FINDING SOLACE IN ART
Ethan on the peace he finds being creative
2–4. LETTERS

THE DAY I MET JONNY
Challenging assumptions about others in prison
10–12. EXPERIENCES

INTRO TO CRIMINOLOGY
Understanding crime and criminal behaviour
13. LEARN

THE STRENGTH WITHIN
Stacey on life on the other side of prison
20–21. MOB

• Australia's National Prison Newspaper

ISSUE NO. 9 APRIL 2025 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

About Time

And Still We Endure

One of the hardest things is to leave the person you love in prison, to walk away and not take them with you

By Ellie

Ellie writes from New South Wales.

For years we had been dragged through court hearings: the prosecutor asking for more time, prolonging the process, wasting the little money we had, and trial delays due to COVID-19. Each court attendance made me feel sick to my stomach with nervousness as rich strangers decided my husband's fate – and our future. Our lawyers would joke and laugh with the prosecutor before presenting their argument riddled with factual errors.

For years while on bail we had endured curfews, travel restrictions, daily check-ins and sometimes twice-nightly police harassment. But in the court's eyes this was not considered "onerous" or difficult. Only someone who has not been on bail could possibly think that.

And then it was the day and the unthinkable happened: "Guilty" the judge said, and it felt like a knife had pierced through my heart, the world fell away to darkness. All I wanted was to be held by my husband, yet it was he who was suffering most of all, sitting alone in that wooden box. It was forbidden: no kiss goodbye, no final hug before he was taken into the depths of the building.
Continued on page 10.

The Ongoing Fight to Vote in Prison

Why the battle to have a say motivates people inside

By Denham Sadler

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

Kelly knows first-hand the barriers people in prison face when trying to vote in an election.

Recently released after being incarcerated at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria, Kelly said there are numerous issues when it comes to voting, including a lack of access to information and confusion over who is able to vote.

Continued on page 6.



Ike Curtis

• Call for Questions to the ACT Attorney General and Minister for Corrections

The Attorney General and Minister for Corrections of the ACT have offered to be interviewed by About Time. We would like the questions to come from people in prison. If anyone would like to submit a question to a politician, please write to us and we will try to get them answered! You can 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



Contents

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

6 – 9 NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS
The Ongoing Fight to Vote in Prison
6 MIN READ
The Policy Commitments of the Major Parties
1 – 2 MIN READ EACH
The latest in criminal justice around the country

10 – 12 EXPERIENCES
And Still We Endure
4 MIN READ
The Day I Met Jonny
6 MIN READ
The Impact of Not Being Allowed to Vote
5 MIN READ

13 LEARN
Intro to Criminology
6 MIN READ

14 – 16 HEALTH
Hepatitis C and Harm Reduction in Prison
6 MIN READ
The Necessity of Sadness
5 MIN READ
Anti Anxiety Yoga

17 LEGAL CORNER
Silence May Be Golden, but Is It a 'Right'?
5 MIN READ

18 REINTEGRATION
Back on the Path of Freedom
6 MIN READ

19 CULTURE
Movie Review of *The Wasp*
2 MIN READ
Book Club Review: *The Wife and the Widow* by Christian White
6 MIN READ

20 – 21 MOB
The Strength Within: Part 1
6 MIN READ
Aboriginal Art in custody

22 – 23 CREATIVE
Poetry, art and creative writing from behind bars
1 – 3 MIN READ EACH

24 PLAY
The monthly quiz, crossword and more

Letters

The Secret to Living is Giving

By Konrad

Konrad writes from a prison in Australia.

"The secret to living is giving" – Tony Robbins

"When we think in terms of energy vibration and frequency, we have the key to the universe" – Nikola Tesla

I believe we are living better than ever, but we still complain. Our external world has so many options and choices, to have, do and be, we even have greater control of this world, more than we have ever had before, yet we are still suffering.

This shows us that getting what we want, doing what we want and having great control, with a focus upon getting, acquiring and building an external world, that of our desire, leads not to a true sense of fulfillment. One that builds a sense of joy and contentment, that comes from truly serving one's purpose. To live in alignment with the intention of contribution.

If getting, earning and making a living, for the sake of just having, is the intention behind one's call to action, then one's call to action is still derived from lack. Quite possibly the source of all suffering. For I think you will find energetically there is no separation between want and lack.

Yet what is one wanting? Some would ask. To be free from suffering perhaps, free of want and desire. Just as the state of joy that arrives from truly being of service, and contributing to something of great importance, greater than just ourselves, and our existence alone.

You may find this builds an internal world which infects us, and everything we do, with light, love and positive energy. Building a shine from within, one that creates momentum, manifesting itself into opportunities. For once we are truly driven to act from within, we can now finally realise a life thriving as opposed to just surviving.

Konrad

To Women Behind These Concrete Walls

By D

D writes from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria.

To Whom it May Concern,

Walking around DPFC and seeing the faces in here is overwhelming, but what you don't see is the burden we carry on our shoulders and does not show on our faces. What you see is a lot of different faces from different parts of the state.

But what our faces don't show is the mistakes, fear, anxiety, depression, mental health issues, regrets, loss of faith in a system so broken, sadness, loneliness, how broken we are inside, loss of our homes and jobs, our pain for our family and children. The women, who have been behind these big concrete walls, some for long term, some short stays, or months or weeks and some for many years ... Yet with our flaws, mistakes, pain, depression, anxiety, mental health and more we are only trying to survive this broken system and being behind these concrete walls.

As in our darkest time, we have lost the battle of rational thinking and made mistakes. We have a voice, but through the system, our voices are muted. We are mothers, sisters, daughters, and even grandmothers. The system dealt with by police/judges/courts etc. only see us as a danger to the community and society.

Remember: people at the other side of these concrete walls – you have not walked in our shoes and hopefully you are not faced with a family member or your children who might make a mistake and are put through our broken system!

How will you react?

For the faces of all women in DPFC.

STARY NORTON HALPHEN | CRIMINAL LAW SPECIALISTS

Stary Norton Halphen is a criminal law firm in Victoria, with a team of highly regarded and experienced criminal defence lawyers. We appear in court regularly and provide our clients with strategic, insightful and pragmatic advice. Being questioned or charged with an offence is, for many, an overwhelming experience. From the very beginning the choices made by an accused person can make a significant difference to the trajectory of their case through the courts. It follows that having the representation of an experienced criminal lawyer as early as possible is vitally important.

(03) 8622 8200
city@starylaw.com
www.starylaw.com

Accredited Criminal Law Specialists

Homicide
Culpable Driving
Dishonesty & Fraud
Corporate Crime
Sexual Offences
Drug Offences
Assault
Firearm & Weapon Offences
Domestic Violence
Intervention Orders
Bail Applications
Traffic Offences
Drink Driving & Drug Driving



We Can Do Better on Health Management

By Alexander

Alexander writes from Ron Barwick Prison, Tasmania.

In my last letter to the editor, I commented on the need for an inclusive case management approach to one's physical health while in prison. An inclusive case management approach should apply to all aspects of prison life, not just physical health. Case management involves whole of operation thinking.

For mental health this is as relevant. Prison can be very difficult to manage as the lifestyle is completely different to life on the outside. On the outside, there are professional supports one can access quite quickly; family and friends to lean on and opportunities to self-manage life's daily pressures like a daily walk with the dog, a swim or a recreational activity or hobby such as gardening.

Prison doesn't easily allow outside support to provide the love and care many inmates require, let alone access professional support. Private health is not an option here, despite it being listed on this prison's documentation as being accessible. Not using private health is an unnecessarily expensive decision.

Developing an effective working strategy ensuring professionals access all inmates who request support in a timely manner is fundamental to success. A week should be the maximum time limit for this. An inmate being told not to contact therapeutics when they ask for support is not an appropriate strategy. Not replying to a moodle from an inmate only exacerbates the mental health concerns of the inmate requesting help. This can breed anxiety and conspiracy thinking. A successful business plan caters for those times when staffing is short, whether due to retirements or leave or simply periods of higher demand.

A simple Key Performance Index (KPI) can be developed around this, to ensure the process supports inmate rehabilitation.

Another key factor relating to mental health especially is communication. Inmates send moodles to support staff. In many cases replies take longer than a week, if at all. This builds frustration, distrust and impacts mental health. Surely an "out of office" reply can assist with this. Having a back-up person to redirect moodles to would be another useful strategy. More KPIs here!

A key factor in living a successful life is being connected to other humans. Preferably those who nourish your soul, preferably those who build you up, especially those you love and care about, and who love and care for you. These connections end abruptly when one is sent to prison. A ten-minute phone call, or a zoom visit, cannot replace the value of sitting next to someone, feeling them lean on you and being able to communicate in a comfortable space. Connection is vital to our lives as humans. Another pressure placed on mental health by being in prison.

If the State is serious about trying to support each inmate's journey through prison, ensure an effective reform process then a more clinical, case managed, and strategic approach is definitely needed. This will save money in the mid to long term and reduce recidivism.



Send Us a Letter

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.

A Letter From the U.S.A!

By Jean

Jean writes from State Correctional Institution in Muncy, Pennsylvania.

To my fellow sojourners in "The Land Down Under" from SCI Muncy, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Cheers, mates!

My name is Jean. I am a wiry spitfire, 65 years young, and incarcerated for the past 24 years with a L.W.O.P. (Life Without Parole) sentence.

I was born and grew up in Bucks County, PA, in the suburbs just outside of Philadelphia, PA (the "City of Brotherly Love"). Life as a child in the '50s and '60s was idyllic. I had an older sister, a twin, and a younger brother. We used our imaginations and ingenuity to keep ourselves entertained.

My "dad" (step-father), sister, and two close friends "on the outside" are my remaining anchors. Without their continued support, the foundation laid in my youth, and the love and support with which my late, beloved husband blessed me, I would not have been able to survive this "life".

My husband was the ultimate gentleman and my greatest supporter. He encouraged my wish to return to school to become an L.P.N. (Licensed Practical Nurse) and my work in nursing homes. Then he was gone, I was charged with his death, and I was now here at SCI Muncy.

I know Australia has a colorful and storied history when it comes to its penal system. I know that as a colony of the United Kingdom, Australia was used as a repository for England's overflow of "criminals". Many of those "criminals" survived and went on to explore and settle and thrive in Australia's vast landscapes.

When I arrived at Muncy in 2005 there were extremely limited opportunities for anyone with a "life" sentence. As has been demonstrated over and over again in Pennsylvania, a "life" sentence means exactly that: one stays "within the fence" until they die.

There is nothing a "lifer" can do in Pennsylvania to "get out of jail" unless in a coroner's vehicle. Yes, there is the illusion of clemency but only an illusion. The same for compassionate release for the terminally ill.

My day-to-day life consists of keeping "my area" clean. I have a lot of allergies and some medical issues not unfamiliar to senior citizens. I live in an "open" unit which has rooms without doors or full walls. I recently moved from an 8-bed room to a 4-bed room. Fortunately one of my "roomies" is a long time friend who is also a "lifer". I work as a cleaning detail in the maintenance shop where I sweep the floors, clean the restrooms and utility cage, and any other jobs that need to be done.

I spend as much time as I am allowed in the Law Library reviewing legal cases for others and doing my own legal work. I relax by doing cross stitch work. I will never stop working to overturn my conviction and leave this little piece of hell-on-earth.

I thank you all for the opportunity to allow you to see what my life, and LIFE, is like within the Pennsylvania DOC.

Cheers!

Respectfully,
Jean

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 ninth 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

Subscribe

About Time is distributed free of charge throughout the prison system. It is available to other readers via a postal subscription service. Please email the below address for more information:

subscribe@abouttime.org.au

Advertise

Advertising in About Time is a unique opportunity to reach an otherwise shuttered population, while also contributing to a much-needed resource. Contact the below email address to find out more.

advertise@abouttime.org.au

Donate

We are a group of volunteers, entirely reliant on external funding to produce, publish and distribute each edition. Please visit the below website to support us if you can.

www.abouttime.org.au/donate

About Time is published 11 times a year by the not-for-profit company, About Time Media Ltd
ISSN #2982-0758

Staying Clean

By Weena

Weena writes from Junee Correctional Centre NSW.

My name is Weena and I'm writing from Junee NSW.

It's great to read other people's stories and articles. Also, I find excellent advice and experiences are much the same as my journey throughout prison, in and out.

I've been in and out of prison since 2009–2025, reoffending, doing stupid shit, thinking I'm invincible, like no other.

Since having my first ever grandson nearly 3 years ago now, it's made me realise that I not only want to change, but I need to do it not only for myself but for my family.

And I want to change more than I have ever in my entire life. This time round, it's more clear to me that crime and drugs destroyed me. I hurt the small family that I have left, and I've lost a lot of friends, neighbours, also my mother and father, also my big bro. I've neglected those that are important. Even my own pet.

I've read *The Journey of Staying Clean* and am reading the best book ever: *Tough Love – Tackling Drug Addiction and Seeing Change* by Peter Lyndon-James, highly recommended as an excellent read.

This book has been an eye-opener for me, and reading it really hit home, and it has given me more incentive than ever. I want to stay clean, and I have been off Oxycontin pills for 45 months, and I was addicted to them for 28 of the 48 years of my life.

I feel smarter and have more knowledge than I have ever had and the drive to keep clean and stay clean.

Being in prison most of the time has had a lot of impact on my lifestyle and it hasn't been a horrible transformation even though some people say it doesn't improve their lifestyle, I find it helped me in ways I didn't think it would.

Someone To Talk To

By Kyle

Kyle writes from Marngoneet Correctional Centre in Victoria.

To Denham Sadler,

I liked what you wrote in the December edition.

Just a few things that we learned – male prisoners mostly have someone to write to or call. I'm supposing female prisoners have the same. But a person like me, I have a very hard time talking to someone, whether male or female, other than Mum and Dad and a mate that are all on the outside. They are fine to talk to but it would be nice to communicate with other lonely people locked up.

I'd think there are a lot of inmates looking for someone to talk to, for some people it might help with the healing process.

A well monitored program might be an idea but it would have to work Main to Main, Protection to Protection.

From Kyle



Finding Solace in Art

By Ethan

Ethan writes from Melbourne Assessment Prison in Victoria.

My name is Ethan. I am a 31-year-old Aboriginal man from the Palawa mob. I am currently at the Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP). I have been here for about two months now. This time since I have been in prison, I have been incident-free. It's a big thing for me to be incident-free in prison. Before this, I spent the last two and a half years in the slot at Port Phillip and Barwon. The thing that has helped me this sentence to keep out of trouble is painting. I love doing art, it helps me with my mental health and my depression a lot. Without my art, I would be struggling.

Since your magazine/paper has been coming to our unit, I have wanted to send a picture of my artwork I did on the large concrete pillar in the common area of our unit. But it has taken me four months to get approval to get photos taken of it. I would love to send a copy of your paper to my family to show them I am coping okay in here. Even if telling my story of how doing painting can help with mental health or even depression. If it helps even one person, I'm a happy man. Because before I started painting, I was really struggling a lot with my mental health. When I paint, I'm not in prison anymore. I'm lost for hours in my artwork. If I paint for one hour a day, I'm not in prison for that one hour, and if I paint for six hours, I'm not in prison for that six hours. And to see what people can create when they put their minds to it, it's crazy. If you don't like to paint, then even try poetry. The more hours you spend doing something creative, the less time you will see in prison. There is something for everyone if you look hard enough, you will find something that gives you enjoyment. Maybe if you like to read, then get some books from the library. If you don't read, try going to the gym. If you're at a prison where you can cook for yourself, try baking cakes. Anyway, what I'm saying is the more time you spend in prison doing things you like, the quicker the time will go.

I have started doing another design on another concrete pillar in our unit. When it's completed, I will send a picture over to you.

Thank you for your time reading this. And thank you for giving me and the other blokes something good to read here.



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Kelly, R, Elias, M, Norman, Debora, Krystal, Barlo, J.B., A.S., Terrance, Brian, Jason, Tai, Trent, Storm, Ruben and many others.

We will aim to publish as many as possible, and we will also try to respond to as many as we can.

Unfortunately, we can't 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.

Please continue to write to us! We love reading and engaging with your experiences and we love publishing your words. Please also encourage others to write letters.

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

maurice blackburn lawyers



Justice in action: The landmark Don Dale case creating real change for youth in detention.

A Q&A with our social justice lawyer Nicki Lees

When our Class Actions team at Maurice Blackburn took on the Northern Territory youth justice class action, it wasn't just about securing compensation, it was about making a real difference in the lives of young people who were part of the class action.

In this Q&A, Nicki Lees, Social Justice Special Counsel at Maurice Blackburn, discusses how the firm took an unprecedented approach by establishing a financial capability program partnering with Hoops for Health and ensuring that justice went beyond the settlement.

Tell us about the NT youth justice class action.

This was a class action the firm was running which lasted over five years and ultimately settled for $35 million. The case focused on the treatment of young people in Don Dale [Youth Detention Centre] in the Northern Territory.

Essentially, the case argued that there was inappropriate treatment by officers and that young people were held in solitary confinement far longer than was allowed.

How did the class action lead to ongoing community support?

My colleague and I spoke to a lot of different people in the community about our class action. A consistent theme kept coming up where lawyers run these big cases, distribute the payments, and leave. That approach doesn't ultimately help address the social issues these young people are experiencing.

We decided we can do this differently at Maurice Blackburn. We asked now Chief Justice Mortimer of the Federal Court, if she would be open to using some of the settlement money for a financial capability reserve.

What does the program aim to achieve?

The program aims to provide ongoing support for young people who were in Don Dale by using the compensation money they received through Maurice Blackburn. For some of these young people, this was a significant amount of money. We didn't want to simply hand them the money and then disappear. Kerry Palmer from our class actions team and I consulted with over 100 members of the class action and asked them, *we have this fund, what would you like Maurice Blackburn to do with it?*

They told us three key things: They preferred group settings over individual ones as they felt more comfortable in groups. They were still struggling with the trauma of Don Dale and experiencing nightmares. They loved playing sport.

They said, *if you really want to help us, we want all three of these things in any program you create.*

What does a typical day in the program look like?

We partnered with an amazing organisation called Hoops for Health, run by Timmy Duggan, a First Nations man. He starts each session with half an hour of emotional regulation, providing a safe space for participants to talk about their experiences.

Timmy also focuses on highlighting First Nations success stories, showing that even if you've been through something like being detained in Don Dale, you can still achieve amazing things. A financial counsellor also attends each session helping the young people think about their compensation money, they'd ask them: What are your thoughts about it? Do you have any goals? What would you like to do with it?

We then open the floor for questions. If I'm there, I'll explain why they received the compensation, because many of them don't fully understand why their treatment was wrong legally. And then, of course, we play basketball!

What did you learn from speaking directly with young people about their needs?

I'll always remember a conversation with one young man who had been in Don Dale since he was 10. Kerry and I were sitting with him at a café in Darwin and we asked, *what would you like out of this program? What skills do you want to develop?* He told us, *they didn't really give us proper schooling in Don Dale. I missed out on learning these skills.*

He appreciated that we wanted to give them money, but he admitted he was scared saying, *I actually don't know what to do with it.* Then he said something that really resonated with me:

> *How do you expect me to manage my money if I can't manage my emotions or my day-to-day life because of the trauma of what I've been through?*

That statement shaped the program. We realised we needed to include emotional regulation and broader life skills, not just financial training.

If people want to learn more about the program, where can they go?

We're working on documenting this project more at Maurice Blackburn and we'll share that across the firm when it's ready. People can also visit the Hoops for Health website to learn more about their trauma-informed work.

(This is an edited transcript of an interview with Jennifer Kanis, Social Justice Principal Lawyer and Nicki Lees, Social Justice Special Counsel).

Call us on
03 9605 2700
or Mail us at
21/380 La Trobe Street Melbourne VIC 3000

• News and Investigations

The Ongoing Fight to Vote in Prison

Why the battle to have a say motivates people inside

By Denham Sadler

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

Continued from page 1.

"We can't get information about how a party or candidate's policies must impact prisoners," Kelly told *About Time*. 'Prison officers also will not provide us with any information as it is seen as political."

Due to this lack of information, people in prison can sometimes feel "blindsided" when it comes to the voting day.

"They spring it on you one day," she said. "If you don't want the news, you wouldn't know it was happening. We can't get any information outside of the news or newspapers and so only get a limited view.

"We still have to vote or we'll be fined, and so are forced to make a choice without information. This damages our ability to properly exercise our democratic rights."

All people in prison on remand or with a prison sentence of less than three years are required to vote in the federal election.

But numerous barriers to enrolling and voting means that voting rates among people in prison are extremely low. For the upcoming federal election, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is looking to boost voting rates in prisons, with significantly more mobile voting booths to be available in prisons around the country, in nearly all states and territories.

About Time contacted every state and territory Corrections department to request information on how voting and the election will be communicated to people in prison, and whether mobile polling booths would be allowed into correctional facilities.

Every jurisdiction except for New South Wales confirmed that mobile polling booths would be allowed into prisons to help people in prison vote.

The availability of these booths has been found to increase voting rates in prisons significantly.

Mobile polling booths were also not allowed in NSW prisons during the 2023 referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament. The NSW Inspector of Custodial Services found that this contributed to low voting rates among those in prison, and called on the state government to allow them for future elections.

The Inspector found that of the 350 people incarcerated at the Bathurst Correctional Centre who were eligible to vote in the referendum, just 10% were actually able to vote. This was despite the inspector finding that "most inmates [they] spoke with expected to vote".

People in NSW prisons will instead have to complete a postal vote, something the inspector found "carries a higher risk that voting is subject to unexpected barriers".

The AEC ran 49 mobile polling booths in prisons around Australia for the referendum, accounting for less than half of the more than 115 prisons in the country. It is hoping to provide "significantly" more for this election.

In Victoria, all prisons have been listed as early voting locations, and polling booths will be placed in them in the week before the election. These booths will also be in prisons in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT.

In the ACT, where there is more access to computers and technology than in other jurisdictions, people in prison will be able to access websites including the ABC, SBS, ESPN, Elections Act and Libraries Australia.

Even if voting rates are increased among eligible people in prison, an estimated 10,000 people are still completely banned from voting under the current laws.

There has been an ongoing campaign to allow all people in prison to vote, regardless of how long of a sentence they are serving. It has been recognised around the world that this helps maintain connections with the outside community and is a basic human right, as backed by the UN Human Rights Committee.

The current rules also disproportionately discriminate against First Nations people, with estimates that First Nations Australians are eight times more likely to be blocked from voting compared with non-Indigenous people.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has stated that all people who are deprived of their liberty should still enjoy all voting rights. In a submission to NSW Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) called on voting rights to be extended to all incarcerated people.

"When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are systematically excluded from voting, it reinforces their historical and ongoing marginalisation by the authorities and undermines efforts to address the socio-economic and political inequalities they are pushed to," the HRLC submission said.

Enrolling and Voting in the 2025 Federal Election

The Federal Election will be held on 3 May 2025.

As an Australian citizen aged 18 or over, you are entitled to enrol and vote in federal elections, including the upcoming 2025 federal election. Even if you are serving a full-time prison sentence, you can still enrol. If your sentence is less than three years, you are required to vote. If your sentence is three years or more, you cannot vote in this election.

Here is some information about how you can enrol and vote if eligible:

Enrolling

You need to stay enrolled while serving your sentence. If you are new to enrolling or need to update your details, you can complete an "Enrol to vote or update your details as a prisoner" form. The AEC has recently provided this form to your facility.

- You can use your previous address or other address options listed on the form.
- Prison staff or visitors can help you fill out the form, but you must sign the form yourself.
- As you don't have access to the forms of ID we require, someone on the electoral roll must confirm your identity. This can be a prison staff member or visitor if approved by the Prison.

Voting

If your sentence is less than three years, you must vote in the 2025 federal election. If it's three years or more, you cannot vote in this election. You can resume voting after you are released.

You can vote in-person with AEC staff if a mobile polling team visits your facility. Posters will be provided to those facilities to display the date and time AEC mobile polling teams will attend. If not, you'll need to vote by mail by applying for a postal vote once the election is announced. The AEC is working with your facility to provide information and support, including posters and paper forms.

To ensure your vote is counted when voting by mail, you must:

1. Complete a postal vote application.
2. Complete ballot papers once they arrive.
3. Return the ballot papers in the sealed envelope to the AEC by the due date.

Staff can provide extra information to support you if needed. You can receive help with voting, but the person helping must follow your instructions and is not able to influence your vote.

Make sure to enrol and vote to have your say in the upcoming 2025 federal election.

The Policy Commitments of the Major Parties

What are the politicians saying they will do?

By About Time

The Australian Federal election is coming up. This is about voting for the Prime Minister and other federal politicians. It will be held on 3 May 2025.

At the time of writing these are some of the policy commitments of the major parties, in their own words, around healthcare, justice, cost-of-living pressures and housing.

Australian Labor Party

- $8.5 billion with the aim of making 90% of GP visits be bulk-billed by 2030
- $573.3 million for women's healthcare, including the listing of new oral contraceptive pills on the PBS and support for women experiencing menopause
- A $10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund aiming to build 30,000 affordable homes within five years
- A ban on foreign investors buying established homes for at least two years
- The wiping of 20% off all student loan debts
- Three days a week of subsidised early education for children from January 2026

The Liberal-National Party

- $8.5 billion with the aim of making 90% of GP visits be bulk-billed by 2030
- $5 billion to fund essential infrastructure, such as water, power and sewerage, at housing development sites to unlock up to 500,000 new homes
- The freezing of further changes to the National Construction Code for 10 years
- A two-year ban on foreign investors and temporary residents purchasing existing homes, and a reduction in permanent migration
- Allowing Australians to access up to $50,000 from their superannuation to buy their first home
- The building of seven nuclear power stations at sites of former or current coal plants, with an aim of nuclear energy making up 38% of Australia's energy mix by 2050

The Greens

- Putting dental and mental health services in Medicare, and making ADHD and autism diagnoses free under Medicare
- A limit of 2% in rent increases every two years, a phase out in tax concessions for property investors and the creation of a government-owned developer to build public and affordable homes
- An annual payment of $800 to families at the start of the schooling year for each child attending a public school to meet out-of-pocket costs
- The wiping of student debt, at a cost of $74 billion over the decade
- The establishment of a National Truth and Justice Commission, review of the Native Titles Act and $14 million over fours to organisations working with schools and First Nations teachers to deliver sessions in a mix of First Nations languages and English
- $750 million for Aboriginal-Controlled Community Health Organisations for advancing policies and programs with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

One Nation

- Increase the Medicare rebate to better remunerate GPs and promote bulk-billing
- A five-year ban on charging GST on building materials and the removal of mandatory disability compliance requirements for all new homes
- Changes to the National Electricity Market rules to enable and incentivise cheaper coal and gas-fired baseload power while supporting nuclear energy in the medium-term

Australia's Voice

- Limit negative gearing and reduce the Capital Gains Tax discount from 50% to 25% by lowering it by 5% each year over five years
- Using the money from this for social housing, reducing rents and making home ownership more affordable
- Raise the student debt repayment threshold to the median wage and cap debts to 1.5 times the origins debt
- Increase the JobSeeker payment
- Ensure that superannuation is automatically split in cases of family and domestic violence

Trumpet of Patriots (Clive Palmer Party)

- Banning transgender athletes from women's sports
- Legally recognising only two genders
- A promise to "drain the swamp" in Canberra



VIC

'Tough Bail Laws' introduced
The Victorian state government is introducing tough bail laws, reversing hard-won changes made in 2023.

The 'Tough Bail Laws' includes removing remand as a 'last resort', creating the 'toughest ever' bail test for worst offences, and new bail laws for serious, high-risk offences.

The bail laws introduce the offence of 'committing an indictable offence while on bail', which is subject to a second-strike rule. If one commits an indictable offence while already on bail for an indictable offence, you will need to show 'compelling reasons' for bail. The Government will also declare machetes as prohibited weapons and introduce electronic monitoring for young offenders. The changes have received widespread opposition from legal and human rights organisations, saying it will lead to further deaths in custody and is against the first principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'. More to come.

Debate begins in Victorian Parliament on new anti-vilification laws
In late 2024, the Victorian Government introduced legislation to expand and toughen the state's anti-vilification laws. The Victorian Parliament began debating the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill in February this year.

The Bill aims to expand existing legal protection against racial and religious vilification to include disability, gender identity, sex and sexual orientation. It also aims to create criminal penalties for vilification offences.

The charge of incitement – to "incite hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group based on their protected attribute" – could result in a prison sentence of up to three years. To "threaten physical harm or property damage against a person or a group based on their protected attribute" will carry up to five years in prison.

In early February, the opposition said they would not support the Bill, taking issue with a clause that allowed for "political expression" as a defence against the incitement charge, believing this would undermine the intent of the law. By mid February, Premier Jacinta Allan announced that this clause had been removed, but that the opposition was still not willing to support it.

The Greens have offered support for the Bill, conditional on amendments being made that would manage their concerns about police being given additional powers.

The Human Rights Law Centre stated that the Bill represents a "positive signal on what the Victorian community stands for, but laws alone will not stamp out hate".



SA

SA Government rules out raising the age of criminal responsibility
The South Australian Government has ruled out raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12, despite strong advocacy from experts and human rights groups.

Last year, the Malinauskas Government committed to reviewing the issue and invited public submissions. However, instead of reform, it has now announced increased investment in police, courts, and prisons.

The United Nations recommends a minimum age of criminal responsibility of at least 14 years old. South Australia has faced ongoing criticism from First Nations and human rights organisations for failing to meet this standard.

In 2023, data showed that an average of 30 children were held in detention in South Australia each day, with more than half being Indigenous. Aboriginal children remain 17 times more likely to be incarcerated than their non-indigenous peers.

This decision follows months of media coverage of the "youth crime crisis", despite evidence showing a 39% decrease in reoffending among children in South Australia over the past five years.

South Australia's Guardian for Children and Young People, Shona Reid, has warned that prioritising detention over diversionary programs will only lead to worse outcomes for both children and the broader South Australian community.



NSW

Parklea Correctional Centre transitions to public management
The NSW Government has announced that it intends to move one of the largest prisons in the state, Parklea Correctional Centre, from private to public administration by October 2026. This decision is part of a broader initiative by the Labor government to reverse the privatisation of public assets, concerning the "failed prison for profit model."

The Public Service Association (PSA) has long pushed for this reform, citing problems including poor inmate care and a rise in violence under private management.

Since 2009, MTC Australia, a division of a contentious American private prison operator, has privately run the Parklea Correctional Centre located in Sydney's northwest. The facility houses both maximum- and minimum-security inmates. Over the years, it has faced several challenges, including incidents of inmate violence and concerns regarding rehabilitation programs.

Parklea is one of the three privately operated prisons in NSW. Parklea's transition comes after the government's earlier decision to return Junee Correctional Centre to public management, with the transition set to be completed in April 2025.

However, plans to return Clarence Correctional Centre, Australia's largest prison with 1,700 beds, to public management are stated to be not feasible due to the substantial costs associated with terminating the current contract with the current private operator, Serco, which was signed in 2020.

Premier Chris Minns emphasised that public management prioritises education, rehabilitation, and safe integration of incarcerated people into the community as opposed to profit-driven goals of private operators.

PSA welcomed the government's decision, viewing it as a vindication of their campaign against prison privatisation. They anticipate improvements in staff conditions, including better pay, safer working environments, and enhanced promotion opportunities within the public system. Additionally, the move is expected to benefit taxpayers by reducing reliance on private operators that may prioritise overseas shareholders over the needs of NSW residents. MTC Australia has expressed disappointment in the government's decision and will work with the government to ensure a smooth transition.



QLD

New parole board president appointed
Michael Woodford has been appointed as the new President of the Parole Board Queensland, and commenced on Monday, 3 February 2025.

The Parole Board Queensland is a statutory body responsible for all decision-making about parole applications in Queensland, as well as decisions about the suspension and cancellation of parole orders. This excludes federal parole matters, which are decided by the Commonwealth Parole Office.

The operation of the Parole Board is governed by the Corrective Services Act 2006 and the Ministerial Guidelines to the Parole Board Queensland.

The President oversees all functions of the Board and is a key decision-maker. The President also has sole decision-making power for certain matters, such as restricted prisoner declarations.

Woodford has been a barrister for more than 25 years, working in criminal and administrative law. He acted as the Queensland Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner and was a member of the Southern Queensland Regional Parole Board.

Minister for Corrective Services Laura Gerber said about Woodford's appointment: "He has extensive appellant experience in matters covering a wide range of cases from sex offences through to people smuggling, drug importation, fraud and domestic violence, and in administrative law and judicial review".

This information was provided by Prisoners' Legal Service, Queensland. It is information only and should not be relied on as legal advice.



TAS

Review of integrity body scrapped
The Tasmanian Liberal Government has announced that a planned independent review of the Tasmanian Integrity Commission (TIC) cannot go ahead.

The TIC is an independent statutory authority reporting on public sector misconduct, as well as promoting good governance and ethical practice.

The Government had committed to an independent review of the TIC as part of a supply and confidence agreement made with independent MPs, who had requested the review. However, in late February, the Premier Jeremy Rockliff announced the review could not go ahead due to a potential legal issue.

While some of the independent MPs have accepted the Government's decision, other members of the crossbench (including independents and the Greens) have raised serious concerns about the Government's actions.

The TIC was previously reviewed in 2016 and a number of recommendations were made to improve its functions. However, 40 of those recommendations remain outstanding.

Meanwhile, reports from independent advocacy organisations such as The Australia Institute have continued to highlight the need for comprehensive reform to increase the capacity of the TIC to meaningfully investigate and respond to public sector misconduct.



WA

Remote polling for state election cancelled in Nullagine
Residents of Nullagine, a town of 1,200 people located 1,300 kilometres north of Perth, faced significant barriers to vote in the Western Australian state election this March.

Less than a week before the vote, remote polling in Nullagine was rescheduled, then cancelled, due to safety concerns in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Zelia. Residents were offered a last minute alternative of accessing a remote polling station in Marble Bar during an allotted one-hour window. However, Marble Bar is a 200 kilometre round trip from Nullagine and the road between the two towns was closed.

The only other option available to residents was a 400 kilometre round trip to a polling station at Newman on Saturday 10 March.

Western Desert community leader and Nullagine resident, Bruce Booth, has raised concerns that the remote polling cancellation is a violation of the democratic rights of Nullagine residents, and that it has created additional financial pressure due to fuel affordability and the $50 fine for not voting. He said, "if we don't have the chance to vote because we have to travel backwards and forwards a long distance, it's not fair to the community".

"We want to see the polling booths come to the community, not chase the polling booths. Because if we miss out, we get in trouble."

Due to Western Australia's size, remote polling can still be far away and difficult to access for some remote communities. This incident raises potential issues for polling access in remote prison locations.



NT

Remote polling for state election cancelled in Nullagine
The NT Government has signed a contract with global security firm G4S to provide private security guards in correctional settings. The guards will assist the courts in managing detainee numbers and assisting with prison transfers as the NT grapples with record high prison numbers.

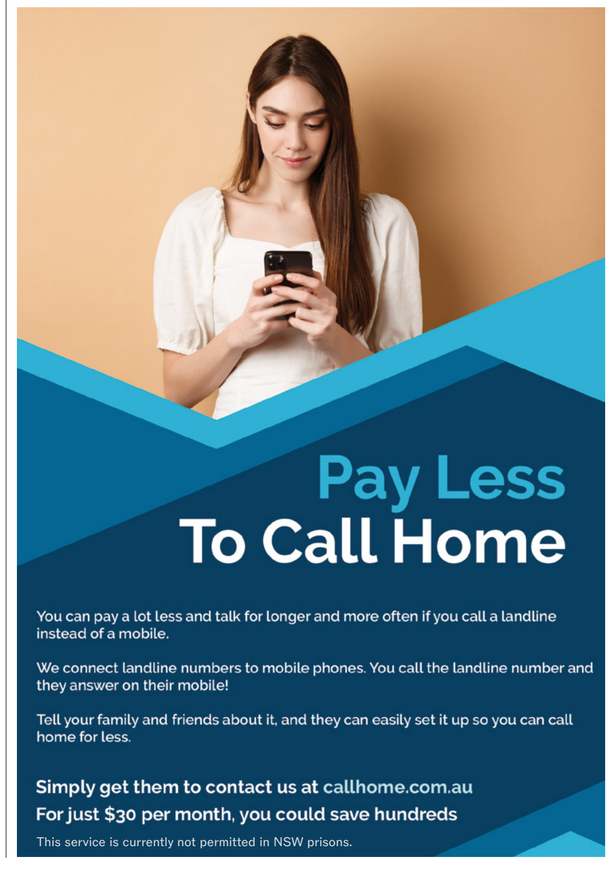
The controversial company has had its safety record in the spotlight over recent years, including a recommendation by the Victorian Coroner to improve staff training in relation to the death of an Aboriginal man in a Victorian prison cell in 2022.

While record high detainee numbers are pushing the NT's prison system to its limits, individuals have raised concerns about the company's track record. In its report on this issue, the ABC quoted Independent MLA, Justine Davis, who said:

"Hiring a private security company with a history of violence and misconduct will not provide 'much-needed relief' for corrections officers."

"It will create an unsafe working condition for corrections officers and unsafe conditions for prisoners in the system."

As of January this year, more than 1 per cent of the NT's population is imprisoned.



Experiences

And Still We Endure

By Ellie

Ellie writes from New South Wales.

Continued from page 1.

They line us up to visit, guilty by association. We are photographed, fingerprinted and submitted to numerous drug searches.

One of the hardest things ever is to leave the person you love in prison, to walk away willingly and not take them with you. Every visit trying to keep a brave face and the tears at bay as you try to bring them a small moment of happiness and relieve the monotony.

And still we endure, because one day he will be free, and prison won't touch us again.

In the meantime? We will not be broken. When they want us to cry, we laugh. When they want us to hate, instead we love and keep going. When they want us to lose hope, we dream of the future and a life together outside of those walls. We take back our power and agency by being true to our values.

For me out here, life feels lonely and empty. I have to walk down the street acting like everything is normal when my husband has been torn from my life leaving a gaping hole in my chest. Can people not tell when I walk past them that he is in prison and my heart is broken? For him, he tells me stories of what life is like inside, the things he has seen, and I cannot imagine withstanding it. We must both be strong but in different ways.

Our strength lies in our community. No matter how we came to be entangled in the criminal justice system – bad luck, poor choices, poverty, addiction or wrongful conviction – we are all in the same boat together now.

I reach out to other families I meet in the visiting room – striking up conversation, building connections. Sometimes we message each other or catch up for coffee. Other people don't truly understand and there is always the fear of being judged.

Inside, my husband supports other prisoners, helping people learn to read and running exercise drills. This has become his solace. In many ways it is the people inside who help you get through it. Sharing a joke with one another, playing a game – camaraderie born from lived experience.

Don't let the "system" win. Hold your head high and endure. Find what opportunities you can: to learn, to build your skills and to find happiness.

It is not an easy road – I struggle to get out of bed every day – but I will not let it beat me. I work hard to build our life out here so he has something to come home to. Our liberty, our money, our time might be taken from us, but we will not let prison take our relationship and future away too.



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

Kairos Outside

For women impacted by having a family member or friend in prison.

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."*

No judgement.
No expectations.
No financial cost.

Tell Your Family and Friends about Kairos Outside
www.kairos.org.au/kairos-outside
or search "Kairos Outside Australia"

The Day I Met Jonny



'Holding Cell 1' by Quang Nguyen, Collection CSNSW

An unlikely connection

By Sam Harris

Sam is a retired inmate.

As we get back into our cells from muster, preparing to be locked-in until tomorrow morning, one of the non-descript guards tosses a few stale sausage rolls onto the concrete slab of our floor, then slams the door shut to lock us in. I give my two rolls to Nick. After only a few minutes, and as if to spare Nick the indignity of eating this stuff, Nick gets called to go to the visiting area. Because I'm a green card (and not a real person at all), the two guards take me to an adjacent cell where I'm told I will stay until Nick's return. I'm going to stay in Jonny's cell with Jonny and his cellie.

The thought of spending any time in close contact with Jonny sets my heart racing – and not in a good way. Surges of adrenalin flood throughout my body and brain. I know who Jonny is. He's that young guy who strides so proudly in the yard with his "bruvvas" as they parade back and forth.

They all look menacingly the same. They also look rather robotic, and yet like feral animals, and they march in packs of five to six at a time.

I've watched Jonny and his mates closely from the sidelines as they parade their young muscular bronzed bodies for all to see and fear. Tanned, oiled and almost hairless, their beautiful tattooed bodies gleam gold in the sunshine like some ancient Greek or Egyptian mini-gods.

Not knowing how long I will be spending my time with Jonny, I take with me the only book that I can find in my cell. Ironically, I have only recently begun to read a tattered copy of Albert Camus' book, *The Plague*. A literary classic, the book is all about how the people of Oran experienced and dealt with the bubonic plague during the 1940s. As I prepare to enter Jonny's cell, I'm not sure which might be worse, reading about suffering and death from the bubonic plague, or spending a few hours with Jonny and whoever is his cellie.

The guard delivers me to Jonny's cell, ushers me in and, just as efficiently, slams and locks the heavy blue door. The two young guys don't pay any attention to me at first. While Jonny seems intent on yelling incoherently out the window to his fellow "bruvvas", his cellie reclines inertly on his bed. Having no idea how I'll be received, I feel nervous being confined with Jonny, and so I spend the first 15 minutes perched awkwardly on a low stool trying to concentrate on reading. But it's of little use and shortly after Jonny signs off with several expletive-filled farewells to his "bruvvas", we engage in a few friendly ice breaking comments.

Jonny then begins to talk, not in irrelevancies, but about the things that are important to him – the conditions in jail, stories of his past crimes, his regret and how he's failed most of his family members. As I listen, I sense that Jonny needs to talk, and I remain fixed like glue to what Jonny has to say. Periodically, as we sit eye-to-eye, I nod in agreement, or frown, or shake my head in silent awe in response to what I am hearing. Mostly, I remain silent yet careful to be fully present and attentive. After quite a long time, to my utter surprise, Jonny offers to make me a cup of coffee, then he offers two of his prized chocolate-mint slice biscuits. He also checks that I'm physically comfortable and not cold. It suddenly dawns upon me that Jonny, the young fearless warrior, is actually taking care of me. Some sort of bonding has taken place. I'm now feeling quite conflicted about my pre-conceived, and incorrect, ideas of Jonny. I'm even a little overwhelmed that someone so seemingly "aggro" and combative can care about some stranger who is totally different from himself.

Sharing our belongings in prison is not an uncommon practice, even in the midst of a good deal of thieving of buy-up items by some inmates. Most inmates understand that very few of us want to be behind bars. We are mostly all in the same boat. Even amongst the most notorious of inmates, there exist fragments of buried compassion. There is an element of "good" in everyone, or so the saying goes. None of us has much in the way of belongings, but when times get rough, the stray gift of a Mintie, a small chocolate bar, or some other small mercy, can be sufficient to alleviate the bitterness of our situation, at least for a while.

When Nick returns, I am transferred back to my cell with him. Jonny treats me with sincerity as I leave, and he wishes me well.

Many inmates, I later discover, are vastly different in a one-on-one conversation, compared to their persona when they are with their mates in the yard. What an afternoon! What a lesson for me!

I never saw Jonny again. A day or two later, many of the guys in the yard were talking about how Jonny had been "busted" with drugs in his cell, had become violent, and was in segro, due to be relocated to "super max" at Goulburn. My heart sank.

I'm sure that Jonny didn't see me as a rival in any way. Whatever bond we developed was based on my preparedness to listen to him, to hear and acknowledge what he had to say about a range of issues. I may be one of only a few inmates who took him seriously and offered genuine concern. In return, he was prepared to trust me with his stories, and his chocolate biscuits.

The Impact of Not Being Allowed to Vote

A confusing, isolating and hostile experience

By Stacey Stokes

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



Tom Barrett

I remember while in custody, whenever an election would come around, I'd get stressed out.

Elections never bring anything good for people engaged in the system. Elections mean mandatory sentencing, harsher bail laws, tougher parole laws and removal of remission laws.

Never has an election come around in my time and we all got time off our sentence or an early release. Or even a sausage sizzle.

Because we are a bargaining chip, a reliable chess piece to be played.

So, when an election rolled around, I'd start doing head miles about what was in store. And the politicians and the commentators never disappointed. Hardline rhetoric and outright vitriol would spew forth. This year it's youth crime and bail laws. Big ticket items. We all saw the result in the Northern Territory. Overflowing prisons. People being held in watch houses. The second highest incarceration rate in the world now.

Every single election, more kicks while we are already down.

Day after day I'd sit there, watching it all. Anxious and concerned. I honestly expected to never be free of the system. I expected them to pass a law forcing everyone to do their top and then complete a supervision order in the community on top of the original sentence.

The two main parties competed to see who was tougher on us. The independents wouldn't say much or would say it very quietly. It made it very easy for me to decide who to vote for in the end... I won't say who. It's a secret. But the name matched the colour of my clothes.

The only problem was, I wasn't allowed to vote – I had a ten- and half-year sentence. I wasn't even sure why I couldn't vote. Not what the real reason was, just that over a certain sentence and you are not eligible to vote.

And that was also upsetting. To be told your opinion doesn't matter, that you don't matter. All this talk about being hard on criminals, hard on me. And I have no say in it.

It was so isolating and hostile. This is the community I'm expected to one day rejoin?

I watched elections come and go. New mandatory sentences passed. Maximum terms increased for all sorts of crimes voters hate, like aggravated burglaries and carjacking. Every election I'd go and ask, can I vote this time? And get told, "I dunno". Because no one knew. It was all incredibly confusing.

Then I got my parole date. I was going. Not going home. Home didn't exist anymore. Not after almost a decade. But I was going. Two weeks until my parole release date, I got to be able to vote. My chance to have my say had come.

I went down to the visit centre and jumped in line. Full of self-righteous vengeance to finally have my say. I'd be heard this time. I wouldn't be ignored. Only to find out, due to one of the past tough of crime campaigns, transgender prisoners can't legally change their name in Victoria.

So, my custody papers were in a different name to my voting name. I wasn't allowed to vote, because I didn't exist. It just wasn't fair. Why do they do this to us? Are we not even people to them? They just play with our lives like it's a game. It's our lives.

So I did what anyone would and had a sook. Because I'm on hormones and I'm allowed to sook.

After my torrent of whining, they decided I could get an officer to swear I was the prisoner in question.

After all of this, I was released. I got to experience voting while being on parole. I had the honour of voting in the council elections. And I had an ID with the same name as my voting name this time. Or so I thought.

So, I happily went along to exercise my "God given constitutional right to have my say". Only to be told, I'm not actually on the list of eligible voters, so I don't get a say. They told me being on parole excluded me from voting still. I was in fact still serving my sentence and it was still too long.

So, my vote in jail was also invalid. I was so upset and embarrassed I actually ran off in tears, leaving my license behind. I only noticed I had left it behind when I tried to visit a prisoner, and it was not in my purse.

I'm pretty sure I will only find out when I'm actually allowed to vote because I will get a fine for not voting.

Serious and Complex Crimes

ASHWORTH LAWYERS

- **Leading** criminal law firm in Qld
- Over **40 years'** combined experience
- Exclusively practising in **serious and complex crimes**.
- **Strategic criminal defence** - we look at every *angle* to achieve your **best outcome**
- Prompt **communication** and compassionate approach

OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID

"Ashworth Lawyers were nothing short of amazing"
"The support, advice, and professionalism were second to none"
"Truly went above and beyond to achieve the best possible outcome"

Ashworth Lawyers | Level 10 Quay Central
95 North Quay, Brisbane QLD 4000 (07) 3012 6531

At this time, we are a private law firm and do not offer Legal Aid.



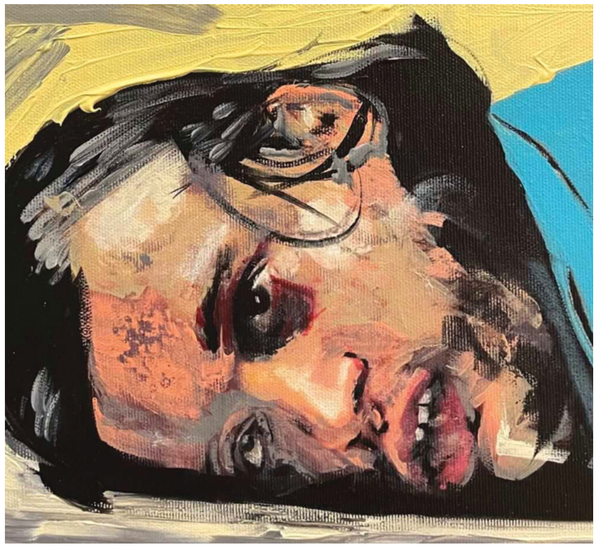
• Learn

Intro to Criminology

Understanding crime and criminal behaviour

By Benjamin Aitken

Benjamin Aitken is an artist whose work is influenced by personal experience and a commitment to social change. Aitken applies the insights gained from his experience serving time in prison to his studies in social science, majoring in criminology. Aitken is curious about how his two passions, art and criminology, can intersect and influence each other.



@benjaminaitkenart

If it wasn't for landing a prison sentence, I may not be sitting here writing this article. My journey into criminology was born out of sheer curiosity, a curiosity to understand the criminal legal system I was tied up in.

There were writeups in the newspaper about me and my arrest, presented as a "name and shame" spectacle. The legal proceedings that followed opened my eyes to the complexities of crime, punishment and the systems that perpetuate them, and it was then that my interest in criminology grew. I was lucky to have one of the best lawyers already, money squirrelled away and – I was white. This seemed problematic, albeit working in my favour. It was an experience that supported the statistics I've heard of Indigenous incarceration rates. So, I decided to study criminology.

What is criminology?

Criminology is more than just the study of crime; it's about understanding the system that controls crime, how it works, who it benefits, and why it sometimes goes wrong. Criminologists dive into the reasons people commit crimes, but they also focus on how the justice system, including the police, courts and prisons, handles those crimes. It's a broad field that looks at power and control.

Why criminology matters in prison

Understanding criminology helps us see the bigger picture, not just about who gets locked up, but why and how the system works the way it does. It's about understanding the flaws in the system and questioning why some people get treated harshly while others avoid punishment. By studying criminology, we can not only understand crime better, but also push for real change in how we deal with crime in society.

Theories behind crime

Several key criminological theories help explain why crime happens. Here are two of those theories:

1. Strain Theory

Strain theory suggests that people turn to crime when they face pressure or obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals. For example, if someone is stuck in poverty with no legal way to improve their situation, they might resort to crime to survive. This theory shows how society's inequalities push people toward illegal activities.

2. Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory argues that crime is learned from others. This might explain how some people get involved in criminal behaviour after spending time with others who have already broken the law. For instance, if you grow up around crime or spend time with people who commit crimes, you may be more likely to follow in their footsteps.

I can relate to both theories. I've seen how societal pressures, and the lack of legitimate opportunities can push individuals toward crime. For me, the company I kept and the need for survival with a lack of consideration for consequences, led to poor decisions that landed me in trouble.

Forensic psychology and sociology

Forensic psychology is a branch of criminology that focuses on understanding the minds of criminals. It looks at why people commit crimes from a psychological perspective. Are there mental health issues involved? Are some people more likely to commit violent crimes due to their upbringing or past trauma? Forensic psychologists work closely with the justice system to evaluate offenders' mental states and provide insight into criminal behaviour.

Sociology, on the other hand, studies how society and social structures influence crime. It's about understanding how things like poverty, race, education, and even the media shape people's likelihood of committing crimes. Sociologists argue that crime isn't just an individual issue, it's a social problem that's linked to broader inequalities in society.

Both forensic psychology and sociology have played important roles in my academic journey. They've helped me to understand not only the factors that contributed to my own involvement in crime, but also the broader societal forces that influence behaviour.
In prison, I've learned that many people come from backgrounds rife with trauma, neglect, and a lack of opportunities, which all fuel cycles of crime and incarceration.

A personal reflection

For me, criminology has become more than just a subject to study, it's a lifeline. With my past, finding employment in my former industry has been nearly impossible, and my prospects were dwindling. But through criminology, I've found new hope and a potential future where I can contribute to important societal changes. My studies have shown me how valuable the experiences of those in prison are to the field. People like me, who have navigated the system first-hand, can offer insights that traditional academic studies often miss. Our experiences could shape future research and influence prison reform.

I now see myself not only as someone who can break free from my past but as a potential educator – someone who can share valuable insights and hopefully help others avoid the same pitfalls I once fell into. And our perspectives and stories as those inside, or formerly incarcerated, are not limited to criminology.

So, whether you're behind bars or out in the world, criminology is crucial for understanding the forces at play. It is about why people commit crime, and what we can do to change society for the better.

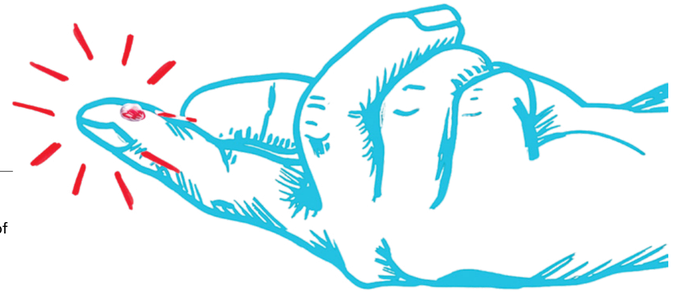
• Health

Hepatitis C and Harm Reduction

An interview with Esha

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.



HepC Test by AIVL

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) caught up for a yarn with Esha, a Peer Harm Reduction Coordinator at QuIHN. QuIHN is a service that supports people who use drugs and alcohol in Queensland. Esha is also on the Board of the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League. A peer is someone who has experience with drugs or alcohol and uses their experiences to inform their work.

Early Experiences in Prison

Esha: It's been a while since I was inside – maybe 20 years. My first experience of prison was being sent to Boggo Road Gaol. And that was a dead-set jail, just like in the movies, I thought.

I was young, and I thought it was cool. Thinking back on it now, it wasn't cool.

AIVL: What was it like for you?

Esha: I just had to get through it, you know.

I remember when I first arrived, in reception, I had to get full bloods done. It was compulsory back then.

They couldn't get blood from me. It was quite an issue, it was a massive issue, you know, because I had no veins. Then they asked me, "Do you have epatitis C or anything?"

I said, "No."

I was in there on drug charges, and they were like, "How don't you have hepatitis C if you're here on drug charges and you're an injecting drug user?"

And I was like, "I just don't, I don't think so."

Because they couldn't get blood from me that day, I had to keep going back to get tested until they could get blood from me, which was quite a mission, a really awful one.

Eventually, I got out of Boggo Road. Then, later in life I went back to prison again and didn't get tested that time. Hepatitis C testing wasn't compulsory and so I refused the optional test this time around because I didn't want to go through those blood tests again.

Anyway, after I got out of prison that time, I found out I did have hepatitis C.

Getting tested this time was much easier, it was a simple finger prick test and I found out my result quickly.

I don't know if I caught hepatitis C between Boggo Road and my second time going into Brisbane Women's, I'm not sure exactly when I did catch it, but I did.

Hepatitis C in Prison

AIVL: When you were in prison, was hepatitis C something people talked about?

Esha: Not really. It wasn't spoken about like it is now. There was no conversation about hepatitis C, no one saying, "Oh, you could catch hep C." The inmates weren't talking about it, the prison guards weren't talking about it, no one. Not that I can remember.

AIVL: Before you got tested, did you think you had any symptoms of hepatitis C?

Esha: Nope, not at all. No symptoms whatsoever. Not that I knew of because I didn't even really know much about it.

AIVL: And when you got tested and began treatment, did you notice a difference?

A hundred percent. I had no energy when I had hepatitis C.

I must have had hepatitis C for 20 years before I got tested. I didn't know my tiredness was a symptom of hepatitis C. I just thought that was me because I woke up every day feeling that way. I had to sleep most of the day, I also had brain fog and I reckon I was depressed too.

I never would have realised these were all symptoms from hepatitis C, unless I did the treatment – which is so easy these days by the way. All it takes is one to three pills a day for 8-12 weeks. Most people don't have any side effects from treatment either.

It wasn't like I did the treatment and I was a brand new person though. It was a process of realising: Oh, I don't feel tired all day, I have energy to do stuff, I feel good.

There's no way in the world I could work full time or even a job when I had hepatitis C because I'd have to have nana naps all the time.

Harm Reduction

AIVL: We know hepatitis C is mostly transmitted through sharing injecting equipment. Do you have any tips to prevent hepatitis C?

Esha: Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus, meaning it is transmitted through blood-to-blood contact. This can happen if you are using someone else's injecting equipment, sharing their needles, their water for injecting, anything that can contain blood. It's safest to use new, sterile equipment each time.

When you are living in the community you can get free injecting equipment from a Needle and Syringe Program near you. You can also visit a peer-based harm reduction service. Most of these services have a Needle and Syringe Program, give out Naloxone, a medication that anyone can use to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, and provide harm reduction and safe injecting advice.

AIVL: Esha, thank you for sharing your experience so openly. Your story highlights how important it is to get tested and treated for hepatitis C, even if you don't think you have any symptoms. It's also great to hear how far we have come and that testing and treatment are much easier these days. Thanks, Esha, ya legend!

The Necessity of Sadness



Willy Pleasance

How to experience being sad in a healthy way

By Annalise de Groot

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

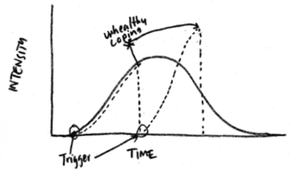
Feeling sad is something that we often shy away from. There are so many representations of sadness as a 'bad' emotion.

It is a common misconception that sadness is 'weakness' and that to feel sad somehow undermines one's 'toughness.

So many of my clients apologise for being sad or for crying in sessions. Some like to make jokes to alleviate the change in mood. My personal favourite is "Uh oh, she's got the tear gas out again." This behaviour is learned through life experiences that, either implicitly or overtly, teach us that to feel sad is to bring the mood down or that it is somehow the 'wrong' emotion for people to publicly exhibit. There are few situations where exhibitions of sadness are expected or allowed, particularly for men. There are a lot of reasons for this, beyond what I can cover here. However, one thing that I have observed through the experiences of my clients is the belief that sadness is uncomfortable for other people. It often seems to me that this is true, not because there is something inherently wrong with showing sadness, but because we do not commonly speak about the healthy role that it can play in our lives.

Sadness is not an inherently negative emotion. It is part of the body's system to support the processing of complex situations. It is meant to support us to connect with others, to reflect on our own needs and to develop strategies to move forward. Sadness signals something going wrong in our lives that we need to take steps to change.

A feeling of sadness is usually linked to a specific trigger. The type of sadness that I am talking about here is not necessarily all-encompassing. It is the kind of sadness that you might feel in response to a nasty comment, a missed opportunity, or an unwelcome change in your life. With proper attention, this type of sadness will pass with time and will likely teach you something worth learning.



All emotional states follow a similar pattern of escalation in intensity. When we are first triggered, we experience a rise in the intensity of the emotion. That intensity eventually peaks, then naturally decreases to return to our baseline. This is shown with the solid line in the image. If we engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms, the intensity of the emotion drops dramatically, meaning that we experience a rapid return to baseline. While this may sound tempting, it means that the emotion remains unresolved, and we can be easily triggered again in the future. It also means that the next time we are triggered, the previously unresolved emotional state is compounded with the new trigger, leading to a more intense feeling. This process is shown with the dotted line in the image.

When it comes to sadness, we often find ourselves unconsciously engaging in unhealthy behaviours to suppress the intensity of the emotion. This might include hiding the feeling from others or using distractions to avoid feeling anything at all. It could also include letting a different emotion out to mask the feeling of sadness.

One of the challenges surrounding sadness is that it is not often spoken about. This means we often don't know what to do with the emotion when we feel it. One of the best ways to cope with feeling sad is by allowing yourself to feel it in the first place. Sometimes, it can help to set aside time to be sad, to allow yourself to cry or to experience low mood. The important thing within this is that you allow yourself to process the feeling. Some people find it helpful to journal or to make art as a form of processing. Others may find that they benefit from talking about why they feel sad or simply just being in the presence of someone they feel supported by. Above all, trust yourself to feel sad. Give yourself permission to experience the emotion and have confidence in your ability to cope with it, knowing that it will pass.

Please note that this article is specifically about sadness as an emotional state. If you are experiencing any thoughts of harming yourself, or if you have persistent low mood, lack of motivation, or difficulty feeling any joy, please speak with a health professional.



Anti Anxiety Yoga

By The Prison Phoenix Trust

All of us have times in our lives when we feel tense, nervous, worried and frightened. We might feel overwhelmed by the thoughts that keep going around in our head or by events in our lives that are facing us. Some of the time we sense an ability to get through troubling times, and that we can come through the anxiety. If you don't sense that right now, please know that it is true. It is a knowing that can get stronger. The yoga postures and movements shown here won't necessarily change your external circumstances, but they can help "put you in a headspace" where you can deal smoothly and effectively with what's happening to you. All of us, you especially, have intelligence and vision to see the way through times of internal trouble. The key is in the breath, so do these postures slowly and concentrate on your breathing the whole time. Give it a good try and I guarantee you will feel better!

All exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.



Position 1: Neutral sit
Sit on the floor or your bed, with your legs crossed like this. If that's uncomfortable, sit upright on a chair. Breathe through the nose if you can and focus on the feeling of the breath in your nose. Make the breaths deep, slow, and all the same length as each other. Do this for 20 breaths.



Position 2: Forward bend
Bend over and hang like this, with your hands holding the opposite elbow. Nod your head a few times and relax your neck as much as you can. Do this for 5 slow breaths. If you've had any back trouble recently, bend your knees a little bit.



Position 3: Sphynx
Lie on your front and prop your elbows under your shoulders. Look forward, with your neck tall and strong. Your hips and legs stay connected to the floor. Hold for five slow breaths.



Position 4: Child's pose
Sit on your feet and rest your forehead on the floor. Stay like this for 10 long, slow breaths. If your head doesn't reach the floor, prop it up with your fists or a pillow. This is a great pose to go into any time when you can't sleep.



Position 5: Knees to chest
Lie on your back. As you breathe in, let your knees drift away from you slightly, straightening the elbows. As you breathe out, hug them close to your chest. Do this 10 times, slowly with your breathing.



Position 6: Savasana
Now lie on your back, legs and arms out to the side a little, palms face up. Relax fully into the pose, and keep your attention on your breathing. Lie like this for 5 minutes, or longer if you want, just focusing on each breath and letting the body relax as much as it can.

Injury & Compensation Lawyers

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

No Win, No Fee

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

Yarn Legal

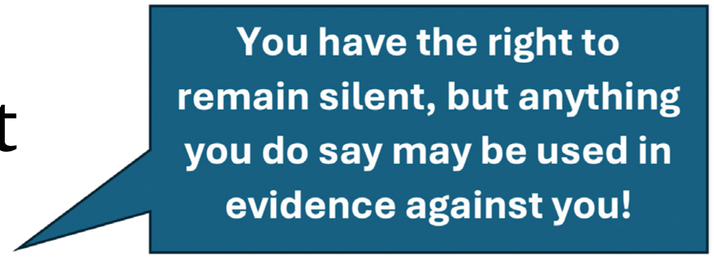


Speak directly to our Principal Lawyer Hanina Rind

Call 0478 861 131

● Legal Corner

Silence May Be Golden, but Is It a 'Right'?



The past, present and future of the 'right' to silence

By Daniel Vansetten

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

Important:
This is legal information only, and not legal advice.

'Silence is golden' according to the famous song by American rock band, the Four Seasons. The praise of silence can also be found in the book of Proverbs in the Bible, which states (at 10:19) '... he that refraineth his lips is wise.'

In law, silence is considered a fundamental right that provides fairness in criminal proceedings. The privilege against self-incrimination forms part of this right. Many historians attribute the right to silence, or the privilege against self-incrimination, to Saint John Chrysostom (d. 407). It is regarded as essential to human liberty and significant in the development of civil rights. As a legal principle, this right can be found in English common law as far back as the 17th century.
Today, the right to silence continues to be enforced by human rights treaties and constitutions across many international jurisdictions.

While Australia has no constitutional right to silence, Australian common law gives a person the right to refuse to answer any question that 'may tend to bring him into the peril and possibility of being convicted as a criminal' (*Sorby v Commonwealth* (1983) 152 CLR 281). This common law right enforces the onus on prosecutors to prove criminal offences and prevents a person charged with an offence from having to assist prosecution. This was explained in *Cornwell v R* (2007) 231 CLR 260:

"... self-incrimination has been treated in the [legal system] as objectionable, not only because the methods used to extract it are commonly unacceptable but because the practice is ordinarily incompatible with the presumption of innocence."

Not only must people be warned of their right to silence before police questioning, but they must also be seen to understand that warning.

Intoxication or high levels of violence during arrest can render a warning futile. In *Robinett v Police* (2000) 116 A Crim R 492, the court confirmed that 'a confession not shown to be voluntarily and freely given with full knowledge of the rights not to give it, should not, in fairness, be admitted' in trial.

There are some exceptions to the right. For example, in all jurisdictions, police can require you to give personal details including name, address and date of birth if they suspect you of criminal offending, or if they believe you can assist with their investigations, or if you are the driver of a motor vehicle or can help to identify a particular driver or owner of a motor vehicle.

Furthermore, the right to silence does not prevent a person from having to provide evidence such as fingerprints, DNA samples or voice recordings (*Sorby v Commonwealth*). Controversially, commissions such as the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission may conduct coercive hearings in which there is no right to silence.

Crucial to the right to silence are the rules preventing jury members from drawing a conclusion of guilt because a person has exercised silence in police questioning or trial. This can be seen in legislation such as, for example, s.89 of the *Evidence Act 1995* (NSW) that provides 'in a criminal proceeding, an inference unfavourable to a party must not be drawn from evidence that the party ... failed or refused (a) to answer one or more questions, or (b) to respond to representations.' Section 18(1)(b) of the *Evidence Act 1929* (SA) states: 'the failure of any person charged with an offence to give evidence shall not be made the subject of any comment by the prosecutor.'

New South Wales, however, weakened the protections of the right to silence in 2013 by introducing section 89A of the *Evidence Act 1995* (NSW). Section 89A allows a jury to find that silence can be an indication of guilt in certain circumstances – that is, when an accused fails to mention a fact during a police interview which the accused then relies on for defence in trial. Further limitations on s.89A include that the accused (i) must be over 18 years of age, (ii) have a lawyer present and available during the relevant questioning, and (iii) be read an appropriate warning by police at the time of questioning.

Silence may indeed be golden. However, the introduction of s.89A shows that even the most fundamental common law rights may be diminished by Parliament. It is recommended that you obtain expert legal advice before participation in any police investigation.



● 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:

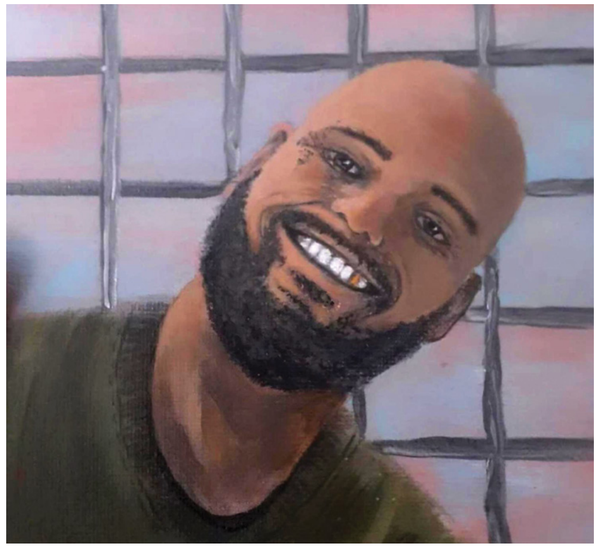
About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

• Reintegration

Back on the Path of Freedom



Self portrait, by Cruise

Tips and reflections from someone who just came out

By Cruise

Cruise is based in Queensland. He wrote a book during his time in prison called Pri-Zen.

I was released about four weeks ago and I was quite stressed. To be completely honest, I didn't really want to leave. The truth is, I loved prison and it became part of my identity. It was a place where I could do all the things I love without getting sucked into the outside world full of distractions that can take you for a mad ride. The outside can become overwhelming: the stress of not knowing where you're going to sleep; if you can afford your next meal; or if you can even bear to see your family after slipping up and relapsing into drug use. I know these problems all too well.

But I want to figure out how to make it work on the outside. I want to be closer to the path of freedom. So I thought I'd share some little tricks that I have been implementing to try to keep me less distracted.

There are a lot of things we think about when we are locked up: plans for the future, bucket lists, training routines. We write them down with high hopes only to get out and never look at those books and lists full of dreams.

Being close to everything is how we are naturally supposed to live. But now in the last hundred or so years, we started expanding yet isolating at the same time. We built a system dependent on working for other people to help them achieve their goals. We once would work our crops and animals to feed and spend time with our families. Now we sacrifice the majority of our time doing jobs for the sake of others. We forget who we are, we forget what we love, we get told what to do but don't get informed how to be.

If there's one thing I can take from prison that we can use in society is try to remember to take the time to disconnect from the expectations of society and do the things that you love.

Take a break from being a part of the world. Use maybe 30 mins everyday to turn off all devices and do something that you would do while you were in prison. Read, cook, paint, train, write, or just simply talk to the people around you.

One example which has worked for me is finding something that I can use as a form of muster. Being a convert to Islam, I've started using the midday 12:30 prayer as my half-way point of the day. So just like in prison when I would train until 10:30 then eat etc,, this is something that I found I can do to muster myself and break up the overwhelmingly long days where we can do both everything and nothing.

I must admit it is more difficult on the outside to remember to break up the day but I'm quite lucky that I have a place to stay when the world stresses me out. When I get to that stressful point I go to that safe place, instead of getting out and about dealing with all the variables that can take me for a ride. I think it's good to kind of put yourself on lockdown for a day or two. Better to stay in and watch TV for a couple of days then do things you might regret. I've been there before and it's a rollercoaster ride, like really on a rollercoaster; you're getting tossed from left to right all while you're trapped in your seat. It may feel like fun at times, but it is still a trap and the thrills aren't as real as they seem.

Here are some dot point tips for reintegrating which has worked for me so far, but please ŕemember I'm a human being so I can't say that it's been perfect these first weeks, but I can say my little hacks have given me a better start.

- Save your mullah: find a way to save money that works for you. For me, I don't shop at big corporations. No Woolies, Coles, Maccas, etc. This stops me from spending too much money.
- Write a list of things that you will need outside while in prison. When you're out, check at least once a week to keep on track.
- Put family first: spend your first moments or weeks out as close to family as possible. Friends and distractions can come later.
- Find a structure in freedom: take some time out of your day to do something you love to do, whether you did it in prison or not.
- Don't rush! Don't be too eager to go straight back to work or play the catch up game too quickly: you will get lost in it and end up back in prison.
- Take 5: Too much stress, better to have a couple of days of doing nothing. Find a cell/room you can be comfortable in, this is so important to have a safe space that you can kick back when things aren't going your way. Sit, chill, and try again another time.
- Most importantly, learn to forgive yourself if you mess up. It's a slippery slope once you do and there are only two places you're gonna end up; that's prison or the grave.



• Culture



XYZ Films

Movie Review of *The Wasp*

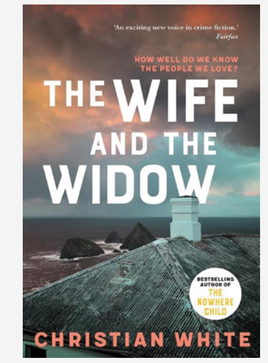
By Vincent

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

The Wasp is a gripping psychological thriller that keeps the viewer in suspense until the very last moment. The film explores an array of topics such as trauma, betrayal, childhood bullying, domestic violence, and social class. The film elegantly surveys emotionally dense subjects through artful storytelling. The film focuses on Heather (Naomie Harris) and Carla (Natalie Dormer) whose respective upbringing, socio-cultural background and life choices are used as indicators to explain their current circumstances as well as their character's overall psychology. Director Guillem Morales employs sharp dialogue, pronounced silence and unflinching flashback scenes.

The Wasp adopts a brazen approach to storytelling. Rather than rely on tired story arcs, this film confronts the story of two former school friends from an original viewpoint which asks as many questions of the audience as it does of the characters themselves. The strength of this picture lies in its capacity to entertain and surprise the audience throughout its 90 minute run time. A minor blemish of this film is the all-too-neat conclusion, as everything seems to occur at the right moment with the required interventions perfectly timed. A superb film nonetheless.

Rating: 4 jailbirds – A must-see quality drama.



Affirm Press

Book Club Review: *The Wife and the Widow* by Christian White

By About Time

Christian White is an Australian author and screenwriter born in the Mornington Peninsula. His second novel, *The Wife and the Widow*, was released in September 2019 in Australia and January 2020 in the US. It became an instant bestseller and won the 2020 Ned Kelly Award for Best Crime Fiction. Christian co-created the television series *Clickbait*, with Tony Ayres (*The Slap*), which went straight to number one on Netflix in 41 countries, including Australia, the US and the UK.

PLOT OVERVIEW:

Set on a quiet island in the dead of winter, *The Wife and the Widow* is a gripping mystery/thriller told from two perspectives. Kate is a widow struggling with her grief, which deepens when she uncovers startling secrets about her late husband's hidden life. Meanwhile, Abby, an island local, is forced to confront the possibility that her husband may be a murderer, turning her world upside down.

As the story unfolds, both women are forced to reckon with the shocking truths about the men they loved. But on this isolated island, nothing is quite what it seems. Only by coming together can Kate and Abby uncover the full story – and the dark secrets that bind them all.

THEMES:

Grief and Loss:
Both Kate and Abby must navigate the emotional turmoil of losing their husbands, though in different ways – one to death, the other to the potential revelation of a horrific crime. The novel examines how grief shapes their identities and their perceptions of the men they loved.

Deception and Betrayal:
Central to the story is the theme of hidden truths. Both women uncover shocking secrets about their husbands, forcing them to grapple with feelings of betrayal and the unsettling realization that their relationships were built on lies.

Identity and Trust:
As the women's understanding of their husbands unravels, they are forced to question their own identities and the trust they placed in those closest to them. The novel probes how much we truly know about the people we love.

Justice and Morality:
The story also raises questions about justice and the lengths people will go to uncover the truth. It explores moral ambiguity, as the characters must decide what is right in the face of shocking revelations and difficult choices.

Isolation:
Set on a remote island, the novel emphasizes the theme of isolation – both physical and emotional. The harsh, wintery landscape mirrors the characters' sense of loneliness and the feeling that they are cut off from the world as they uncover disturbing truths.

ABOUT TIME'S VERY OWN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR, CHRISTIAN WHITE

Q1. Deception is a theme in the novel. How do you think people can come to terms with the truth when it challenges everything they thought they knew about their lives?

Coming to terms with a challenging truth can be painful, but it's also an opportunity for growth. Facing the truth, no matter how difficult, allows us to see things clearly and make peace with the past. Honesty, with ourselves and others, is the first step toward healing.

Q2. The novel raises complex questions about justice and morality. Do you believe there is ever a "right" way to seek justice, or is it always subjective, depending on the circumstances and who is involved?

Justice is rarely black and white. It often depends on perspective, emotions, and the situation. I believe the "right" way to seek justice should involve understanding, fairness, and empathy – trying to do what's right for everyone involved while considering the consequences.

Q3. Isolation plays a huge role in the story, especially since much of it takes place on a remote island. In your opinion, how does isolation – whether physical or emotional – affect the way people process trauma and make decisions?

Isolation can make everything feel more intense – pain, fear, even hope – because you're left alone with your thoughts. It can be overwhelming, but it can also provide clarity. The key is finding ways to stay connected to others, even when you feel alone, because support can make all the difference.

Q4. The novel explores the idea of how people redefine themselves after major events in their lives. How do you think people find a new sense of identity when they are forced to let go of the past?

Letting go of the past is never easy, but it's a chance to start fresh. People find a new identity by focusing on what they value most and by being kind to themselves. It's about accepting what's happened and looking forward, even if the path ahead is uncertain.

Q5. What do you hope readers, particularly those who are incarcerated, take away from *The Wife and the Widow*? Is there a particular message or feeling you hope to convey?

I hope readers see that everyone has secrets and struggles, but no matter how lost or isolated you feel, there's always a way forward. The novel is about resilience and finding strength in unexpected places, and I hope it offers a sense of hope and connection.

Q6. Lastly, if you could share one piece of advice with someone facing a difficult challenge, whether inside prison or out in the world, based on the themes or lessons of *The Wife and the Widow*, what would it be?

No matter what you're going through, keep moving forward. The past doesn't define you – what matters is what you do next. Be honest with yourself, take small steps, and trust that even in the darkest moments, there's always a way to rebuild.

● Mob

The Strength Within: Part 1

An interview with Stacey Edwards and Marie Mitchell

By VALS and Marie Mitchell



Stacey Edwards, in front of one of her paintings at The Torch

This interview was part of Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's Invasion Day webinar in January this year. The Q&A spoke to an incredible panel of First Nations people, each with their own unique experiences of the criminal legal system. The interviews amplify that burning spirit that lives within all of us. Marie Mitchell, a proud Yorta Yorta woman and the leader of VALS Statewide Community Justice Programs, spoke to the panel about their experiences, learnings, strengths and challenges. This month, we start with Stacey Edwards.

Stacey, could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Stacey Edwards, I grew up on Wemba Wemba Country and I identify as a Bun Wurrung, Boon Wurrung and Taungarung woman, and I've spent seven years in the prison system.

You describe yourself as a grandchild of the Stolen Generations. How has this impacted your connection to your culture and influenced your work as an artist?

My grandfather was part of the Stolen Generation and his nine siblings were also. He thought that just because he lived in Melbourne that he was Wurundjeri.

When I worked at the Koorie Heritage Trust, about 15 years ago, I learned and identified the language groups that I do today and my signature style is diamond patterns that were traditionally used on our shields and possum skins.

Can you tell us about some of the challenges that you faced while you were in prison and how your art that you just touched on helped you express and navigate your experience?

I spent seven years in the prison system all together. I've been out of prison for 18 months now on parole and I still have nine months to go on parole. It took a lot for me to adjust with such a long remand period. I was on remand for two and a half years. It was hard accessing mental health care and medication, and it was hard adjusting – obviously realising that prison officers are not police officers and just the general routine of prison life.

I was really fortunate when it came to my art. We had a Koorie art class at the local TAFE and so we have a space dedicated to allow me to explore different styles and mediums.

Can you talk a little bit about your transition out of prison and what supports were or were not available to you?

VALS was there, obviously. It was the first organisation that I reconnected with when I left prison. And they were fantastic, transferring all my prison health records to their system and making sure that all my health issues were followed up and cared for.

The Torch program was obviously amazing. I did my community service here at The Torch which led to paid work, employment and now I'm permanent part-time at The Torch now.

But I didn't have housing. That was probably the biggest challenge for women in prison as you can't get parole pending housing and you can't get housing pending parole.

I was really fortunate that with the money I saved up from selling my artwork through The Torch, I was able to put a deposit on a house when I left prison.

Wow. That's brilliant. The fact that you've been able to use your art to set yourself up in your own property – I applaud you in that. Next question – what do you think needs to change in the parole system to better support Aboriginal women especially around issues like family violence and housing?

There has to be a better understanding around family violence and how complex it is and, especially, they need to understand culturally as well how that affects us and how we integrate back into the community.

There's a lot of shame around family violence obviously and I didn't speak a lot about it for a long time because it was part of my court case so I didn't get help for it, but I'm getting professional help now which is fantastic. I get to see a psychiatrist every couple of weeks to talk about family violence and that's been really beneficial.

I think the biggest barrier with parole is how many restrictions have been put on me and the hardest thing to adjust to has probably been having a GPS monitor on my ankle.

What advice would you give to younger Aboriginal women who find themselves caught or engaged with the criminal justice system?

Some advice I gave women after I had spent a few years in the system was basically "yes, sir, no, sir, three bags full, sir". Just do what you're told and get on with it, it's the only way I was able to adjust the system.

Pick my battles, what was worth walking away from and what was worth standing my ground with. And use the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs) to your advantage 'cause they're a great support. I couldn't have done it without the AWOs at DPFC. Just keep your head down and work hard. Keep busy. Do all the programs and wake up every day another day gone.

Given you were in prison for seven years, what do you feel helped you most in prison to cope?

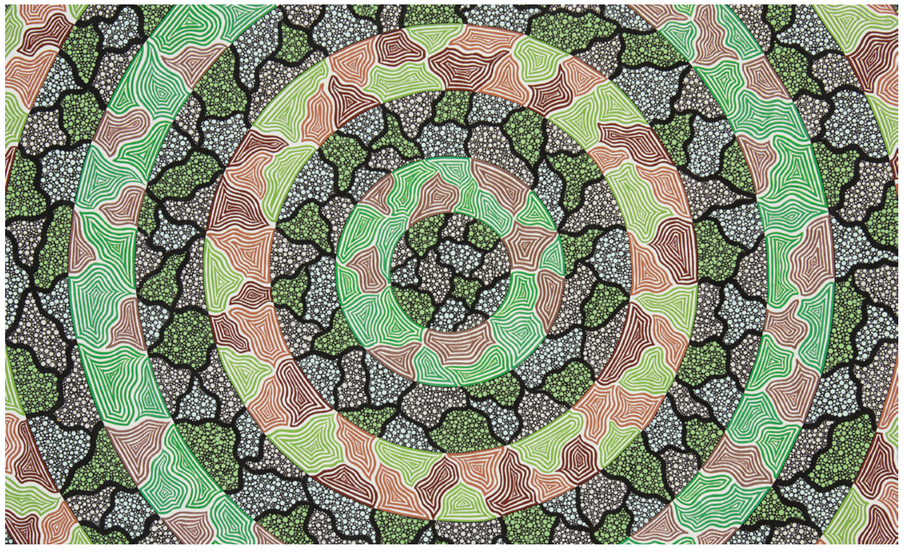
Art. When I did art and I painted, it felt like I wasn't in prison. So I would paint for hours and hours and hours on end if I could and just to escape prison life, block it all out. Art was my best ally in prison.

Thank you to Stacey, Marie and VALS for the conversation. We will have another interview next month!



My Ancestors Looking Over Me and My Kids
By Jarrod C
Gunditjmara people
2025

Me and my kids dancing and going walkabout and the serpent going through Australia.



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.

● We Need Your Feedback!

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

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

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



Creative

Time Together

Anonymous

This person writes from Ravenhall Correctional Centre, in Victoria.

Doing time together, under lock
and key,
But helping others can set your
mind free.
The past is gone, the future's
not arrived,
Focus on now, be glad to be alive.

Have a second thought before
abusing screws,
I know it's frustrating, but you'll
only lose.
Be slow to anger, put ego aside,
Tolerance and patience will be tried!

Don't be concerned what others
have done,
Vigilante mentality is not on.
Consider others and make a
good choice,
If you're not outside, use your
inside voice!

Be kind to each other, ask R U OK?
One short question that goes a long way.

Better Man

By R.M.

R.M. writes from Brisbane Correctional Centre, in Queensland.

As I stand, and look through these bars,
I can't help to think of my lil stars,

How I wished I could have been
a better man,
Sometimes I think, 'why have I been
dealt this hand?'

But I am what I am, and who I will
always be,
Because I know I can produce a
better me,

The same as I was, just in a
different lane,
Because the monster in me I can
now tame.

After Darkness Comes Light

By Rachel

Rachel writes from Numinbah Correctional Centre in Queensland.

When you feel broken and can't remember who you used to be, please know that person is still inside of you, waiting to be acknowledged and validated. Find a calm place, go inside of your soul. That is where the goodness lies.

When you believe the lies you have been told – that you're 'broken' or that you're a 'bad' person, that's the moment you need to remember that is simply not true.

Your essence is good, you are worthy of good things and you are a good person.

The thing about the way you feel is that it's only temporary. I know that your mind is consumed right now, suffocating you to a point where you can't think or see straight. Please remember these feelings won't last. It may not feel like it right now, but these feelings will fade in time. Like a hurricane, the whirlwind of life can wrap you up and spin you around so fast and so violently. But just like the eye of a storm, calmness and peace will come too.

You may not believe me and some days I struggle to believe it too. On those days I remind myself, everything is unfolding exactly how it's supposed to, even if you can't see it just yet.

Think about it, you have survived every tough day in your life so far, and this is no different. Please trust that the universe has a plan for you, you are so much stronger than you think you are right now. You are not alone in your struggle. I promise you this.

Hold tight to the people who have your best interests at heart. They are there to remind you of your inner strengths, capabilities and worth. If you don't know who to turn to or trust again, go within and search for love. Perhaps the only trustworthy person is you right now, but in time, that too will change. This is a reminder to choose you. You are enough, even if you don't feel like it. You always have been enough. You are worthy of love. You are capable of growing and changing.

You are never alone.

Good things are coming your way – because you are choosing different this time.

Freedom Flight

By Joshua

Joshua was formerly incarcerated in five different prisons in Victoria.

I stand at my door and watch the birds
As they spread their wings and fly
Oh how wonderful my life would be
If I could fly so high

I'd peruse the vacant skyline
Before I take to flight
Feel the magic as the soft winds blow
As I rise up, to a soaring height

As I glide through the heavenly clouds
And gaze at the distant earth below
My freedom has never felt grander
And my soul has a peaceful, inner glow

Flying high across the valleys
The mountains, rivers and trees
Not concerned where my journey
takes me
To have the freedom of "shooting
the breeze"

In the distance I see a large building
It's where I'll take refuge for the night
Flying down I look for a landing
To rest my weary body, from its flight

In an instant my body jolts and I awaken
I sit up and my blood runs pale
Rubbing my eyes, I realise I've
been dreaming
Oh dear God, I'm still locked up in jail!

My Heart, My Soul

By Amaka

Amaka writes from Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Victoria.

Her laugh rings through me
like a thousand bells.
The soft sweet way
her little head smells.

His smile so bright,
his giggle so sweet.
His precious tiny fingers,
his chubby little feet.

What filled my days before
I do not know.
I have so much love within me,
from inside my heart I glow.

A beautiful new world
has just begun
For in it, is my beautiful daughter
and my handsome son.

Boredom

By Bukks

Bukks writes from Loddon Prison in Victoria.

Here we are again, this day is just the same as last,
I've done all I can do and yet it seems no time has passed.
Staring at the ceiling and I'm staring at the floor,
Been sitting here for ages and I'm staring at the door.
I've been walking around in circles, I've spent too long sitting down,
It's like that I am searching, but there's nothing to be found.
I slept in half the morning, now I'm back lying on the bed,
My eyes are sore from being shut, a headache's in my head.
There is nothing on the TV and I cannot cop the adds,
There is nothing more to talk about, when I am with the lads.
All my music I have listened too, at least a hundred times,
I have rapped my brain out, I'm completely out of rhymes.
I can't drink no more coffee, I can't eat no more food,
It is so bloody boring; I can't change this attitude.
All the good books I've read, I can't seem to get another one?
There is so little to do, my mind is turning numb.
What is there that I can do, to help me pass the day?
If anyone's looking for me, tell them to "go away".
There is nothing they will tell me, that I don't already know,
There is nothing we can do today: there's nowhere we can go.
I hate the bloody weekend, there is just nothing to do,
All the thrill is gone what's left is just the residue.
I do not even see the point in being let out the cell,
As soon as the door cracks open, boredom I can't repel,
Every now and then I get a visit, but this weekend I don't have none,
Would you be surprised if I say, "times like this I wish I had a gun?"
You think you're bored, you don't know shit, until your freedom's taken,
The monotony of prison's something that cannot be mistaken.
Especially on the weekend when there's nothing going on,
Getting through it's just as tough as if you were running a marathon.
I'm so bloody bored that it may cause fatality,
Boredom for over a decade now, I'm bored and I'm not free!

She'll Be Apples

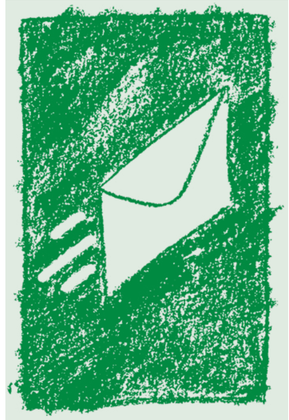
By Angela

This image depicts the wild woman and the apple tree. It is inspired by the character 'Aofie' in this year's production.

During development, we had discussions about what the apple represented. To trust or not to trust, to bite or not to bite. For me the apple merely represents choice. You can drift along or you can bite the apple and choose for yourself. And that is powerful.



Coloured Pencil on Paper, 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:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Love Worshipful (a Midnight Repose)

By Jon

Jon writes from Marngoneet Correctional Centre, in Victoria.

Some say Love is overrated
It has no relevance anymore I say
I know more than love unbound
I can make these prayerful sounds

More than Love my darlin'
I believe in you
Through separation station
In life and strange curfew

For belief is more than desire
Desire is the answer key
I await that friendly fire
When your eyes embrace me

Belief in you majestic
Realistic in all respects
In your life complicated
I must have some effect

I know I have worshipped
Your picture on the wall
Worship has much emblazonment
There I made it fall

Do not scare belief
It is pure and sane
Beyond Loves depths
I will worship once again

Your countenance pure
Your eyes so demure
A picture is a cure
I am really sure

I Love you my darlin'
Beyond this starlight
My belief relating
To more than plain sight

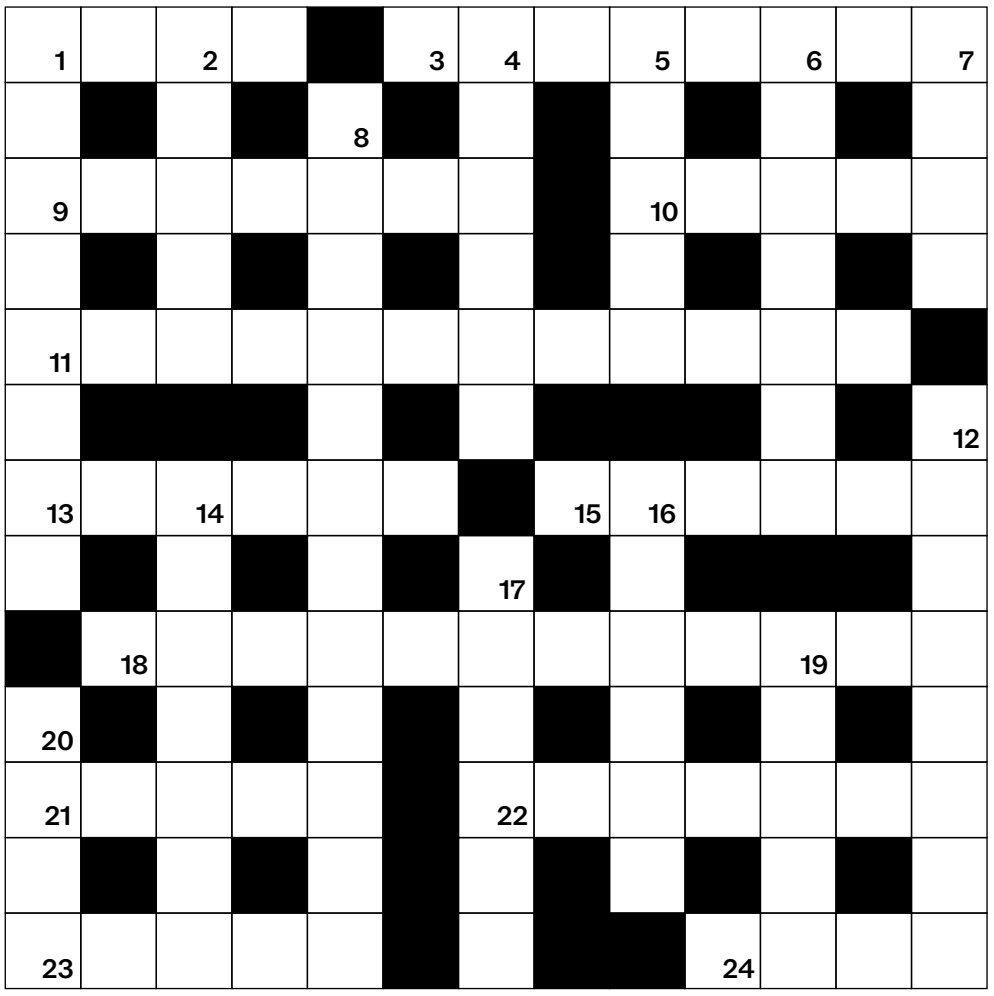
on this frozen midnight
to a moon above
my belief is sacrosanct
it answers to Love

and my sacred lady leads me on...



• Play

Crossword



ACROSS

1. Arrived (4)
3. Main ingredient of hummus (8)
9. Undo a necklace (7)
10. Surprise or astonish (5)
11. Secretive (12)
13. Encrypt a message (6)
15. Payment to release a captive (6)
18. Provide evidence of support (12)
21. Vintage fashion (5)
22. Afraid (7)
23. A master of ceremonies (5)
24. Terminated TV show (4)

DOWN

1. Walking aids for a sprain (8)
2. Very masculine (5)
4. Type of music (3-3)
5. A map or diagram (5)
6. Sport participants (7)
7. Gorillas (4)
8. Colourful children's toy (12)
12. Urged to do something (8)
14. Corrosive (7)
16. From the stars (6)
17. Received an angry lecture (6)
19. Attach (5)
20. A very large plant (4)

Categories

Create four groups of four! Each group of four has a common theme.

RED	**CHUCKLE**	**TONGUE**	**YELLOW**
CACKLE	**HEEL**	**GIGGLE**	**PEAR**
EYELET	**PEACH**	**GREEN**	**LACE**
ORANGE	**APRICOT**	**APPLE**	**LOL**

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Came
3. Chickpea
9. Unclasp
10. Amaze
11. Closemouthed
13. Encode
15. Ransom
18. Substantiate
21. Retro
22. Fearful
23. Emcee
24. Axed

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Crutches
2. Macho
4. Hip-Hop
5. Chart
6. Players
7. Apes
8. Kaleidoscope
12. Impelled
14. Caustic
16. Astral
17. Earful
19. Affix
20. Tree

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. Which Yothu Yindi track won ARIA's Song of the Year in 1992?
2. When Jesus entered Jerusalem what animal was he riding on?
3. What country does parmesan cheese come from?
4. How many holes are in a standard ten pin bowling ball?
5. Name the school that Harry Potter attended?
6. On a farm, a kid is a baby what?
7. What are the only two mammals that lay eggs?
8. Name the South Australian town famous for its underground homes.
9. True or False: Australia has a fence longer than the Great Wall of China?
10. Which company makes the National Rugby League's official ball?

Card Game – Speed

Speed is a fast-paced card game for two players where the goal is to be the first to get rid of all your cards.

Place two piles of five cards facedown in the middle of the table. Between those piles, place two more piles of one facedown card each. Divide the remaining cards between the players, so that each gets their own 20-card draw pile. Before the game starts, each player takes five cards for their hand.

Flip over both of the single cards at the same time to start. Both people play the cards in their hands simultaneously as fast as possible onto the face-up piles, one rank higher or lower than the card you're playing on. If neither player can play a card on the two face-up piles, then use the two piles of facedown cards. To continue play, each person turns over a card from one of the facedown piles and places it face up on the middle two piles. Each time you play a card, take one from your draw pile to maintain five cards in your hand at all times. If you play all of your cards before your opponent, shout "Speed!" to win.

Quiz Answers

1. Treaty
2. Donkey
3. Italy
4. Three
5. Hogwarts
6. Goat
7. Platypus and Echidna
8. Coober Pedy
9. True
10. Steeden



Kenny Eliason

Caption This...

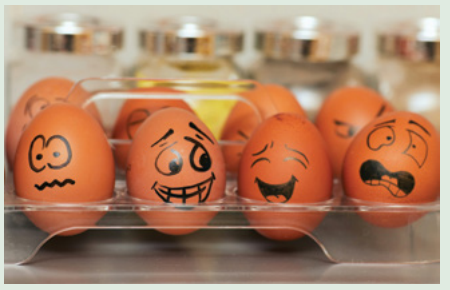
Submit a caption to this photo, and we will print the three finalists (including the winner) in the next edition.

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au



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

WINNER!
Egg Puns Crack Him Up
Belly, Queensland

Bunny Jokes

Q: Why was the Easter bunny hired for the job?
A: He had the most eggs-perience.

Q: What do you call a rabbit with fleas?
A: Bugs Bunny.

Q: Why did the bunnies go on strike?
A: Because they wanted better celery.

Categories Answers

Colours: Red, Yellow, Orange, Green
Laughs: Chuckle, Cackle, LOL, Giggle
Shoe Parts: Tongue, Lace, Eyelet, Heel
Fruits: Pear, Apple, Apricot, Peach