million for Aboriginal children charged with minor offences to be diverted from custody and into community-based support programs aimed at addressing the underlying causes of offending.



NT

No room left in jails as NT rolls out strict new bail laws

The Northern Territory's updated bail laws came into effect earlier this month, resulting in fewer Territorians being granted bail by police and the courts.

The strict new laws were a key feature of the Country Liberal Party (CLP) election campaign and are now a reality following their decisive victory in the 2024 NT election.

The CLP has made no apologies for this move to reduce the number of people granted bail. A statement released on Friday 10 January 2024 provides, in part:

The Finocchiaro CLP Government is now keeping more offenders off our streets to keep our community safe... Increased arrests are proof less offenders are out in our community to commit more crimes.

A consequence of these changes is that more and more individuals are being remanded in an already overburdened system, with prisons over capacity and police watch houses acting as quasi-prisons.

As reported by the ABC, the Northern Territory Police Association's President, Nathan Finn, fears it's a "matter of time" until a death in custody occurs as police station cells swell to capacity with dozens of overflow prisoners.
"We're at a crisis situation here," Mr Finn said. "With the high numbers coming into our watch houses, they're high risk... they're not designed for long-term inhabitation of those cells."
"There's going to be a high risk of people actually dying within our cells."



WA

Unit 18: New yarning circle and updates on Cleveland Dodd's Coronial Inquest

Aboriginal Services Manager Will Hayward, among other community members, has embarked on introducing a yarning circle in Western Australia's youth detention centre, Unit 18.
The first yarning circle in December incorporated a range of cultural activities and programs for detained young people.

One young participant stated "it's good for the boys and stuff, to help them while they're in here. I reckon it's good for them. And me also. Like connect more, feel more comfortable and safe and just get through their time easier I reckon." The yarning circle was opened with a Welcome to Country, smoking ceremony and traditional dancing, with the aim of building cultural spaces for cultural healing and yarning with Elders.

The coronial inquest into the death of Cleveland Dodd, a Yamatji boy who died on 12 October 2023 after self-harming in solitary confinement in Unit 18, finished hearing oral evidence on 11 December 2024. Cleveland Dodd is described by his mother, Nadene Dodd, as a "child of the sunrise, of sweeping deserts and untampered earth."

In one of his eighteen provisional recommendations, Coroner Urquhart stated Unit 18 should be closed "as a matter of urgency."

He also recommended that if Unit 18 is to remain open, young people should only be sent there for a maximum of six weeks. Closing submissions are scheduled for mid-June before the Coroner delivers his final findings and recommendations.

• Experiences



'Minimum Security?' by Tony, acrylic on canvas, Boom Gate Gallery

A Voice From Beyond the Fence

By Troy

Troy writing from Cessnock Correctional Centre, NSW.

Just a few simple expressions said more than a couple of pages of detail ever could.

Continued from page 1.

Separating the photocopies, I eagerly started reading. An update on how my friend had been and everything he'd been doing was there, as was a good sense of what life was like on the outside. But ahead of all that one thing struck the heart strings most: "Sorry for taking so long to write, you've been on my mind though," the opening lines read. "How are you? Hope you're doing well."

The feeling that I exist and am cared for by someone I thought I had lost carried meaning far beyond words. I buzzed with happiness, glad that making the first move to write to this distant friend all that time ago had paid off.

It didn't matter that there had been uncertainty about whether there would ever be a reply, or when the reply might come, or how long it might be. That all faded into the background. Because when it arrived, quality was better than quantity.

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Willy Pleasance

A Movement for Change

Who Are We?
We are the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. We call ourselves the National Network for short.

The National Network is made up of women, trans women, gender-diverse people, and girls who have experienced life inside prisons across so-called Australia. We exist to support women and girls to break free from the cycle of incarceration by addressing the challenges and barriers they face, both inside and outside of prison.

At the core of our work is a belief in fairness, dignity, and justice. We are committed to amplifying the voices of women and girls who have been to prison because we know that real change starts with those who have been directly impacted.

We believe in creating a system that is safe, fair, and supports women to thrive in their communities. We work to address the deeper issues that lead to incarceration, such as racism, poverty, housing insecurity and lack of access to healthcare.

We are building a movement for justice and equality, led by women and girls who have lived it.

What We Do:
The National Network is here to make sure women and girls have the support they need to build better futures. We work on the following:

- Stop the criminalisation of women and girls for issues that can be addressed through support and services.
- Provide access to healthcare, including mental health support and PBS medications, in prison.
- Ensure women leaving prison have access to safe, secure housing so they aren't forced back into unsafe situations or homelessness.
- Guarantee access to the NDIS for women in prison.
- Create meaningful education, training, and employment opportunities to prepare women for life beyond bars.
- Allow free phone calls so women can stay connected to their families and children.

We also visit prisons across the country to listen to the voices of women and girls on the inside. Their experiences guide the work we do.

How Can You Get Involved?
Joining the National Network is free, and you can participate in whatever way feels right for you. You can stay informed about what we're doing or get actively involved in shaping our work. Whether you're inside or outside, we value your voice and need your support.

This is a movement for all of us—because when women and girls thrive, our communities are stronger.

Write to us, connect with us, and be part of a brighter future for all women and girls.

Join the National Network today.

Contact us by:

Email:
admin@thenationalnetwork.com.au
(if you have access to email)

Mail:
The National Network
PO Box 3407
South Brisbane QLD 4101

'Parole Pending Housing': An Impossibility



Sam Wallman, for Homes Not Prisons

Despite meeting the requirements for parole, I still cannot be released due to a lack of suitable housing

By Kelly

Kelly writes from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, Victoria.

"Parole approved pending housing." This is by far the worst sentence I have heard in prison. Not hearing the judge say I am being sentenced to three and a half years; not being told that I have just lost my house and all my possessions or that my loss of liberty will not be the only punishment I will receive while in prison.

Despite doing my non-parole period of two years and two months, and completing a three-month intensive Forensic Care behavioral change program designed for serious violent offenders to be eligible to apply for parole, I still cannot be released due to there being no suitable housing.

All the counselling, mental health assessments and treatments, medication trials, AA and NA, the tantrums, the tears, self-reflection and holding myself accountable – I'm still here.

The Adult Parole Board (APB) sent me my four-week letter, which usually means that they will issue you with a release date in the next four weeks. I call my family to tell them. My mum cries, my dad's voice is full of joy and he cuddles my daughter. They tell me they love me; we hang up and I feel proud of what I have achieved in prison. I have put in 100% effort and I truly want to be better moving forward. I finally have a chance at freedom. I believe I can do this life sober and happy without drugs and crime.

Three weeks later my ATC worker comes to see me and tells me that yes, parole is approved; however, Corrections Victoria does not have any housing options for me. There are no transitional housing or Corrections Victoria properties available. I will be required to stay in prison unless I can find my own housing.

So, I cry and cry some more. I then have to call home again and tell my family I will no longer be released from prison until I can find my own housing. My mum cries and keeps asking me "Why are they doing this to you? "You have done all the right things," she says. "You are not perfect but you're really trying!"

So, I cry again. I hear the pain in my dad's voice. It's cruel, I tell them I don't know what to say. I try to reassure them that I will be home soon. Before Mum hangs up the phone she says to me, "It's not fair, Kelly, I don't want to live here alone anymore without you! I want you to come home! Why won't they let you come home?".

This broke my soul; I have never had a conversation like that with my mum. As I sit here now in my cell writing this down, I am starting to cry all over again. It's a Saturday here at DPFC in October 2024 and we are locked down in our cells for the fourth time this week due to not having enough staff to operate the prison.

It's been eight months since I first got my four-week letter. The APB and Corrections Victoria require me to find my own housing while I am in prison, however, I cannot use the internet to view or apply for properties. No one in my support team in prison can use any of the housing websites to apply for me. I am not permitted to have day releases to go find, view or apply for my own housing.

From my research, from 2021-2022, Corrections Victoria has approximately 19 houses for people leaving prison on parole. Only one parolee can live at each property. Men and women are in the same pool for those houses. There were approximately 116 prisoners needing parole housing in 2021-2022.

These are the options that the APB deem appropriate housing options to be released on parole:

- A home owned by you (where the offense didn't happen)
- Corrections housing (very few available in Victoria)
- A room with a family member who has no criminal history. You must have your own bedroom and space. Shared rooms with your children or anyone else are not deemed appropriate.
- A house rented by you. However, while you are in prison you cannot access:
  a. Housing websites
  b. Visit the potential rental
  c. Put deposits down
  d. House must be approved by APB E-scan prior to applying

The APB will not approve:

- Long stay serviced apartments (like Quest) even if it is paid six months in advance
- Cabins in a caravan park
- A caravan owned by you in a caravan park
- A rooming house for women
- A room rented from a landlord that isn't known to you personally
- An Airbnb paid three to six months in advance
- A friend or family member who has a criminal history

I want to emphasise that for women who have come into contact with the justice system, having these prerequisites is highly unlikely considering that one in three people reported being homeless prior to entering custody.

I am sure by now that you see that parole housing is nearly impossible to get.

Trying to rent a house while in prison is laughable and not actually possible. It's not as simple as leaving prison on parole at the earliest possible date.

After reading the Centre for Innovative Justice, Law and Advocacy Centre for Women and RMIT's Submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness, the data shows that over half the prison population is expected to be released into homelessness after serving their whole sentence. The reason for this is that the government is not required to supply housing to prisoners once they finish their whole sentence. They can release women into the community with three nights accommodation in a hotel room. That is where their responsibility finishes.

Corrections Victoria does not offer transitional housing and community-based housing options for Victoria's most vulnerable women who have been released from prison. We have suffered family violence, trauma and have been treated like trash at the hands of evil people in the community prior to being jailed. We need housing.

We Are the Change

I write to you as someone who has been incarcerated and experienced addiction and many forms of violence. I wanted to share my story with you with the desire to plant a seed of hope

By Nina Storey

Nina is a lived experience advocate and FIGJAM member. She works at Flat Out alongside great teachers and folks who truly understand the struggles of criminalised people.



Image provided by Flat Out FIGJAM program

Hello, my fellow friends.

I am 42-years-old this year and have been booting around for all my life. I thought I was living the high life, that I was invisible. My world had no boundaries, I had no boundaries and the harms I experienced were numbed by drug use.

I self-medicated and used strategies of survival to keep myself alive, harming people in the process. I could go deeper and give many different examples, but you all know the life I am talking about. No consequential thinking and living every day like it might be your last because it might have been your last.

Six years ago, I left prison. The pain and suffering I endured broke me: I couldn't have contact with my kiddo, all the while detoxing while held in a cage without support, care or consideration of my complex needs or trauma.

My child had been removed before but I was always able to still have contact and navigate my world with choice; in prison that was stripped away from me.

I swore that under no circumstances would anyone EVER hold that power over me again; to strip me of my freedom and the liberties of seeing my kiddo. So, the fight began.

I'm not going to say it was easy because this is a story of honesty and truth. It was painstakingly difficult; I had to look those in the eye that I loved and cared about and make amends for the suffering I had caused them.

I had to step away from friendships that I had for decades. I wasn't allowed back home but was bailed to live with family.

I had to start again and rebuild myself, my identity and my soul.

I practiced going slow and nurturing my mind and my body. I am forever learning and peeling back the layers of the onion uncovering more and deeper pieces of me.

I am grateful that I gave myself the opportunity to try something different, that I chose a different life for myself, that I grabbed onto new opportunities that supported my development with willingness and pushed past the uncomfortable and the fear.

It was me that created the change, I did it all!! Not prison: prison hurt me, prison did not offer healing or reform my behaviour. Prison deployed its violence onto me that I am still working through today.

I am now a proud member of the FIGJAM collective: we are completely peer-led and support one another through difficult times and share experiences making happy and joyous memories.

We are the change makers! We all have lived experience of prison and are a really diverse group of women, trans and gender diverse folks. The collective was established at the end of 2022, and during this time we have made some great headway.

FIGJAM created a five-part podcast series in partnership with 3CR community radio. We have spoken and been invited to present at several different forums, sometimes travelling (all expenses paid!) interstate. We have made submissions, engaged in research, policy reform and media.

My heart is so incredibly full of love and hope. I am deeply inspired and motivated for the future. FIGJAM is the wind beneath my wings that allows me to fly!

Today I see a promising future. I have created change and made my dreams a reality, but without community, support and love and kindness I could not have done it.

If you would like to contact FIGJAM please write to:

Flat Out- FIGJAM
Level 2, 210 Lonsdale Street
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Hanging Out With AC/DC

Memories of jamming with the greatest rock band on earth

By Simon

Simon writes from Cessnock Correctional Centre, NSW.



Album cover for Highway To Hell, AC/DC, Albert Productions/Atlantic Records

It was the sweltering Sydney summer of '79 and AC/DC was the most potent new rock band on earth. Their latest album, Highway to Hell, had caused a storm, but the earth was already shaking for Back in Black, which would tear the rock music world apart the following year.

Back then, I was a teenager with ambitions to rule the rock world and I'd fallen in love with AC/DC's music. I decided to exploit my contacts in the recording business and meet the lads. When it finally happened, a hole was burned into my brain.

J.Albert & Son (Albert Productions) was the recording and management hub for many of Australia's great music artists between the 60s and the 80s. The powerhouse song writing duo Vanda and Young were based in the company's King Street HQ, as were acts like the Easybeats, John Paul Young and Stevie Wright. Alberts may as well have been Countdown's Sydney office.

I think it was Albert's general manager, Fifa, who ushered me into a tobacco fogged green room on the fourth floor. With the band indefinitely stranded due to a flight cancellation, I could hang around as long as I wanted.

Three tacky, yellow couches surrounded a small, wooden coffee table. Guitarist Malcolm Young's legs straddled the table while his brother Angus's legs stretched under it (they were short legs, so they didn't stretch that far). He was wearing jeans, which looked, well, just weird and wrong. No-one had ever seen him in anything other than his signature schoolboy shorts.

"Pull up a pew" said Angus, but there was so much stuff on the couches that I just crashed on the floor next to the coffee table. Both brothers had acoustic guitars and to my disbelief – they were playing jazz. I recognised the tune as "Watermelon Man" By Herbie Mann (I knew it from a jazz compilation I'd just bought). So instead of being holed up in a whisky sodden rock star backroom, I was transported to a Mississippi river bar in New Orleans.

They played this song for a while with intricate chords you'd never normally hear from the band. The experience blew my mind so I seized a couple of pencils and started drumming on the table. Then I grabbed an acoustic and played it like a bass, with Angus Young's naked foot tapping time on my kneecap.

I was jamming with AC/DC – top that!

After joyfully playing to me a cassette tape of Malcolm having fun with a groupie, Angus played for me an early version of "Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution", which was to feature on the Back in Black album. But when he got to "Never Gonna Die" in the chorus he played the augmented chord that Hendrix made famous in Foxy Lady and Purple Haze.

"Like it?" asked Angus, then turning to the others, "these wankers don't".

It's true. The song almost featured the Hendrix chord but Angus was outvoted by the majority who thought it clashed too much with the rest of the music. Angus was pissed off, to say the least.

Among the feet and legs on the coffee table was a full tea set, including flowered pot and delicate china cups. Indeed if you check out the album notes for Back in Black, you'll see the lads make it a contract condition to be supplied with tea on tap.

Bon Scott had made a brief appearance earlier, brandishing a hip flask and yelling "F****ing tea junkies" at us. Word came that the lads needed to get to the airport. "Come back after the tour," pleaded Angus. "Then we'll play some real music for you!" Bon Scott handed me his hip flask which I keep to this day. I even got a snifter of whisky from it, but true to form, he had drained just about every last drop. Now he's dead and I'm in prison – classic AC/DC.



• Health

Medications for Drug Dependence: Why Can It Be So Hard?



Image from @cool_ridge600

To About Time,

I would love it if you could do some research into the OST program and the issues including wait times can be up to 12 months and longer always with the same limited reasons and responses. I myself came into custody already on the opioid substance treatment long acting injection (OST LAI) yet have been refused treatment and been told I'm waitlisted. The suffering from withdrawals is intense and can play part in deteriorating mental health. Thanks for taking the time and not forgetting about us who are behind bars.

Regards, Samsara

Response from The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)

Thank you for your letter Samsara. It can be very hard to get medications for opioid dependence in prison and in the community. This article will try to explain why. The best treatments available for heroin dependence in Australia are methadone and buprenorphine (given as the Suboxone film or the long-acting injectable). Unfortunately, we don't have enough prescribers providing treatment across the country.

Why is it hard to find prescribing doctors and nurses?

- Some doctors and nurses won't prescribe the medications because of stigma and discrimination about people who use drugs.
- Some doctors and nurses are worried people will overdose which is a risk to their licence to practice as a doctor.

Why is methadone and buprenorphine harder to get in prisons and corrections centres?

Prescribing and supervising people who are dosing on methadone and buprenorphine comes with its own set of rules and issues we don't get with other medications. We know it isn't fair, but in prisons and corrections settings, getting these medications to the people who need them is even more complicated than it is in the community.

Some of the issues that make it difficult for prisons and corrections centres to give medication for heroin dependence include:

- Many prisons are in regional areas, where prescribing doctors and nurses are harder to find than in the bigger cities.
- Some of the short-term detention and remand centres don't have systems in place that can quickly get people dosed or don't have qualified health workers to provide the medications.
- Prisons won't let people get any takeaway doses. That means people have to be supervised going to the clinic and getting dosed. This takes time and more prison and health workers.

All of these issues mean that methadone and buprenorphine are expensive, time-consuming and difficult to organise. For people in prisons, it means a direct impact on their health, wellbeing and rights to choose what they need, because they face:

- Very long waitlists, sometimes several months long.
- Prisons that only offer treatment to people already on the program before they go into the prison.
- Places that will only let people have the long-acting injectable buprenorphine because it doesn't require daily dosing, has less overdose risk, is less likely to have people stood over, and is easier for the prisons to provide.
- Prisons that don't provide any of these medications even if the person has been on them for a long time.

How can we make change in prisons?

There are a lot of reasons and issues that result in people having no access to methadone and buprenorphine while in prison in Australia.

The good news is that there are people who are working hard to make positive changes, and you can join us in speaking out.

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) is a national organisation made up of people who use drugs and state Drug user Organisations (DUOs) across every state and territory in Australia. We've been fighting for the rights of our community of people who use drugs since 1989, along with other organisations, doctors, nurses, and even government officials.

We have worked to create policies and campaigns calling for:

Fast Access to Treatment

You should be able to get medications soon after entering prison.

The Right Medication for You

Everyone deserves the choice of treatment that works best for their body and needs.

Training and Resources for Prisons

Prisons and other corrections services should have well-trained health workers and staff who understand why these medications are important.

Respect, Equity and Dignity

People who use drugs who are in prison have the right to the same healthcare other people can get in the community, and should be able to access it without judgement, fear or disrespect.

AIVL will continue to work alongside others to ensure the best healthcare for people in prisons, corrections centres, and the community. To learn more about our work and how you can get involved, visit www.aivl.org.au, call 1800-692485 (MYAIVL), and mail at A1/35-39 Bourke Road Alexandria NSW 2015.

You are not alone. There are people who believe you matter. Together, we will keep fighting to get everyone in prison access to the life-changing treatments they deserve.

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When Anger Hides the Truth

Anger can be a 'secondary' emotion, often hiding real feelings underneath

By Annalise de Groot

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

Anger can be a confusing emotion, especially when it doesn't seem to fit the situation you are in. Sometimes, anger becomes the "easier" way to cope with being hurt. It can be seen as socially acceptable, and is often a simple and effective way to make whatever is causing the pain go away – at least temporarily. At its core, anger is an emotion meant to signal something is wrong, and for this reason, it can become a default way of communicating our needs. Unfortunately, when we use anger to address situations that involve other underlying emotions, it can lead to more problems in the long run.

When we experience anger in response to other, deeper emotions, it becomes a secondary emotion. If those underlying feelings remain unresolved, it can lead to more conflict and greater pain in the future.

A concept that regularly appears in 'therapy speak' is the Anger Iceberg (see image). While it may seem like a cheesy idea, it is a useful way of understanding what lies beneath anger.

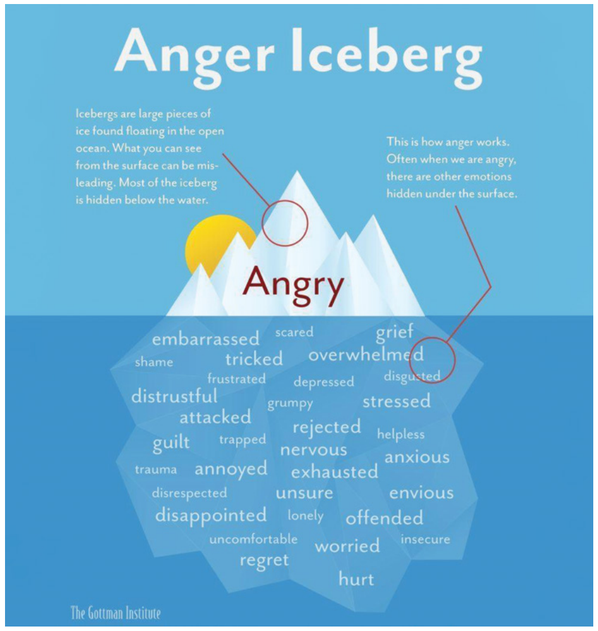

Image from The Gottman Institute

Consider Larry*. When he first started therapy, he told me that he was having problems in his relationship because he felt his partner was being unreasonable and demanding. When his partner asked him to spend more time together, he told me about times he would work himself up into a state of rage while explaining that he couldn't because he was tired from his other commitments. It got to a point where he began to feel angry as soon as he even thought about seeing his partner after work, and he would react with anger before she could even start a conversation with him. Larry's behaviour was reaching a point where his relationship was on the verge of ending.

When Larry and I explored the issue, at first he could only tell me about how unfair it was that his partner made requests of him, and how she didn't appreciate that he was too tired to spend time with her. He felt disrespected and unappreciated by her, which led him to use anger to push her away and protect himself from those feelings. When we explored this issue further, Larry came to realise that what he was feeling was a sense of not being good enough for his partner. He assumed that asking to spend more time together meant she wanted him to spend more money on dates and gifts, and that he would have to sacrifice his relaxation time to do so. He felt that she didn't appreciate the hours that he was working to make ends meet, and as though she was implying that he wasn't a good enough partner. Underneath his anger, he was embarrassed, afraid and hurt. Once Larry became aware of these deeper feelings, he was able to communicate them to his partner and they found a way to resolve the issue.

To understand anger as a secondary emotion, we must look deeper at what is causing it. This means letting go of anger itself and exploring the feelings that triggered it.

Instead of reacting with anger, it can be helpful to ask yourself what your needs are and why the issue has come up.

Often, this involves reflecting on what assumptions you may have made and questioning why you made them in the first place. One way to do this is by focusing on the facts of the situation and then asking for more information to test those assumptions. In order to communicate effectively in these situations, it is important to identify and address the emotions beneath the anger.



• Recipes

Carbonara & Tuna Bake

By Peter

Ingredients:

- 1 pack Carbonara pasta
- 1 pack tuna in oil (can also try any other tuna option)
- 1 packet Mi Goreng noodles (can also any other noodle option)
- 1 pack cream of chicken soup (can also try any other soup option)
- Gaol milk (as much as required, but average is half a carton)
- Seasoning
- Optional sauces
- Margarine

Method:

1. First, in a 1.8 litre tub, microwave the past and one or two spoons of margarine in an even mix of water and gaol milk. Simmer for up to eight or ten minutes until soft or springy. Stir frequently. When done, set the mixture to one side for the moment.
2. Next, add the soup powder, seasoning and noodles to a minimum amount of milk and summer for three minutes. Add the pasta mix.
3. Finally, add the tuna and bring to boil for a minute. Mix thoroughly and serve.

Fried Rice

By Damien

Ingredients:

- 1 pack oriental fried rice
- 1 tin champignons
- 1 can spam (either variety)
- 2 Mi Goreng noodles (add more if you have more people)
- 1 stir fry mixed vegetables
- 1 tin capsicum
- Margarine
- Seasoning
- Optional Sauces including Soy

1. First, part-cook the oriental fried rice, adding noodles toward the end, and set aside for the moment.
2. Next, dice the spam, slice the champignons and add mixed vegetables. If you have any sort of hotplate like a Breville, cook until the spam is lightly crisped.
3. In a plastic tub, add mixture to water and margarine then add rice and noodles together with seasoning and sauces. Bring to boil, stir regularly and keep cooking until water has been soaked up but not so much that the mixture is dry.

● Legal Corner

Do You Have a Right to Legal Representation?

"Putting an accused to trial in a serious case without a lawyer is barbarous" – Justice Murphy, McInnes v The Queen (1979)

By Daniel Vansetten

Daniel Vansetten spent nearly 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study a Bachelor of Laws. He uses his lived experience and study to advocate for prison reform, working with prison reform advocates across Australia and internationally.



Gregory Peck, as Atticus Finch, is shown in a scene from the film 'To Kill a Mockingbird'

This is intended to provide legal information only and is no substitute for legal advice. If you wish to take any action arising from matters raised in this publication you should consult a lawyer immediately.

The case of Dietrich

In 1992, the landmark judgment by the High Court of Australia in *Dietrich (Dietrich v The Queen* (1992) 177 CLR 292) extended the common law right to a fair trial, more accurately stated as the right not to be tried unfairly, to require trial judges, subject to the below considerations, to adjourn, postpone or stay a trial to allow an unrepresented accused to obtain legal representation. The High Court ruling did not, however, go so far as to provide a clear right to legal representation.

Olaf Dietrich was forced to represent himself in the Victorian County Court on serious drug offences, including importing a trafficable quantity of heroin and possession of heroin. Legal aid was denied on the ground that Mr Dietrich had no real prospects of acquittal.

During the trial, Mr Dietrich repeatedly complained about having to represent himself. One interesting exchange between Mr Dietrich and the judge during trial was exemplified in the High Court ruling as follows:

His Honour: I want you to understand this, Mr Dietrich – if you will listen to me – that I have no power to give you legal representation.

Accused: You have the power to adjourn the matter, sir.

His Honour: I don't propose to adjourn the matter. The matter is an alleged offence, which occurred the year before last, and it is desirable that the matter proceed to trial.

Accused: Desire by whose side?

His Honour: Desirable to the community.

Accused: The community has got no interest in it. If the community is aware that they're putting people in front of a court without representation, the community would be aghast.

His Honour: Yes. Well, I don't propose to engage in this type of matter; this debate can get us nowhere.

The trial lasted approximately 40 days. Without formal legal training, Mr Dietrich was successful in defending one charge of possession, although found guilty of trafficking.

Mr Dietrich's appeal of conviction ultimately went to the High Court. The acquittal on one charge was central to the decision of the High Court, with the High Court noting that the acquittal disproved any claim that Mr Dietrich had no real prospect of acquittal.

The rule from *Dietrich*

The rule in Dietrich applies where (1) the offence charged is a "serious" offence; (2) the accused is unable to obtain legal representation through no fault of their own; and (3) the accused wishes to be represented.

While the term "serious offence" was not defined in *Dietrich*, the term is generally accepted to mean indictable offences. The South Australian Supreme Court found, generally, that 'offences carrying a penalty of imprisonment should be regarded as "serious"' (*Weinel v Fedcheshen* (1995) 65 SASR 156).

Ultimately, whether a case is stayed on the Dietrich principle will depend on the circumstances of the case and any risk of a substantial miscarriage of justice. Legislation in many jurisdictions now provides for an accused to be represented through legal assistance schemes. See, for example: s 197 *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* (VIC), s 6 *Criminal Law* (Legal Representation) Act 2001 (SA).

What if the accused is at fault for not having representation?

In 1994, a NSW Court of Criminal Appeal case, *R v Small* (1994) 22 NSWLR 575, found that the court must still consider the interests of justice as well as the interests of the accused, even when the accused may be at fault for the absence of legal representation.

In *Small*, there had been some misunderstanding between Mr Small and his legal representatives which resulted in them deciding not to represent him at trial. Real attempts to secure representation at the last minute had failed. Subsequently, at trial, Mr Small complained on multiple occasions that he was not getting a fair trial due to having no legal representation. The jury also expressed concerns about the lack of legal representation in a note to the judge. The judge continued the trial and Mr Small was convicted of two counts of armed robbery.

The Court of Appeal found the trial judge should have balanced the interests of justice and the interests of Mr Small, and 'ought very seriously to consider whether an accused should be forced on without [representation] in [a] case in which there is a reasonable possibility that he may obtain [representation] ... without unbearable delay'. The convictions were quashed.

Final word

In 2006, then Justice Kirby of the High Court of Australia defended the decision in *Dietrich*, stating 'Surely [a person's] liberty should not depend upon the means of a person. Ultimately, to force an unrepresented person to defend a serious criminal charge without a lawyer is a form of cruel and unusual punishment.'

If you believe your right to a fair trial has not been provided, you should seek advice from a lawyer.

● Legal Q&A

Do you have a legal query that you want answered? Is there an area of law that you think people inside should know more about?

Send us your question and we might publish an answer in the paper. So far we've written about bail, parole, remand, freedom of information, making complaints, disability support, financial stress, and more.

Let us know what you want to know! We are looking for questions of a general nature, rather than personal situations.

All information that we publish is of a general nature, and is not a substitute for professional legal advice.

Write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

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Prisoners' Legal Service

Travel While on Parole

By Prisoners' Legal Service (PLS)

Prisoners' Legal Service (PLS) is a not-for-profit community legal centre that is dedicated to providing information and advice to people in Queensland prisons. PLS provides information and advice in relation to issues arising from imprisonment, including human rights violations, use of solitary confinement, parole matters, and obtaining access to rehabilitation. Due to high demand for assistance and limited resources, PLS can provide a limited number of people in Queensland prisons with assistance and representation. Eligibility criteria is applied when selecting clients to receive our assistance.

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Can I travel when I'm on parole?

A parole order will include general and specific conditions. These include getting approval from the relevant authority for any travel interstate, or overseas.

Interstate travel

Getting approval to travel to another state or territory in Australia will come from the relevant state or territory agency.

In Queensland for example, if you wish to travel interstate for fewer than seven days, permission must be first given by your Parole Officer, or by the Parole Board. If you have been granted parole by a Court ('Court ordered parole') then the period of leave outside of Queensland may be more than seven days. The Parole Board can also grant permission to travel interstate for more than seven days. An approval granted for travel can be subject to conditions that the Parole Board considers to be appropriate.

Approval processes are in place in each state and territory. The requirements for obtaining permission to travel, as well as details such as how long you can be away for, are specific to each location. Talk with your Parole Officer about what is required to get interstate travel approval in your state or territory.

Overseas travel

You will also need approval to travel overseas whilst on parole. In Queensland you have to get permission from the Parole Board, which will only grant permission to travel overseas for compassionate purposes in exceptional circumstances.

As with interstate travel, the application process for obtaining permission to travel overseas while on parole depends on the rules in your state or territory. In all cases, prior approval is required in order to travel overseas.

Federal parole

If you are on a federal parole order and wish to travel interstate, you should check the interstate travel conditions included in your parole order to confirm which agency you need to get permission from.

If you wish to travel overseas you must obtain permission from the federal Attorney-General or their delegate. During the first quarter of a federal parole order, overseas travel will only be approved in urgent or exceptional circumstances, and the maximum period of travel permitted during this time is four weeks.

For the remainder of your federal parole period, travelling overseas is only allowed for a legitimate reason that cannot be delayed until after the parole period has ended. Travelling overseas for a holiday will not normally be approved. The maximum period of travel permitted during this period of parole is six weeks.

Applications should be made in writing and contain detailed information about why you want to travel overseas. The applications should be made to your Parole Officer at least two months before you plan to travel, unless circumstances do not allow such time.

The Attorney-General's office recommends that you do not apply for a passport or make travel arrangements to go overseas until you receive written permission to travel from the delegate of the Attorney-General.

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Call 0478 861 131

• Learn

Critical Thinking & the Art of Persuasion – Forceful Arguments

Reasoning with probability – make your arguments more persuasive

By Daniel Vansetten

Daniel Vansetten spent nearly 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study a Bachelor of Laws. He uses his lived experience and study to advocate for prison reform, working with prison reform advocates across Australia and internationally.



Probability:
The extent to which something is likely to happen or be the case.

In this series, we showed that arguments are attempts to persuade people to act or believe something. The strongest arguments are sound arguments. Sound arguments are supported with reasons that are truthful and logically lead to the conclusion.

Sometimes, however, the conclusion of an argument is not definite. Instead, the argument is based on probabilities – or a likelihood that something may or may not occur. In this case, we must use correct language to ensure that our conclusion is true. In terms of critical thinking, this is called making the argument 'forceful'.

Let's do an example:
A worker is late three out of every five days, and the business owner says, 'you are always late for work'. The statement is clearly untrue. The worker is not 'always' late. The term 'always' means they are never on time.

Instead, an accurate claim would be, 'you were late three out of five days this week' (literally accurate) or 'you are regularly late' or 'you have a habit of being late' (not literal but still true).

It's important to use language of probability to maintain legitimacy, strengthen your arguments and prevent your aims from being undermined. In this example, the owner aims to address the worker's lateness, and encourage a change in behaviour. However, the inaccuracy of the owner's statement makes it easy for the worker to create a diversion away from the aim, and instead, the conversation may switch into an argument about the accuracy of what the owner said. The owner could then be left with a more disgruntled worker and no change in behaviour.

The point is, we should be very careful about using words that portray definitive values, such as 'always', 'never', 'cannot'. It may undermine your argument and turn people off. Instead, try to use *phrases of probability* like 'sometimes', 'possibly', 'rarely'.

Below are more examples of definitive phrases and phrases of probability. You will note the phrases depicting probability do so in varying degrees. See if you can think of more!

Definitive phrases	
Always	Forever
Constantly	Never
Certainly not	Impossible
Will not	Can't
Won't	

Phrases of probability	
Probable	Regularly
Likely	Often
Sometimes	Possible
Improbable	Unlikely
Rarely	

Doing the math

Probability is all about math. Phrases of probability can have associated numerical percentages, either real or perceived. For example, 'certain' is 100%, while 'impossible' is 0%. The term 'probable' means more likely than not, or greater than a 50% chance. While this technically includes anything from 51% to below certain (100%), phrases of probability can help make your statements be more accurate. For example, 'usually' can mean something different for everyone, but it sits somewhere in the 70-90% range. Using accurate phrases of possibility will strengthen your argument.

While accuracy is important however, phrases depicting probability, such as 'likely' or 'unlikely', can be more 'forceful' than using accurate numerical values. You may have heard people make statements using percentages, such as, 'Newcastle has a mere five per cent chance of winning their next game!' But how would they know this? Providing a specific numeric value requires analysis of all the relevant factors that may affect the outcome. Unless you're a rugby analyst, you would be unlikely to have all this information required to make this statement. You therefore might come off a bit silly! Instead, the argument would carry more force by saying, 'It's highly unlikely Newcastle will win the next game.'

Adding context to situations to show the true probability

Understanding the full context of any situation is crucial to understanding the probability of a relevant event. For example, let's say a man called 'Gary' had been charged with an assault that occurred at a pub. Gary has already recently assaulted someone in the pub, and had only been in that pub four times in the past six months. This means an assault had occurred two out of the four times he'd been in that pub, or 50% chance. There is therefore currently a 'probable' risk that Gary would commit assault again if he were to go to that pub.

However, a man we shall call 'Shane' was also involved in this assault in the pub. Shane had gone to this pub at least twice a week for the past 20 years. He has a previous assault charge in this pub, but from 10 years ago. While Shane therefore has had two assaults in that pub, he had been there on over 2,000 occasions (calculating at twice per week, 52 weeks over 20 years). The probability in this case is one incident in 1000 attendances. Based on this circumstance alone (there would be other factors at play!), he is at a much lower risk of being involved in an incident than Gary.

Give it a go

We have touched on the surface of the complex topic of reasoning with probability. See if you can identify examples in your claims or other people's claims relating to probability, and analyse the words used to describe the probability of an event to determine if different language could be used to increase the force of the statement!

The Learn section is for articles and practical how- to-dos on a variety of topics. If there's anything you want to learn about, please write to us!

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Melbourne VIC 3000

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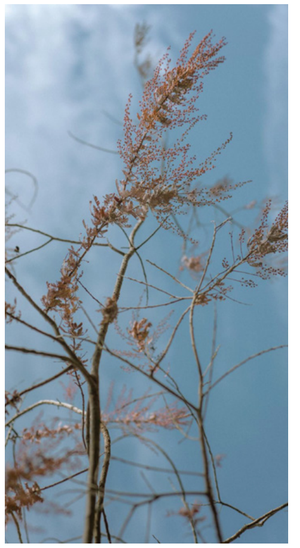
• Reintegration

Starting Fresh: A Journey to Reintegration and New Beginnings

By Whitney Collis

After spending just shy of nine years incarcerated, Whitney is now back in the community and starting to put her life together again. Whitney is working as a business and policy consultant, is self-employed, and uses her lived experience to advocate for change within the systems of society. This year, she will start a Bachelor of Arts at Griffith University, with a double major in Sociology & Public Relations.



Willy Pleasance

For many of us, the idea of re-entering society after incarceration can feel like standing at a crossroad, unsure of which way to go. It's overwhelming. But I'm here to tell you that, despite the obstacles, starting a new life is not only possible – it's within your control. My own journey of reintegration into society wasn't easy, but through dedication, support, and a willingness to embrace change, I've found a way forward.

Avoiding the traps of parole

It's easy to feel like the system is set up to trap you, to watch you stumble and fail. But it's important to remember that while parole can be a challenge, it's also an opportunity. It's a checkpoint to make sure you are staying on track and not falling back into old habits. However, that doesn't mean you need to let it control you. The key to staying out of trouble is planning ahead. This is where support services can play a huge role. Support groups, therapy, and job training programs are all designed to help you stay on course. They provide the tools to keep you grounded, even when the road gets rough. Don't underestimate the power of having a community behind you, guiding you when you can't see the next step clearly.

Parole is a bit like the guardrails on a mountain road – while they keep you from falling off the edge, you're the one steering the wheel.

Every junction point is a decision you make: Will you go left and face old temptations, or right and build something new? I've had my own moments of weakness, but I've learned to ask myself, "What's the end goal here?" Letting that question guide me has kept me focused, even when it felt like everything around me was pulling me back.

The opportunity to start over

Coming home after time inside can feel like waking up from a long, hard sleep. You may find yourself surrounded by new technology, changing social norms, and the weight of expectations from parole officers, family and society. It's a lot to carry! But I've learned something important during my reintegration: this is your second chance to start fresh. You are no longer defined by the mistakes of the past. The road ahead is wide open, and you have the power to choose your direction.

The first step is to accept the reality of this new beginning. Yes, the past may have shaped you, but it doesn't define you. You have the chance to build a new life – one grounded in who you truly are and the values you want to live by. I used the time I spent incarcerated not just to reflect on my mistakes, but to figure out the true "me." What do I stand for? What do I want from life? Taking that time to really define my values helped me find direction when it came time to take my first steps back into society. Build a clear path, set small achievable goals, and stick to them.

Building a new track

The key to reintegrating into society successfully is creating a new track to follow. One of the hardest parts about leaving prison is that the old track you used to be on – whether it was crime, toxic relationships or unhealthy coping mechanisms – doesn't just disappear. But you can build a new one, one step at a time.

We all face crossroads, and sometimes, it's hard to know which direction to take. But don't be afraid to ask for directions. Whether it's through parole officers, re-entry programs, or support groups, there are people and organizations ready to help you stay on the track you want to follow.

Reaching out isn't a sign of weakness – it's a sign of strength. It shows that you're willing to invest in your future and take the necessary steps to rebuild your life.

I've learned that building a new track means choosing better friends, seeking new opportunities, and refusing to let fear or old patterns of behaviour dictate my path.

The importance of after-incarceration support: Don't be afraid to reach out

Reintegration isn't a solo journey – it's a community effort. The transition from prison to society is a complex process, and it's important to reach out for help. Too many of us feel that we have to do it alone, or that asking for help makes us weak. But the truth is, reaching out for support is one of the strongest things you can do.

After I was released, I connected with after-incarceration programs that helped me with housing, finding employment, and connecting with a network of people who had walked similar paths. These services are invaluable. They are designed to help you navigate the challenges of re-entry and set you up for success. Whether it's mental health counseling or life skills workshops, don't let pride get in the way of using the resources that can help you rebuild your life.

In conclusion: The future is yours

Your journey may not always be easy, but it's possible. Reintegration into society is not a linear path – it's filled with highs, lows, and everything in between. But remember, every decision you make is a step toward the life you want to live. Don't be daunted by the road ahead. Instead, focus on building a future where you value yourself, where dignity and pride can be the driving forces behind seeking support; because that support is always there to help guide you along the way.

In the end, this is your new beginning, and the possibilities are endless. Stay on track, seek support, and never forget: Your number one goal is to be proud of you.

• Mob

Keeping the Fire Burning

Interview with Uncle Robbie Thorpe from Camp Sovereignty and the 'Black GST' movement



Uncle Robbie Thorpe at Camp Sovereignty, picture by Storm Bloomfield

On 26 January 2024, Krauatungalung (Gurnai) / Djapwurrung (Gundditjmara) elder Uncle Robbie Thorpe, along with several other First Nations people, re-ignited Camp Sovereignty on Boonwurrung Country in Melbourne's Kings Domain. About Time spoke to Uncle Robbie Thorpe, a First Nations activist and truth-teller, about his fight for sovereignty for Aboriginal people.

What is Camp Sovereignty and what does it represent?

Camp Sovereignty represents and raises awareness of our sovereignty. Our sovereignty, or supreme authority, was never ceded on these lands. Other Commonwealth countries have treaties, but not here. Colonists built their country on the idea of 'Terra Nullius', that the land was 'empty' – but we're still here.

Camp Sovereignty started back in 2006 when the Commonwealth Games – or 'Stolen'wealth Games – came here. We received a lot of media attention at the time, making other countries aware of the colonial history of Australia and the oppression of Aboriginal people.

Around that time, we started the Black GST movement – calling attention to the issues of Genocide, Sovereignty, and Treaty (GST). The movement believes we must focus on ending the genocide of our people, by recognising our sovereignty over these lands, by creating genuine and lasting treaty. This is our way to collective liberation, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike.

On 26 January 2024, we lit a fire down at the King's Domain, reclaiming that place. That spot is a sacred site for Aboriginal people, sacred but also brutal. We brought ashes back from the fire at the Tent Embassy in Canberra to reignite the fire at Camp Sovereignty. We've been keeping the fire burning now for nearly a year.

You've taken the government to court on several occasions, can you tell us about that?

We're trying to get the government into court to deal with the intentional genocide of our people. It started with Cook in 1770. They brought smallpox into this country, biological warfare into this country, put us away and stripped us of our health and our rights.

The original people of this country have been badly treated. We've been subject to genocide from the get-go.

We charged John Howard in 1997 and was told by the High Court that genocide was not a crime according to Australian law and was told to pay costs.

We have cases still going. We're trying to get into the International Criminal Court to get justice about the genocide.

Can you explain the link between genocide and environmental collapse?

I believe that genocide leads to ecocide. If you kill the custodians and the guardians of a place, the change you would cause is so great, that you cause ecocide in the process. No one is left to defend the land and its sacredness. You become unaware of the effect that would have on you and the land. That's what we're seeing now – ecocide. It impacts everyone– white people as well. We must have sovereignty to protect our beautiful lands for everyone.

Do you have a message for Mob inside prison?

Firstly, I do not encourage violence. Using violence emboldens a violent response and causes us harm. There is a racist community out there, making it a dangerous place for our people. The most dangerous place for Aboriginal people is our own country, as we stand in the way of the colonisers. But violence is not the way. We must be smart. We're a tiny community, indoctrinated with self-hatred, in a colony that cannot handle our existence.

In saying this, I don't want to incite mob in prison to start speaking like me. People are at a greater risk inside prison, deaths in custody are common. And speaking like me puts you at odds, so you got to be careful.

Ultimately, you got to be clever about managing the truth, managing what you say and what the impact would be. You must think about what you say and how it could impact your kids and your relationships with the community.

I've never been in jail – I'm no angel, but I'm careful how I step. I don't have my family around me, because it impacts them. It's better for them to let me do what I do without them around. And that's not possible or wanted by everyone.

Another thing – don't go knocking your heads up against the police. They're paid to protect the system. The police are just guys doing a job. They implement the law, but they do not make the law. It's the bigger system we need to challenge.

I grew up in Fitzroy around community. I have been questioned by police a lot (often three times a day) asking my name and address – but I never had any real problems. They're trained to stop us and ask us these questions. But we got to be smarter than react or we become harmed.

Educate yourself and the wider community. Educate your kids. I believe in the truth. The truth is a powerful force. It can be indestructible. People can relate to it. But I've been doing this for a long time. The key is you must be patient. Imagine the light on the horizon and walk towards it. Lately, the light is a lot brighter. I've lost a lot of people on the way – but amazingly, I've survived.

You've been doing activist work for decades now – what sustains you?

I'm sustained by the love for my people and the love for my country. I want to see justice in my lifetime, while I'm still here. I want to set the foundations for my cousins. I will keep working away at the truth. I have undying faith in the truth. It's taken a long time to get any sort of recognition, but I think about my ancestors before me, who never had a hope in hell. I'm fighting for them, and my future and my children's future on this land. It's such a beautiful place here, thinking of its sacredness and beauty.

Non-Aboriginal people are welcome to stand up and liberate themselves alongside us – no-one is free until everyone is free.



• Write to Us

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

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

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About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

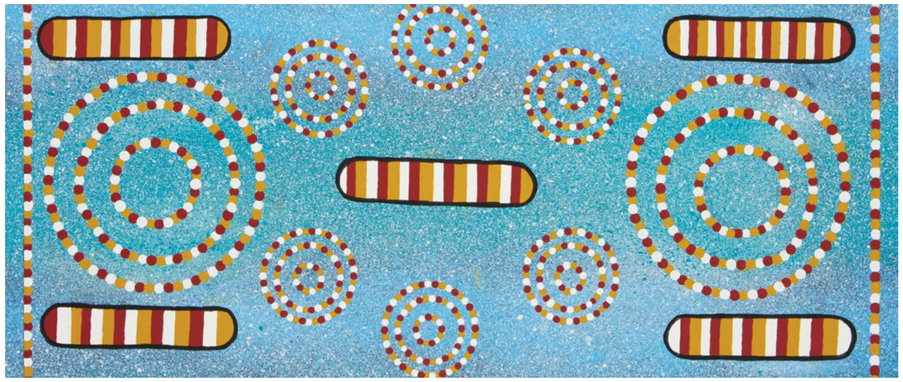
Or, if you have access to email, you can email us at:

contribute@abouttime.org.au



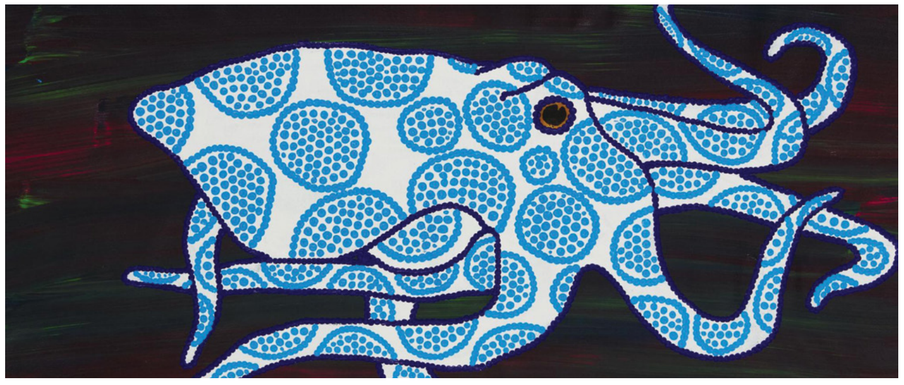
Goanna
By Juddy H
Gunditjmara
2024

This goanna represents me and the dots represent the people in my life. The dots on the goanna are the loved ones in my life and the people who have had an impact and made a difference in my life. The groups of dots represent my people in places I've travelled and people's paths I've crossed. Some are positive and some are negative, either way, they are part of the journey in life.



Five Clans
By Arthur H
Gunaikurnai
2024

This is a story of the five clans/shields of the Gunnai Kurnai people. These five clans are spread all over, from the Snowy Rivers through to Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyres, Bairnsdale, Gippsland and past Mirboo to Port Albert and Wilsons Promontory. The five clans are: Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Brabralung, Tatungalung and Krauatungalung.



Octopi
By M.Casey
Dhungutti/Bundjalung
2024

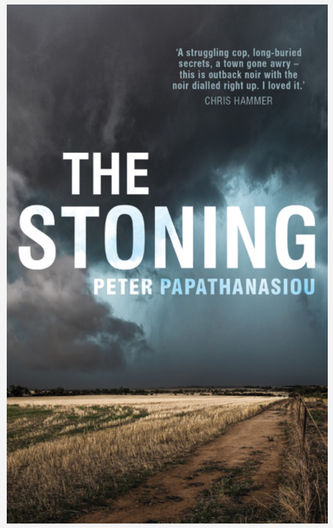
I was struggling to create a peaceful happy feeling until I started painting. These paintings are the first few I've ever done and I got a lot of positive feedback making a feeling of incredible happiness.



Stronger Now
By Caleb M
Dharawal
2024

This painting is about a very strong gonna. He had a very tough upbringing, so he had to grow up and get strong at a very young age. You could say he was a man at the young age of 12. What he has been through as a kid, no man or woman could imagine but how he turned out after his hardship/ upbringing is all worth it. He is very nice and kind to everyone, respectful, well mannered, his family are his life as well as his culture. Old school morals are rare these days and always remember hardship and hard times will only make you stronger in every way.

Culture



Book Review: The Stoning by Peter Papathanasiou

By Alexander

Alexander writes from Ron Barwick Prison, Tasmania.

One of the recent reads in our 'Book Blokes' book group is titled The Stoning, by Greek Australian author Peter Papathanasiou. It is another Australian book offering along the lines of Jane Harper and Sarah Barrie. The genre is crime fiction, set in the Australian outback, in rural, sometimes insular communities where everyone seems to know everyone else. This is set in the outback NSW town of Cobb where a woman, a local school teacher, has been stoned to death.

It is a small town, with a population of maybe a thousand or less, with two pubs, an asylum seeker detention compound, a group of Indigenous Australians with a smattering of white Australians. The stoning prompts the powers that be in the capital city to send a former child resident, now a detective based in Sydney, to investigate the murder. He happens to be a Greek Australian, Detective Sergeant George Maniolis. He is confronted with a police presence who a) has had little experience investigating a murder and b) has a laconic, cynical and unfair approach to crime.

Despite these constraints, the lack of resources, being targeted by whoever, in the form of somebody burning his prized Valiant, and other intimidating tactics, George does with difficulty eventually solve the case. I will not however comment further, because I don't want to spoil what is a great read with several twists.

Even so, the relationship he develops with the younger police constables, along with his belief that the simple answer is not as simple as it might appear, creates an interesting narrative (storyline) and a belief in the reader that justice will prevail. The novel addresses themes of discrimination, the veracity of placing legitimate asylum seekers in the outback for detention (interesting topic given current events) and the search for power. All in all, an enjoyable read, the outcome is not predictable, so you will want to read through to the end to find out who the perpetrator is.

Papathanasiou's writing is accessible to all readers, as it is engaging and relatable.

The Ron Barwin Prison library in Tasmania has a copy of this book on the shelves, or alternatively you can join the book club to receive a copy. Jane Harper and Sarah Barrie's books are also on the shelves.



Back to Black

A biographical drama about singer-songwriter Amy Winehouse

By Vincent

Vincent writes from Long Bay Correctional Centre, NSW.

This is a film about music powerhouse, multi-award winning artist, and a one-of-a-kind record breaking songstress from London, Amy Winehouse.

'Back to Black' charts Amy's life from her teen years through to her success as a world famous musician and singer. The film shows how Amy's unique sound garnered her a record contract in the UK and the release of her acclaimed album "Frank". This biopic focuses on Amy's love affair with Blake, and the significant impact this period had on Amy's music. Both Marisa Abela (as Amy Winehouse) and Jack O'Connell (as Blake) provide outstanding performances.

A tie that proves all-too-consuming for Amy is her attachment to alcohol. The grip that alcohol held over Winehouse is illustrated throughout the film. Indeed, the battle with addiction is shown to be one of the major obstacles throughout Amy's life.

The movie does a superb job of showcasing the talent and persona of Winehouse. The audience is left with a better appreciation of how and why the gifted artist was able to reach the pinnacle of her industry. Furthermore, Amy's emotional make-up is revealed as the core to her music and the reason she was so relatable and loved by her fans.

I finished the film wanting to see more of the final era of Amy's life. An explanation or an outline of the events that occurred at the end of Winehouse's journey would have served the biopic well. At its close, we are left pondering: just what drove Amy 'back to black'?

Rating: 4 Jailbirds – "An excellent expose of the woman and artist that was Amy Winehouse"

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Creative

Stair-Ways

The stairways in my life are different at every step of my day. Whether it's going up or down or just round and around I cannot figure it anymore. Where do the steps take me? When will I finish the 'one step at a time'.

By Sofia

From Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company Workshops and Art Exhibition, operating out of Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower, Victoria.



Charcoal, Acrylic on Paper, 2024

This Miserable Existence

By Darren

Darren writes from NSW.

Hi Team,

Recently I was in the holding cells of the Sydney Downing Centre Courts waiting for a decision from my jury who were deliberating for the 4th day.

I had a copy of About Time Issue 1 to read, so, with plenty of time to fill, I decided to try one of the Creative Writing Exercises – Suggestion 1 – all the action takes place in one defined space, indoors or outdoors. I chose an outdoor bus shelter (see below). On the 5th day of deliberations, I'm pleased to tell you the jury returned Not Guilty verdicts for 5 out of 6 serious counts and Guilty on 1 alternate count of Common Assault. I was bailed immediately as I had already served more than enough time for that type of charge. Cheers to everyone in Sector 4, Y1/B Pod at Nowra.

Regards,
Darren

Icy fingers clawed the nape of the old man's neck as swirling wind whipped up dust and debris into Jack's tired weathered face. Eyes stinging and watery, rubbed red and raw from repeated assaults of city detritus, Jack pulled the collar of his threadbare Vinnie's coat tight against the onslaught. He huddled as best he could into a corner of the open-fronted bus shelter. It provided little by means of any real protection from the storm, nevertheless it proved a vast improvement on the rotting park bench from which he'd awakened on that awful Godforsaken day. Incessant gnawing hunger, his throat painfully parched, Jack found himself fondly reminiscing on the warm bed and full belly of a recent stint in jail. "Better that than this miserable existence?" he pondered. What petty crime might reward him with shelter and three meals a day to see him through the Winter? 'twas a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Give Me Hope

By Joshua

Joshua was formerly incarcerated in Victorian prisons.

Alone in a world of darkness and pain
The world there outside, I don't see the rain
Is the sun shining brightly? I really don't know
There's no place to turn and nowhere to go

Moments of madness can quickly turn bad
Anger, frustration and a need to feel sad
Tears fill my eyes, my emptiness exposed
Thoughts are with loved ones that I long to hold

Time here is volatile, no longer my own
A drive to the shops, or a chat on the phone
No longer a privilege in what I say or do
My life is so fragile, in how time sees me through

My two grandchildren, I just long to see
Wanting to hug them and hold them to me
I'm angry inside and I feel such pain
My emotions run high again and again

Someone please help me, it's getting harder to cope
Dear Lord up above, please give me some hope
Free me from this torment and show me the light
I'm broken, I'm battered, no more can I fight

Whispers in the Wind

By Rachel

Rachel writes from Numinbah Correctional Centre in Queensland.

I dedicate this poem to my king Benny...
May you finally Rest In Peace.

One day you're here, the next you're gone
There's nothing I can say that makes the pain go away.
My whispers every night never reached you it seems
Now I only see you in my vivid dreams
Our lives both torn apart by addiction and crime
We've paid the ultimate price and ran out of time.
My whispers now carry your ashes up to heaven
While my heart's left here to ache 24/7.
By the dawn of tomorrow
A new day breaks
A world you're no longer in
I know you're looking down on me
I hear your whispers in the wind.....

Surely You'll Love Again

By RM

RM writes from Brisbane Correctional Centre in Queensland.

I see the pain in your lost eyes,
And see, all your life ends in cries,

I've seen that you've been down,
I can tell the way you wear your frown,

You drink late into the morrow,
All that pain, all that sorrow,

A heart stone-cold, you can't really mend,
Blissful mind, how did it bend?

This wall between you and I,
Can be tricky, to the blind eye,

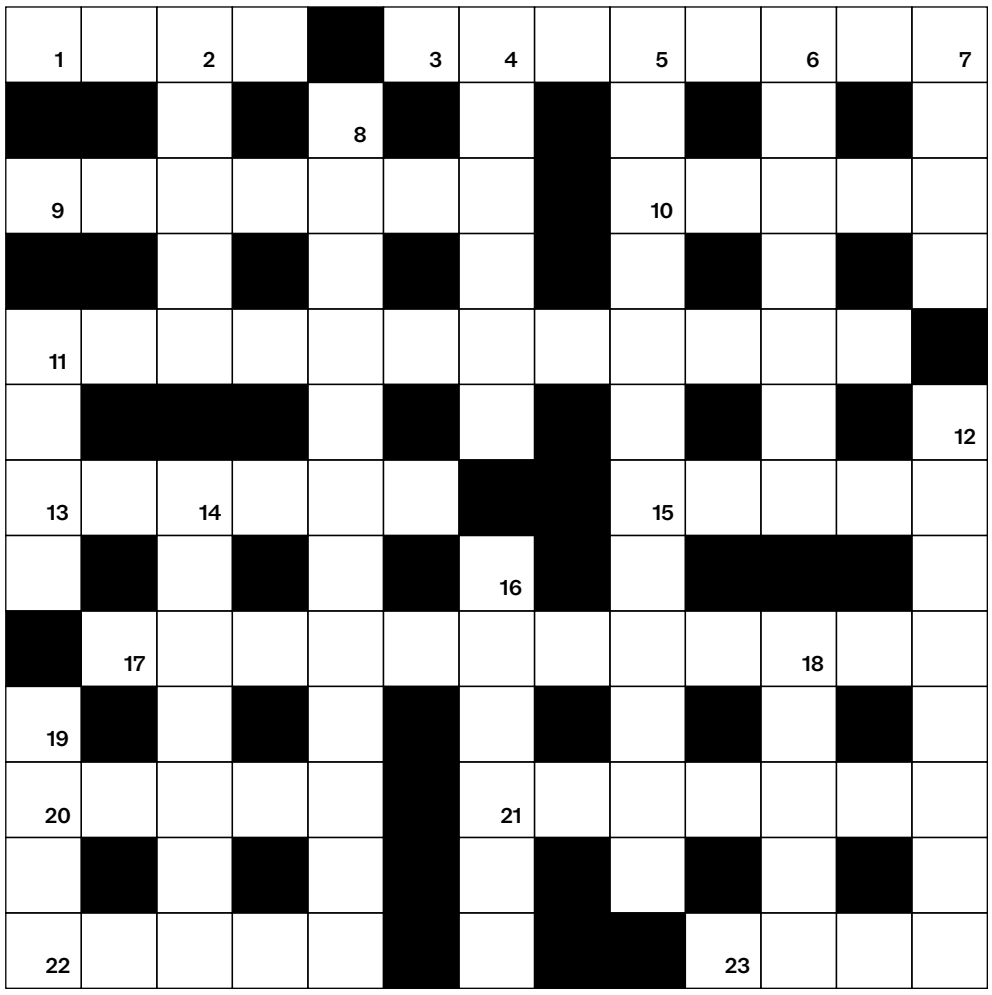
Surely you'll love again,
Till then I can only be your friend.

• Play

Crossword

ACROSS
1. Soft drink (4)
3. Large snake (8)
9. Kind of breakfast cereal (7)
10. Certain to end in failure (2-3)
11. Donation (12)
13. Cattle feeder (6)
15. Relating to the quality of sound (in music) (5)
17. Lack of ability (12)
20. Bath gowns (5)
21. Wearing away (7)
22. Highschool assignment (5)
23. Observed (4)

DOWN
2. Looking tired (5)
4. Close at hand (6)
5. A country's fundamental rules (12)
6. Very young infant (7)
7. Your mother's sister (4)
8. Bravely (12)
11. Large town (4)
12. Substance causing a reaction (8)
14. Public transport vehicle (7)
16. Velocities (6)
18. Sound (5)
19. French soft cheese (4)



Quiz

1. Name the TV show where single people marry total strangers.
2. On which date does Halloween fall?
3. Compared to their body weight, which animal is the strongest – Dung Beetle, Elephant, Ant or Cow?
4. How many minutes are there in a day?
5. Which fruit is used to make wine?
6. In which city is the Colosseum located?
7. Which chocolate's slogan is 'Feel the bubbles'?
8. What is the main ingredient of guacamole?
9. Who is the lead singer of rock band Crowded House?
10. In what part of the body is the radius bone located?

Word Morph

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

①	ROCK
②	
③	
④	
⑤	SAND

Card Game – Blitz

This card game is for two or more players and you'll need a standard 52 playing card deck. Aces are worth 11 points, face cards are worth 10 points and numbered cards are worth their value. The aim of the game is to have a hand equal to or as close to 31 as possible. The player with the lowest hand loses.

Set up

Each player draws one card from a shuffled deck. The player with the lowest card becomes the dealer. The dealer shuffles the deck and gives three cards to each player in a clockwise direction. The remaining deck forms the stock pile and it is placed in the middle. The top card of the stock is flipped over, placed beside it and becomes the discard pile.

How to Play

The player to the left of the dealer starts. When it is their turn, players choose to either pick a card from the stock or from the discard pile and then they must discard one of their cards, all in an attempt to get a hand as close or equal to 31.

Only cards of the same suit count as points. For example, if a player has an Aces of Spades, an 8 of Spades, and a King of Hearts, the player's hand is worth 19.

If a player has a three of a kind, the hand is worth 30 points.

When a player is comfortable with their hand, they knock on the table. All other players then have one more draw to try and improve their hand. The player with the lowest hand loses for that round. If the player who knocks has the lowest hand, they give up a loss of 2 rather than 1. When a player loses 4 times, they are out of the game. The last player standing wins the game!

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, the clue is:
14 February

H	V	M	I	D
A	E	E	X	B
L	A	N	T	E
E	M	I	R	N
R	N	T	W	E

Jokes

I used to hate facial hair but then it grew on me.
Joke from Word Magazine, Cessnock CC, NSW

Riddles

1. What has to be broken before you can use it?
2. What disappears as soon as you say its name?
3. There are five sisters in a room. Anne is reading a book, Margaret is cooking, Kate is playing chess, and Marie is sleeping. What's the fifth sister doing?
4. What can fill a room but takes up no space?

Riddle Answers

1. An egg
2. Silence
3. Playing chess with Kate
4. Light

Word Morph Answers

1. Rock
2. Sock
3. Sack
4. Sank
5. Sand

Quiz Answers

1. Married at First Sight
2. 31st October
3. Dung Beetle
4. 1440 minutes
5. Grapes
6. Rome, Italy
7. Aero
8. Avocado
9. Neil Finn
10. Arm

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Soda
3. Anaconda
9. Granola
10. No win
11. Contribution
13. Trough
15. Tonal
17. Incompetence
20. Robes
21. Eroding
22. Essay
23. Seen

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

2. Drawn
4. Nearby
5. Constitution
6. Newborn
7. Aunt
8. Courageously
11. City
12. Allergen
14. Omnibus
16. Speeds
18. Noise
19. Brie