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• Australia's National Prison Newspaper

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About Time

Victoria and ACT Cut the Price of Prison Phone Calls in Half

Several other Australian states look to reduce the "exorbitant" rates imposed on those in prison and their loved ones.

By Denham Sadler

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

From the start of February, people in prison in Victoria will now be charged 25c per minute to make a mobile phone call, down from the previous 57c per minute rate.

This means that the cost of a maximum-length, 12-minute phone call is now $3, down from the previous cost of $6.85.

It takes the cost of prison phone calls in Victoria from being the most expensive in Australia to being among the cheapest out of all the states and territories.

The ACT government also reduced the cost of prison phone calls late last year, with the introduction of a new detainee telephone system bringing costs down from 44c per minute to 18.7c per minute to call both landlines and mobiles.

This reduces the cost of a 12-minute phone call from a prison in the ACT to $2.25.

Continued on page 6.



Ike Curtis

On Repeat

In the monotony and desperate repetition of prison life, you become a stranger to yourself

By Storm

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

The inevitable monotony of another day decays your precious time, alongside your brain cells as you get trapped listening to those who surround you once again. The walls seem to grow thicker as the sun rises each day. Your patience is as thin as it's ever been and your tolerance even slimmer. Preparing yourself for another ten and half hours straight of "how are you", "another day in paradise", "living the dream", "good, how are you?", "I'm alive", "yeah okay", "MUSTER", "THEY'RE COMING!", "roll your trouser legs down", "answer when you hear your name", and "meal service is now available".

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Note to Readers

We have had a few people ask us what happened to the January 2025 edition, as they didn't receive a copy.

As we wrote in the December edition last year, we took a short break over the January period and did not publish a January edition. So you didn't miss out!

There will be a new edition each month for the rest of the year, so if you don't receive one please let us know.

Note to SA

Dear South Australia readers

Thank you so much for reading and interacting with the paper over these last few months.

The Department has informed us that if you want to be published in *About Time* you first need to seek approval from the Chief Executive of Correctional Services.

While no official process has been confirmed by Correctional Services SA, we suggest sending a copy of your letter to the Chief Executive, either by mail or through your social worker, to seek permission to have that letter published by *About Time*, Australia's National Prison Newspaper.

If approval is given, you can then send your submission to us, along with a copy of the permission from the Chief Executive.

The address for the Chief Executive is:

GPO Box 1747
ADELAIDE SA 5001

We are committed to sharing the experiences and contributions of all people in prison and hope to continue to receive submissions from the South Australian community.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, and we are working with the Department to make things as smooth as possible for you, so that we can publish your stories and your art in *About Time*.

Letters

Another Day in Paradise

By Noah

Noah, originally from Germany, writes from Brisbane Correctional Centre in Queensland.

Hey,

My name is Noah and I have been in BCC for seven months. My life in this place is limited. I have emotional fights with myself. It started with being angry, angry towards everybody, angry towards myself, angry towards the situation. Then follows the shock. For many days, I could not eat or sleep. I was nothing.

After the shock, follows the disappointment. It hurt so much. I was just a few months in Australia, my English wasn't really good and nobody from my life before speaks to me. All the future plans and dreams are gone. They let me completely fall. I miss my children, everyday I pray for them, I think about our good times. This is something that nobody can take away from me. I miss my home country, Germany. I am so alone. I don't know what is happening outside, I just have contact with LegalAid lawyers. That's wild and sad.

Most people here are nice, everybody has his story, and it's good not to know everything. I don't judge and really, I don't understand everything, as most inmates speak with really wild slang. Most of them don't explain, they say it louder, which makes it difficult. In every place on this planet people can be an asshole, even in prison. This is not something that is new. People come and go. It's the same every time.

Everybody has the same words, "another day in paradise". I am not here to make friendships, but I am thankful for every support, every nice word and for everyone who wants to listen when I want to talk. I feel forgotten. Prison reflects you like a mirror, you regret every mistake in your life. Everything. And if you want, it brings you back on the right way.

Noah

P.S. A big shout to all prisoners and the team of "Australia's National Prison Newspaper". Thank you for all the support.

Running for Your Life

By George

George writes from Victoria.

I was 40 years old when I was incarcerated and I could barely run around the block. To challenge myself physically and to feel like I was doing something for myself, I joined a couch to 5K running program. The program runs three times a week over nine weeks and is structured around run-walk intervals.

At the start there is more walking less running, by the end of the 9 weeks you can run 5K in 30 minutes. After being involved in six couch to 5Ks I have recognized the benefits of group running. In the program, there are many different physical abilities but the main ability you need is strength of mind. Before we start we stretch and walk a lap around the oval, we talk shit, spin a yarn, and sometimes keep our conversation topics out of jail. When we start running we are all very encouraging, sometimes the men who can already run 5K are there JUST to encourage a friend and others just to "keep going" and don't stop. As a group, we are more accountable for turning up, because sometimes the hardest thing is to just "TURN UP".

Running or group running is not only about cardio fitness, blood sugar, weight loss, cholesterol, or brain function. It also gives a sense of community and camaraderie, as we are all in this together. We have a BBQ for the men who complete the running program. I facilitated my last couch to 5K in 2024 and I am so happy for the participants who got through and are on their own fitness journey. We have formed a running group and run 5 or 10K three times a week. It's been over six years since I ran my first 5K and I am so happy and grateful for my fitness. Before I was incarcerated I would never have dreamed of being so fit.

Thank you for reading and I hope this inspires you to start your own or participate in a couch to 5K running program. Maybe you can help someone else.

Regards,
George

Change Starts With You

By Paul

Paul writes from Townsville Correctional Centre in Queensland.

My name is Paul, I have been in and out of the Victorian prison system since 1991. I am a 51 year old proud Aboriginal man.

After my last release in 2021 I decided I had had enough of prison life so I packed up and moved to Far North Queensland. The first year was great, I held a management position with a national tyre company and was living in a nice apartment on the Iconic Watermark on The Strand in Townsville with my long term partner who made the move with me; we were in paradise.

Before long my anger resurfaced and I started back on the slippery slope of addiction and unexplained hatred; although I have never physically hurt my partner I have scared the crap out of her on many occasions. She couldn't handle my crap anymore and an AVO was served on me, so I was back on the street.

It wasn't long until I found myself back in prison searching for reasons why I threw away paradise.

The realisation that there was no one to blame but me hit home. For years I have blamed my childhood and other events or people in my life for my behaviour and I guess these events will always play a part in my decision making.

I've struggled for a very long time with my anger and lack of respect for the law and not knowing why I have made the bad decisions that have led to a life in prison.

Since reading the December issue of *About Time*, I have started to read the Bible. I want to say I am not a religious person, but there are so many things I can relate to and I think I am getting to know myself better through reading it. I don't think I would have picked it up if not for Denis's letter published in the December 2024 issue; a very big thank you to you my friend you have been a big influence on many people over the years. I look forward to more poetry. Keep up the good work mate.

I now live in hope that I can find peace within myself, and there is a faint light at the end of a very long tunnel.

I guess the moral of my story is changing location is not the answer. Change needs to start with you.

Paul

Learning My Lesson

By Wendy

Wendy writes from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria.

So this is my first time in jail. I reside at DPFC and have done so for the last 18 months. I never would've thought I'd be in a place like this in my life ever! However my choices I went with landed me right here and now. The worst thing is I could be getting deported back to NZ, so I am fighting that as well. I haven't been home for 20 years now and have six kids here in Melbourne who come and visit me on the regular but it still doesn't or won't ever make up for the time I've missed out on with them while being in here.

Before jail I actually never pictured what it could be like and now being in here I've learnt a lot and I most certainly have learnt my lesson!

I'll never come back to this place, but I'll always respect the time that I've spent in here, and I understand now how and why people return to this place.

It's easy, you don't have to pay rent, you get fed, you have a job, you learn how to live without a lot of things, but you also learn about yourself in so many ways. My fiancée had always told me about the lifestyle and I always wondered why he went back in so many times and only now do I understand it for myself. You're routined in here. It's actually easy and like a camp, no you can't smoke, drink, or go out whenever you want but the constant uniformed way of things you become accustomed to and did I say it's easy... There are days where I wake up and think OMG I'm still here and days I don't wanna get up to make it go faster and closer to the day I leave this place and boy have I learnt my lesson...

Some days time stands still and sometimes it flies by, the excitement of getting my meds at 5pm are the highlight of my day as is receiving mail from my gorgeous man as interprisons are the only thing that we have to keep in contact with each other, but the love I have for him goes deep as we are both going through jail time realising the time we have missed out on with each other. The things I've learnt in here are crazy – from how to make jail donuts to making fitted sheets, utilising velcro and ordering special spends to make my room seem not so jail-like. God I miss home and my family.

I felt like I needed to write in here to say I totally understand now how jail is, but more importantly I've def learnt my lesson and cannot wait for all this to end. Much respect to all who are incarcerated; this journey has most def charged my thoughts. My way of thinking allows me to respect people regardless of how their lives have been, or turned out and most importantly what they've gone through and came out of after being in jail, but learning my lesson was the best of all and I'm thankful that it's only one I needed to learn by never coming back here. So yes, I've most definitely learnt my lesson.

Thanks jail.

Kind Regards,
Wendy

About Time for a Pen Pal Program

By Rachel

Rachel writes from Numinbah Correctional Centre in Queensland.

Hi *About Time* Team,

Wow, I won the caption comp for December... I've never won anything and the whole jail is congratulating me.

Our jail was never told about your newspaper – but in November 2023 it just showed up and all 120 girls at NCC love it. So please, please keep it up.

It's interesting to see what other jails and other states are doing and it's very interesting to see the differences we all have, like phone costs, buy up items and even what we pay to have our TVs. For example, Adelaide jails pay $11 per year but QLD it's $2 per week.

Thank you for the write up on pen pal programs – I've been in jail for four and a half years and always watch a show called Love After Lockup based on the USA pen pal project.

After watching this show I asked my Aunty to sign me up for an Australian pen pal prison program – but she told me that there wasn't any. I've only got one year left to go and when I get out, I really want to work and advocate for Queensland prisoners and I am going to try again to start up an Australian pen pal program. Every person incarcerated or not should have the opportunity to write. Maybe the jails themselves could or should monitor outgoing mail better instead of just banning beneficial pen pal programs altogether.

Anyway guys, thank you for your newspaper. We eagerly await it every month here at Numinbah CC.

Sincerely,
Rachel

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 eighth edition, distributed to all prisons in Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. We hope that Western Australia and the Northern Territory will join us soon.

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

Write to Us

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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Pay Not Adding Up

By Kerrin

Kerrin writes from Marngoneet Correctional Centre in Victoria.

To *About Time*,

I've been locked up several times in the last couple and including this one I have found that the best way of getting through it is to enrol in programs/courses to gain qualifications that'll potentially help me with employment one day or work in industries where I get hands-on experience with a variety of hand/power tools and equipment. But the main reason is to fill my days up, in terms of making my days, weeks and months seem to fly by.

The issue I want to address is our 'pay rates'. I am a great worker. I work full-time and I'm on the highest pay grade in industries. I get $48 pay per week ($38 available to spend, $10 goes into my set aside). I've worked in many different factories over my last few sentences, made wood panels for standalone spas, high quality playgrounds and currently fabricate hay feeders (for livestock) which sell for $5K-$8K and farm gates/fencing at different lengths and strengths in quantities of 400+, each one would range from the $800-$2,000 mark; my point is that the prisons get paid large amounts for quality items.

Prices at our canteen have just increased up to 5% for a lot of items, as they tend to on a yearly basis, but our pays do not increase, in fact I get paid less than I did eight years ago in the same location. If I did not have a partner or mother to drop me money out of their own pockets monthly, I would not be able to live half comfortably. We have to buy everything in here: toiletries, milk, coffee, sugar, noodles etc. Even after $150, $70 (phone) per month and my $38/week, I still find myself going without basics at the end of each month.

Prisoners who do choose to work hard should be looked after/paid better for what I can only describe as legal 'slave labour'. How can't the system (DOJ) see that encouraging prisoners to work, maintaining a work/life routine would benefit the community enormously! It would 100% lower the reoffending rate, I can say that from my lived experience. Rimes that I have maintained employment in my life were times I didn't reoffend. Times of my own offending and drug use in the community were times I was unemployed. The current situation in jail is that I get about $10 a week more than I would if I were unemployed. Where is the common sense in that? It's as if the system would rather prisoners spend their time getting involved in drugs and the politics that come from such.

With even the prison staff in industries agreeing that our pay rates are ridiculous, how do things stay the same? Marngoneet Correctional Centre, what are they correcting?

I see the benefits of a work/life routine structure, so I try to train myself the best I can so I give myself the best chance of rehabilitation, but a lot of people in here do not. I can't believe these issues are still continuing in the year 2024.

We (prisoners) have never had a way to shine light on these issues, until now. Let's hope it doesn't fall on deaf ears.

Regards,
Kerrin.

P.S. In reply to Ruby (November edition):
We have access to a library here, it's not a huge one but I think there's a large enough selection of books. A lot of prisoners tend to use it as a place to read the daily newspapers available there. The Herald Sun, Geelong Addy and The Age are available to read. There's a couple of desktop computers there also, no internet obviously but I think we can use Word, Excel etc. To attend, the library does not require the library billet to be there and staff (guards) at move control. Hope this insight gives you a better understanding.

Lack of Housing for Inmates Seeking Parole

By Patrick

Patrick writes from Ron Barwick Prison in Tasmania.

Dear Editor,

I am writing from Ron Barwick Prison in Tasmania.

I am concerned about the lack of housing for inmates seeking parole. I also would like to comment on the lack of flexibility when considering an inmate's application for parole.

The lack of housing is creating a backlog for inmates who otherwise would be eligible for parole. With all commitments met, other boxes have been ticked, inmates who have not put a foot wrong as they journey through prison and who are considered safe to be let back into the community, yet this counts for nothing if a house or unit cannot be found. Housing is in crisis in every state and territory at the moment, our federal politicians spend far too much time playing politics instead of working for the greater good. The housing crisis is affecting many families.

I do not know what options the Parole Board have available, I am not sure what constraints they work under with respect to housing, or how flexible they are able to be as they work through the parole process, however if for example a family goes as guarantor for an inmate, letting him or her stay in a unit behind their house, or a caravan in the back yard, as long as that family is considered appropriate why wouldn't this be considered? Especially older inmates who have a very low recidivism rate, who just want to be out of prison rebuilding the later years of their lives.

Being considered eligible for parole then not being granted parole is very demoralising. I encourage authorities to consider being more flexible in their approach.

Yours faithfully,
Patrick

The Benefits of Gardening

By Alex

Alex writes from Langi Kal Kal in Victoria.

My old man is a gardener, always has been. Of course, he came up on a farm and went through hard times, times when you had to grow food, and the better you did, the less your stomach aches.

Now (and since I was a kid) he just does it for the love of it. I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with Dad bent over a garden bed in need of weeding or holding a hose and (with the dissatisfaction of a teenager who stumbles upon a chore) helping water.

Dad would always say "there's something about toiling in the garden, getting your hands in soil, it earths me out."

I've never really thought much about this, my old man has wisdom to share about most anything and has always freely shared it with his sons.

I took a different path in life. The monsters from my childhood were not as tangible or clear-cut as hunger and rather than fight them, I ran. Seeking escape in all its best (and most potent) forms.

I should have died, but instead I wound up incarcerated. Stripped of everything, money, clothes, outside stressors like bills or a place to stay, I started to rebuild myself as best I could. Learning lessons (some harder than others) along the way. Meeting some good and (plenty) of interesting characters, I knuckled down and finally decided I want to like myself.

Some years went by and I found myself in a location that offered the use of a community garden to residents.

Getting my own plot, learning about improving soil and the planting of seasonal plants has been a unique pleasure – harvesting the fruits of my labour has been a delicious one.

Now, when I call my old man, I tell him all the time, "You were right, Dad. There is something about getting down on your hands and knees, digging into the soil, feeling it tumble over your hands and sift between your fingers, with the sun on your back and your love and time in the garden before you. It is grounding. It brings me a sense of peace that seems to both remove me from and bring me into myself."

He just laughs and says "that's good son". (His advice never comes with expectation). Yeah Dad, I guess it is.



Produce from the garden at Langi Kal Kal

Sustainable Gardening

By George

George writes from Langi Kal Kal Prison in Victoria.

At this location, Langi Kal Kal in Victoria, we are very lucky to have access to a half acre block dedicated to a community garden. As this is a community garden with an emphasis on sustainability, we all need to work together and draw on each other's skills and knowledge to achieve a common goal.

I am the volunteer garden billet and some of my responsibilities are garden plot allocation and seed distribution. Some of the other skills we draw on are steel and timber construction, pottering, plumbing and seed harvesting. The gardening knowledge that is passed down the line is priceless.

To have the time and opportunity to grow from a seed and all the way to harvesting and cooking is a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. We are always looking for ways to improve and share outcomes.

Some of the sustainable practices we try to incorporate include compost/soil produced from the prison's food waste. We harvest seeds to resow, we also use some cow, sheep and chicken manure for fertiliser. We recycle scrap timber and steel to make garden beds, setting, shade houses, hot houses, bee hotels and garden sculptures.

I and many others are very happy to have therapeutic and practical outcomes from having a space to get our hands dirty. There are many of us here who eat something out of the garden with nearly every meal. I would like to thank the ongoing support from the staff for their enthusiasm and encouragement, they too see the holistic benefits of community gardening.



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from David, Grant, A.S., S., Kelly W, Kelly F, Dolas, Darren, Shea, Luke, Mr M, Brian, Jason, Stephen, Justin, Lonnie, Aaron, Lance, Bo, Craig, Lasse, Kyle, Micky, Mark, Sam, Axel, Gavin, Rachel, Paul, Storm, Kerrin, George, Patrick, Wendy, Spooner, Matthew, Leo, Greg, Steven, F, Christopher, Vincent, David and others that wish to remain anonymous.

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

To give yourself the best chance of being published, please try to keep your letter to a **maximum of 600-800 words**.

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:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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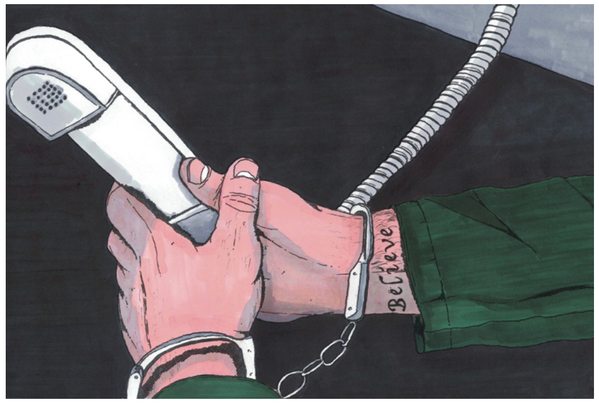
News and Investigations

Victoria and ACT Cut the Price of Prison Phone Calls in Half

By Denham Sadler

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



Ike Curtis

Continued from page 1.

"The new detainee telephone system is an upgrade from the previous system, which had reached its end of life and incurred higher costs than the current system," a spokesperson for ACT Corrective Services told *About Time*.

The price reductions come after years of strong advocacy and campaigning from people in prison and a range of civil and human rights groups, with many of these organisations now calling on states and territories to make prison phone calls free entirely.

The Victorian government announced last year that it would move to subsidise the cost of prison phone calls in the short-term as it renegotiates a contract with the private company that operates the prison telephone system.

The state government has indicated that it has informed all people in prison in Victoria of the price reduction, and that they do not need to do anything to access these cheaper calls as their phone credit will be charged the lower amount automatically, with no connection fee to be imposed either.

"For most in custody there are family, friends and loved ones on the outside," said Victorian Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan. "As the Minister for Corrections I have heard from many family members of people in custody, and many of them tell me a similar story.

"For anyone, a conversation with your children, parent or partner can provide reassurance and connection. That call can be even more important for people with a loved one in custody.

"This brings those costs more in line with the costs faced in the community and makes Victoria one of the cheapest in the nation."

The news has been welcomed by Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission, which heard evidence about the impact of the high price of prison phone calls on First Nations people.

"The reduction of the cost of prison phone calls is a welcome step in the right direction and shows the Victorian government has listened," Yoorrook deputy chair Commissioner Sue-Anne Hunter told *About Time*.

"However, the job is not done. The next step is to implement Yoorrook's recommendation in full by ensuring that all prisoners, whether on remand or under sentence, including Aboriginal prisoners, can make telephone calls for free or at no greater cost than the general community."

"Yoorrook has heard concerning evidence that the exorbitant cost of phone calls from prison was preventing First Peoples from having regular contact with loved ones and staying connected to their culture and community."

Vacro, a Victorian not-for-profit organisation focused on reducing the impact of crime on individuals and communities, has been campaigning for prison phone calls to be made cheaper for several years. The organisation has welcomed the state government's move, but said it will continue to push for these phone calls to be made entirely free.

"This announcement is a positive step forward, and we commend the government for funding it," Vacro CEO Marius Smith said. "But the new reduced cost is still expensive, and the next step must be fully subsidised phone calls.

"We know that strong family connections reduce the likelihood that a person will reoffend, and that their kids will end up in the justice system themselves. That's an outcome worth investing in. Family connection is often the golden thread that links people in prison to a successful life in the community after their release."

Teegan Hartwick, a member of Vacro's lived experience panel, said that the ability to make phone calls while incarcerated is crucial.

"In prison all you sit with is hope that life will be better when coming home," Hartwick said.

"The work, however, starts inside, with continued contact with loved ones [...] connection is so important to foster these relationships. I am so happy that people in prison will have a chance to afford their phone calls."

The change brings Victoria largely in line with New South Wales when it comes to the cost of phone calls, and cheaper than the Northern Territory. Western Australia still offers the cheapest prison phone calls in the country, with a charge of 10c per minute.

In the Northern Territory, prison phone calls cost 40c, and a spokesperson for the NT Department of Corrections told *About Time* it "does not currently intend to reduce the cost of prisoner phone calls".

The Queensland government is currently upgrading its prison telephone system, and a spokesperson for Corrective Services told *About Time* that an aim of this upgrade will be to "deliver cheaper rates for prisoners to call family and friends".

The cost of prison phone calls in Tasmania was reduced in mid-2021, with calls to mobile phones currently priced at 36c per minute, to local landlines at 25c per minute and to mainland Australia costing 15c per minute.

"The Department of Justice will review its telephony services arrangement during the next contract renewal period to ensure our prison is receiving the best market value from available service providers," a spokesperson for Corrective Services Tasmania told *About Time*.

In NSW prisons, those who are yet to be sentenced receive three personal local calls per week for free, and sentenced inmates receive one. A spokesperson for Corrective Services NSW told *About Time* said that making all calls from prison free would "create a significant cost to taxpayers and is something that requires careful consideration".

In Victoria, the state government is currently looking to sign a new contract with a provider to deliver telephone services in its prisons.

Comsec TR, a private company, currently has a six-year, $26 million contract to deliver these services which will come to an end midway through 2025.

The Victorian government has promised to explore "longer-term solutions" to the high cost of prison phone calls, outside of the subsidy, as part of these negotiations.

While the price of making these calls is coming down in some Australian states and territories, it is still much higher than it is in the community, and staggeringly high compared to the wages paid to those working while in prison.

In Victoria, people in prison earn between $3.55 and $9.60 per working day, and must also budget for items from the canteen, toiletries and other essentials.

This means that someone earning the lowest salary will need to work a full day in order to afford a 12-minute phone call with a loved one in the community.

Considering the disparities to the community and the benefits of phone calls to rehabilitation, many prison rights advocates are now campaigning for free phone calls. In many US states and cities, including California, Connecticut, Minnesota, New York City and San Diego, prison phone calls are now free.

"Across the world, contact between incarcerated people and their loved ones is increasingly understood as a right that governments must uphold without passing on the cost, and Victoria is lagging behind," Vacro senior policy and advocacy advisor Abigail Lewis said.

"Years of staunch advocacy led by currently and formerly incarcerated people has achieved this wonderful outcome and will continue from here."



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QLD

QSAC releases its final report on the sentencing of sexual assault and rape offences

On 5 February 2025, the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC) released its final report on the sentencing of sexual assault and rape offences. This final report is the result of a 19-month-long review, including research into community views, extensive consultation with key stakeholders, a consultation paper, and a detailed analysis of sentencing outcomes.

QSAC analysed a period of 18 years of data, and found that: over one-third of sentenced rape cases were also domestic violence offences but very few sexual assaults were committed in a domestic and family violence context.

QSAC made a total of 28 recommendations to improve sentencing practices and processes for sexual assault and rape offences.

Overall, QSAC's recommendations aim to ensure that penalties imposed for sexual assault and rape adequately reflect community views about the seriousness of this form of offending and sentencing purposes, including just punishment, denunciation and community protection. The report specifically recommended that the sentencing purposes and principles set out in the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* (QLD) provide a proper framework for the sentencing of sexual assault and rape offences. It also recommended that the penalty and sentencing framework supports sentences being imposed for this form of offending that enable the person sentenced to have access to supervision, programs and treatment interventions, and allow Queensland Corrective Services to respond better than they can under the current orders available to issues of escalating risk.

For further information or to ask for a copy of this report, you can write to QSAC at:

GPO Box 2360
Brisbane QLD 4001

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. We are unable to assist people who are imprisoned in or on parole orders from other states or territories in Australia.



ACT

ACT Age of Criminal Responsibility rises in 2025

In November 2023 the ACT passed the *Justice (Age of Criminal Responsibility) Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*, raising the age of criminal responsibility in the ACT from 10 to 12, and then to 14 from 1 July 2025. Then Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury stated at the time that "Raising the age to 12 then 14 will bring the ACT into line with international standards, uphold our human rights obligations, and support positive and just outcomes for both vulnerable young people and the wider ACT community."

ACT Justice Reinvestment Plan to be delivered in 2025

The ACT is making progress on its plan to reduce recidivism by 25% by 2025 (RR25by25), with Phase One seeing a 19.6% reduction through housing support and culturally appropriate programs. Phase Two includes $340,000 for a co-design process to create a justice reinvestment fund to prioritise investments in community-led early intervention and diversion programs. Then Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury stated in September 2024 that, "instead of only engaging with people once they are in the criminal justice system and imprisoned, we want to also support people both before they enter and after they leave custody."

ACT story updates

In June 2024, *About Time* reported on a review into the over-representation of First Nations peoples in the ACT criminal justice system. The Jumbunna Institute at the University of Technology Sydney is leading the review and completed the first stage in August 2024. The second stage of the review is underway, with the final report expected in 2025. *About Time* will continue to update readers on this review.



NT

Illegally obtained youth justice cell recordings excluded from high-profile murder trial

A guard at the Northern Territory's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre could face charges for the covert surveillance of a young person's conversations in his cell. The recordings, which the prosecution sought to tender in a recent high profile murder trial against four co-accused, included the young person discussing the victim's death, the motive, and the involvement of himself and the co-accused in the murder. While the guard initially began recording due to concern about the young person's risk of a medical episode, the Court heard that after establishing there was no emergency, the guard continued to record, with recordings made on a further 20 occasions via the intercom system.

While the contents of the recordings were characterised as being important to the prosecution's case, the judge said to admit these conversations into evidence would constitute a "serious injustice".

All four co-accused were found guilty of the murder of an 18-year-old man in Palmerston, Darwin in 2022, following the trial in late 2024. The three adults were jailed for life (eligible for parole after 20 years), while the young person who was the subject of the covert recordings was handed a 14-year sentence with a seven year non-parole period, due to being 17 at the time and his probable cognitive and behavioural impairments.



NSW

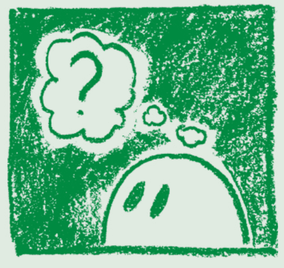
New laws to target antisemitism and hate speech

The New South Wales government has proposed new legislation to address rising concerns over antisemitism and hate speech. These changes stem from recent incidents where two synagogues were vandalised with swastikas and one was the target of attempted arson.

Proposed amendments to Section 93Z of the state's Crimes Act include making "intentional incitement of racial hatred" a criminal offence, which would carry a two-year prison sentence. The reforms also include criminalising protests outside places of worship, making it an offence to block access or intimidate individuals, with a maximum penalty of two years in prison. Police would gain enhanced powers to move on individuals engaging in such protests. The reforms also include increasing maximum penalties to two years imprisonment for displaying Nazi symbols near synagogues and for graffiti on places of worship.

Alongside the proposed legislative reforms, the government has committed an additional half a million dollars to NSW Police Engagement and Hate Crime Unit to increase policing around Jewish schools and institutions.

Last year, a review into NSW hate speech laws ultimately recommended there was no need to strengthen the laws and to do so could impinge on other freedoms. However, NSW Premier Chris Minns emphasised that these laws are designed to protect people of all religions from hate and violence, with the proposed reforms part of broader efforts to counteract hate speech in the state.



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SA

South Australia set to introduce strictest knife laws in country

The South Australian Parliament is set to pass the strictest knife laws in the country with new legislation introduced in February.

The reforms, aimed primarily at tackling youth knife crime, are the result of extensive consultation with the South Australia Police and will significantly increase their powers.

The proposed legislation would see expanded police powers to conduct wand searches in shopping centres, public transport hubs and extend knife-carrying offences to include childcare centres, preschools, kindergartens, licensed venue and universities and TAFE. It would create new offences for supplying knives to minors and require retail premises to display signage stating that knives cannot be sold to anyone under 18 years old. It would also require that certain types of knives must be securely locked up or tethered in stores.

South Australia's approach draws on similar legislative measures introduced by other states. New South Wales is trialling increased police powers to use handheld scanners in certain areas without warrant to detect knives, while Western Australia currently allows police officers to carry out non-invasive scans anywhere and anytime within specified knife wanding areas.

Increased police presence in the Adelaide CBD and regional South Australia has resulted in higher detection rates of knife crimes in recent months.

The Malinauskas Government argues that these changes will help reduce crime and improve community safety. The move reflects a growing national trend towards stricter regulation and enforcement of knife-related offences across Australia.



WA

Young rappers write new album in Banksia Hill Detention Centre

Earlier this year, the double album *Banksia Beats Volume 3* was released. The 15 tracks were written by young people detained in Unit 18 and Banksia Hill Detention Centre, facilitated by program Hip Hop 101.

The therapeutic program is run by artists Flewnt, Optamus and Rush, who deliver multiple lyric-writing workshops each week at the youth detention centres. The sessions also include freestyles in the purpose-built studio at Banksia Hill and boast a long waiting list due to their immense popularity. Noongar rapper Flewnt states that Hip Hop 101 participants "really are pouring their hearts out in these songs and they genuinely mean what they say" and that "the therapy, the speaking of stories and connection back to Culture through music, has been really incredible".

The album was launched at an event inside Banksia Hill Detention Centre, where Flewnt, Optamus and Rush also performed some of their own songs. Young participants praise Hip Hop 101. One voiced, "you can rap your future. You can rap your past. Yeah you know, story songs. It's [...] getting it all out there".

Another expressed, "some people don't like talking about their feelings, talking about what they're going through. But it's like in the music ways, we can talk about our feelings".

One promising young artist has five tracks on *Banksia Beats Volume 3*. In one of the tracks titled *BLAP (Blak Loud And Proud)*, she raps: "Misunderstood, think we're no good, tryna do better, get out the hood, survival is taught to the struggle is taught to the trauma, can never be taught in the book".

Banksia Beats Volume 3 is available on SoundCloud.



VIC

Government seeks to review bail laws

Victoria's Premier, Jacinta Allan, has ordered a "review" of the state's bail laws, but has not provided details about its scope or objectives. The announcement came ahead of the recent crucial by-elections in Werribee and Prahran, where law and order issues were reported to be heavily influencing voter sentiment.

Critics argue the review is politically motivated to address Labor's falling support, especially in Werribee where first preference votes for Labor dropped from 45% in the 2022 state election to 28.7% in the by-election vote count at the time of writing.

Speaking about the review in a press conference, Allan could not provide specifics or points of concern, but emphasised that she did not necessarily want more alleged offenders remanded without bail.

Aboriginal advocacy groups have criticised the move, accusing the government of prioritising political gain over community safety. The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Aboriginal Justice Caucus argued that the review could undermine previous reforms, including bail law reforms that were spearheaded by the family of Veronica Nelson, a proud Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman who was refused bail for shop theft in 2019, and passed while in police custody.

Advocates warn that reversing recent changes to bail laws could worsen existing disparities, particularly for First Nations people, children and youth.

Critics argue that any review must carefully consider the purpose of past reforms and their impact, rather than be a reaction to short-term political pressures.



TAS

Lack of progress on child safety and wellbeing in Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government has committed to the full implementation of all recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. Many of these recommendations relate to the safety and wellbeing of children in the out-of-home care and criminal legal systems.

However, the Report of Government Services relating to youth justice released by the Productivity Commission in late January 2025 shows a lack of progress in relation to a number of targets. For example, despite committing to changes to reduce the number of children in custody – including amendments to bail laws, raising the age of criminal responsibility and the closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) – the data shows an increase in the number of children in detention over the past year, most of whom spend time in prison on remand.

The data also shows ongoing issues relating to safety and wellbeing at the youth prison.

Although there were no serious assaults recorded over the last year, the rates of non-serious assaults, both in relation to children who are detained at the centre and the staff who work there, are the highest of any state or territory in Australia.

This data echoes safety concerns raised in recent reports relating both to the lack of appropriate services (particularly mental health supports) for children detained at AYDC and the need for additional support for staff to ensure issues such as staff shortages are not impacting child safety and wellbeing.



National

Labor pushes for mandatory minimums for hate crimes and terror offences

The Albanese Government has proposed amendments to the criminal code to introduce mandatory minimum sentences for hate and terror crimes. These include six years for a range of terror offences, three years for financing terror and one year for displaying hate symbols. Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke described the changes as the toughest laws Australia has ever had against hate crimes.

The use of mandatory minimum sentences has sparked significant criticism. The move marks a significant departure from Labor's previous stance against minimum sentencing, which it argued was ineffective and led to unjust outcomes.

In a media release, the Law Council of Australia (LCA) stated it was "extremely disappointed" in Labor's decision to introduce mandatory minimums, and would disproportionately impact vulnerable groups.

"Mandatory sentencing laws are arbitrary and limit the individual's right to a fair trial by preventing judges from imposing a just penalty based on the unique circumstances of each offence and offender." said LCA President Juliana Warner. "Judges are best placed to determine the appropriate and just penalty under these laws on an individual, case-by-case basis."

Despite opposition from the crossbench, the government is seeking broad parliamentary support for the bill, signaling a bipartisan approach to combat hate speech and violence in Australia.

Private bail provider shutdown without notice

BailSafe Australia, a for-profit private company that provided GPS tracking and rehabilitation services, recently shut down unexpectedly, leaving the whereabouts of numerous people on bail unaccounted for. The company, which tracked people on various charges including violent offences, had been approved by courts as a service provider for electronic monitoring bail conditions. However, its sudden closure has caused a crisis as courts, authorities and the people being monitored were not informed, and only BailSafe held records of the individuals it monitored. The Victorian government has condemned the company's failure to notify relevant authorities, with Victoria Police also unaware of the shutdown. The collapse follows a police investigation into the company for potential criminal activity and misconduct. Despite this, the company continued operations until its closure. The shutdown has caused alarm in both Victoria and New South Wales, with concerns over people on bail not being properly monitored. It has also caused a scramble for defence barristers and lawyers for bail hearings based on the availability of the service. The incident has raised questions about the lack of regulation and oversight for private bail providers, especially following similar issues with other providers.

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Pride March in St Kilda in February 2025

Pride Without Police

Stacey heads to Midsumma Pride March to check out what it's like without any police presence

By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender woman who did eight years in a men's prison. She now works as a lived experience consultant and writer. She has contributed to anthologies, "Nothing to hide, Voices of trans and gender diverse Australia" and "Soft borders hard edges" and wrote for Archer and Debri magazines. She also writes a Substack called 'Stacey Stokes'.

Midsumma is on again this year, but with a change: no police.

To provide a quick breakdown of the event for those who have never been, Midsumma Festival is a Melbourne-based queer arts and cultural festival that runs over three weeks in January and February each year. The festival runs events that centre around queer culture from local, interstate and international artists. The major events of the festival include the Midsumma Carnival, Victoria's Pride Street Party and the Midsumma Pride March.

The Midsumma Pride March sees tens of thousands march down Fitzroy Street in St Kilda, with many more turning out to cheer them on. The march culminates in an outdoor party in Catani Gardens, with after parties held across St Kilda stretching on into the night.

This year, the Midsumma Pride March went ahead without a notable participant: Victoria Police.

I learned a few weeks ago that the police were excluded from marching in uniform in the Midsumma parade this year. This, in turn, led Victoria Police to decide they would pull out and not participate in the parade at all. I decided to go along to see what difference their absence would have, if any, on the day.

Attempting to get public transport to the parade, the first thing I noticed was the bus was cancelled. Thankfully, the tram was still running, so I was back on track.

Arriving at St Kilda junction it was apparent something very queer was happening. Rainbows and glitter were everywhere, with people funnelling towards Fitzroy Street.

The street was extremely busy and local bars and restaurants were doing great business. Being near 40 degrees, I found a restaurant with shade, got a cold drink and settled in to watch the parade.

All sorts of groups, community organisations and public services marched past. SES, Fire and Ambulance, even Disney. I liked the sci fi and live action role play groups. But not one uniformed police officer marched past.

I asked people how this made them feel; the opinion was surprisingly divided.

I asked an older queer person from Tasmania who remembered a time when it was illegal to be gay. They said, "the police have no place in queer spaces after all the harm they have carried out."

A formerly incarcerated person showed me their tattoo that read, "I love abolition" and said "good riddance to them."

Others lamented the police not being present. A disabled queer man told me, "it's a shame the police were bullied and couldn't come."

While an older lady told me, "the police look so nice marching in formation in their uniforms, it's a shame they aren't here this year."

What I personally noted, having attended the march last year, was the distinct lack of violent incidents and confrontations. Last year, I saw a police officer knock over two teenagers right in front of me. I'm not sure what prompted them to do this, but I felt bad for the kids.

This year's parade was a fun and safe day. Teenagers were excitedly jumping around yelling "we are all gay!" with much excitement and joy. A lady put glitter on my face. Another person gave me a badge. People were there dressed as furries and in leather puppy suits. Twinks wore little fairy wings and dykes rode bikes. Local venues and businesses were accepting and people showed their support for the queer community.

I can't say who was to blame for the incident with the teenagers last year. What I can say is, this year was wholesome, no one was made fun of for being gay and everyone felt safe.

Recognising the Rights of Incarcerated Workers

What do human rights guidelines say about conditions for incarcerated workers?

By Andreea Lachsz

Andreea is a Quentin Bryce Law Doctoral Scholar at the University of Technology Sydney.



'Innovations of Identifications', by Geoff, 2003, Boom Gate Gallery

What is 'prison labour'?

Prison work differs across the country. According to one 2023 report, 48.8% of incarcerated people worked in prison operations (i.e. kitchens, laundry, gardening) and 29.7% in commercial industries (involved in making products or services designed to be sold to those outside the prison). Only 0.6% had work release. Incarcerated individuals who were ineligible for work included those with ill-health, those in full-time education and people on remand who chose not to work. The report also said there were more people in prison than there were available jobs. (Australian Productivity Commission)

What is the purpose of prison labour?

There are different views about the aim of prison labour. Some say it's a way for incarcerated people to give back to the community (either through the work itself or to pay victims' compensation) or as a way for them to pay for prison services and goods (such as phone calls). Others think it helps to keep people busy or compliant with prison rules, instils discipline, or even acts as a deterrent from further offending, especially where the work is hard or boring.

Today, Australian governments say that the primary objective of prison labour is rehabilitation: assisting incarcerated people to get work after they are released from prison. But that is not the only reason for prison labour. One of the few Australian reviews into prison labour concluded that governments having competing and changing priorities for prison labour (e.g. rehabilitation versus recouping state costs of prisons) reduces the effectiveness of industries in prison.

International human rights protections

There are international laws designed to protect workers against exploitation. One example, the *Forced Labour Convention*, is an international treaty against compulsory labour. Incarcerated people have some protections against forced labour under this Convention, but fewer protections than people in the community. Under the *Forced Labour Convention*, private companies, whether they are running an entire prison or just some of the work programs for incarcerated people, need the consent of the incarcerated people to work in their programs. The Convention also, however, allows governments to maintain work programs that require incarcerated people who are convicted to work.

There are also some labour protections in the *Nelson Mandela Rules*. The *Nelson Mandela Rules* are a set of guidelines adopted by the United Nations in 2015 which detail minimum standards for the safe, secure and dignified treatment of incarcerated people.

Some relevant *Nelson Mandela Rules:*

- **Rule 96:** there be 'sufficient work of a useful nature'
- **Rule 97:** no incarcerated person 'shall be required to work for the personal or private benefit of any prison staff'
- **Rule 98:** 'so far as possible', the work provided should improve people's ability to get work after release, and incarcerated people should have some choice about the type of work they do
- **Rule 99:** vocational training is a more important objective than the prison making a financial profit, and should be the priority. Prison work should be as similar as possible to work done in the community, to prepare incarcerated people for work following their release from prison

The *Nelson Mandela Rules* also detail some minimum standards for incarcerated workers similar to workers in the community, such as occupational health and safety protections and the regulation of working hours (Rule 101 and 102). On the other hand, Rule 103 of the *Nelson Mandela Rules* does not require that incarcerated people be paid the same minimum wage that people doing the same sort of work in the community earn.

It is important to keep in mind that for international laws or guidelines to be enforceable here in Australia, the protections need to be included in Australian law. Some Australian states and territories have included some of these protections in their Human Rights Acts (e.g. ACT, Queensland and Victoria), but not necessarily in their labour laws. Moreover, because Australian governments are guided by international law, the gaps in international labour protections for incarcerated people are unfortunately reflected in our Australian laws.

> **"Both internationally and in Australia, more work needs to be done to strengthen the rights of incarcerated workers."**

Where to next?

Last year, the United Nations' independent expert on modern forms of slavery investigated work conditions for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people and made some recommendations for change. Here are some of the expert's recommendations:

- including incarcerated people in the category of 'workers' under national labour law protections, particularly focusing on 'wages, working hours, occupational health and safety and trade union rights'
- paying incarcerated people national minimum wages
- ensuring reasonable and fair wage deductions 'so that incarcerated individuals are able to purchase necessities, support their loved ones outside and save for their future'
- addressing employment barriers arising from criminal records (e.g. wiping records 'after appropriate rehabilitation periods')
- providing incentives to encourage hiring of formerly incarcerated people and raising awareness among businesses and employers, in order 'to tackle discrimination, prejudice and stigmatisation experienced by formerly incarcerated individuals'
- making 'appropriate adjustments and allowances depending on individuals' wishes and needs' when allocating work assignments (e.g. for people with disabilities)
- strengthening independent oversight of compliance with labour laws in prisons, 'to identify instances of exploitation promptly'.

The Australian Government has committed to uphold the United Nations' human rights framework and should genuinely consider implementing these expert recommendations to better ensure that incarcerated workers are protected from exploitative labour practices and their human rights are protected.

There also needs to be greater transparency about prison labour in Australia, including in relation to how much incarcerated people are paid in prisons across the country and whether the work people do while in prison leads to employment upon release. Crucially, we need to understand better what is and what is not working from the perspective of those most impacted by current labour laws, policies and practices – incarcerated and formerly incarcerated workers.

Experiences

On Repeat

By Storm

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

Continued from page 1.

The deafening PA system bing-bonging at regular intervals, piercing your eardrums with exclamations of "ATTENTION! Blah blah blah, I SAY AGAIN, blah blah blah".

Name after name, hour after hour, minute after minute of constant repetition and meaningless niceties.

Useless small talk and unwarranted bragging about past activities echoing around you on every side. All around you are people sitting about in groups just wasting as much time as they can doing absolutely nothing useful before the final call rings..."ALL INMATES TO RETURN TO THEIR UNITS FOR MUSTER AND COUNT".

Then the day is through, and everyone retreats to their cells, or their units if they have progressed through the system far enough as not to get locked in cages overnight. Nearly every single one of them sits and watches pointless crap on a small box in their cells or if they are lucky, the larger one in their common area until their eyes feel heavy, and their minds have grown even more numb. Then, sleep away a few hours before they have the privilege of starting the EXACT same day again tomorrow, over and over. No end is in sight.

You feel such a sense of disconnect from everything, not only on the outside of here, but in here as well. It seems to grow every day you spend here as new hordes of prisoners come and go, only a miniscule amount of the same faces become regular signs. The screws rarely cycle in and out, but they become less human every day without fail anyway. Eventually, you stop seeing them as people so much and instead they become just like some rusty cogs, in a nearly broken-down machine.

Questions fill your mind, all the "what ifs" of the past and the "what will be" of the future swirling themselves into an impossibly tangled knot within your brain. "When?" is the truly complicated one however. It's all guessing and anxiety, both around being here and around getting out simultaneously.

There comes a point where you don't even have energy to disassociate left within you anymore, months ago it seemed to suddenly evade your grasp. Now you're stuck in a panicked state, subjected to the full force of your own emotions swirling and twisting up from the very tip of your cold toes, into your knotted gut, shivering up the length of your spine and flooding into your heavy, overflowing skull. The full elation you feel when you're soaring upwards one hour measures equally to the overbearing weight that drags you down to the next.

For someone who is acclimatised to bare nothingness, of which was their own creation, these sudden rushes of emotion are free to take hold of you completely and throw you in whichever direction they please. You feel out of control entirely and as a result, fear starts to fill every fibre of your being. Feeling out of control of yourself and never sure how you may react from one moment to the next.

You've never felt like this before; over time your environment becomes less foreign to you than your own self does. Now a stranger to yourself just as much as you are to the next fresh face who stumbles through the prison gates, wondering what their days will be filled with here.

Someone on the outside looking in couldn't possibly fathom this existence unless they have lived here before. But if anyone would like to try, simply start reading this again from the first line and when you reach the last one, go again. Repeat again for the entire day tomorrow and the next day, then every day after that. Nothing will change, just as nothing changes in here either. In (give or take) 16 months, maybe it'll start to seem as monotonous as everything else here.

Kairos Outside

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Kairos Prison Ministry Australia

Rachel attended a **Kairos Outside** weekend and said:

*"I was fortunate enough to be invited with my mum as a guest to a Kairos Outside weekend, the theme of which was "Hope to Carry On". It was there that I heard the stories of other women just like me; women whose **husbands, fathers, sons, daughters, friends** were imprisoned. I heard how they'd felt, how they'd survived and I cried a flood of tears. I couldn't believe that there were other women, even Christian wives, who actually knew what I was living through. These women were an inspiration and they have helped me to start living again. I found the "hope to carry on" through the Kairos Outside family."*

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No Real Closure



'What a Waste of Time' by Brian, 2018, courtesy of Boom Gate Gallery

What is closure? And is it really possible?

By James

James writes from Langi Kal Kal Prison in Victoria.

You must go to jail, they said, as it will be closure for your victim. This is what the lady from the DOC said to me when I was in St John of God Psychiatric Hospital in Richmond.

I was in the ward for War Veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). There were a lot of us there and not just from the Vietnam War but from other conflicts as well. There were even police members there and an ambulance officer; you do not have to be a soldier to become traumatised by what you see. At this time in our collective lives, we were all looking for some type of closure for our own well-being. Just get back to what people casually term 'normality'.

I needed closure to help me live a normal life, but it was not forthcoming. I was reaching out for closure but it never came.

I have since pondered the word "closure", and I have come to the conclusion that there is no real closure as those involved do not forget and, as much as people say they do, there is no complete forgiveness – even from the most Christian of hearts. However, I have found that those with more faith, in whatever religion they may follow, tend to forgive more easily than those with limited or no faith, and the more one forgives the more the term "closure" seems to comfort them. It also seems that the word closure can sometimes be related to words like "vengeance" or "revenge".

I was 60 years old when I first came to jail and I had never been so frightened in my life. I was mentally exhausted and had lost 11 kilos. Actually, I was petrified for the first time in my life because there is no way to prepare for coming to jail for the first time. Previous reputations and standing mean absolutely nothing.

My conscience was in overdrive and the guilt and remorse I felt then have not diminished in any way; it is a constant in my life and is here to stay. One can apologise for the harm they have done, but whether the apology is given once or a dozen times, the sincerity is only relevant to the depth and remorse felt by the person giving the apology.

So, what is closure? I am locked away – it may make people feel safe, even pleased, but is it closure?

Did closure occur to my victims when I came to jail? For some it may have, but for others it made them sad and angry, and for some of them a life sentence of memories, good and bad. Trauma can cause a complex mix of emotions. So does the need for closure. I did not mean to cause hate, but I did. Does closure make the hate go away? It is a small matter, but I do not think so.

Even those who seek revenge by seeing to it that someone is sent to jail, is it closure? It cannot be, as they still remember, so in truth they are deluding themselves. Perhaps I am being cynical because of what I have brought upon others, especially those whom I still love. My cynicism has certainly developed since I have been in jail.

I have asked some of my new peers about closure, some answer roughly and abruptly, others put some thought into it; but the consensus is the same, there is no real closure, and I have a personal example.

A horrifying incident occurred when I was a child. I've closed the door on that memory. I am sure that I am not alone in these circumstances – a young mind will put up a protective barrier, it is a natural response. This, I can say, was temporary closure. It took a long time and a significant emotional shock for these memories to return, and when they did, it was with a vengeance. My first wife had an affair and the shock brought back that memory I had closed off. My recurring nightmares relived that moment over and over, for 26 years, so much for real closure.

There are some, here in jail, who have been victims themselves and, as with me, seem a bit blasé with the word "closure". Is it then a word used for self comfort or appeasement? Or is there another reason? I have seen the parents of murdered children, pleading on the news that they want to find the murderer to give them closure. I agree that a person should be brought to trial for murder, but I do not think for one moment that the murderer would hand themselves in to give the parents' closure. Even when eventually caught, the trauma of a trial has to be painful for the victim's family.

I am the father of 12 healthy children and for that I am grateful, however my wife lost three babies at six to eight weeks of pregnancy. I was traumatised, my wife took it in her stride and I got sick of people saying it was "God's will". This happened a long time ago and I still wonder what they may have been like, so where is the closure?

In my humble opinion, gained only from life's experience, the word closure is a misnomer and is used too widely as an excuse to help the grieving process, where a more positive approach should be made. Any dramatic experience that happens to a person throughout their life is never totally forgotten, nor is the perpetrator forgiven, therefore there is never any real closure. Our memory serves us so we can recall moments in our past. Whatever trauma that occurs that has a profound adverse effect on us will become a memory, it stays in our being, in our psyche, and it never leaves us.



Write to Us

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to *About Time*, please send your letters to the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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

Reflections From a Prison Teacher

A teacher's account of working inside prisons and detention centres

By Paul A MacNamara

Paul is the author of The Criminal Class – Memoir of a Prison Teacher and Inside Juvie – A Teacher's Story.



'Muster (Long Bay, long day)', by Peter, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 107cm x 108cm, Boom Gate Gallery

When I walked into the correctional facility for the job interview for the vacant teaching position, I remember my mind was racing as I took in the scene. The guarded boom gates. The razor wire enclosures. The heavy metal doors that didn't open until the one behind was closed. The aerial cameras observing all activities down below. The gun towers. The authorities in blue and the people in prison in green. It was a strange mix. A strong sense of order combined with an undercurrent of explosive danger.

The female boss of the education unit escorted me through the prison and there was a rush of people towards the cyclone fence that separated us from the main yard.

"Miss! Miss! Is parole in? Miss, I need to talk to my welfare officer!" She ignored the pleas. The voices then started addressing me: "Chief! Chief!" No one had ever called me chief before. My new boss began my prison education by schooling me on the new language I'd have to learn – chief, edjo, buy-up, classo, officer shopping, stand over.

What the hell had I got myself into? A correctional education officer? People are desperate to get out, and here I was applying to get in. I could just turn on my heels and leave. No questions asked. But I didn't. As I sat nervously at the beginning of that first ever class,

I would never have dreamed that I would spend the next seventeen years employed as an educator inside the criminal justice system in both adult corrections and in juvenile detention.

Movies, books, television and the internet are saturated with tales of crime. And true crime outrates fiction. As an author, I have experienced this fascination with crime first hand but, as an outsider on the inside, I also witnessed the consequences, the human cost and the waste.

I must admit, I never really held a political view on the prison system before working in jails. "Was the criminal justice system effective? Do we have the balance right between punishment and rehabilitation? Is locking people up the best use of social and economic resources?" On that first day those thoughts never even crossed my mind. Of course, I imagined prisons were far from ideal places, but I knew very little of their workings or who occupied the buildings.

I know there are some truly awful crimes and some people forfeit their right to freedom. However, most people I encountered in prison were not innately evil. The majority came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, had little education opportunities and were recidivists – they keep coming back.

Education is not regarded as the most significant risk factor for reoffending but there is an undeniable link between a lack of education and crime.

Research shows this is the case not only in Australia but right across the world.

I was hired to improve peoples' literacy and numeracy skills to help them gain employment and to become better functioning members of society upon release. As an educator, I soon became very aware of the low level of literacy of most people who are incarcerated in the adult and juvenile systems and how that negatively impacts their lives.

I met 50 year olds who wanted to be able to read the newspaper, parents who wanted to be able to record themselves reading a book to send home to their children, and others who wanted to study to improve their chances "on the outs".

Crime fascinates us and the media glamourises it, but the reality of a life of crime for many is a life of recurring incarceration and wasted human potential. There's a reason it's called "doing time".

Pregnant in prison



Being pregnant in prison can be hard. Getting ready to leave prison and have a baby can be hard too.

PANDA's Helpline provides information and counselling if you are pregnant or have a new baby.

You can call us when you leave prison, or in NSW, contact your Perinatal Mental Health Nurse to speak with us.

Remember, there are people who can help. You're not alone.

Call PANDA on 1300 726 306
National, free and confidential.

PANDA Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia

Learn

Gardening, for Those With and Without

Inspired by this issue's letters on gardening at Langi Kal Kal in Victoria, Dan digs up gardening facts, tips and tricks for those with or without access to gardens.

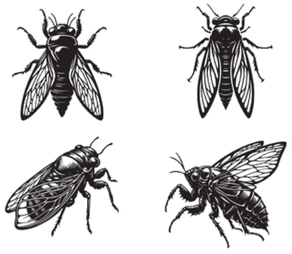


By Dan Nathan

Dan is a writer and gardener based in Naarm/Melbourne.

Tuning into seasonal rhythms with birds and insects

Noticing the gradual shifting of seasons within a garden is a unique pleasure. But you don't need access to a garden to experience this grounding joy... Insects and birds don't care much for fences, and can signal a season's arrival with more accuracy and meaning than a calendar, if listened to.



The exact birds and insects – and sounds to look out for – will obviously depend on which corner of the country you are located. Indigenous knowledge calendars, and citizen science websites for tracking bird sightings and migrations, are some useful resources for finding out what to look for. The library at your location might have books or information on seasonal rhythms and bird migrations.



FUN FACTS

Getting your hands dirty releases serotonin

If you've experienced gardening, you're likely well acquainted with the mental health benefits of getting your hands dirty. What might be surprising is that there is a chemical explanation for some of this. Researchers have found that contact with a particular type of bacteria that lives in soil, called Mycobacterium vaccae, releases serotonin in our brain. Serotonin bolsters our immune system, acts as a natural antidepressant, and contributes to feelings of happiness and wellbeing– as if the wonders of gardening weren't abundant enough!

All 100,000 living Wollemi pines come from one or two individual trees

The Wollemi pine was thought to have gone extinct millions of years ago. The pine belongs to a plant family that's 200 million years old. Rediscovered in 1994 in a canyon in the Blue Mountains – two hour's drive north of Warrane/Sydney – it's one of the rarest and oldest trees in existence.



The pine's impressive lifespan (500-1000 years) and resilient nature wasn't enough to protect it against hostile conditions in the distant past. Somewhere in the vicinity of 18,000 years ago the pine went through what's known as a genetic bottleneck, and only a handful – likely one or two individuals – survived. As a result, the 89 pines living in the wild, and the roughly 100,000 that have been cultivated by gardeners around the world, are genetically indistinguishable clones.

Trees communicate and cooperate

Using either underground fungal networks, known as mycorrhizal networks, or by directly grafting their roots together, trees share water and nutrients with neighbours in need. They also send chemical signals that alert other trees to various threats presented by animals and hostile fungi, allowing them to prepare defensive chemical compounds. Recognising their interdependence, our deep-rooted friends have opted for cooperation over competition.

HELPFUL TIPS

Complementary and space saving planting techniques

If space is tight, planting in straight lines isn't necessarily the best option. The "square metre planting system" divides a square metre – a common size of a single raised garden bed – into four squares. Each 25 centimetre square can then fit one large veggie, like a cabbage or a zucchini plant, four medium sized veggies, or 16 smaller ones, like carrots or radishes.



Certain plant pairings don't just thrive in proximity, but benefit each other in ways. For example, tomato, basil and onions are just as potent in the patch as they are in pasta. The tall and sun-loving tomatoes offer shelter to the low-growing basil, and the basil and onions deter pests like aphids and caterpillars. Corn, beans and pumpkin are another mutually supportive trio, with a history dating back to Native American tribes. The corn provides a natural trellis for the beans, the beans fix nutrients in the soil, and the pumpkin minimises weeds and moisture loss.

Any succulent stem can be broken off, stuck in soil, and will grow

Succulents are desert plants adapted to tough, dry conditions. You can identify them by their unusually thick leaves and stems, designed to minimise water loss. They're the easiest type of plant to propagate (create more of) and care for. White they're no good for eating, they can add brilliant colour and texture to a garden.

Is there a topic you'd like to learn more about? Write to us at *About Time*, PO BOX 24041 Melbourne 3000, and we'll endeavour to write something on it!

Legal Corner

The Federal Election: Voting and More

By About Time

The federal election is coming up. It happens about every three years. It's for electing the government for the whole country – the federal government. There will be more information on the election in the next edition of About Time.

Voting is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 years or over.

If you are in prison, you can and must vote if you are serving a sentence of less than three years.

If you are on remand, you maintain full voting rights. If you don't vote, you will need to provide a 'valid and sufficient reason' why or pay a $20 penalty. Unfortunately, if you are serving a sentence of three years or more, you are not able to vote in this election.

Why vote in the federal election?

Voting is the way we choose who represents our views and interests in government. Australia is a representative democracy, where each vote is equal. Governments make decisions about all aspects of our lives. While state or territory governments make decisions about a lot of things, including police and prisons, the federal government has its own set of responsibilities. These include: taxes; defence and foreign affairs; trade; immigration; most social services including pensions and more. Voting is a way of being part of those decisions. It's a way to hold governments accountable to the people and to have a say. If you don't like what a government is doing, you can vote differently next time. So while voting might not feel like it's doing much, not voting is not doing anything at all!

Enrolling to Vote

Before you can vote, you must be enrolled. Enrol means putting your name and address on a list of voters.

Many people in prison are already enrolled, maybe from a previous election. You can ask someone in prison to help you check if you are enrolled to vote.

How to enrol?

If you're not enrolled or need to change your details, you must fill in an enrollment form. There is a special form for people in prison. Prison staff at your location can help you.

If you do not have an address out of prison, you can either put the address of a next of kin (who is enrolled) if you haven't enrolled before, or if you cannot do this, you can put where you were born. If you don't know where you were born, you can put an address to where you have the closest connection.

You might need proof of identification, such as a driver's license, passport number, Medicare card number, or citizenship certificate. If you do not have these, someone else on the electoral roll will need to prove that they know you. If a staff member or another incarcerated person is on the electoral roll, they can complete this section on the form. Prison staff can put the correctional facility address and phone number down.

Enrolment shuts one week after an election date is set.

Voting in the election

If you're on remand, or your sentence is for less than three years, it is compulsory to vote.

If a mobile polling team is visiting the prison, you can vote in-person. Ask prison staff if this will happen at your prison. If a mobile polling team is not visiting, you will need to vote by mail. Prisoners can register to be a General Postal Voter and automatically receive ballot papers in the post or can apply for a single event postal vote once an election has been announced. The cut off for registering for postal voting is by 6:00pm on the Wednesday before the election. Ask staff at your prison to help you do this. The Australian Electoral Committee will also be visiting prisons and providing information about enrolling and voting.

How do people become elected?

Voting in the federal election includes voting in two 'houses', which are the House of Representatives and the Senate The federal election uses preferential voting. This means, voters rank the candidates in their order of preference, with '1' being the preferred candidate, '2' the second preference, and so on.

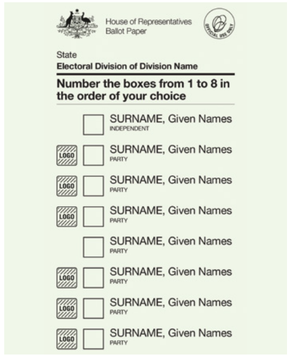


Voting boxes for the Senate and House of Representatives – Source: Australian Electoral Commission

Voting in the 'House of Representatives'

Voters elect someone to represent their 'electorate' in the House of Representatives. An electorate is a geographical area represented by a member of the Australian Parliament. There are currently 151 electorates in Australia. Each electorate has one representative, so there are 151 members. Electorates are based on population; an average of 110,000 voters live in each electorate.

When voting in the House of Representatives, voters must write a number in the box beside every name on the ballot-paper: '1' for their first preference, '2' for their second preference and so on, until all the boxes are numbered.

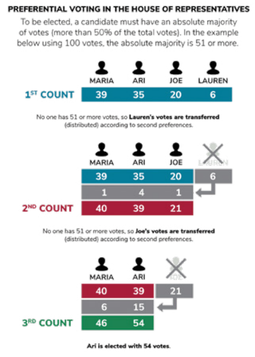


Sample House of Representatives ballot paper, Source: Australian Electoral Commission

How someone is elected: Preferential Voting

Preferential voting allows for votes to transfer from one candidate to another.

If a candidate gets an 'absolute majority' – more than half – of first preference votes, they are elected. However, if no candidate wins more than half the first preference vote, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated from the race. Their votes are then transferred to whichever candidate the voters marked as their second preference. The process of transferring votes according to preferences continues until one candidate has an absolute majority of votes. They then become elected.



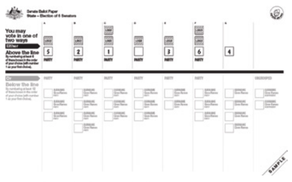
Source: Parliamentary Education Office (peo.gov.au)

Voting for the Senate

Voters also choose senators to represent their state or territory. There are 76 senators, with 12 senators elected to represent each state and two senators elected to represent each territory. The Australian Constitution says that states must have equal representation in the Senate, but this does not apply to territories. That's why there are fewer territory senators than state senators. Senators have six year terms, so often only half of the senators are voted on in each federal election (which comes around every three or so years).

The counting system for the Senate is different to the House of Representatives. The number of senators elected in each State and Territory is decided in proportion to the number of votes; for example, if a party receives half the votes in the senate, this will elect six senators (half of 12). Usually, this means a wider range of political parties and/or independents can be elected to the Senate. To be elected however, a candidate must gain a 'quota' or proportion of the state or territory votes. The counting process for a Senate election is complicated and — it sometimes takes several weeks after an election to count all the Senate votes and finalise the result.

Voters have a choice of voting above-the-line or below-the-line:



Sample Senate ballot paper – voting above the line (Australian Electoral Commission)

'Above-the-line' means voting for a party or group. Voters number at least 6 boxes from 1 to 6 at the top section of the sheet.

Below-the-line means voting for individual candidates. This requires voters to number at least 12 boxes from 1 to 12 in the bottom section of the sheet.

Difficulties to voting from prison:

There are many people with sentences of three years or more who cannot vote. And people who are eligible to vote often face challenges. Facilitating people in prison to enrol, to access information and to register has been low compared to other members of society. It's important that people in prison can access voting rights – it encourages people to exercise their civil and political obligations and engage with society, which is key to moving forward after prison.

Legal Q&A – No Body, No Parole

Question:
I wonder if you could explain the new "No Body No Parole" law in New South Wales, where now people charged with murder or manslaughter need letters from the head of police? Why is it used on everybody, I don't understand?
Anonymous, NSW

Hi there, thank you for your question. This information comes from the NSW State Parole Authority:

Under the No Body, No Parole legislation, the NSW Commissioner of Police must provide the NSW State Parole Authority a written report evaluating an offender's level of co-operation and assistance in identifying the victim's body or remains.

The legislation applies retrospectively, i.e. for any parole decision made after October 2022, regardless of when the homicide offence or conviction occurred.

How does this legislation impact parole decisions for offenders convicted of homicide?
Community safety is the Parole Authority's highest priority when making decisions about releasing inmates on parole.

The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 states the State Parole Authority must not make a parole order if it is not satisfied that it is in the interest of community safety.

Following the "no body no parole" amendment, the State Parole Authority is required to have regard to the written advice of NSW Police about the offender's level of cooperation and assistance concerning the location of the victim.

This includes an evaluation of the timeliness of the offender's cooperation; the truthfulness, completeness and reliability of information or evidence provided and the significance and usefulness of the offender's cooperation.

Therefore, the Parole Authority cannot make a parole order unless it is satisfied that the offender has cooperated satisfactorily in police investigations or other actions to identify the victim's location."

Added by *About Time*:
Similar laws have been introduced in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

While intended to provide a sense of closure for the family and friends of victims, critics argue that the legislation has serious repercussions for people who are wrongfully convicted. In late 2024, the Bridge of Hope Innocence Project wrote an open letter to the NSW Attorney General, signed by over 100 people, arguing that the law doesn't effectively incentivise cooperation but instead traps wrongfully convicted individuals in prison, even if they pose minimal risk to society. One high profile example is Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton, who served three years in prison for the murder of her daughter, Azaria. Chamberlain-Creighton was later pardoned when new evidence was found indicating she was innocent.



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:

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Injury & Compensation Lawyers

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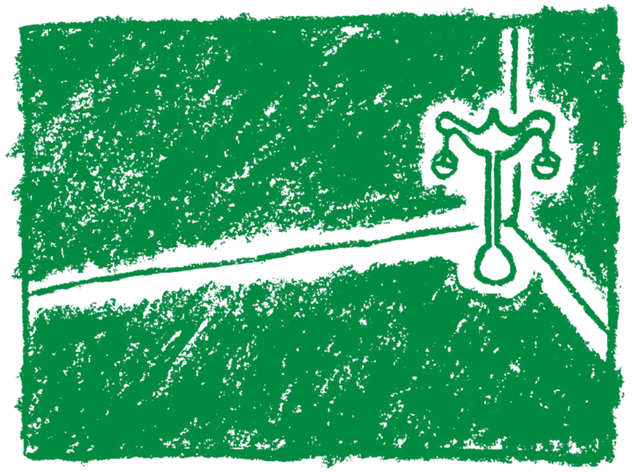
Speak directly to our Principal Lawyer Hanina Rind

Call 0478 861 131

Common Human Rights Issues in Prison



Ethan Cassidy

By Prisoners' Legal Service (Queensland)

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.

What are human rights and how are they protected?

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms inherent in every person. They are principles about how you should be treated, and are based on respect and dignity.

In some jurisdictions, human rights are recognised in and protected by legislation, often referred to as a "Human Rights Act", a "Bill of Rights", or a "Charter of Rights". In other jurisdictions, where there is no Human Rights Act at all, human rights are not explicitly protected by legislation.

In Australia, there are Human Rights Acts in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Victoria and Queensland. There is no Federal Human Rights Act in Australia.

This article discusses some of the human rights that may be relevant in prison with reference to human rights protections under the *Human Rights Act 2019* (QLD) in Queensland. The legal information provided in this article 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 in the jurisdiction where you are incarcerated.

Can human rights be limited?

In Queensland, the government can **lawfully limit or restrict human rights only if it has a good reason** and it does so in a reasonable way which can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. In deciding whether any limitation on a human right is reasonable and justifiable, the relative importance of the limitation should be weighed against the importance of the human right, including whether there are any less restrictive and reasonably available ways to achieve the purpose of the limitation. (s 13 *Human Rights Act 2019* (QLD))

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON HUMAN RIGHTS THAT MAY BE IMPACTED FOR PEOPLE IN PRISON?

Right to Humane Treatment When Deprived of Liberty

(QLD Human Rights Act; s 30)

The Queensland Human Rights Act states that if you are deprived of your liberty, you must be treated with humanity and respect for your inherent dignity as a human being.

This right may be relevant if you are subject to ill-treatment or harsh prison conditions. For example, this right may be relevant if you are subjected to extended periods in solitary confinement – which is the isolation of a person in a cell for 22 hours or more per day without meaningful human contact.

Cultural Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

(QLD Human Rights Act; s 28)

In the Queensland Human Rights Act, the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are protected. This includes their right to enjoy, maintain, control, protect and develop their identity, cultural heritage, language, kinship ties and relationship with land and/or waters.

For example, First Nations' cultural rights can be relevant if you want to attend an important family funeral or Sorry Business in the community, or if you want to be transferred to a different prison in order to be closer to and receive visits from your family.

Access to Health Services

(QLD Human Rights Act; s 37)

The Queensland Human Rights Act provides a right to access health services without discrimination. If you are unable to access the appropriate level of medical care for the seriousness of the medical issue you are experiencing, your right to access health services without discrimination may be affected.

For example, if you need to access essential medicines and you are unable to do so because you are in prison.

Other Human Rights

Here is a full list of human rights protected in Queensland:

- Recognition and equality before the law
- Right to life
- Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
- Freedom from forced work
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Freedom of expression
- Peaceful assembly and freedom of association
- Taking part in public life
- Property rights
- Privacy and reputation
- Protection of families and children
- Cultural rights generally
- Cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Right to liberty and security of person
- Humane treatment when deprived of liberty
- Fair hearing
- Rights in criminal proceedings
- Children in the criminal process
- Right not to be tried or punished more than once
- Retrospective criminal laws
- Right to education
- Right to health services

If you wish to make a complaint about a human rights issue in Queensland, please request a copy of PLS' *Human Rights and Discrimination Complaints* factsheet.

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 provided a limited number of people in Queensland prisons with assistance and representation. Eligibility criteria is applied when selecting clients to receive our assistance.



Reintegration



Ernie Journeys on Unsplash

Getting a Job After Prison

Managing expectations and looking for opportunities

By VACRO

Vacro is one of Australia's oldest, independent, non-denominational community organisations, starting in Victoria in 1872. Their mission is to support new beginnings for clients of the correctional system and their families, and build safer and stronger communities.

Getting a job after prison is hard for most people. If you had a job before you went in, you may not be able to go back to it, or you might not want to. Your criminal record might also mean you won't be able to work in the same industry as you had previously, or go into others. At times finding work can be easy.

Sometimes it is about asking the right person at the right time.

Your family or friends may be able to help. An old employer may have a vacancy. Normally, it takes time and persistence to find a job. You may get knockbacks along the way but the important thing is to keep trying. If you have a job it is easier to pay rent, meet new people and settle back into life outside of prison. So getting a job is worth the effort and former prisoners do find work. Everyone can increase their chances of getting work. Get as much advice as you can, prepare in advance and practice.

What can I do before I get out?

Any education or training you do in prison can be useful. You can prove what courses you have completed. These Certificates will be from the TAFE or University that provided the course, and they won't mention the prison where you studied. Ask the Education Centre for all your Certificates and Statements of Attainment before you leave prison. You can get copies later but it might not be easy.

Prison work is a form of work experience but you may not want to put it down on a resume. You can talk about the skills you picked up through this work though. Think about what you've done and the skills you've learned through prison work, or any responsibility you took on whilst doing prison work. These are things that can be listed on a job application.

What are my skills?

Think about all the skills that you will need for the job you're applying for. Don't just write down the ones the employer is asking for. Include all skills that might be useful without writing too much. There are some skills that all employers want. These are known as transferable or employability skills. Transferable skills include:

- **Communication skills –** Can you speak clearly? Can you listen and understand what people say? Can you follow directions or instructions?
- **Teamwork skills –** Do you know how to work on your own and with a team? Have you worked with other people of different ages, genders or cultures?
- **Problem solving –** Are you good at solving problems? Can you stay calm and think through all the options?
- **Initiative –** Can you work without instructions? Are you good at making decisions?
- **Planning and organising –** Can you plan ahead and stay on track?
- **Learning –** Are you willing to learn new skills and be open to new ideas?

These skills can be learned in many areas, not just the workplace. They may be skills gained through family life, volunteering, or hobbies. For each skill you write in your resume, try to think of an example of a time that you used that skill. While you may have learnt or strengthened some of these skills in prison, you may not want to mention that. They may ask you to explain any skill you have listed in an interview, so think of more general ways to frame your skills.

Job applications

To formally apply for a job, you usually need to send a resume and a cover letter or document that sets out how you meet the job criteria. Sometimes companies have their own application forms that they want people to fill out. You can always get help filling job applications out if you need to. You may also be called for an interview before a job is offered. Practise responses for basic questions for the interview, and remember to over-dress (think smart and appropriate for the role) and be on time (early even!). At every stage, try to be as polite, responsible and reliable as possible. Have a professional sounding email address (easiest is usually your first name.last name@gmail.com) and a working and available phone number. Being contactable is very important when applying for jobs.

Consider your resume. Make it look professional as possible, neat and easy to read. Don't lie about your qualifications or experience. Many employers will ask for proof either for qualifications or through references. Some prisons run courses to help you to write resumes and cover letters. Ask the prison or education staff if there is a resume-writing course that you can do. There are also many organisations in the community that can help you with this once you're out.

Talking about your record

It can be risky to lie about your record. A lot of employers ask for a criminal record check before or after you start work. Employers may also search online for information about you. If they find out you have lied about your record, they are unlikely to give you the job. If they find out after giving you the job they may sack you. Make sure you understand the consequences of how you respond to questions about your record for the job you're applying for, as some roles like government jobs have serious consequences for not being honest about your record.

It is not sensible to lie but you don't always need to share everything with an employer. When you talk to a potential employer about your past, put it in the most positive way. You can't always control who finds out about your criminal record but you may be able to control how and when people find out. If you have had long breaks between jobs you can hide this a bit by not putting dates on your resume. Telling a potential boss about prison time isn't easy. Think about the benefits and problems of telling them early. Pick your words carefully and practise them.

Advantages of disclosing before getting a job

- You don't have to worry about it coming out in the future
- You will find out early if it is a problem or not
- You appear honest, and employers may respect this.

Disadvantages of disclosing before getting a job

- The employer may decide not to employ you before they get to know you
- If you decide not to talk about your past, prepare a response to questions about the gap in your work experience. You may want to say something like: "I had to take some time out of work for personal reasons"
- Some employers will require their staff to undergo a police record check. It doesn't mean you won't get the job but you will have to talk about your record

If asked about your criminal record in a job application forms you can consider:

- Answer the question honestly and include a sheet giving brief details of your offence, the circumstances leading to the offence and your achievements since. Mark this sheet 'private and confidential'
- Leave the question blank and write "to be discussed at interview"
- Leave the question blank and be prepared to be asked if you get an interview.

If asked about your criminal record in a job interview:

- Tell the truth if asked directly
- Don't spend too much time talking about your offences. Turn the discussion back to your suitability for the job
- Keep the talk about your record brief and focus on how you have learnt from your mistakes. Don't make excuses for your offence, explain how you've changed
- Present your achievements since the conviction (including education, training or work experience)
- Convince your employer that it is not a risk to employ you
- You can choose to disclose your record directly to the manager and ask them not to tell all the other employees. Ask your manager to respect your need for confidentiality.

Workforce Australia

Centrelink will link you to a Workforce Australia provider in your local area. These employment services can help you with resumes and finding interviews. They can also help with further training and skill updates. There are employment services in each state and territory and a limited number who specialise with people who have left prison. You can request to go to these providers or any other provider that you have worked with previously. Services will only take you if they have a vacancy.

Finding work and staying in a job after prison can be a daunting task but with a clear mind and the right support, it's very possible.

Health

Everything You Need to Know About Naloxone

If you or someone you know uses opioids, Naloxone can be a lifesaver



AIVL

By Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)

AIVL is the national peer-led peak organisation representing a network of peer-based harm reduction and Drug User Organisations. AIVL's purpose is to advance the wellbeing, health and human rights of people who use/have used illicit drugs.

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a medicine that can be used by anyone to reverse a potentially fatal opioid overdose. It works by blocking opioids (like heroin, morphine, methadone and codeine) from acting on receptors in the brain. This helps a person start breathing again if their breathing has stopped or slowed down because of an overdose.

Naloxone is safe, easy to use, and will not harm someone who has not taken opioids.

How is Naloxone used?

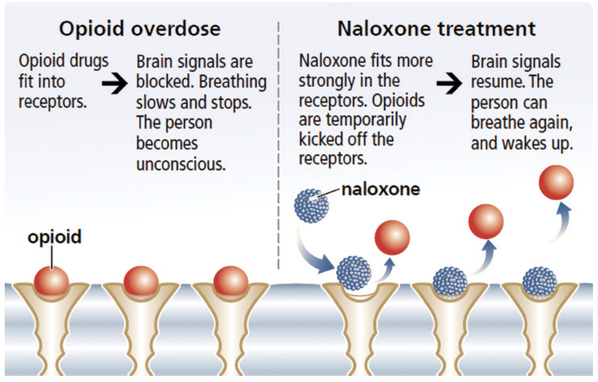
Naloxone comes in three common forms:



1. Nasal Spray (Nyxoid): A spray that goes into one nostril. Nyxoid comes with 2 devices that each provide 1 dose. 1 dose is equivalent to 400 micrograms of naloxone. While some people might only need one dose, others may need multiple.



2. Prefilled Syringe (Prenoxad): An injection that goes into muscles like the thigh, or upper arm.



NYXOID® Nasal Spray, Product Information

Prenoxad has 2000 micrograms of naloxone in the one pre-filled syringe. It is easily put together by attaching the 23g syringe tip provided in the box. The person who has overdosed can be given up to 5 small doses of 400 micrograms of naloxone.



3. Ampoules: 5 small doses of 400 micrograms of naloxone that come in small ampoules (bottles) that get injected into the thigh or upper arm. The naloxone doses have to be loaded into 3ml barrels with a 23g syringe tip attached.

Nyxoid, Prenoxad, and Ampoules are all filled with the same medicine, naloxone.

How to recognise an overdose

- A person is unconscious or difficult to wake
- No breathing, or slow and shallow breathing
- Loud raspy snoring
- Blue lips
- Pale skin
- Tiny pupils

What should you do if someone overdoses?

There is no one way to overdose, but there are signs you can look for, and ways you can help if a person has overdosed.

- Try to wake the person and check their breathing.
- If they can't wake up properly or at all, but they are breathing regularly, put them on their side in the recovery position.
- If they aren't breathing, or they aren't breathing enough, give them rescue breaths.
- Give them one dose (one spray of Nyxoid, one line of Prenoxad or one ampoule) of naloxone.
- Keep doing rescue breaths for about 3 to 5 minutes.
- If they still aren't breathing regularly, give them another dose of naloxone.
- Repeat rescue breathing and doses of naloxone until the ambulance arrives or the person begins to breathe and wakes again.

Always call 000 when a person has overdosed, even if you are using naloxone. The person may still need medical care.

Getting Naloxone in prison

Every prison and correction centre in Australia has different practices when it comes to overdose training and naloxone.

- **On release –** Some prisons offer training to people who want to know how to use naloxone. It is usually offered during other education sessions about drugs, or close to a person's release date. People in prison usually can't get naloxone while they are locked up but may be given it when they are leaving, or will be told where they can get it once they are out.
- **Corrections and health staff –** Naloxone is available to health workers in most Australian prisons and corrections centres and sometimes guards in prisons and corrections centres so that they can help if a prisoner overdoses.
- Many people who work in policy, advocacy and health are trying to make sure prisons and corrections services can provide naloxone to everyone.

Getting Naloxone after release

Leaving a prison or corrections service is an extremely risky time for people who use drugs. People who use heroin or other opioids can lose their tolerance after even a few days without using. This means you can't use as much of the drug as you might have used before you went in, and because drugs like heroin are illegal, it is really hard to know how much you previously used and how much you can use after you are released.

When you leave prison, you can get naloxone in many places. It might seem like a hassle but having naloxone can save your life or the life of someone else you care about. It is free in most places, and you do not need a prescription or ID.

- **DUOs:** The AIVL Network of peer-based harm reduction and Drug User Organisations in every capital city and some regional and rural locations can provide you with free naloxone, overdose training, and support.
- **Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs):** Most NSPs in Australia provide free naloxone and teach you how to use it.
- **Pharmacies:** Many community and hospital pharmacies give out free naloxone without a prescription.

Staying safe

- Try not to use opioids alone. Have someone nearby who can help if needed.
- Use less if you haven't used in a while or you don't know how strong the gear is.
- Carry naloxone. Make sure people around you know where it is and how to use it.
- Avoid mixing opioids with other drugs, especially depressant drugs like alcohol, benzodiazepines (valium, temazepam), and some other medications.

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.

Lean on Me

Yoga poses using the wall of your cell

By The Prison Phoenix Trust



1. Mountain
Stand, eyes closed, for 10 breaths.



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



3. Forward fold
Relax your upper body, head, and neck. Stay for 5 breaths.



4. Warrior 1
Right leg forward for 5 breaths.



5. Intense stretch
Forearms or palms rest on the wall for 5 breaths.

6. Repeat 4 & 5 on other side.



7. Warrior 2
Right hand and outer edge of foot connect with the wall for 5 breaths.



8. Peaceful warrior
Reach left arm and upper body towards wall for 5 breaths.

9. Repeat 6 & 7 on other side.



10. Boat pose
Forearms or palms rest on the wall for 5 breaths.



13. Seated twist
For 5 breaths on each side.



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

Exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.

Recipes

Recipes From Jail Dinners

By Caitlin

Caitlin writes from Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, New South Wales.



Chicken Kebab Marinade

1 part = 1 tablespoon

Ingredients:

- Soy sauce (2 parts)
- ABC sauce (1 part)
- Honey (1 part)
- Garlic (1 tsp)

Method:

- Shredded chicken (Enough for 1 person, use more if eating with others)
- Mix together, use water (a little) if needed



Ham Carbonara

Feeds about 8 people.

Ingredients:

- 2 packets of carbonara pasta
- Ham (from ham/salad dinners – use enough from 6 dinners)
- 1 cream
- ½ packet rice stick noodles
- Mixed herbs

Method:

- Cut the rinds off the ham. Dice into small pieces and cook on the cooktop with butter and garlic.
- Cook up the carbonara packs in separate mixing bowls.
- Break rice stick noodles up and cook in hot water for 5–10 mins. Drain and add half into each carbonara.
- Add cream (½ into each bowl) towards the end of microwaving carbonara pasta.
- Once pasta is finished cooking in the microwave, add bacon and herbs into the pasta. Mix thoroughly.

"But No One Died." Why We Feel Grief in Response to Life Changes

How to manage feelings of grief when the cause is not obvious

By Annalise de Groot

Annalise is a forensic psychologist at PsychOrium Forensic and Clinical Psychology Services.



'Escaping Cloth' by Allan, 2000, 85cm x 108cm, Boom Gate Gallery

Grief is not just something that happens in response to death. It is an acute sensation of loss, and it can apply to any aspect of life. It can occur in response to the loss of freedom, of security, of connection – symbolic or real. Grief does not discriminate as to whether the loss is 'good' or 'bad' for you; it is about the absence of something you have held close for a long time.

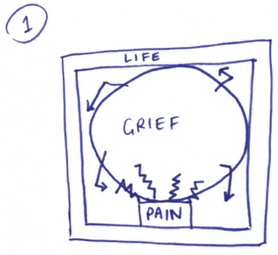
When a person is incarcerated, they can often find that they have lost many things on the outside, like their homes, their families and their employment. Sometimes, it is the loss of an unhealthy coping mechanism which prompts a lifestyle change – such as getting clean from drugs. Sometimes, it is the loss of people who were important to us, not through death but through changing relationships.

The way that loss affects each person is different, but there is often a common thread related to the lack of control surrounding the loss.

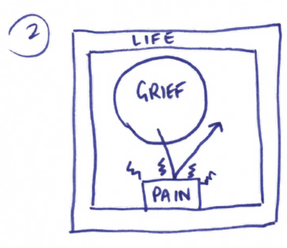
This is where grief takes hold.

Grief is one of the most painful emotions we experience. By its nature, it is gut-wrenching, all-encompassing pain. Grief exists because we cared about what we lost, because it meant something to us, regardless of whether it played an unhealthy or healthy role in our lives. Grief is layered with sadness, anger and desperation. It hurts because we cannot control the loss. Grief as an emotional state is designed to tell us that we need to heal from pain, but how do we do this when that pain is so consuming?

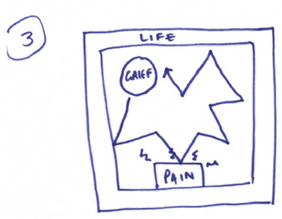
The 'ball in the box' analogy is a helpful way of understanding how we learn to live with grief. Imagine that your grief is represented by a ball. That ball exists within a box, which represents life, alongside a button that represents emotional pain. When we first experience loss, in the acute stages of grief, that ball is so large it takes up the whole box. Because it is so large, it presses the pain button down constantly. (Pic 1)



As time goes on, and we process our thoughts, feelings and urges related to the grief, the ball gets smaller. The pain button is no longer constantly pressed, but the ball moves around and hits the button sometimes. When the button is pressed, we experience a surge of emotional pain, but over time it fades again. (Pic 2)



Eventually, the ball gets to a size that is manageable. It still hits the button at times, but it isn't big enough to keep the button pressed down. We learn to cope when the button is pressed, and the grief is no longer so all consuming.



The ball won't shrink any faster than it is meant to shrink, and it won't go away completely, but it becomes something that is manageable. Most importantly, we learn how to cope with the distress caused by grief, and this enables us to move forward despite having the pain button activated at times.

One of the most effective ways to process our thoughts, feelings and urges related to grief is to spend time reflecting on what we have lost. This can be hard because it can feel very overwhelming, however, it is important to understand why we are hurting in response to loss in order to overcome it. One of the best ways to process grief is through expression. Communicating to others or to ourselves (through journalling or art), is critical in allowing the feelings of pain to surface and be resolved appropriately.

Time spent reflecting on the loss will reveal the different emotion states, and enable you to tackle each of them, which will in turn help the ball of grief to become smaller. For example, you may feel angry that you have lost what is important to you. Maybe that anger is directed at someone else, or maybe at yourself. In order to process this, it is necessary to look deeply at what the anger is telling you, and to communicate that as appropriate.

Grief is not just about loss, it is also about learning what matters to us. Underneath the pain are layers of emotion, each of which can reveal an important lesson about what is important in our lives. Despite losing something, we are afforded the opportunity to evaluate what it was that we cared about and why. This can lead to important lessons about what we value, what we need and what we could stand to change in our lives.

Mob

Government Report on First Nations Healthcare in Prisons Calls for Urgent Changes

By About Time

A wide-ranging report commissioned by the federal government has called for "urgent and proactive" system-level reforms to improve the standard of health care provided to First Nations people in prison.

The final report, released publicly in December, calls on governments at all levels to work together to implement large-scale reforms to address health care needs of incarcerated First Nations people. It also suggests that these reforms should be led by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and draw on alternative models of custody for First Nations people.

The report leads with six high-level recommendations for systems change to address the serious concerns identified throughout the review.

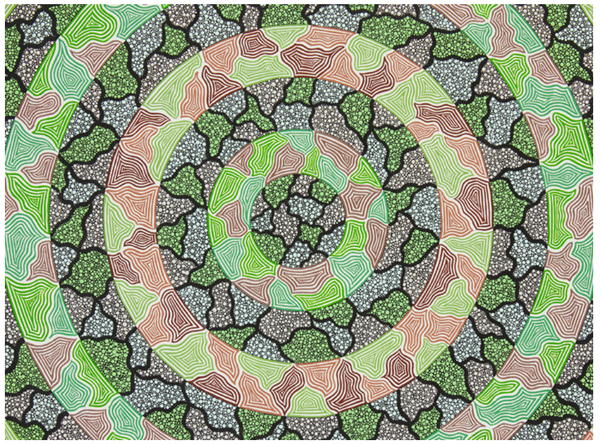
These include an agreement on a set of national reform principles, and the establishment of a National Partnership Agreement to govern the implementation of changes.

The report also urged governments to investigate the evidence that had been provided to the review and take immediate steps to cease any practices that are violating the human rights of people in prison.

The report suggested that governments should also implement a national program of work for First Nations health care in prisons, and pilot alternative therapeutic models of custody for First Nations people.

The flagship recommendation from the review is for governments to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to lead the policy design and delivery of health services in prisons.

The federal government and all state and territory governments have endorsed the report and committed to developing an approach to implement the recommendations this year, in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.



Country
By Chippa
Palawa people
2024

This is my interpretation of Country. The greens and browns take me back to the quiet and secluded areas I've worked on and stayed on whilst camping and living off Country.

Questions for Mob Inside:

1. What do you think is the best way for Aboriginal people in prison to access healthcare?
2. Do you want to receive healthcare from other First Nations people?
3. Are you connected to your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in the community? Were you before you went inside?
4. What do you want to see in prison for Aboriginal people more generally?

Write to us via the below postal address:

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The Journey Ahead
By A.Smith
Waka Waka people
2024

This is my journey through life. How I try to avoid the problems that life throws my way, which is shown by the dots.



Rainbow Serpent Creating the Land
By D.Bell
Noongar/Whadjuk people
2024

My story is the rainbow serpent creating the land for all the different mobs.

Culture



20th Century Studios

Movie Review of Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes

By Vincent

Vincent writes from Long Bay Correctional Centre in New South Wales.

Welcome to the planet where the apes are rulers and the humans – as far as we know – are reduced to a subspecies. This is the state of existence we are introduced to by director Wes Ball. This is a movie for fans of the "Planet of the Apes" franchise and regard it does not disappoint. This is an action movie with a gripping story. I was enthralled by the plot, the story arcs of the primary protagonists, and the well-crafted action sequences.

The film takes place years after the death of Caesar, the original leader of the apes. There is an inevitable power tussle between different tribes of apes with the new ruler, Proximus Caesar (Kevin Durand), fixated on obtaining the tools and knowledge of the humans. The film follows the path of chimpanzee Noa (Owen Teague), who confronts Proximus Caesar, deliberates over Caesar's legacy, and attempts to chart a way forward for all of ape-kind. The film isn't long on dialogue, nor does it contain dense plot developments, instead dramatic battle scenes, violence, and confrontations to build the story and keep the audience in suspense... This is a film that leaves the viewer entertained and taking a side in this epic contest.

Rating: 3.5 jailbirds – "Entertaining and thought-provoking."



Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros

Reviewed by Mark

Mark writes from Port Phillip Prison in Victoria.

Thanks to a spinal cord injury, I spend most of my time in bed at the St John's ward in Port Phillip Prison. Fortunately, I like to read because there's not much worth watching on television, and so for the last 16 months I have devoured hundreds of books (and maybe written one as well!). One of the nurses here is also a voracious reader and pushed me hard to get this book because she believed that it was the Best. Book. Ever. Initially, I was hesitant because she said it was a fantasy romance. What? I've read thousands of novels over the last fifty-odd years and not one of them was romance, but while I'm trying new things – like paraplegia and prison – I might as well add in a romance novel to my life experience.

I purchased a copy via the canteen and a week later I received a fat, hardcover edition with a silky smooth and shiny gold slipcover. Compared to the faded, dog eared, hand me down bits of scrap from the library, the smell, feel and look of this new book was delightful. The first few pages feature some beautifully illustrated maps of a new world for your imagination, along with the following disclaimer: "Fourth Wing is a nonstop-thrilling adventure fantasy set in the brutal and competitive world of a military college for dragon riders, which includes elements regarding war, battle, hand-to-hand combat, perilous situations, blood, intense violence, brutal injuries, death, poisoning and graphic language. Readers who may be sensitive to these elements, please take note, and prepare to enter Basgiath War College..."

The tale is told through the eyes of twenty-year-old Violet Sorrengail, who dodges death with every step she takes in her frail body, having been born with a connective tissue disorder. No words are wasted in establishing the enticing setting of a war college where danger, dragons and magic jump off the page to take you away from whatever you've got going on in your world. Basgiath War College is far deadlier than Hogwarts, and while she starts as a shrinking Violet, Sorrengail develops into a character that's far better than Harry Potter. Author Rebecca Yarros has very cleverly fortified the world she has created by starting each chapter with a quote that has been referenced from a textbook in the syllabus of the war college. This acts as a preview to what topic is about to be explored and helps motivate the reader to keep turning the pages. For example, at the opening of Chapter One it reads, "A dragon without a rider is a tragedy. A rider without a dragon is dead".

Yarros has conjured up a story so enticing that I bought the followup novel, *Iron Flame*, before I'd even finished the first one. Although she has authored fifteen novels, it was *Fourth Wing* that put Yarros on the map as it became a number one best selling phenomenon. The world is anxiously awaiting *Onyx Storm*, the third book in this saga that she is calling "The Empyrean Series", and I have no doubt that movie studios are lining up to buy the rights like they did for the Harry Potter franchise (although I hope they don't water it down for the kids...). In summation, I'm not sure if this fantasy is all that romantic, but I am damn certain that it is totally fantastic!

Write to Us

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to *About Time*, please send your letters to the below postal address:

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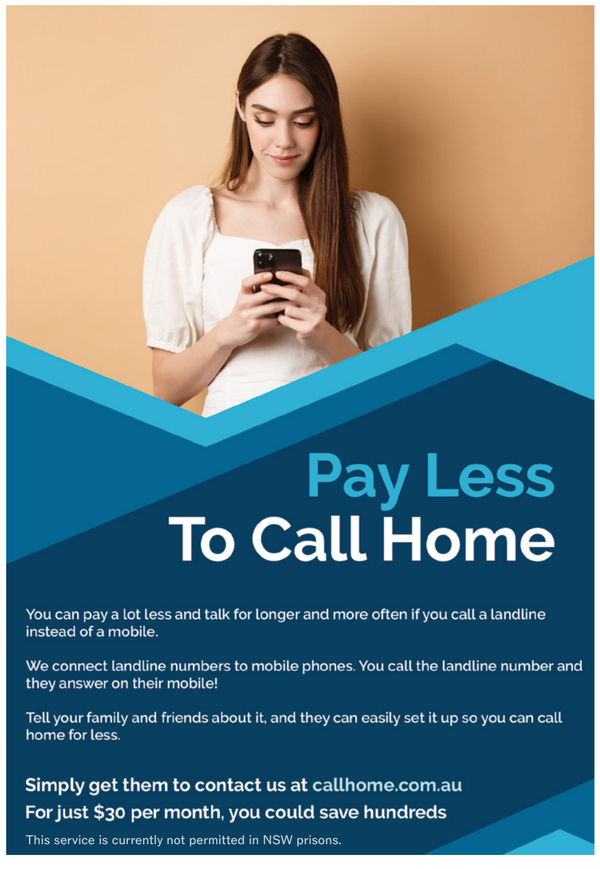


Creative

Education Area Transformed by 'Resident Artist'

An interview with Nathan, who paints from Ron Barwick Prison, Tasmania

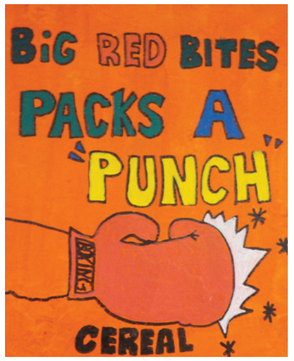
By About Time

How did you first figure out that you were good at art?
I remember being young at school and put in the corner by my teacher for being disruptive. I drew on my book most of the time. I copied pictures out of magazines and off the wall. School mates started asking me to do pictures for them and I realised yeah, I am pretty good at this.

Most of the day in school I would spend in art as my teacher Mrs Crawford was the only one that seemed to understand me and get my ADHD. She made me feel equal. I liked her spirit. She didn't judge me and taught me technical art skills that I liked and enjoyed. Birds and faces were the first thing she taught me how to draw and it was good to feel recognised and good at something, plus it was a break from my home life.

In prison I have used art a lot as an outlet, especially in isolation. I had just a pencil, a rubber and a bit of paper. I have done some of my best pictures in isolation because there's no distractions like TV or other people. Whatever you feel you can put into it. It's always been a comfort thing of mine. It's natural as it runs in the family. We are all good at drawing.





How did you come up with your ideas for painting this space?
My first idea was the design of the snake I've done over the years. The Storyline for the original design is two snakes wound together with the male protecting the female holding her eggs.

Also, I chat to staff and see what their favourite things are and then come up with an idea. Then I free hand draw it on the wall and add the colours in.

With the murals, I've tried some new stuff in black and white. These are like my own take on Zentangle designs. I've included motives that tell a story, like the man with the cuffs and a dove that's free and other symbols. This is all new to me painting on walls – I've never done it before it turns out I'm pretty good at it.

What are some of the challenges about making art in prison and can you offer people any advice?
Being in the right state of mind making art is important to me. Sometimes I feel exhausted because of my diabetes. Some days I feel really good and free and on the good days before you know it, I'll have all sorts of stuff on the wall.

If you want to do art but are not confident in yourself or what you're capable of doing, just try it a few times until you feel good and happy with what you have done and the idea of what you're trying to achieve. Don't worry about stuffing up. You can always erase it, start again or paint over it. At the end of the day, you're the person that's got to be happy with what you've made for yourself!







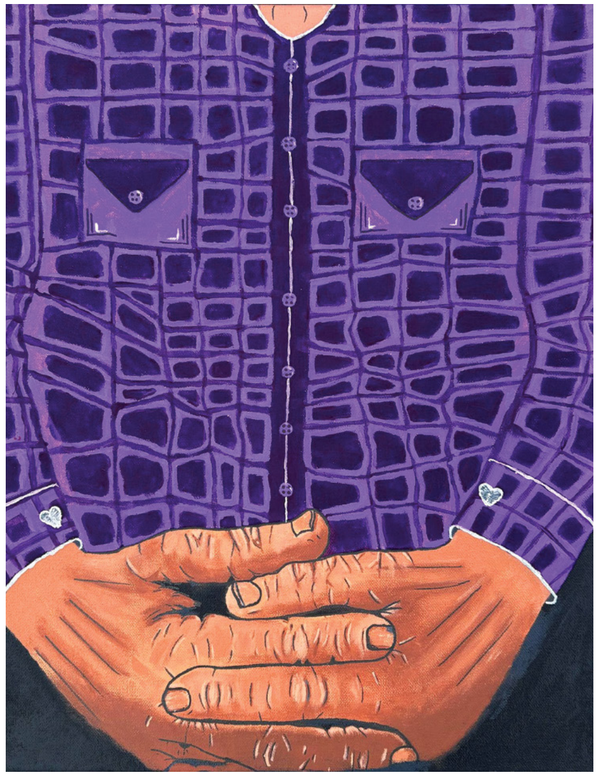
For Rich or For Poor, Sickness And In Health

By Courtney

Courtney's art is from Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company Workshops and Art Exhibition, operating out of Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower, Victoria

I saw a picture and followed it to help with the outline, then after that I went with what was in my mind about colours, lines, shadows, details. This picture really resonates with me.

To me it means hard work and rough times, you have to work for what you want and there will always be barriers and things/people trying to bring you down. Some people wear their hard work and rough times on the outside but all of us wear it on the inside.



For rich or for poor, sickness and in health, By Courtney, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



Send Us Your Art

We're looking to print more artwork from people in prison. If you have any sketches, paintings, creative pursuits – send them to us. Staff members at your prison may be able to scan and send them to us via email.

Please send your letters to the below postal address:

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Gemini

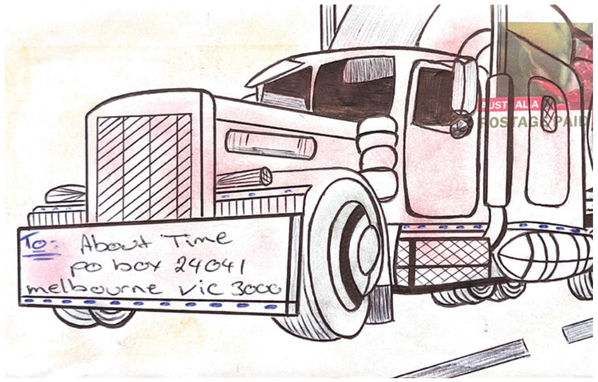
By Luke

Luke writes for Marngoneet Correctional Centre in Victoria.

There is a kind of peace that comes with routine. A familiarity that numbs you to the monotony of everyday life. It lurks in the periphery, just out of sign but ever present. But as I walk my laps, it slowly melts away until there is only the rhythmic staccato of my strides echoing through my ears.

I focus on my gait, pumping my legs forward on the stark concrete path. I am so fixated on the soothing drum of my steps that it takes some time to realise there is something very different about time. The familiar pairs and groups of green figures, caught up in their own daily rituals, are nowhere to be soon. I widen my hearing to encompass the yard and I am deafened by the silence. Lifting my gaze to the horizon answers the questions bubbling to the surface.

The sky is bruised. A violent mottling of deep purples and shadowed greys. It fills the heavens defiantly, an unspoken threat of what is soon to be unleashed. Almost on cue, a fierce wind rushes through the prison. It is a herald for the storm and the electrified wires screech and whine under the force. It



Craig, Woodford Correctional Centre, QLD

tears wildly at my face and pulls at my clothing in a vain attempt to steal my hat and send me scuttling for cover. Yet the unfailing beat of my steps will not be slowed by the burgeoning tempest. I push forward relentlessly, congregated by the primal energy crackling all around me that fills the air to bursting.

The yard now lies deserted. Everyone with any sense has retreated to their sanctuary to wait out the storm. The brooding clouds engorged with water, can no longer hear their heavy burdens and release it from above with a grateful sigh. Sheets of rain, forced by wind, hurtle towards the earth. It whips across my back like a medieval flogging, lashing my flesh and leaving my skin stringing from the precision of its strikes. The razor edge of the elements slashes and rips at any skin left vulnerable and bare but still my march continues.

Darkness now engulfs the sky in total dominance yet still I stand defiant in the face of Nature's wrath. Its strength and wild power dances around me untamed and unchained. Through glass and wire questioning eyes observe and wonder why the solitary figure endures the violent weather. The answer is simple.

The tempest is my twin...
A mirror...

The closest reflection to the tumultuous storm that surges within my breast and thunders through my veins. The smothering tangle of guilt and shame that wraps itself around my organs and insidiously contracts. The searing pain that scorches through my bones when I see the hurt in the eyes of the ones I love. The fury and self-loathing that makes me want to scream and howl until my throat is raw and my voice is nothing but a broken whimper.

In the frenzy of the storm, I see myself equal. It doesn't judge or set restrictions. It is limitless and ancient and honest and it is here, within the unbridled passion, that I truly am at peace.

About Time

By Storm

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

Dear *About Time*

Your newspaper is fantastic and is extremely valuable, sharing experiences and knowledge between prisons in all states of Australia as well as the world, helping all gain insight into practices and procedures as well as outlining certain discrepancies. It is wonderful to see such a vast array of people writing in to share their views, feelings and sharing their lived experiences within the system. Thank you to all those involved and keep up the great work!

With this letter, I've included some of my poetry and a short story I've completed in prison. Writing and creating artwork has really helped me express my emotion and document my experiences here over the time I have served.

"About Time" is my favourite piece and it was created after reading your first issue some months back.

It's about time, I outline,
the walls we're within.
No doubts fly, no routes fine,
the way I'm living.
I shout, whine, but still I'm
stuck in prison.
Mistakes, lies, of all kinds
that aren't forgiven.
I did lines, my shout guys,
insight went missing.
My fam cries, I got time, charges arisen.
No goodbyes, no wise guys,
at large just wishing.
Chose mob ties, not outcries,
I've been losing my vision.
The cops bite, one more time,
they're ankle nipping.
I got high, now gotta find,
my own remission.
Not guilty, we all cry, there's
no admissions.
Prosecution, all sigh, got 'em
power tripping.
They see nothing we do's right,
that's the stigmatism.
All criminals, all fight, try to
sit and listen.
It's about time to outline, the
truth you're gripping.
I'm trying to shed light on
your firm position.
'Cause we are drowning in blood,
from the law's incisions.
Not all of us are all bad, your
pocket's been pissin'.
Generational trauma, got
some pathways missing.
Some of us, just made some
bad decisions.
Others were in raids, that
our peers positioned.
Of all the charges laid, a lot
of facts went missing.
At the back of the courtroom,
hear the snakes all hissing.
A few are innocent black slaves,
to some cruel traditions.
I'm not gonna lie, some are
plain Kool-Aid sipping.
But the generations born
with stigmas are slipping.
So it's about time, we outline,
corruption's given.
To all of mankind, it's time
the subject's risen.
Before more sons and daughters
die in this system.
Or another rise, in rates of recidivism.
I just hope you'll listen, to these words,
from RISDON.

Calls Behind Concrete Walls

By Leslie

Leslie writes from Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Victoria.

Lights on, doors slam, go
running to the phone
Dial the number hit the hash,
and wonder if they're home
Spend the first minute saying
hello, fight to say a word
Tell them that you love them
and hope that you are heard
The phone gets passed around
so everyone gets a go
To tell you what is going on and
things that you should know
Twelve minutes pass much too fast,
soon you hear the beep
To tell you that time has ran out,
the family begin to weep
Calls behind the concrete walls
are never easy to make
Speaking to those you love whose
hands you cannot take
Your heart breaks as you hear
their pain going down the line
Knowing that you cannot help to
make everything fine
So if you have one you love in
jail and away from you
Just know that there is something
small that you can do
To show them that you love them
and tell them that you care
Even though they are far away,
sometimes who knows where
Remember that a single call can
really change a day
And fill a saddened heart,
chase their blues away
So if you get a call from
someone far apart
Let them always know that
they are in your heart.

Heartache and Pain

By Robert

Robert writes from Wolston Correctional Centre in Queensland.

Tears on my pillow
Pain in my heart,

The day they put me in prison
My whole world fell apart,

But if my tears could build a stairway
It would lead to your front door,

Just so I can tell you
I love you once more.



Write to Us

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to *About Time*, please send your letters to the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Crochet

By Rachel

Rachel writes from Numinbah Correctional Centre in QLD.

Here's just a few of my crochet art projects – this is what you can achieve if you learn how to crochet!



Play

Quiz

1. How many months have 31 days?
2. What is the capital of Vanuatu?
3. What meat is used in a shepherd's pie?
4. Etihad Stadium is the home ground of which English Football team?
5. Pink ladies are a type of which fruit?
6. Who won the men's singles in the 2025 Australian Open?
7. Bryan Cranston played which character in the hit TV show Breaking Bad?
8. Which famous musician has the nickname 'The Boss'?
9. Which city is home to the Christ the Redeemer statue?
10. How many stars are on the Australian flag?

Card Game – Slapjack

2-4 player game using a standard 52 playing card deck.

To win a game of Slapjack you will need to quickly slap the deck whenever a jack is played in order to win all of the cards.

Set Up

Each player draws one card from a shuffled deck. The player with the lowest card is the dealer. The dealer shuffles the deck and deals out all the cards evenly and face down to each player in a clockwise direction.

How to Play

The player to the left of the dealer starts by placing the top card of their deck into a centre pile. Play continues in a clockwise direction. Players must draw away from them so that everybody sees what the card is at the same time. If the card is a jack, players must slap the deck. The player who slaps it first wins all of the cards in that pile. The pile is shuffled and added to the winner's pile. Then a new pile is started by the winner. The player who eventually gets all of the cards wins.

When a person runs out of cards, they have one chance to win a slap. If a card is played on top of a jack before anyone can slap it, the jack is lost and play continues.

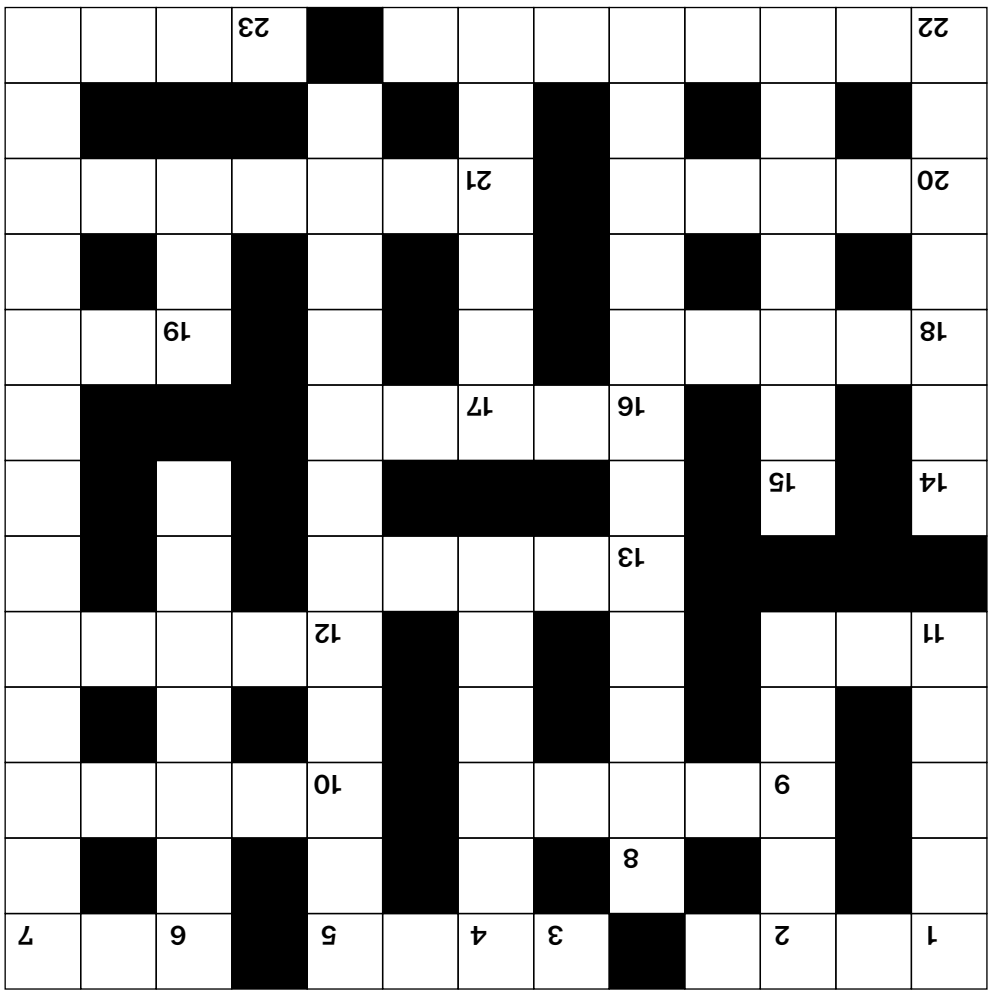
Crossword

ACROSS

1. Suggestion (4)
3. The sun is one (4)
6. "It wasn't too long ___" (3)
9. What a bird does in the sky (5)
10. Lift up (5)
11. Attempt (3)
12. Solemn promises (5)
13. Moving images (5)
16. Supply with food for a party (5)
18. Send money in payment (5)
19. Farewell remark (3)
20. One who puts in a lot of effort (5)
21. Roll-away bed (7)
22. Open space in a forest (8)
23. Filth (4)

DOWN

1. A stupid person (5)
2. Short piece of writing (5)
4. Hanging decoration on a cushion (6)
5. Type of high-altitude cloud (12)
6. Pilot (7)
7. Exaggeration (13)
8. Maker of machinery (12)
14. Irregular or unpredictable (7)
15. Collect (7)
17. Fabric associated with Scotland (6)
19. Furniture for sleeping (3)



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.

M	L	P	U	F
A	O	U	I	F
U	R	B	Z	E
N	T	A	Z	D
T	E	L	I	P

Caption This...

Photo by Oner Mopo on Unsplash



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

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Bad Jokes

If you have a better joke please send them to us because these ones are terrible!

Q: Why do chickens play in the rain?
A: They love fowl weather.

Q: Why did the tree take up a hobby?
A: It wanted to branch out.

Q: How did the mobile phone propose to his girlfriend?
A: He gave her a ring.

Q: Why was Cinderella so bad at soccer?
A: She kept running away from the ball!

Q: How do you make an octopus laugh?
A: With ten-tickles.

Boggle Answer

Puzzle

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Idea
3. Star
6. Ago
9. Soars
10. Raise
11. Try
12. Oaths
13. Films
16. Cater
18. Remit
19. Bye
20. Trier
21. Trundle
22. Clearing
23. Smut

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Idiot
2. Essay
4. Tassel
5. Cirrostratus
6. Aviator
7. Overstatement
8. Manufacturer
14. Erratic
15. Compile
17. Tartan
19. Bed

Quiz Answers

1. 7: January, March, May, July, August, October, and December
2. Port Vila
3. Lamb
4. Manchester City
5. Apples
6. Jannik Sinner
7. Walter White
8. Bruce Springsteen
9. Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
10. 7