SILENCE ISN'T GOLDEN
Gazza on the difficulties of communication in prison
2–4. LETTERS

Q&A: DEBT RELIEF
How to deal with debts while in prison
18–19. LEGAL CORNER

HOUSING AFTER PRISON
What you need to know before release
20–21. REINTEGRATION

NEW EXTENDED PLAY SECTION!
Enjoy the comics, jokes and more
27–28. PLAY

ISSUE NO. 13 AUGUST 2025 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

About Time

Australia's National Prison Newspaper

Write to Us:

Share your story, your thoughts, your hopes or your dreams. Tell us what's going on inside. Ask us any question.

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000



EXPERIENCES

The Eulogy I Couldn't Deliver

Sending my love to Paris (the man, not the city)

By Mark Mi Words

Mark Mi Words writes from the inside-out, finding flickers of hope, humour and humanity in places most people try to forget.

Read on page 12.



Ike Curtis

NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Ask for Naloxone Before Release – It Could Save Your Life

By Denham Sadler

Denham Sadler is the Chief Reporter at About Time.

Programs providing naloxone to people leaving prison are now running in most Australian states and territories, with hopes they will continue to expand.

Naloxone is a medication that rapidly reverses the effects of an overdose on opioids.

Also known as narcan, it comes in the form of a nasal spray or injection. It can be used by anyone and does not need a lot of training. It does not have any side effects if it is used on someone not experiencing an overdose.

"It's a nasal spray – it's not brain surgery," Australian Alcohol & Other Drugs Council CEO Melanie Walker told About Time. "It's a really practical thing for people to have.

"You can't do much harm with a nasal spray – it's an actual medication that does no harm to someone if they're not overdosing."

Given that the period immediately after release from prison is especially high risk for overdoses, a number of countries around the world provide naloxone for free to people leaving prison.

There have been calls for this to be done in Australia for several years.

"When people are coming out of custodial settings, they've usually got a few things on their plates," Walker said.

"There's a lot to do. If you're able to have that [naloxone] with you, rather than add it to the list of things you need to do, then it makes it all easier."

Continued on page 6.

Contents

2 – 5 LETTERS
Experiences of the incarcerated

6 – 10 NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS
Ask for Naloxone Before Release – It Could Save Your Life
Prison Voting Sees Dramatic Rise Across Australia
How Your Prison Journey Can Lead to Meaningful Work
Reintegration Conference Held in Alice Springs
The latest in criminal justice around the country
End-of-Life Care in Prisons: A Call for Compassion

12 – 15 EXPERIENCES
The Eulogy I Couldn't Deliver
When Things Are Too Good to Be True
Support After Prison
Protesting for Change
Picturing the Impact of Prison Through Photovoice

16 – 17 HEALTH
When Your Mind Turns Against You: Understanding Depression in Prison
My Breast Cancer Story, and How It Led to Something Beautiful
Yoga for a Good Night's Sleep

18 – 19 LEGAL CORNER
Video Court: What to Know
Solitary Confinement as a Sentencing Factor
Legal Q&A: Debt Relief

20 – 21 REINTEGRATION
Finding a Place to Live After Prison

22 MOB
Staying Connected to Culture in Prison
Aboriginal Art in custody

23 CULTURE
Review of Songs Inside
What's on TV Today?

24 – 25 CREATIVE
Poetry, art and creative writing from behind bars

26 LEARN
Our Living Planet: Wild Facts About Earth

27 – 28 PLAY
A collection of monthly puzzles and games

Letters

Real Ones Don't Forget

Anonymous

This author writes from a prison in Queensland.

To About Time and follow inmates around Australia,

There is a line so many of us here have heard over and over again from inmates going home: "I'll write to you and put my number on when I get out." And you never hear from them again.

If you have no intentions of keeping in touch with people you met on the inside, don't say you will. Life is pretty hectic on the outside, I get it. But don't promise fellow inmates something you have no intentions of doing.

But for me it was a different story. I met a bloke in here back in 2022. I will keep his name out of this. We didn't really hang around a lot together at first, but he was someone I could have a decent conversation with – and no BS or war stories.

Over the next 12 months we became good friends, and I found he was someone I could honestly trust in here. He never once repeated anything I said to him, nor did I. We always had each others' backs. Then came his turn to go home. It was sad to see him go as he was and still is the only one I could really trust. But, on the other hand, I was very happy for him. It was bittersweet I suppose.

Before he left, he said he would keep in touch and gave me his address and phone number. Within two weeks, I got my first letter from him and I had his number on my phone. I have been ringing him at least once a week every week since his release in 2023, and he sends me emails regularly.

The biggest thing I can't get over is he sends me money every month (I have never heard of an ex-inmate doing this for someone still inside). I made him my power of attorney about a year ago, and he has done nothing but go over and beyond what I'd expect anyone to do.

He has a very busy lifestyle on the outside. Now, since his release, he has a very successful business and still manages time to take my calls and do things for me.

But this is the thing that blew me away. Last year he purchased a property for me to use as a parole address when I am due for parole in 2030. He has just put a tenant in it until I'm due for release.

This guy is a godsend. He truly is. I never in my wildest dreams ever thought I'd meet the most loyal person I have ever met in my life in a prison. I have kept a record of everything he has done and every cent he has sent me. I am due for a compensation payout soon, and I will make sure he is well looked after.

I could never thank you enough, mate, and it just goes to show you don't judge a book by its cover.

Treat people with respect, be an ear when needed and, above all, be loyal to those who earn it – and, who knows, maybe god might send you an angel too.

Take care and stay safe,

Anon.

Silence Isn't Golden

By Garth

Garth writes from a prison in Queensland.

In prison, silence isn't always golden. It's just another form of the unknown, another form of loss of control, another avenue for the negative thoughts to take.

When the phone call isn't answered, the letter not replied to or the email not received – was it lost? Was it missed? Was it ignored? Was it never received, or did they simply not know how to reply?

Communication while in prison is always haunted by the unknowns, the maybes, with all the possibilities hanging over every word. All of these shape how we communicate with the outside world and shape our perception of it, which shapes our perception of how time passes for those we love. It distorts it and warps it.

It makes the 10 minutes during the call pass like seconds and the 10 minutes between calls feel like hours. The days between emails feel like months of silence. The weeks between letters feel like months of abandonment. It stretches the waiting and increases the hurt.

Communication is hard for most people, and the limitations placed on inmates and their loved ones amplify this to higher levels of frustration. Pair this with the changes forced on new inmates and their family, and it can lead to abandonment of ties between inmates and their friends and family or the projection of frustration onto those on the outside, leading to a loss of connections.

For some, these problems are further increased by limited reading and writing ability, limited funds for phone calls or being unable to adapt to all the changes in time before damage to already fragile relationships has been done. For many inside, once that damage has been done, there is no way to work on repairing it. And, contrary to the old saying, time does not heal all. It increases the gap between the two parties – sometimes to impossible distances.

This loss of connection can occur at a critical point in an inmate's life. Connection to the outside world is important for mental wellbeing, where projected frustration can negatively influence people on the outside who are already unsure about maintaining a relationship. This can lead to increasing disconnection between the inmates and the outside world, potentially leading to a complete loss of communication and increased isolation during and after incarceration.

I put out the call to all inmates to remember that there are many reasons a call might go unanswered or a letter un-replied to and not to assume the worst. I also ask those on the outside to remember that there are many reasons for frustration in prison. If any of it leaks out in communication, it is not intentional – just a side effect of the difficulties of communication.



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



The Simple Things in Life

By Edward

Edward writes from a prison in New South Wales.

My name is Edward. I am from New Zealand and have worked in Australia for the last nine years as a pro chef.

I have been in prison for 10 months now. I have always loved reading your monthly letter. I have been cooking pro for 22 years and have been doing art since I was 15 years of age.

I have done a lot of art courses in NZ including a Degree in Arts. But I still struggle with spelling, but that still never stopped me from getting educated. Since being in prison I have realised so much about how much I relied on money and thinking success was about money. And trying to please too many fake people.

From being blessed with the gifts God has given me I now share it with other inmates. Drawing cards for their loved ones, birthday, anniversaries etc. The prison have noticed my talent and over the last six months I have painted murals at work and in all four pods of our prison. And I am about to paint in the clinic

After working in so many restaurants in Sydney, why is it that painting these murals means more to me than cooking for thousands of people in the restaurant? The murals are a mixture of landscapes or Australia and animals, with every pod having the Nyora Memorial representing ANZAC. It to me is the only day all nations are one: PNG, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, NZ, Torres Strait, Aboriginal and Australia.

So I have been doing what I have always loved doing – art and cooking. Sharing with inmates what I can make even with the simplest of ingredients. Sometimes that's all it takes. The simple things in life mean so much more.

So to all the team at About Time, I thank you. We thank you.

Check out a recipe by Edward on page 27!

The Importance of Letter Writing

By Shea

Shea writes from a prison in Victoria.

I daresay that for most people in this day and age, physical letters have become quite the antiquated method of communication. I know that prior to my own incarceration, it was definitely true of myself.

With the internet there to provide instant gratification and feedback for any minor thought, the ever-cascading dialogue of chatrooms and forums filled with random individuals, interaction was unlimited and immediate.

That tap runs dry the second you pass through these gates. The price of a simple postage stamp has become far more relevant to me than a mobile data allowance ever was.

Few on the outside would truly understand the horror of receiving a letter back marked "RTS", as you reflect on the dollar or two wasted on your failed attempt to send out a distress signal from this socially isolated wasteland.

Thank you greatly for publishing my letter in your October issue, as it not only gave me an outlet for personal expression, but also opened up lines of communication from other inmates.

I received many inter-prison letters from people I hadn't shared a unit/prison with for many years. They wrote of connecting with many of the points I had made, and shared in turn how they felt about the direction of their lives and the decisions they'd made along the way.

It was also a nice surprise to read a letter from a reader named Ruby, who was kind enough to reference my letter (and others) and extend their thanks and support. For those of us in this journey, separate yet together, thank you in return for considering our words.



Finding Light in the Darkness

By Aidan

Aidan writes from a prison in Victoria.

I am Aidan. I am 30, and this is my 12th time on remand since 2019.

Let me start by stating that once you are in the cells the saying "it is what it is" feels relevant. It most certainly is what it is.

But everyone gets an end date, and all I can say is find what motivates you and use it to fall on, because inmates are all doing hard miles and in the end the only one you can rely on is yourself.

This is a dark thought, but what motivates you will end up being something that lights your longest days.

How to approach the officers: the less time you are in front of them the better.

Thank you About Time, and I think we should be able to include our CRN to find pen pals.

Thank you again.

Response from About Time:
Hi Aidan, thank you for your letter. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to include CRNs in our letters. We know there is a strong want and need for pen pal programs, but About Time is unable to organise those, unfortunately. Keep writing to us!
From About Time

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 thirteenth 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 12 times a year by the not-for-profit company, About Time Media Ltd
ISSN #2982-0758

Saved by Faith

By Delphine

Delphine writes from a prison in Queensland.

My name is Delphine. I'm a proud Aboriginal woman. I heard about About Time from a friend I've known for a very long time. I just want to share my story about how I was saved by faith.

My last release was in August 2023. Before my release, on the 3rd of June 2023, I lost my mother to lung cancer. That day my world, my heart, felt empty. A part of me went with her. What hurt the most was I couldn't attend my mother's funeral because of the cost of funds to get me home to say my last goodbye. That hurt me not saying my last goodbye and not giving her one more last kiss. On my release I got home, went up to the cemetery to see my mother's grave.

Being out and getting to spend time with my two kids who are both adults – 21 and 19 – at that time. It was the best loving time I had with both of them in a very long time. My 19-year-old daughter went back to where she lived in Rockhampton. A few months went by, and my son stayed back home for good.

On the 11th November 2023, I got a phone call no mother should get – to be told your baby girl has passed away in a car accident. My world was turned upside down. I was numb. I felt like someone reached into my chest and ripped out my heart and threw it to hungry vultures to feed on. It turned stone cold, and I couldn't feel the blood pumping to my heart. My heart felt lifeless. So one of my cousins asked me if I would like to live with her until I got back on my feet.

I was angry. I started having a few beers once a fortnight. It started turning into every day, from beer to top shelf stuff. I didn't care how much money I was spending on grog. It was helping me to heal with the loss of my mother and daughter.

It was time to lay my baby girl to rest. That day, seeing my baby girl go down really hit home. My baby was really gone.

My drinking had gotten worse to the point I not only needed grog. I needed drugs. I also wanted to be high. I didn't care if I was going to fall deep back into drugs where I would be awake for days on end.

My cousin got me something, and it came in the mail. It was a big banner of my daughter, and the theme was Bloods and Crips with all different coloured bandanas doing west side symbols. I cried and thanked my cousin for the love and support she had given me through the last few weeks after putting my baby girl to rest. But waking up to seeing that banner and seeing her smile had made me realise that my mother and daughter are no longer in pain. They are in a better place, and I should focus on getting back on my feet and getting back to good health, without drugs and alcohol.

But I couldn't stop drinking. I stopped using drugs because I started back at my old job. But I was still drinking until now, coming back to prison because I took all my anger out on my son. Now it ended me back in prison to start all over again.

That's when I reached out and asked the Lord to take my hand and heart and make me whole again.

I'm waiting to be sentenced. In the meantime I've applied for rehab. I'm connected back with my son. I took back my power with the help and blessing of the Lord. I'm ready to tackle my problem and take control of my life again by walking in faith. If the Lord Jesus believes in me, I should also believe in myself. Just know, having faith can save you – like it did with me.

Advice for When You're Released

By Danielle

Danielle writes from a prison in Queensland.

Hello,

Here is some feedback for About Time – it's absolutely positive! From my first introduction to issue 2 or 3 (at BNCC) I looked forward to the next edition. Arriving at NCC I followed up with an officer who ensured copies were available to us.

The information is useful and informative. A quick ask around has resulted in the following additions being suggested.

- More feedback (if possible) on supports and ideas for people being released, particularly women.
- Would anyone be interested in sharing their experiences of that process? Things to watch out for when our time is complete and we face the outside world again. Interviews with such people perhaps?
- Opportunities to link with pen pals? Perhaps a request email/contact so people can link up.
- Monthly astrology
- Sudoku
- Information and feedback more focussed on women over 50, who have different needs at times with health and medical issues.

We look forward to future issues.

Sincerely,
Danielle

Response from About Time:
Hey Danielle,

My name is Ashleigh Chapman, and I thought I would respond to your letter as I got out of prison here in Victoria in May after doing four years. Hopefully, I can help you.

So here goes.

When it comes to getting out of prison there is no one-size-fits-all approach. It is about taking your time and not pushing yourself. Trying to do everything at once is not a clever idea – it just leads to anxiety and thinking that prison is so much easier.
If you have close supports, tell them what you need, set clear boundaries, put yourself first and speak up if you can. If you do not have close supports, are unable to or do not want to speak up, services that may be able to help are there for anyone to use.
Ask around to other people who you have seen come back. They may have helpful tips. It is okay and it will be okay. Take it one day at a time. If you need to take it one minute or one second at a time, then so be it. Remember you are you; you can do whatever you put your mind to. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise.

If you fail, if you fall, ask for help and do not beat yourself up. You got this. I could keep going – I am quite enthusiastic about making sure everyone knows they are great people and can do wonderful things.

Services:
There are many services out there, but it depends on where you live. For example, here is a service in the Nerang area and things they can help you with.

Nerang Neighbourhood Centre
29 Martin Street, Nerang QLD 4211
(07) 5578 2457

The Centre says that:

When you call in (or ring) our Centre, the first smiling face you will see is either Reece and/or Zoe, our fabulous Community Support Workers. They offer a listening ear, warm cuppa, free meal and years of experience and knowledge of the Gold Coast community sector. In the rare case that they cannot assist you, they will put you with the right person and/or service.

- Community Connect – helps you navigate through life's struggles by providing support, advocacy, advice and counselling.
- Financial Resilience – provides budget guidance & information including making sure you are getting all your concessions and entitlements. They offer No Interest Loans (NILs).
- Employment – offers free and practical assistance to individuals between the ages of 16 and 65 who are seeking employment and/or training opportunities.
- Food Services – anyone in need of a hand up can access our pre-packed $25 food boxes every Thursday and/or Friday. No concession cards required.
- Free BBQ – hosted by Mark, aka Wolf, and wonderful community volunteers (The Wolf Pack). Offers a free BBQ for anyone feeling isolated and in need of food and company. At Bischof Pioneer Park every Wednesday night from 4:30pm – 8:00pm.

Keep asking for help, keep advocating and please let us know if this helps or you need anything else.

Thanks,
Ashleigh Chapman

Return of the Stamps

By Les

Les writes from a prison in Victoria.

To the editor,

I want to write to you regarding seized stamps and envelopes. At times, if we happen to be sick and taken to hospital, everything of ours is put into boxes and taken away until the time we return. Then on our return we are strip searched and our possessions are taken out and checked.

This is where the problems start for those of us who previously bought stamps and envelopes from the canteen. The canteen is the only place where we can buy stamps or envelopes. We cannot get stamps or envelopes sent to us. As they are checking our boxes, they remove the stamps and envelopes and will not return them.

One of the stories is that drugs may be smuggled in under stamps. This seems rather strange, as why would a prisoner try to smuggle drugs out of prison, under the stamps purchased at the canteen?

On a low wage, letters to friends and relatives from home are a big help to retain one's sanity. Losing these stamps and envelopes means a lot, and then having them seized and having to go and buy the same again does not help financially, also as the price of stamps is going up in July. Makes an added burden to an already stretched budget.

I don't know whether this happens in all jails, but I guess it does.

Thank you for a great magazine. I just hope that someone in power thinks about our financial position. The drop in price of phone calls has been gratefully received. I just hope something happens with the return of seized stamps.

Yours in appreciation,
Les

Matthew's Advice

By Matthew

Matthew writes from a prison in New South Wales.

Hi there. First of all I would like to say what an awesome magazine – keep up the good work. My name is Matthew from Wellington NSW. I'm an Aboriginal inmate currently incarcerated in NSW.

I'm currently doing my parole of one year eight months with charges to be sentenced on awaiting sentence. I will be looking at five-plus years inside a jail cell again if things don't go my way.

I have done around 12 to 12½ years in jail since turning 18. I'm now 35 years of age with four beautiful kids. I would say I am somewhat institutionalised even though I hate to say that – it's like a second home to me. It's sad to see the younger generation come in and out as well as first timers doing time. Some people come back in because they get fed three times a day, a hot shower and a roof over their head with minimal to no bills to pay.

I love to help guide the younger lads or first timers to do their time easily.

My best jail advice is: don't get involved in the jail politics or in other people's business, show respect to get respect and do your own jail.

To help distract yourself from doing it hard or missing your family and the outside, start training, do exercises. Walk around your yard/wing or play cards, do sport, have a yarn to the boys and get to know them better. Or even get a job in jail if possible (that depends on jail and class).

So there it is – that's my best advice to anyone that comes to jail, and I'm sure a lot of people would agree with my advice. It's straight out and honest. And also – don't do drugs. Stay clean, stay healthy.

I grew up in Wellington, NSW at Nanima Mission/Reserve to a family of four. Nanima is situated 7 kilometres out of town. Growing up times were tough. I grew up around drugs and alcohol and domestic violence. I watched my best mate – my dad – take his last breaths in hospital at the age of 13. My whole world turned upside down. I started using drugs and alcohol, in and out of boys' homes and jail, in and out of the court system.

I'm currently clean from drugs, on the Buvidal program. It's not until I came into my 30s that I looked at things differently in life. I have wasted so much time in and out of jail, letting my kids down.

No matter how bad your upbringing or life may seem, there's always light at the end of the tunnel. Take it from me – come seek help and recognise you need help and have a problem before it's too late and you spend the majority of your life locked up.

You have to be mentally, physically, emotionally strong to survive in jail. As they say, only the strongest will survive. Jail is not for the faint hearted.

Most of all, I regret not being there 100 per cent for my mother and kids. This will hopefully be my last time in jail. I just want to lead a positive, healthy, lawful life without crime or drugs.

I have written three poems that are true and honest. Hope you enjoy my poems and my story. If it helps just one person with my thoughts and story, I have done my job. It feels really good to help people through these times and to help them stay out of jail and not do head noise.

You can read one of Matthew's poems in the Creative section.

Friday the 13th

By Belly

Belly writes from a prison in Queensland.

To the editors at About Time,

It's Friday the 13th. I am already in prison so probs won't fall under the bad luck banner. Lolz.

Thanks again for another great issue (no. 11). "Lizard Brain" by Annalise De Groot (page 10) was fantastic.

From,
Belly



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Henry, Rachid, Park, M, Chee On, Mark, Aidan, Natasha, Jacob, Werner, K, Norman, Edward, Joanne, Kaiya, Kumara, Lanie, R, Ahmed, Chris, David, Jeffrey, Lance, Leslie, JB, Lex, Challis, Declan, Bukks, Fergal, R, Danielle, Garth, Matthew, Edward, Shea, Les, Belly, Graham, Brad, Jack, Matthew, Daphne, Gazza, Daniel, Aiden, Paul, Brian, Gavin, Delphine, Kelly, all those that wish to remain anonymous and many more.

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

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

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

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

At Lauren Tye Legal we're not just your legal team – we're your strongest defence.

Whether you're in Victoria or anywhere across Australia, our experienced criminal defence lawyers are here to fight for your rights, your freedom, and your future. Our team of lawyers bring the expertise, discretion, and relentless advocacy you need when it matters most.

✔ 24/7 AVAILABILITY ✔ LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, INTERSTATE REACH
✔ PROVEN TRACK RECORD IN ALL COURTS ✔ TRANSPARENT, FIXED-FEE OPTIONS

L|T
LAUREN TYE LEGAL
CRIMINAL DEFENCE LAWYERS

Call now for a free confidential consultation.
When your future is on the line — make your first call count.

(03) 7020 6519 Laurentyelegal.com.au
11/456 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000



News and Investigations

Ask for Naloxone Before Release – It Could Save Your Life

By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

In recent years all Australian states and territories have introduced programs to give naloxone to some people leaving prison, except for Western Australia and the ACT.

Most of these programs are limited to those deemed to be at a high risk of an overdose or who were on an opioid replacement program while in prison.

There are concerns among drug harm minimisation advocates that these programs are "random", and those leaving prison around the country are encouraged to ask for free naloxone before they are released.

In New South Wales, naloxone can only be given to someone leaving prison if it has been prescribed by a medical officer or credentialed health worker. Up to two supplies of nasal spray can be provided, and they will be placed in your property before you are released.

In Victoria, the Naloxone on Release Program provides all people in prison who were prescribed Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Dependency with naloxone when they are released, along with anyone else who asks for it.

Queensland currently provides naloxone to those who "might benefit from having access" to it when they are released, while a spokesperson for the South Australian Department for Correctional Services said people in prison are "empowered" to ask for it.

Those soon to be released in Tasmania and the Northern Territory who are "identified as at risk of opioid misuse" are provided naloxone and how-to guides.

Western Australia and the ACT do not provide naloxone directly to people leaving prison, instead directing them to sites in the community where it is provided for free.

While these programs have been welcomed, there is also a push for Australia to follow Scotland and provide naloxone to all people leaving prison as standard practice.

"It's a natural part of handling it there," Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League Deputy CEO Ele Morrison told About Time. "You don't have to identify yourself as a drug user, and it's not something that gets forgotten because it's done for every single person as they're leaving."

Many similar programs around the world have been proven to be highly successful in saving lives and preventing overdoses.

There is also a push for naloxone to be more available within prisons to help respond to overdoses.

In most prisons in Australia, only medical staff are given naloxone, rather than prison officers. The ACT is the only place where prison officers are given naloxone, while the Northern Territory includes it in prison emergency kits.

The ACT Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) recommended that naloxone be given to people in prison recently as part of a report on a potential overdose at the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

If you are about to leave prison in Australia, drug harm minimisation advocates recommend asking for naloxone before you are released and to seek it out from pharmacies, needle syringe programs and community health organisations if you don't get it.

"Naloxone is a wonderful tool," Walker said.

"It would be really great if you were provided it when leaving prison, but, if you're not, it'd be great if you could put that on your list of priorities when you're out.

"It's free – it's something you can do that could save your life or the lives of a friend or family member."

Injury & Compensation Lawyers (NSW Claims only)

- Childhood Abuse & National Redress Scheme
- Abuse in Custody & Detention
- Sexual Assault
- Police Misconduct
- Workplace Injuries
- Road Accidents
- Medical negligence
- Public Place Injuries (Slip, Trip or Fall)

No Win, No Fee

Email: aadil@injurycarecompensationlawyers.com.au

Web: www.injurycarecompensationlawyers.com.au

Mail: PO BOX 2093 Berala NSW 2141

INJURY CARE COMPENSATION LAWYERS



Speak directly to

Aadil Ahmed

Accredited Specialist in Personal Injury Law NSW, Law Society of NSW Accredited Mediator

Call: 02 9158 9650

Prison Voting Sees Dramatic Rise Across Australia

State and territory governments allowed mobile polling services into 82 prisons across the country, leading to a huge uptick in voting from people in prison.

By Denham Sadler

Nearly 10,000 people in prison voted in the recent federal election – a massive increase from previous polls.



AEC

In the 2022 federal election, just 274 people in prison cast their vote. In the 2025 election, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) issued just over 9,700 votes in mobile polling services in 82 prisons around the country.

That's an increase of more than 3,000 per cent.

It shows that people in prison want to vote but have been unable to do so in previous elections due to a range of barriers.

The huge increase in voting this year was driven mainly by state and territory governments allowing mobile polling services in prisons for the first time, making voting far easier than the complicated process of postal voting while incarcerated.

All states and territories allowed mobile polling booths in most prisons for the federal election this year, with the AEC confirming that mobile polling booths were in 82 out of the more than 110 prisons around Australia.

While the NSW Government had earlier blocked mobile polling booths due to safety concerns, it eventually allowed a "trial" of this to be done.

The spokesperson also confirmed that eligible people in prison who did not vote will not be fined.

How Your Prison Journey Can Lead to Meaningful Work

What you learn through being in the system can be incredibly valuable and might even help you land a job when you get out.

By Stacey Stokes

This is known as *lived experience*. It recognises that people who have been through prison understand the challenges of the legal system and reintegration better than most professionals. People with lived experience – meaning direct, personal experience rather than work or academic knowledge – offer valuable insights that others may overlook.

Those with lived experience of prison often do public speaking, consulting, workshops and other work to share what they've learned on their journey. At the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in June, many people with lived experience took the stage to share their stories and many even helped organise the event. Many scholarships for airfares and accommodation were provided so people could attend. The conference also gave people with lived experience a chance to connect with organisations that value their knowledge and may want to employ them.

It was also a space for people who have been in prison to connect and support each other in healthy, meaningful ways. The conference highlighted a strong and caring community of people with lived experience – individuals who not only fight for justice but lift each other up in the process.

While having a criminal record can be a barrier to employment, there are jobs where lived experience is actually a strength. These roles are often found in the justice and alcohol and other drugs sectors, where programs led by *peers* – people who've been through similar experiences – are often more effective and impactful than those led by others.

Peer-led programs, or those designed in partnership with people who have lived experience, tend to be more empathetic, empowering and successful. They also offer hope – showing others what's possible and how far someone can come. Seeing someone who has walked a similar path and found purpose can be truly transformative.

People who've been incarcerated have a unique and valuable perspective. Remember – lived experience can open doors to meaningful employment once you're released. It could be a fulfilling job filled with community, purpose and support.

If you're interested, reach out to the Justice Reform Initiative – and make sure to come to the next conference when you're out!



Conference Poster, JRI

Reintegration Conference Held in Alice Springs

By About Time

In June, people from across the country gathered in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) for the 18th Reintegration Puzzle Conference – an annual event for those working in justice reform, as well as those with lived experience of prison and reintegration.

The conference brought together First Nations leaders, community workers, researchers, service providers and – most importantly – people who have spent time in prison.

Hosted by the Justice Reform Initiative (JRI), an advocacy organisation working to reduce incarceration and build a society that doesn't respond to disadvantage with policing, the event was a powerful space for connection and learning.

With hundreds of attendees, the conference offered a chance to explore new ideas, build relationships, share experiences and support one another.

Talks focused on reintegration services, inspirational stories from people who have done time and deep wisdom from the Traditional Owners of the area – the Arrernte people. Presenters included:

- Social Reinvestment WA, on what Australia can learn from the justice systems of Scotland, Norway and Denmark;
- The MARA Project, on financial counselling and literacy programs in women's prisons in Victoria;
- First Nations Youth Commissioners, on how to better support our youth and prevent imprisonment;
- Queensland Injectors Voice for Advocacy and Action (QuIVAA), on the importance of peer support – that is, support from people who have also been to prison – after release;
- The Salvation Army, on the difficulties of securing Working With Children Checks and meeting other employment requirements;
- ConFit Pathways, on the value of mentorship and fitness programs for young women after prison;
- and a wealth of presentations from people who have been in prison and are now working in justice advocacy.

About Time will be printing highlights from the conference in upcoming editions, because we know that, if we're serious about improving outcomes for people leaving prison, we need to include those inside prison in the conversation too.

If you'd like to know more about a particular speaker or program, please get in touch.

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.





VIC

Increased jail time for posting crimes online

People who share content online about committing serious crimes will face an additional two years in jail as the state government announces a crackdown on so-called "posting and boasting".

Under new legislation that the Victorian Government introduced to Parliament in mid-June, anyone found guilty of a specified serious crime who has also posted about it on social media or a messaging app will face an additional two years imprisonment.

The crimes covered by the legislation include affray, burglary and robbery, car theft, carjacking, home invasions and violent disorder.

The state government said the legislation is needed to respond to a trend of people "chasing clout" by posting about crimes on apps such as TikTok and SnapChat, which it says "encourages copycat offending, retraumatises victims and deeply disturbs the community".

Posting about a crime online can currently be considered an aggravating factor in sentencing, but the new law will see more prison time imposed.

The law will not apply to third parties such as witnesses, bystanders or journalists.

Pill-testing site to open in Fitzroy

Victoria's first fixed pill-testing site will open this month in Fitzroy for an initial 12-month trial.

To be located at 95 Brunswick Street in Fitzroy, the facility will be able to test most pills, capsules, powders, crystals and liquids and will operate from Thursday to Saturday.

The pill-testing site will provide confidential and non-judgemental harm reduction advice from health professionals, and the service will be able to detect highly dangerous synthetic opioids like fentanyl and nitazenes, which can be mixed with other drugs.

The site will be operated by Youth Support and Advocacy Services, The Loop Australia and Harm Reduction Victoria and will partner with Melbourne Health, Youth Projects and Metabolomics Australia.

It comes after a trial of mobile pill testing was run at five music festivals over the last summer.

These sites tested almost 1,400 drug samples, with 11 per cent of these samples returning results that included unexpected substances.



ACT

Age of criminal responsibility raised

The ACT has become the first Australian jurisdiction to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

This means that children aged under 14 will be provided with support and services to help address the causes of their offending, rather than being charged.

The age of criminal responsibility in the ACT was raised to 12 in late 2023.

There will be exceptions to this for serious crimes such as murder, intentionally inflicting grievous bodily harm and specific sexual offences.

The move has been welcomed by advocates and experts, including National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds.

"Criminalising young children really does no-one any good," Hollonds said. "It doesn't help the children – in fact, it harms the children – but also it doesn't keep communities any safer."

While the ACT has raised the age, a number of other Australian states and territories are either lowering the age or going back on plans to increase it.

The Northern Territory recently lowered the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10, while the Victorian government has ditched plans to raise the age to 14.



WA

Calls for internet access for those studying on the inside

An independent prison inspector has urged the Western Australian Government to provide limited internet access to people in prison undertaking university studies.

In a review of the Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women, Inspector of Custodial Services Eamon Ryan found that a lack of internet access was hampering the ability of those in the centre to complete educational programs.

"We heard that access to education and self-improvement courses were often hampered by limited or no access to online education resources and materials," Ryan said.

Two people at Boronia have received laptops from the University of Southern Queensland with pre-loaded content, but they are unable to access extra online educational materials, conduct research and engage in interactive learning activities.

"With such technology not readily available in prisons, this significantly impacts full participation and student completion rates," Ryan said.

The Inspector recommended that the state government look at options to introduce "controlled, secure internet access to tertiary students in prison", but this was not supported.

The inspection report also found there were long delays in gaining approval for external activities such as employment, work outside of the prison and reintegration leave.

In response, the state government agreed in principle to develop and provide more voluntary programs at the facility, create a life skills instructor position, review payment for people in prison who are working and provide a transparent and streamlined approval process for home leave.

Boronia is a minimum-security prison for women, aiming to help them reintegrate into society. The inspection report described it as a "high-quality facility providing women with important self-improvement opportunities in the lead-up to their release".



NSW

NSW budget funds Corrections and child protection

The NSW Government handed down its 2025-26 Budget in late June, with a focus on rebuilding the child protection sector and extra funds for Corrective Services.

The centrepiece of the Budget was a $1.2 billion child protection package, including a 20 per cent increase to the Foster Carer Allowance and $1 billion to rebuild the out-of-home care system.

The Budget also allocated an extra $100.5 million to Corrective Services NSW to ensure it is "resourced to supervise offenders" and $5.5 million for early intervention and diversion programs for young people in contact with the criminal justice system.

A program improving access to identity cards for First Nations people leaving prison in NSW will also be provided $1.8 million.

Staying on Track program hailed a success

A program aiming to ensure First Nations men have a strong support network upon release from prison has been recognised as successful in its first 12 months.

Launched by the Nowra Community Corrections Office, the Staying on Track framework has been used to support 123 Aboriginal men in the last 12 months and has seen a decrease in the number of breaches of community correction orders due to non-compliance with supervision.

The program is currently open to First Nations men incarcerated at South Coast Correctional Centre who will be released on a supervision order.

The framework sees men provided with targeted support, which includes program staff connecting with them 12 months before their release date to talk about the steps involved.

These steps include family conferencing, connection with Elders and community, engagement with an Aboriginal Community Engagement and Culture Officer and support services such as mental health and employment agencies.



QLD

QLD readies new prison and funds rehabilitation programs

The Queensland Government is readying to open a large new prison near Gatton and has provided additional funding to a number of rehabilitation programs.

The Queensland Budget, handed down in late July, included funding to open the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre, a new 1,536 bed maximum-security men's prison near Gatton and increase capacity at other centres.

The state budget also provided support for a number of prison diversion and rehabilitation programs for youth.

This includes the Staying on Track program, which provides intensive rehabilitation for 12 months after a period of detention.

The program starts with six months of intensive support for young people returning to the community and is designed to work with supervision orders.

The budget also funded the Circuit Breaker Sentencing programs, which the state government said would provide rehabilitation programs running for three to six months for youth offenders.

This will take place in two small facilities, with combined room for 60 people, and include wraparound social and health services.

The Queensland Government is planning to open "Youth Justice Schools" where teenagers on youth justice orders will attend and receive specialised behavioural programs and individual case management five days a week.

The state budget also provided extra funding for the legal assistance sector.

New independent review of Parole Board Queensland

On Friday 20 June 2025, the new Queensland Government announced that a new independent review will be conducted into Parole Board Queensland.

There have been two previous reviews into Parole Board Queensland since it commenced operations in 2017.

The new review, which will be led by barrister Mr Peter Hastie KC, will focus on ways to "improve the operations and conduct of the Board", with the two primary objectives of the review being to "consider the impact on victims of crime" and "assess the Parole Board's practices and procedures".

In the Terms of Reference for the review, the Queensland Government announced that the review will focus on:

- The rights, participation and treatment of victims within the parole process;
- The practices, procedures, decision-making structures and efficiency of the Board;
- The historical failures in governance, oversight and victim engagement under the previous government;
- The alignment of Parole Board operations with legislation and broader criminal justice priorities in promoting community safety; and
- Any other matters relevant to the review referred by the Minister.

The Terms of Reference state that the review is expected to deliver a final report to the Minister for Corrective Services within 90 days of commencement.

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



TAS

People in prison vote in state election

Last month, people in prison in Tasmania were able to vote in the state election for the first time in more than a decade.

After a trial during Legislative Council elections last year, mobile polling stations were allowed into prisons around the state for the House of Assembly election on 19 July.

Tasmanian Custodial Inspector Richard Connock praised the work of Tasmania Prison Service and Tasmanian Electoral Commission and said it was a "great step forward" in enabling the democratic rights of people in prison.

"Democracy is about public participation," Connock said. "Being able to vote on who governs us and proposed changes to the Australian Constitution are core features of that participation."

Those serving a sentence of three years or more were still unable to vote in the Tasmanian state election.



SA

Treatment of First Nations man in the spotlight

A man held in isolation at Yalata Labour Prison for more than 800 days has reportedly chewed off his own finger.

Media reporting in July quoted a number of people who said the man was so distressed that he had gnawed off his own finger.

They said he had been suffering greatly in G Division at the prison, where he is kept confined to his cell for 23 hours a day, with no access to entertainment.

He has also been blocked from seeing Aboriginal Elder Uncle Moogy Sumner, who had been visiting him, and Aboriginal Liaison Officer Melanie Turner.

In response to questions from the media, the Department for Correctional Services said that it "appreciates the important role Elders and Aboriginal visitors play in supporting Aboriginal prisoners".

Artists on the Inside exhibition opens

An exhibition featuring artwork by people in prison in South Australia has opened in Adelaide.

Artists on the Inside will be on display at UniSA's Kerry Packer Civic Gallery until 29 August.

The exhibition includes artwork created by men and women in prison in the state and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

It will also be the first chance for some of these artists to sell their work.

Those visiting the gallery will be able to vote for their favourite artwork as part of the People's Choice Award and leave a comment that will be shared with the artist.

This year's version of the show will place a greater emphasis on creativity, culture and the celebration of visual arts highlighting the diversity of living artists.



NT

Coronial findings into death of Kumanjayi Walker handed down

The death of 19-year-old Warlpiri and Luritja man Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu in 2019 was "avoidable" and the police officer who shot and killed him was "racist", a Northern Territory coroner has found.

After a three-year inquest, Coroner Elisabeth Armitage released her findings in early July.

Walker was fatally shot by then NT police officer Zachary Rolfe. The Coroner found this was a case of "officer-induced jeopardy", which means the officer needlessly put themselves in danger.

"Mr Rolfe was racist, and he worked in and benefited from an organisation with the hallmarks of institutional racism," the Coroner said.

Rolfe was found not guilty of charges of murder and manslaughter in early 2022.

Family of Kumanjayi White call for federal government to step in

The family of Kumanjayi White, who died after being restrained by police at an Alice Springs supermarket, have called on the federal government to "step in" and sort out the "justice crisis" in the Northern Territory.

White's grandfather and respected Warlpiri Elder Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves in an open letter urged Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to "match your fine words with action".

"This madness must stop," Hargraves said in the letter. "You must step in now."

He also called for an independent investigation into White's death, the release of CCTV footage and for the police officers involved to be stood down while an investigation is conducted.

An independent investigation has been ruled out by the NT Government and the NT Police Force.

End-of-Life Care in Prisons: A Call for Compassion



Willy Pleasance

As more people grow old and die in prison, we must ensure their final days are met with dignity

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a retired inmate.

I've been thinking a lot about what it means to grow old, especially for those behind bars. It's a reality we often overlook, but the prison population is aging, and with that comes a growing need for something we all deserve: compassionate care at the end of life. This isn't just about medical treatment; it's about basic human dignity. Let's explore the challenges and how we can do better.

THE QUIET CRISIS

Imagine growing old in a prison cell. The walls close in, not just physically but emotionally. You're surrounded by concrete and steel, far from family and familiar comforts. Now imagine facing a serious illness on top of that. It's a stark picture, isn't it? But it's the reality for a growing number of incarcerated people. We're seeing more older prisoners because of longer sentences, stricter laws and simply because our overall population is aging. These individuals often have complex health needs: heart disease, bad arthritis, cancer, emphysema, dementia – all the things that become more common as we get older. Providing good end-of-life care isn't just a medical necessity; it's a moral one. It's about recognising the humanity in everyone, regardless of their past. We all deserve compassion, especially when we're most vulnerable.

WALLS WITHIN WALLS

The challenges of providing decent end-of-life care in prisons are immense. It's like building walls within walls.

The Mindset
Prison culture often prioritises security above all else. While people need to be kept safe, healthcare can sometimes take a backseat. Staff might be uncomfortable with death and dying, or they might mistakenly believe incarcerated people are faking illness to manipulate the system. This can create a barrier to getting them the care they need. And, let's be honest, some incarcerated people have a deep distrust of authority, including medical staff, which makes building a trusting relationship crucial but difficult. And guards are there to "guard", not to act like nurses.

The System
Prisons often struggle with limited resources. There are often not enough doctors and nurses, nor any specialised staff trained in palliative care. Getting access to specialists, pain medication or even a comfortable bed can be a bureaucratic nightmare. The physical environment itself can be a challenge – think bunk beds, narrow hallways and a lack of accessible facilities for those with mobility issues.

The Human Element
The social and emotional needs of people dying in prison are often overlooked. Many have strained or broken ties with family, making visits and support difficult. Imagine facing your final days alone, surrounded by strangers. It's heartbreaking.

And then there are the ethical dilemmas. How do you respect an incarcerated person's wishes about their end-of-life care in a system built on control? How do you navigate compassionate release programs, which can be complicated and difficult to access? We can't forget the cultural piece either. Incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for example, may have unique cultural beliefs about death and dying that need to be respected and integrated into their care.

BUILDING BRIDGES

But here's the thing: we can do better. We *must* do better. Here are some ways to build bridges over these walls.

Education is Key:
Comprehensive education for prison staff on palliative care, communication and cultural sensitivity is essential. We need to equip prison staff with the skills and knowledge to recognise when an incarcerated person needs referral to nursing and medical care. I suspect that most prison officers don't want to provide hands-on care. It's not their job. But, perhaps, we can identify and support those staff members who have a passion for this work – they can be champions for change and good role models.

Invest in Care
We need to advocate for more funding and staffing for prison healthcare systems. Dedicated palliative care teams, with specialized training, are crucial, as are linkages to local hospitals and general practitioners.

Rethink the Rules
Security protocols need to be reviewed to ensure they don't unnecessarily interfere with quality care. Clear policies and procedures for end-of-life care, medication access, advance directives and compassionate release programs are essential. Regular reviews of deaths in custody, with input from both prison and health staff, can help identify areas for improvement.

Tracking Progress
We need to track data on incarcerated people receiving palliative care. This helps us understand the quality of care being provided and where the gaps are. Of course, we need to do this while respecting privacy.

Working Together
Partnerships are vital. Collaborating with outside palliative care providers, community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can bring in much-needed expertise and resources. Online learning and professional networks can also support prison staff in identifying incarcerated people with unmet healthcare needs.

Speaking Up: We need to talk openly about the ethical implications of denying compassionate end-of-life care to people in prison. We need to advocate for policy changes that prioritise dignity and compassion for everyone, regardless of their circumstances or their past criminal behaviours.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Providing compassionate end-of-life care in prisons isn't just about ticking boxes or following procedures; it's about recognising the shared humanity that connects us all. It's about offering comfort, dignity and respect to those who are facing their final chapter, even when they're behind bars. It's about acknowledging that everyone deserves a peaceful and dignified death, no matter what they've done.

It's a challenging task, but it's one that's worth fighting for. Because how we treat the most vulnerable among us says something about who we are as a society.



If you've been hurt, we're here to help.

We're Australia's leading personal injury lawyers.

Our expert lawyers can provide legal support on a 'no win, no fee' basis for the following legal services:

Disability and unemployment compensation

If you have an injury, disability or illness that prevents you from being able to work, you may be eligible for a lump sum payment.

These payments come from an insurance policy included with most superannuation accounts. You don't need to touch your super to access the compensation payment.

The injury doesn't need to be work-related, and while it comes with extra challenges, it is possible to claim from prison.

Workplace, road and medical injuries

Our dedicated lawyers specialise in different compensation schemes around Australia, including for:

- workplace injuries
- motor vehicle accident injuries
- medical negligence injuries, including medical error, like a missed diagnosis or a botched procedure
- occupational diseases where you have been exposed to toxins that led to the development of a disease, such as asbestos or silica.

We also help with institutional childhood abuse claims, Wills disputes and more.

No Win, No Fee.

If we don't help you win compensation, you won't have to pay our legal fees.

It doesn't cost anything to know where you stand.

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

Experiences

The Eulogy I Couldn't Deliver

By Mark Mi Words

Mark Mi Words writes from the inside-out, finding flickers of hope, humour and humanity in places most people try to forget.

Continued from page 1.

The only bloke on God's green earth I knew to be in prison just so happened to be holding out his hand in support when I landed in the hospital at Port Phillip Prison almost two years ago. Paris was in a cell awaiting transport for eye surgery. I was crippled and confused, fresh off a traumatic incident from hell. Paris was calm, kind and compassionate – exactly what I needed in a place full of... well, criminals.

What are the chances – not only was he in the prison hospital at the same time but he was in the cell right next door?

Due to my disability, I was stuck there longer, while Paris slipped in and out for treatments. Then this year, they found cancer. It hit him hard – and fast. Despite the pain, he stayed a gentleman. Kept his vibe high. When he didn't return from St Vincent's, the nurses told us the truth: it was much worse than he'd let on. He was in for the fight of his life.

It didn't matter what charge brought you in; Paris had a way of reading people. He could size you up, figure out what made you tick and find a way to offer something useful.

Gentle with his words but firm with his truths, and in prison that kind of quiet strength is rarer than Vegemite. He used to say, "You're not here to fight time – you're here to learn from it." And, like a proper sensei, he led more by example than by speech.

He got lumped with an extraordinary amount of time for his misdemeanours, yet never wasted it feeling sorry for himself. Blessed with a brilliant mind, Paris took real joy in mentoring other prisoners, especially on legal matters. He was the go-to guy when someone needed guidance, not judgement.

As luck would have it, I got out on bail. Before I left, I got to feel that familiar joy again – Paris finding his way back to me, telling me how much he enjoyed reading my review of *Fourth Wing* in *About Time*. And, as his luck would have it, I gave him the actual book to read, plus the sequels. A voracious reader, he powered through all of them, along with some of the stories I'd written about our fellow inmates. He encouraged me to keep going. Said the stories mattered. Said they needed to be heard.

Neither of us expected I'd be writing this one – about him.

I'm ashamed to admit I didn't go to his funeral. Couldn't get past my own fear – of being judged, rejected or ridiculed by the friends we shared. No one tells you how hard life is after release. I reckon you'd have handled it better than I have, mate.

The sense of belonging you find in prison is something you don't realise you'll miss until you're out and alone, like I was today – no one checking in, no one to help me through.

It's gutting that you died spending your last eight years inside, especially when you were so close to the end of your sentence. And it's gutless that I squandered the chance to see you off, when so many others would have leapt at it.

I just couldn't show my face.

But I'm sure I speak for many when I say: rest peacefully, Paris.

We love you, mate.

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

When Things Are Too Good to Be True



Willy Pleasance

Coercive control is when someone uses fear, isolation or manipulation to dominate another person. The behaviours can seem small on their own, but together they form a web.

By Tabitha Lean

Tabitha is a formerly incarcerated woman having served time in Adelaide Women's Prison and Adelaide Pre Release Centre, as well as time on Home Detention. She is now a member of the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, a collective that advocates for liberation, not punishment.

You'd think I would've learned by now. But I haven't.

I've made the same mistake more than once, and I still don't fully understand what it is about me that keeps attracting men like this into my life.

It's been a year since I left another violent relationship. This time, I married him. I really thought he would be my ever after.

I met him not long after I got off home detention. I was still on parole. I couldn't wait to get that clunky shackle off my ankle, to finally have some freedom of movement. Even though parole still meant restrictions, at least I could leave the house when I wanted, take my daughter out for the day, feel like a "normal" family again.

And then I met him. He felt like freedom. He was what I thought I needed after six years caught up in the system. He took me camping, we bought a campervan, and we dreamed of outback adventures – fireside dinners by the beach, soaking our feet in the waters of my mother's country, sandy toes, windswept hair, salty kisses under burnt orange skies. It felt like I'd finally found home.

It sounds too good to be true, right? That's because it was.

What he offered me was a dream – a fantasy.

The DV experts call it future faking: when someone lures you in with promises of a beautiful future, just to gain control over you. The promises aren't real. They're just tools to make you stay, to distract you from the red flags and excuse their bad behaviour.

I fell for it all – hook, line and sinker. The travel, the freedom, the carefree life. I believed in it. I wanted to believe in it.

We moved in together. I brought the kids. We got married. We started building a life, or so I thought.

But slowly, the control crept in. Subtle. Clever. Coated in love.

He said he came to my counselling sessions because he loved me and wanted to support me. He didn't tell me what to wear, but he got angry if I wore something "too revealing" when he wasn't there. He'd accuse me of dressing for someone else. He isolated me from friends and family, saying, "We only need each other. That's enough." He checked my phone daily. My passcode was written on the whiteboard on our fridge, like I was a child. It was humiliating.

This is what coercive control looks like.

Coercive control is when someone uses fear, isolation or manipulation to dominate another person. The behaviours can seem small on their own, but together they form a web – one that's hard to see from the inside. You feel stuck. Trapped. Like you can't say no, can't disagree, can't move.

Sometimes coercive control looks like monitoring your every move. Sometimes it's controlling your meds, food or body. Sometimes it's constant criticism until you doubt your own thoughts. It can be stopping you from practising your culture or religion. It can look like messing with co-parenting arrangements or withholding child support to punish you after a breakup.

For me, it was financial control.

Because of my criminal record and bankruptcy, none of our business accounts could be in my name. That gave him full control over our money – and over me. I had to ask every time I needed something for myself or the kids.

And that control gave him the space to escalate – from words to violence.

By the time I realised how deep I was in, it was hard to find a way out. But I waited. I waited until parole was over. Then, with the support of Sisters Inside, I got out. I got the kids out.

I'm sharing this because I want you to know: your worth is not up for debate. When I got out of prison, I was so beaten down by life that I didn't believe I deserved anything good. I settled for the first person who offered me attention, who promised me freedom. But he wasn't my freedom. He was my jailer. He held the keys to my cage for years.

But no more. I want you to know:
Before prison.
Inside prison.
After prison.

You are worthy of love.
You are worthy of safety.
You are worthy of care and respect.

No matter what you've done. No matter who you've been.

Please don't settle like I did.

And if you find yourself in that dark place – trapped like I was – reach out. Reach for the sisters you met inside. Reach for Sisters Inside, the National Network, Figjam, Voice of Hope, Seeds of Affinity. These are your people. They will help you plan your way out.

Because there is a big, wide world out here – and the prison system cannot take that from us.



Write to Us

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



Willy Pleasance

Support After Prison

For many people, the real test comes after they're released from prison

By Renee McNab

Renee McNab is a former prisoner and now a passionate prison advocate supporting those currently affected by the justice system in Australia and to fight for change.

Jail is a journey, and it is certainly not over the moment they hand you a release certificate, open that gate and send you on your way.

More often than not, that is where the journey gets even more difficult. The real test comes after that sentence expires. Going to prison is such a hard experience, and it definitely takes a lot of getting used to. I don't think you ever fully do.

But we, as prisoners, do our best to make the best of a bad situation. For me personally, the real challenge came in the lead-up to release day and once I exited custody.

You see, there is very little post-release support, and you are let out regardless of whether you have supports in place or not.

I can remember so many times being given my release papers and left to organise my own accommodation and support. Often it is only short-lived, as things like temporary accommodation can only be given for a certain period of time.

It eventually becomes exhausting having to stay somewhere for a couple of days, then pack up your stuff, head to the housing office to extend it, and travel elsewhere again, only to have to do the same thing all over again.

As much as I appreciated having a roof over my head for short periods of time, I was still fresh out of jail – homeless and lost – with very little in terms of long-term support.

Looking back, I think that is part of the reason I ended up back inside so often.

I can remember standing in Centrelink offices still in my greens, with very little to help me survive in the outside world, and wondering what would happen if I couldn't find a place to stay long-term, or a job to help me survive out here.

Dealing with all the judgment – not only from being out in public in prison greens, but in general as an ex-prisoner – it is an awful feeling, I tell you!

Post-release support is something that is vital to prisoners. Without it, life can be very challenging. As much as so many of us want to stay free and continue to have our freedom, I feel so often the system sets us up to fail. I know it did for me.

I can remember clearly attending a parole appointment one December, many years ago. I was still homeless, but doing my all to try and get myself back on my feet, whilst battling addiction and mental health issues. I was told by my parole officer that I had approximately two weeks to find a psychiatrist and proper accommodation, or a rehab bed, or I would be breached (keeping in mind it was only weeks to Christmas!).

The majority of psychs and rehabs close their books or are already at full capacity. So, as you can guess, I couldn't do it in time. So I was sent back to prison, even though I was not breaking the law or reoffending.

I simply could not find the proper support in time, through no fault of my own.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, it doesn't work.

We should be doing more when it comes to post-release support and services. Then maybe, just maybe,ex-prisoners may have a better chance of never coming back.

Of course, it's no guarantee. But more often than not, that is partly why people reoffend and lose hope, because they have no support or options to survive in the outside world. So they resort to ways to survive that often land us back in prison.

The aftermath of prison needn't be so difficult and exhausting to navigate. But in order for that to happen, we need better post-release services and support.

We need some kind of action plan to better support and encourage those exiting custody.

We need more people willing to give us a go and help those that want the help – and the ones who are lost and broken and unsure where to turn. Because I used to be one of them. And I know I won't be the last.

The current way is not working. Our recidivism rates are proof of that. And I think a fair bit of it comes down to the lack of post-release support.

Without that support, we end up falling through the cracks.

Every single prisoner who will eventually be released will need that support. And they will be better off if they have the right level of services in place.

The benefits of that can be the difference between staying out or going back inside.



Protesting for Change

Finding community and solidarity after being released from prison

By Kelly Flanagan

Kelly Flanagan is a female First Nations artist with lived experience in the Victorian prison system. She is an advocate for women inside, and is also using her lived experience to write her first book.

The community is now watching, listening and aware of lockdowns inside our prisons. The persistence with media, radio and newspaper, and with emails and phone calls is finally paying off. Next – a protest. What else is left to do?

I never knew that people existed in the world that were so selfless and who really cared for others – especially people they have never met. It shocked me; all the people who helped me plan this rally from start to finish and who didn't want anything in return.

Their kindness, love and absolute passion to give vulnerable women a voice is now forever ingrained into my soul.

The day of the protest starts off unlike any other day.

It's 6:30am and I am in an Uber to 3CR community radio station to be interviewed by the Wednesday Breakfast team about why I am going to protest today and what I want from it.

By 9am, I am heading back to my house, and it dawns on me that I am three months into my parole and I have two cars of strangers at my house waiting for me who have speakers, microphones, stickers, banners and flags in the boots of their cars ready to help me successfully complete my first protest.

Who are these people? No idea. How did I meet them? Through one comrade who has more heart and passion than any other woman I have ever met.

These comrades come into my home, we test the equipment, we chat then head off to the city, to the Corrections Victoria head office. We are ready for anything that may come our way.

We get to the city, and we start unpacking and setting up speakers, microphones, banners and posters.

I have help from 10 people I have never met. All who are waiting for my instructions to do anything I need them too. I just need them to be there with me, that's all.

We wave our hands and tell them we won't stand for this treatment any longer. The lockdowns need to stop now.

The protest continues on foot, from one location to another, marching through the city. We are walking on tram lines, stopping trams, screaming on the megaphone. Too many coppers, not enough justice. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

My heart is beating fast but I look at all the faces of the people who are fighting beside me.

We finish up at the park, and we talk about the women for whom we did this for.

There is so much love that surrounds you while you are in prison. You won't see it or probably ever hear about it, but it exists and when you are released to freedom you can join us and come and see for yourself. There are people who believe in you and want great things for you.

We are those people, so keep fighting in there and come out stronger with a passion to join us in making change.

Picturing the Impact of Prison Through Photovoice

The power of photography and finding your voice

By Dr Patricia Morgan and Mr Bevan Argent

Sometimes, it can be hard for people to tell their stories, especially when trying to describe things that cannot be put into words. Photovoice is a way to deal with this – it is a research method where people take photographs about aspects of their lives or topics that are important to them. Photovoice is often used with people who don't usually get heard and can open people's eyes to issues that are often ignored.

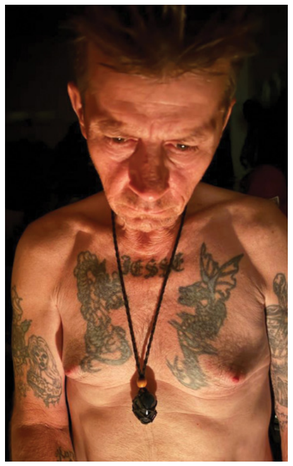
At the recent Justice Reform Initiative conference, Dr Patricia Morgan and Mr Bevan Argent shared a photovoice project from the Justice Health program at UNSW Sydney. In this project, five men who had been to prison took photographs describing their lives before, during and after prison. These photographs, and what is said about them, become the main part of the research, giving control to the people telling their stories.

After Patricia explained how photovoice works, Bevan shared his own photos. He talked about what each one meant to him. These are Bevan's words and photographs, which he presented in front of a large room of people – his first public speaking gig. He hopes his story can help others.



The prison
I took this photograph outside Parramatta Jail because it represents 27 years of my life in and out of boy's homes, state ward homes and jail. I've been out since 4 February 2020, and I'm never going back! I've been in the newer prisons, but the majority of my incarceration was always in the draconian old sandstone jails, with the bars on the windows. That was in Long Bay, Parramatta, Grafton and Bathurst.

So, yeah, the sandstone, the bars, represent how much time I spent in those places and wasted my life. Weirdly in some ways it felt like home because of being in them for so long. Then you get out, you're out for two or three weeks and you're back in. So it's a struggle. It's hard to survive when you get out because you'd get out with half a dole check, they put you up for four weeks in, they call it temporary accommodation and then you'll end up in a boarding house or a men's hostel. There's always drugs around in those places, and you know it's like a jail, an outside jail, because you know everyone there from jail. It was like being in prison but worse because the rooms are smaller than the jail cells.



Looking down
When I took this photograph, I didn't want to look at the camera, so my flatmate took the photograph. I actually had the feeling, it came back up then, of the sadness of not being at my Aunty's funeral. They wouldn't let me go because of parole conditions. I was then and am still battling with the grief of losing family members and friends and the child sex abuse, because the redress thing had come up again. And I was struggling with the fact that I successfully sued the state government, and then the other party was supposed to go into mediation afterwards, but the person passed away two weeks prior.

I'm still waiting to go back to a government agency to tell me what I'm worth for what that person did, and I'm getting judged on how much I'm worth. So, when they decide, they ring me, and it's not like the mediation. They make a one-time offer, and if you don't take it then that's it.

So that's what I was struggling with at the time, and that's what I tried to represent in this photograph.



Rainbow lodge
This photograph of Rainbow Lodge represents my past, present and future. I've stayed there after getting out of jail, and I still go there sometimes. Because I'm still an outreach client, I get free membership to the Victoria Park Swimming Pool and Gym. So I've been going to the gym after work, and then I go for a swim after that.

Rainbow Lodge has helped me get housing, and they've helped me in court. They actually signed my lease for me when I was in prison when my lease ran out on my other flat – otherwise I would've lost it. I like the fact that they never judge and you're always welcome. If you ever need something like food, milk, bread, anything, you can go there and ask them. They write support letters for court and they come to court to support you.

You know, the place was opened by Justice Rainbow, who was an Aboriginal judge. He had a vision of opening a place for Aboriginal men, for when they got out of jail, to help them, so they didn't have to go straight to the street. I like going there and mentoring new people that are scared.

I just took a big bag of clothes that were too big for me, all brand name stuff. You know, because a lot of boys when they get out of jail have just got their greens, they bring the things they got out with and they've got nothing in life. Connecting with Rainbow Lodge has helped me remain out of prison and give back to other people. Without going there I'd probably still be going in and out of the prison system.



Samsn
This last photograph is of the Samsn pamphlet. Samsn is an organization that works with male survivors of child sexual abuse. I've now done the 8-week program, and I attend their monthly online meeting. I met many men like myself, in different stages of their recovery from childhood sexual abuse.

Sharing stories with each other and listening to each other with respect and getting feedback is very powerful, and it takes a load of weight off your shoulders.

There's nothing better than talking to a fellow survivor, who knows exactly what you're going through, how you're feeling, the mood swings and the changes, and that's what I've experienced in Samsn. It's great to know that there are people out there willing to help, and this program has helped me in more ways than I can possibly put into words.

The photovoice project has opened my eyes and taken a ton of weight off my shoulders. I've learnt so much about myself. It has given me so many tools to help me get on with the rest of my life.

My message to people inside is that, when you're out, give photovoice a try. It can be a really helpful way to process and document important parts of your life. Give yourself a topic, decide on the number of photos and then write or speak about them with someone close to you.

Health

When Your Mind Turns Against You: Understanding Depression in Prison

Depression may flatten your mood and your outlook, but you don't have to let it take your life. These are some tips and perspectives to help you better understand depression and to make life more bearable.



Willy Pleasance

By Steve Rothwell

Steve spent many years running from the trauma of his incarcerated past until he broke down and realised he had to face his demons. He put all his research and writing skills into developing a system that gave him his life back, and nowadays, he is devoted to helping others overcome trauma.

When your thoughts are not your own

When it comes to battling depression, often your thoughts are not your own. These thoughts are an inevitable result of being emotionally overwhelmed (in the case of reactive or situational depression) or as a result of imbalances of neurotransmitters in the brain (in the case of clinical depression).

Sometimes, as a result of the pressures and trauma of imprisonment, incarcerated people struggle against both forms of depression.

In both these cases, people tend to believe they are thinking rationally and men in particular privilege logic and reason and assume that suicidal feelings are real and true and to be acted on. This is one of the reasons why men account for 75 per cent of suicides in Australia.

But, if people can realise that their own mind is playing tricks on them, they have a shot at overriding the powerful urge to end their own lives.

Types of depression

There are two types of depression: reactive/situational and clinical/biological. Reactive depression comes about as a result of being (subjectively) overwhelmed by life challenges. Relief can either come from reducing the number and severity of stressors or by increasing coping mechanisms.

It's people going through clinical depression who are most at risk of suicidal ideation. Two key characteristics of clinical depression are:

1. Low mood feels like it's permanent. The emotional pain feels like it is not survivable.
2. There doesn't have to be a reason to be depressed. Depression can come on at any time, for no reason.

If you are experiencing clinical depression rather than reactive/situational depression, it's likely you would greatly benefit from going on antidepressants or other medications.

Managing expectations of treatment

It is essential for people with clinical depression who are suicidal to get medical help. They are first aid mental health patients with a life-threatening condition. They also need to manage their expectations, because "getting fixed" in the context of clinical depression or suicidality is not like getting a Land Cruiser serviced.

Getting well needs to be looked at as a project, more like restoring an old Land Cruiser. Getting better might require several visits to the doctor and many visits to a therapist. This is because antidepressant medications take time to start working, and it may be necessary to try several meds before finding one that works for you. It takes patience.

Because of this, it is essential for those undergoing medical treatment to be mightily lion-hearted about monitoring their moods, and at all times realising that the thoughts of sure and imminent doom they have are not a reflection of reality. This is the most dangerous phase (80 per cent of men who seek help for their depression at least once go on to end their lives) because, tragically, the delay in starting medications or seeing results from therapy leaves people in a very vulnerable state, sitting there thinking that nothing works.

Increase connection, decrease hopelessness

Depressed and suicidal people need above all to forget the notion that talking about their emotions won't solve anything. That's not the point. The point is to increase their human connections first and foremost. The experience of suicidal thinking is typically one of extreme isolation and despair, and these two factors feed off each other.

The more isolated a person is, stuck on their own with dark thoughts, the deeper into despair they are likely to fall. But social connection is immensely psychologically nourishing, and in many cases it's essential for survival.

It may not immediately make the feelings go away, but it takes away the focused intensity and fixation on suicide.

Talking to a mate

If you see a mate who is clearly struggling – for instance, because they've just been sentenced or had their parole knocked back – the first thing you're likely to ask is if he or she is ok, and that leaves them with a lot of "wiggle room" to simply say, "Yeah, I'm fine."

A better approach is to ask where their head is at. This acknowledges and validates the impact of their situation, without judgement but with encouragement to speak freely. Then you can start to address their concerns and, where you feel it necessary, offer them alternative, more constructive perspectives. Share your coping strategies, ideas that helped you to pull on through.

You may help to arrest your mate's slide into mental chaos. But, if your buddy is clearly struggling, also have the social courage to ask if they have had suicidal thoughts. If so, encourage them to seek help, because seeking help is a sign of great strength, bravery, wisdom and responsibility.



Staying Healthy?

Do you have any questions about your health? Are there any health topics or exercises you're interested in learning more about?

The Health section is dedicated to different aspects of physical and mental health, from exercises and yoga, to strategies for dealing with trauma, providing health inspiration and guidance for trying to keep healthy. If there's anything you want to see featured here, please write to us!

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

My Breast Cancer Story, and How It Led to Something Beautiful

How a diagnosis led to ongoing advocacy with prisons

By Patrice Capogreco

Patrice Capogreco is an author, breast cancer survivor and advocate.

I'll be honest – I found a lump in my breast months before I did anything about it. I was scared, and I told myself it was probably nothing. It actually took a lover at the time to gently push me to get it checked. This was back in 2021, right in the middle of Melbourne's long COVID lockdowns.

At the same time, my eldest daughter had just come out as transgender. That should've been a happy time for our family, a moment to celebrate her living as her true self. But, instead, everything was clouded by what turned out to be a very frightening stage 3 breast cancer diagnosis. I needed surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and an oophorectomy – an operation to remove my ovaries because my cancer was being fed by estrogen. I've now been on hormone therapy for 3 years, with 7 more to go.

I'd heard about checking your breasts before, but I thought I was too young to worry. No one in my family had ever had breast cancer. I also assumed the lump would feel like a small ball, like a marble. Mine didn't feel like that at all – it turned out I had four tumours, all joined together, filling the top half of my left breast. My nipple had even started turning inward, which I later learned is another warning sign.

Doctors believe the cancer had only been there for about 6 months. If I'd left it much longer, things could have been much worse. That's why I now always say: check yourself, and don't ignore the signs.

I was terrified – not just of dying but of what all this meant for my relationships, for dating and for how I'd feel in my body after the surgery.

Dating is hard enough without scars, surgeries and the emotional toll of cancer. I couldn't find much out there about intimacy and cancer, so I wrote my own book called *FK with Cancer* to help others like me.

When the book came out, an Aboriginal woman who worked in prisons reached out. We'd known each other from back during my time working with the late, great Uncle Jack Charles. She asked if I'd come speak to the women about breast cancer. I had spent time with Uncle Jack in men's prisons. He was the best storyteller. The men adored him, and he inspired so many by sharing his story of turning his life around.

So about a year ago, I began running workshops at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, sharing my story and creating awareness about self-checking and how early detection saves lives. My book is also in the prison library, and sometimes our sessions turn into little book clubs.

I'm joined in prison by my dear friend singer-songwriter Stella Donnelly, who brings her guitar and the tunes! Stella often plays music to the women's poetry too, turning their words into powerful songs that echo long after the session ends. There's something really special about seeing their stories come to life through music.

These visits have been so special that we've decided to take them on the road. Later this year, we're touring women's prisons across Australia with our 'Beautiful – Inside and Out' project.

'Beautiful – Inside and Out' is proudly presented by Treasure Chest Charity, which also supported me during treatment. Together, our mission is to use creativity and lived experience to improve breast cancer awareness and emotional wellbeing for women in the justice system.

If you're reading this from a women's prison or if you work in one and think this program could be a good fit, we'd love to hear from you. This is about community, connection and reminding each other that we are all beautiful, inside and out.

Patrice xo

Yoga for a Good Night's Sleep

By The Prison Phoenix Trust



Happy cat
Breathe in.



Angry cat
Breathe out. Move between these two postures in time with your breath. Repeat 10 times.



Rest pose
Stay for 5 breaths, or longer if you like.



Shoulder circles
Breathe in as you move your elbows forward and up, and out as you move them down and back. Moving slowly and smoothly, do this 10 times. Repeat in the other direction.

All exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.



Cross-legged side bends
5 breaths each side. Feel the stretch along your side.



Cross-legged forward bend
Lean forward over your crossed legs as far as is comfortable. Stay for 5 slow breaths. Cross your legs the other way and repeat.



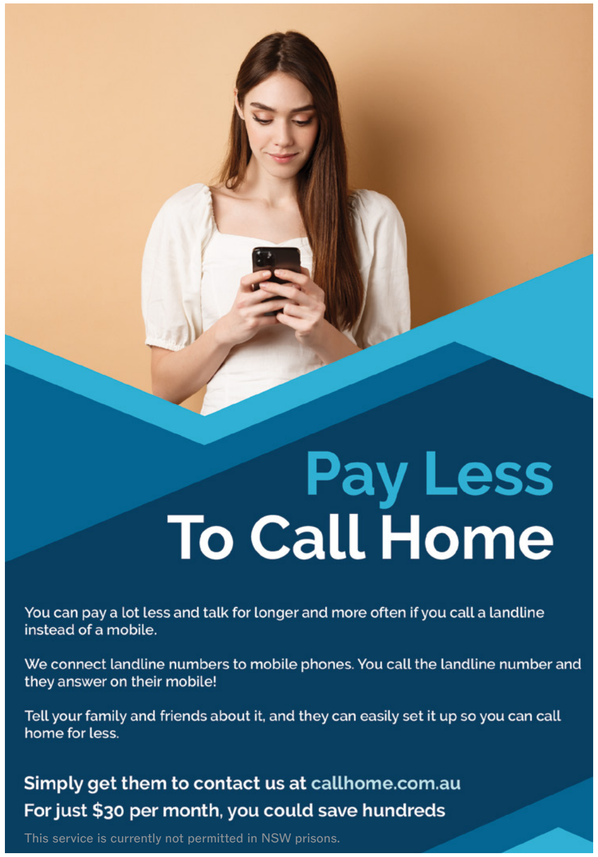
Cross-legged twist
5 breaths each side.



Supported bridge
Lie like this with a pillow or some rolled-up blankets or jumpers under your hips. Relax for 10 slow breaths.



Legs up the wall
Find a wall you can lie in front of. Get as close to the wall as possible, then put your legs up it, lying back. Stay in this for 30 breaths or longer if you like.



● Legal Corner

Video Court: What to Know

By About Time



Namzo via Unsplash

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

Telecourt, AVL, Webex, online court. No matter what you call it, it happens all the time. Attending court from prison or from police cells means appearing on a screen, from a room you don't control, using technology that barely works and under the eye of corrections staff. Often, your freedom is on the line. Despite all this, you're expected to be formal and well behaved.

This guide doesn't assume fair treatment, but it hopes to offer some tools to help you navigate online court while in prison.

1. At the beginning

Be aware that, when the video program launches, microphones and cameras will be off. It might take a little while for your matter to come on screen. While it might be really nerve wracking waiting for your case to be called, patience will get you through.

You will be asked to identify yourself. Remember to call the magistrate or judge "Your Honour".

If your lawyer doesn't appear at the hearing, make sure you tell the magistrate or judge that you are represented by a lawyer so that they don't carry on with the hearing without them being there.

If you don't have a lawyer, you are allowed to say you would like legal advice, to speak with Legal Aid or that you want to look into getting yourself legal representation.

2. It's your case

Sometimes you're in a dedicated video booth – other times, you're in a small room with a grainy webcam. No matter where you are, you're still part of the hearing. That means:

- You have the right to hear and understand what's happening and what's being said.
- You can ask to speak to your lawyer privately before anything starts.
- You can request clarification if you don't understand a question or what people are saying to you.

While it might feel unnatural being on a screen rather than in the room itself, you're allowed to speak up. Just also remember: politeness goes a long way, and your best outcome could depend on it.

If you change your instructions during the hearing – for example, if you no longer want to plead guilty – it is important that you immediately put your hand up so you can speak with your lawyer.

3. While private conversations can be rare, they're still your right

Going to court online from prison often means:

- You can't talk privately with your lawyer before the hearing like you would in a normal courtroom setting, and you also cannot talk to them during the hearing.
- There's an officer in the room or monitoring from outside
- There's no way to mute or turn off the feed.

If you need to talk to your lawyer privately:

- Ask: "Can I speak with my lawyer in private before we continue?"
- If denied, ask that it be noted in the record.

4. You can ask for things to be repeated when tech breaks

Most facilities don't give you control over the camera, mic or screen. The setup might glitch. The video or mic might cut in and out.

If you miss part of the hearing because of that:

- Clearly say: "Excuse me, I didn't hear that. Can you repeat it?" or "The screen froze during that part."
- If you're muted and can't speak, try to get the attention of corrections staff or your lawyer, if they're on the call. Please note that the bench clerk can mute your microphone and often does so when there is noise or feedback that can disturb the court.

If you're denied a fair chance to participate, talk to your lawyer about your options.

5. Appearance and behaviour matters

If we're being honest, how we hold ourselves in court can affect outcomes.

If you have any choice:

- Sit up straight, look alert and stay facing the camera.
- Your words still matter, and judges still hear tone and presence.
- Avoid conflict and poor language with officers on camera if you can.
- Stay seated and refrain from moving around the room during the hearing. If you find you need to walk around as a way to calm your nerves, try to talk to someone like a counsellor, health professional or even a trusted friend about other ways to do this during a hearing. Online court is like a regular court – in normal court, you would need to ask for permission to move around, and this still applies in an online hearing.
- Just like regular in-person court, people must not behave in a manner that causes disruption to the courtroom. So while we can ask to be heard, try to do so in a way that wouldn't be deemed as "disruptive".

In some prisons, such as Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in Victoria, people can ask for a black jacket to wear for court. Ask if your prison facilitates this. It might make you feel more formal and confident.

Remember that most of what happens on the screen is being recorded, so, before you say private things to your lawyer on the video, make sure you check with them that no one else can hear.

If there is a person joining the online hearing that you are not allowed to talk to because of an intervention order, be careful not to talk to them.

6. You're not alone – even if you feel like it

Being on a video screen can make it feel like you're isolated. But:

- Supporters may be watching online in the virtual court room
- If you have friends or family on the outside, ask them to attend your hearing virtually – even if they can't speak, their presence sends a message. They can request to do so from the relevant court. Ask your lawyer to help you with this.
- If your friends and family want to join the link, they can also search your name on the Electronic Filing Appearance System (EFAS) on the magistrates court website and then work out the court room and date. They can then find the court link for the hearing on the website.

7. Take notes

Ask if you can take paper and pencil into the hearing.

Write down:

- What was said, as much as you can remember
- Any dates or orders given
- Anything that glitched, went wrong, or felt unfair
- Anything you didn't understand and want clarification on

These notes can help you understand what happened, what questions to ask your lawyer after the hearing and any other ways to deal with your case. Remember to always ask questions about your case if you are unsure. It is the lawyer's responsibility to explain things to you clearly, both what happened in court and what happens next.

Solitary Confinement as a Sentencing Factor

New sentencing manual for lawyers in Queensland released

By Prisoners Legal Service

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

Solitary confinement occurs when a prisoner is locked down in their cell for at least 22 hours a day with very limited or no association with other prisoners. While conditions of solitary confinement can vary, common features include:

- The cell is located in a separate part of the prison;
- The cell has no windows, or windows may be small or partially covered, resulting in no or very limited natural light;
- Lack of fresh air due to the cell conditions and lack of ability to leave the cell;
- Lower standard facilities, including 'small and barren' exercise yards, unpowered cells or cells with plumbing restrictions (e.g. where the water can be turned off);
- No, or very limited, contact with other prisoners;
- Limited contact with other people, including family, health staff and lawyers;
- Limited access to programs, including work and education;
- Reduced privileges including visits, phone calls and television; and
- Limited or special furniture, bedding and amenities.

If a prisoner is detained in solitary confinement, the conditions they face in custody are significantly more challenging compared to the general prison population. In some cases, this may be taken into account by a sentencing court and result in a shorter sentence being imposed.

Prisoners' Legal Service in Queensland (PLS) has recently published the *Solitary Confinement Sentencing Manual*, which provides a practical guide for criminal lawyers in Queensland to help prepare and present evidence of solitary confinement as a mitigating factor in sentencing.

The manual aims to help Queensland lawyers identify when their client is being held in solitary confinement, obtain evidence of their solitary confinement and prepare material to assist in mitigating a sentence. More generally, it aims to raise awareness amongst criminal lawyers of the conditions that prisoners may face if kept in solitary confinement and the significant human rights concerns associated with this practice.

If you would like to request a copy of the *Solitary Confinement Sentencing Manual* or other resources about solitary confinement, please contact PLS at:

GPO Box 257
Brisbane, QLD, 4001

Please note that the *Solitary Confinement Sentencing Manual* only applies to prisoners in Queensland.

This article provides legal information only and is not a substitute for legal advice. If you wish to take any action arising from matters raised in this publication, you should consult a lawyer immediately.

Legal Q&A: Debt Relief

By Gazza

Gazza writes from a prison in Victoria.

I am a first-time inmate in a Victorian prison and I am trying to obtain some accurate information with regards to my debts. These consist of credit cards, a mobile plan and a couple of hire purchase contracts. I am aware that outstanding fines can be offset or wiped by time incarcerated, so I am wondering if there is any provision to do the same for other debts?

Even if it were only to the extent of avoiding the seemingly endless accrual of "late payment fees" and "penalty interest charges".

I am certain any clues you can offer will be greatly appreciated by not only myself but lots of guys and gals who have found themselves in a similar situation.

Gazza

P.S. keep up the great work guys. I really look forward to each issue of About Time.

Response From Financial Counselling Victoria:

It's a positive step to seek information about your debts while in custody – well done on reaching out early!

It's true that, if you are serving a prison sentence, you can apply for some fines that are registered with Fines Victoria to be converted to run concurrently with your existing sentence. An application to convert the eligible fines should be available through the prison.

This arrangement doesn't apply to private debts such as credit cards, mobile phone contracts or hire purchase agreements. These debts remain active while you're in custody and may continue to incur interest and late payment fees if not managed.

There are protections available. *Under the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009* (Cth) and the *ASIC Act 2001* (Cth), you have the right to request financial hardship assistance from your creditors. This means you can ask them to pause payments, stop interest and fees, restructure your repayments, extend loan terms or other actions that meet your hardship situation while you're in prison. The Banking Code of Practice also now recognises incarceration as a reason for hardship, and banks are required to provide extra care for these customers. Lenders and credit providers should have hardship departments and are required to consider reasonable requests, responding to your request within 21 days.

You, or a recognised consumer advocate like a financial counsellor, need to proactively ask for this hardship support from your creditors. Unfortunately, while we understand there is no financial counselling service available at Ravenhall, Inside Access through the Mental Health Legal Centre can assist with non-criminal legal matters at the facility, and this includes fines. Reintegration officers may also be able to help you make contact with creditors and explain your situation. If possible in your circumstances, you can also call the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 for financial counselling help over the phone.

When you do this, you could consider whether any of these debts are statute-barred – this means that no payments have been made on the debt for 6 years, and you have not admitted in writing that you owe the money during that time, and the creditor has not started legal action in that time. In these cases, you still legally owe the money, but the creditor can't use the court to make you pay it.

Don't wait too long – the sooner you act, the more options you may have to stop the debt from growing.

By Financial Counselling Victoria

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



• Reintegration

Finding a Place to Live After Prison

What you need to know before release



Willy Pleasance

By Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) Australia

ACSO is an Australian not-for-profit that has over 40 years' experience working in prisons and community reintegration. Although we're not a housing provider, we have plenty of experience guiding people on how to find the best housing option for after prison.

All states and territories offer bond loans or other forms of assistance to help cover the cost of a rental bond when you move into a new rental home.

Australia is in the middle of a housing crisis. This is making it harder for everyone to find affordable accommodation, but, for people leaving prison, the barriers can be even higher. While it can feel impossible and out of your control, there are some things you can do.

To give yourself the best chance, begin organising this as soon as you can. Plan ahead, search around, and talk to as many people as you can.

Housing options

Before you try to organise housing, it can be useful to think carefully about the different types of housing that are available to people who are exiting prison. To help you, this article will go into some more detail about the most common housing options:

- Crisis housing
- Boarding houses
- Rental properties
- Share housing
- Public housing

Keep in mind, your first choice may not work out. So always have a back-up plan.

Option 1 – crisis housing

Crisis housing is also called emergency housing or homelessness services. It is only a short-term option. Different services run these housing options, so, depending on where you are, it is a good idea to ask about what is available to you if you find yourself without housing.

Each state and territory has its own hotline. They can tell you about any vacancies and link you with services that can help you.

State	Support Service	Best Contact
NSW	Link2 Home	1800 152 152
VIC	Housing VIC	1800 825 955
QLD	Homeless Hotline	1800 474 753
WA	Entrypoint Perth	1800 124 684
SA	Homeless Connect	1800 003 308
NT	Shelter Me	shelterme.org.au
ACT	OneLink	1800 176 468
TAS	AskIzzy	askizzy.org.au

Option 2 – boarding houses

Boarding houses, also called rooming houses, are often the only option available for some people, for various reasons, including not having family support or not being able to live in a certain area where family and friends are.

The best way to find a boarding house near you is by looking at local council websites or contacting housing agencies. Boarding houses are also sometimes listed through online directories like flatmates.com.au, RoomingKos, or realestate.com.au.

It is important to know the standards of boarding houses are often quite low, and they can be expensive for what you are getting. In most boarding houses, all facilities are shared, including kitchens, bathrooms and living spaces.

While they are not the cleanest places, it is important to keep your space clean and damage free to ensure you get your bond loan back.

Option 3 – rental properties

While it is extremely difficult to organise a rental property from inside, it can be useful to start thinking about what you need to do to secure a rental property before then. Securing a rental takes time and planning, so, if this is a long-term goal of yours, it may make it easier if you begin working out what steps you will need to take.

There is a lack of rental properties across Australia right now. This means that there can often be a lot of competition for people trying to secure a rental. Don't be discouraged by this. But be aware that, if you are going to apply for a rental, you need to be well prepared.

You should have:

- all paperwork ready – including photocopies of your ID, pay slips and proof of income
- references who can vouch for you as a good tenant and provide their contact details
- money for the bond and two weeks' rent saved and ready to go.

It can be expensive to get enough money together to be ready to rent. Applying for a bond loan can help.

Bond loans

All states and territories except for Tasmania offer bond loans to help cover the cost of a rental bond when you move into a new rental home.

The loan amount for a bond loan is up to four weeks' rent and must be repaid. No interest or fees apply.

Bond loan rules are different in each state. For example, in Tasmania, there is a system called Private Rental Assistance (PRA) that can provide one-off financial assistance to eligible people on low incomes to help pay bond and other expenses. An application can be made through Housing Connect. Each has slightly different eligibility requirements and procedures for access, so it is worth looking these up on the state government website that is relevant to you to find out more.

Here is a list of the different bond loan schemes for each state and territory:

State	Support Service	Best Contact
NSW	Rentstart Bond Loan	13 77 88
VIC	RentAssist Bond Loan	1300 475 170
QLD	Bond Loan and Rental Grant	13 74 68
WA	Bond Assistance Loan Scheme	1800 176 888
SA	Private Rental Assistance Program	131 299
NT	Bond Assistance	08 8999 8549
ACT	Bond Loan	1800 950 255
TAS	*No bond loan available	–

Option 4 – sharehouses

Like rentals, sharehouses cannot be organised from prison. But, if sharehouses sound like an option that could work for you, it may make it easier if you begin working out what steps you will need to take now, before you are released.

Some people rent out one or two rooms in their house and advertise them online. This may be a more affordable option if you are unable to afford and enter the private rental market on your own.

Rooms in sharehouses are often advertised on websites like Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace and flatmates.com.au.

Keep in mind that, if you have a residential condition on your parole order, parole will need to call all other tenants in the house to confirm they are aware that you are on parole, your offences and any special conditions.

Disclosing information about your parole

Where you live is also part of your parole. You might have conditions about where you can live and who you can live with. Ask Sentence Management in your centre what some of these might be.

Keep in mind that, if you have a residential condition on your parole order, Community Corrections or Corrective Services will need to speak to anyone you live with.

Because you will be sharing sensitive information with people you may not know well, it may be a good idea to find out from Community Corrections or Corrective Services what your housemates need to know so that you are sharing enough information but not too much.

The most common things they will need to know are:

- that you are on parole
- a general overview of your offences
- whether you are on a curfew
- that the police may complete in-person checks.

Option 5 – public housing

Every state has long-term housing for people on low incomes. Rent is about 30 per cent of your income, but the wait can be several years long.

You can apply for public housing while you are still in custody. We strongly support this as your application will be backdated to when you first submitted it. When you are in prison, your application will be put on hold, and you need to activate it within 28 days of being released. Your time in custody will then be counted as time on the waitlist.

When you attend housing after your release, you can tailor your application and speak to the relevant government department in your state about further support. The government department you should speak to has a different name depending on the state or territory you live in:

State	Support Service	Best Contact
NSW	Homes NSW	1800 422 322
VIC	Homes Victoria	1300 161 485
QLD	Department of Housing	13 74 68
WA	Department of Communities	1800 176 888
SA	SA Housing Authority	131 299
NT	Territory Families, Housing and Communities	08 8999 5511
ACT	Housing ACT	1800 950 255
TAS	Housing Tasmania	1300 665 663

Ask your unit officer for a relevant housing application form.

What to think about next?

Those who plan early, explore all their options and prepare both a 'Plan A' and a 'Plan B' have a better chance of finding stable housing and making it work for them long term.



• Have a Question?

We want to help prepare you for the outside.

What questions do you have about leaving prison? Write to us and we'll try get them answered!

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"**

Mob

Staying Connected to Culture in Prison

The Teelack program is bringing people into prison to deliver lectures and help First Nations people connect with their culture.

By The Brothers

Hello About Time readers,

We have been inspired to talk about the legal system that makes us the most incarcerated culture in this country.

So we decided that we would write in and talk about the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples, including the right to enjoy and maintain and control, protect and develop their identity and cultural heritage language and kinship ties.

We are the most incarcerated people in the country. We are trying to find the reasons why the legal system is doing this.

We are seeking to understand why this legal system is locking up children as young as 10 years old, when they should be providing them with cultural guidance and connection with their land and waters.

The effect of long-term jail terms impacts on cultural connection to culture and your mob.

In regards to this we have developed a program we are running here for us Aboriginal prisoners in partnership with Federation University and Corrections as part of the Mungul Dhal program. We have called this Teelack.

The word Teelack means Good Country in native tongue. We have created this course here because we know there are a lot of Aboriginal prisoners that are reaching out for connection to culture and wanting to learn more of who they are and how critical it is to stay connected to mob's own country.

We are learning about how important our connection to culture is, and the way we have done this is by getting a bunch of different people in and giving us lectures. The lectures also include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speakers. We also invite non-Aboriginal prisoners.

Not only do we get to learn about a whole different range of topics regarding culture, health and life skills; we also invite Corrections staff so they can learn about this as well.

It was a great turn out when we had our first guest speaker in, who was a historian named Fred Cahir. He has a number of books he has written on Aboriginal history. What a very informative speaker he is.

We learnt that Hopkins Correctional Centre is based at the head of the Hopkins River. We also learnt that the nearby Langi Guruant mountain depicts the Eel Dreaming story, as well as the Ka Ka Muurrup Spirit.

There were pictures shown in Fred's lecture of the Eel Dreaming story and how damaged it has become. This presented a challenge to inmates on how to become more involved in the ongoing maintenance of cultural heritage and environmental works in the Hopkins basin.

Discussions with the Traditional Owners, Corrections and inmates are in the planning stages of looking into it in the immediate future.

We also learnt about Aboriginal heroes and the things that made them heroes.

A lot of people don't know or have never heard of these heroes. This lecture series aims to inform the inmates and staff about the true history in this country, potentially finding the reasons behind why we are the most incarcerated peoples in this country.

I will be talking about that a little more in the next article. Now I just want to say to all you brothers and sisters out there, stay Black and Deadly and be proud of who you are and stay strong.

Thank you.

Regards,
The Brothers



Share Your Story

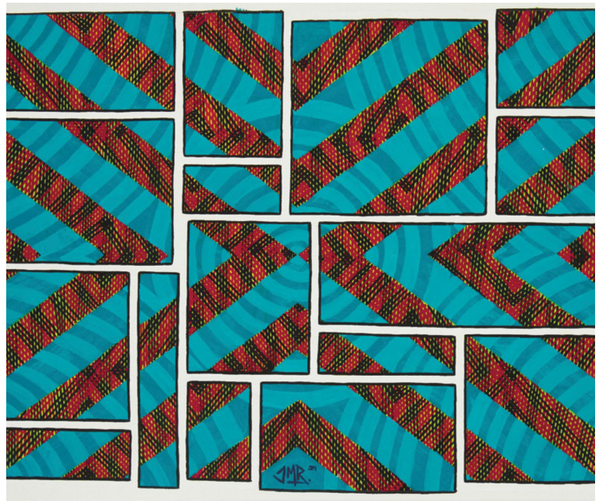
We are a new paper; a new idea. We welcome all of your thoughts about how we can make this as successful as possible. Is there something you want removed from the paper? Something you want added? Let us know.

Write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

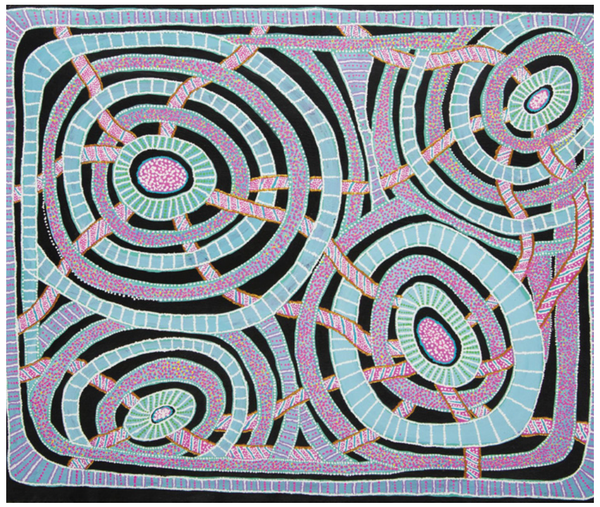
Or, if you have access to email, you can email us at:

contribute@abouttime.org.au



My View
By J.Rozynski
Gunaikurnai people
2024

This painting represents our Country which has been taken over by others. They cover the land with buildings and roads and take more than they need but, wherever you look, you'll always see marks and signs of the first people... we are here and always will be.



Cave Dreaming #11
By Lucas W
Wiradjuri people
2025

This painting is number 11 of a series called "Cave Dreaming". I lived in a cave with my father on the south coast of New South Wales from the age of 15 to 16 or 17. This was the happiest time of my life.

Culture



Review of *Songs Inside*

New documentary follows music program at Adelaide Women's Prison

By About Time

As the movie opens, we see Tina, sitting in her cell at Adelaide Women's Prison.

She looks straight into the camera and introduces herself as her prisoner number, before announcing her audition for the Songbirds music program.

She begins to sing, and her voice is strong and mesmerising, more suited to a dimly-lit jazz bar than a bare prison cell. The audience is instantly hooked – the music has transcended the grey prison tracksuit and barred walls. We are somewhere else. This opening captures the essence of the feature-length documentary *Songs Inside*, which brings us in contact with the human ache for connection. It captures our longing to be better and how music can bring us out of isolation and towards a deeper understanding of ourselves, even in a place like prison.

With unprecedented access to all areas of Adelaide Women's Prison, director Shalom Almond and her team immerse themselves in the prison environment and intimately follow participants in the 6-month songwriting program. Led by Barkindji singer-songwriter Nancy Bates, the Songbirds program is a vehicle of expression, a way for the women to step outside the prison walls and feel the power of music. Nancy begins the first class by sharing her own story of her childhood neglect then singing a song to the little girl who needed her mother. A slow pan of the room shows the teary eyes of the participants, who are welcomed into the power of music. As Clancy, a Songbirds participant says, "Music brings all kinds of emotions – happiness, sadness, forgiveness – all in one. You forget where you are and get in touch with the person who you are on the inside."

As part of the program, each woman learns to play the ukulele, and together they write songs about their life and experiences, from funny anecdotes on how they spend their time to powerful calls for freedom. The film's story follows their preparation for not just any concert but a collaborative performance with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, who orchestrated their songs before performing together at the prison.

The film also manages to capture the persistent frustration of being stuck in the criminal legal system. Despite the women's strongest intentions to move away from negative habits, the hits keep coming, from being denied bail, to drug use, to lack of housing upon release. The documentary skillfully captures how positive programs like Songbirds exist in tandem with the hurdles, challenges and disempowerment of prison. But no more spoilers!

Songs Inside received the Audience Award at the Adelaide Film Festival and Documentary Australia Award at the Sydney Film Festival. It's touring around the country. About Time was lucky to watch the film at the screening in Alice Springs as part of the Reintegration Puzzle Conference. The screening ended with a standing ovation, followed by a panel discussion from a number of women in the movie – people were starstruck to see them on stage! As Erin, one of the panelists said, "When I see the movie, I remember how much better I can be. The girls keep me grounded."



What's on TV Today?

By Grace

Stuck with free-to-air TV? Here are some great shows to help time fly by.

Please note the times listed are a guide only and subject to change, depending on broadcasting arrangements

ABC

The Assembly
The Assembly follows journalism students with autism interviewing some of Australia's biggest names.

Mentored by Leigh Sales, the students build their confidence and ask hard questions to the guests, who include Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, musician Delta Goodrem, AFL player Adam Goodes and presenter Hamish Blake. What follows is a warm, insightful glance into the brains of people with autism and how they navigate this space.

Reruns of Season 1 air intermittently on Saturdays at 12:15pm. Season 2 airs later in 2025.

Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont Spelling Bee
New Zealand comedian Guy Montgomery and Australian comedian Aaron Chen run a spelling bee show.

Each week, they're joined by different guests (also comedians) and participate in spelling challenges related to a theme, while trying to guess another challenge set up by Chen. Some guests have included Wil Anderson, Hannah Gadsby, Jenny Tian and Tom Gleeson. The first episode of the show saw the guests trying to spell words related to Australia's currency, but how successful they actually were is another matter entirely.

The show currently airs on Wednesdays at 8:35pm.

NETWORK 10

Have You Been Paying Attention?
Another game show with comedians! Join Tom Gleisner, Sam Pang and Ed Kavalee, alongside their fellow comedian friends and guests, as they navigate the news headlines and make a game show of it, attempting (and it really is attempting) to answer questions based on the headlines. While the official goal is to answer the questions correctly, the unspoken goal is to throw Tom off his game by providing the funniest answer. Again, even if that answer is not even close to correct. Past guests have been Kitty Flanagan, Celia Pacquola and Robert Irwin.

The show currently airs on Mondays at 8:40pm on Network 10

Creative

Sound Advice

By A.S.P.

A.S.P. writes from a prison in New South Wales.

Life is only short my son, with so
many paths to take,
Life is an uphill struggle, with every
step you make.
That's why you must treasure life,
with every second of the day,
because you may never know, when
it's your turn to go away.
See the good things in life, and never
let them go,
I'll give you the paddles, but you'll
have to row.
It will not be easy though, because l
ife is one big test,
but no one can ask for more, once
you've given your best.
Always be kind to others, and respect
their point of view,
if you show consideration, they'll do
the same for you.
Never take freedom for granted, of
one thing you can be sure,
there are better places to be, than
behind a prison wall.
Life is so much a gamble, forever
throwing the dice,
I haven't a great deal to offer, only
some sound advice.
But each night I do pray, that when
I've passed away,
I've helped to make your life happy,
in each and every way.

Family Tree

By Erin

Erin writes from a prison in Queensland.

How would it be
To be set free
Yes, I'd smile with glee
No guilty plea
This system you see
Has broken my family tree
Taken my kids from me
Now under lock and key
A charge sheet like a shopping spree
Please just let me be
Forever you can't keep me
Jail I'm waiting to flee
And reunite with my family
Stuff the system and BWCC

By Erin.

P.S. It breaks my heart the pain this system causes. I wish someone could make it better.

Let Down

By Matthew

Matthew writes from a prison in New South Wales.

I hear the sirens wailing
I know the cops are coming
To my door
I let down my family
Even my kids, friends and all
I promised I wasn't going
Back to jail
They said we've heard
All this before
As I get handcuffed
And put into the paddy wagon door
My 11-year-old son follows
Crying and all
I will never forget
The words he said to me
Dad you have let me down
Like before
Those words have stuck
Right into my head
Time for me to wake up
And do the right thing instead
Get out of jail
And make them proud instead
This is what motivates me
Every night and every day
Knowing I'm going to get out
I cannot wait 'til that day

Imperious

By Belly

Belly writes from a prison in Queensland.

As I find myself in perpetual motion
I endeavor to imitate the Roo and Emu
However;
It is imperative to check my blind spots
To glance into into rear-vision mirrors
as I change lores

Consideration
Consequentiality
Concernment

I yearn to spend loving time with my
Mother
To reunite with my sister and brother
To introduce my kin to the new man I
am

Standardise
Uniformalise
Classicise

Looking into the future right now is a
daydream
But like the A-Team
I love it when a plan comes together.

Mistakes (For My Mother Toni)

By Megan

Megan writes from a prison in New South Wales.

She saw his will and was convinced
She listened to his lies and was
convinced
She looked into his eyes and trusted
his smiles
She was convinced

Fifty years gone and now she's
convinced
That number two is never number one
Her youth is gone–her life almost over
She's had a harsh reality check–too late
to change her choices
All her sacrifices–all for nothing

Now she sits alone with her thoughts
and memories
No idle chatter to make with friends
She has none
Too afraid to look into a mirror–a
constant reminder of her loss
Waiting for a sound at her front door
Which never comes.

She's all alone–waiting for her regret
to end.

I Will Always Love You

By Jack

Jack writes from a prison in Victoria.

A poem for the one true love of my life,
I wish I could change the past, but I can
only change my future.

I will always love you
Something special, something true,
The perfect future I wanted with you,
Something crazy, something great,
All of the things that are worth the wait,
Know that you're hurting, and aching
inside,
For all of the times that made you cry,
The way that I hurt you, the things that
I said,
All of the doubts that I put in your head,
Constant reminders of mistakes that
I made,
Are something that likely won't go away,
All of the nights that I left you alone,
All of the times you sat by the phone
I am so ashamed, I wish I could
change it,
No words could describe how much
that I hate it,
Honest to God you're the most
beautiful girl,
If I could do it all again I would give you
the world,
Someone to lean on, someone to trust,
Someone to give you everything that's
a must,
Know that it's hard and might feel like
a waste,
But the sky is the limit for your love that
I taste,
Miss your smell, your face and your lips,
Your smile, your legs, your hair and
your hips,
Will we work out, only time will tell,
But either way I love you, and I do wish
you well

To About Time: Thanks for giving us
something to look forward to every
month, it means a lot.

Losing Control

By Goodj

Goodj writes from a prison in Queensland.

"LISTEN UP! LISTEN UP!
ATTENTION ATTENTION!"
The calls we hear every day
Whether guilty or claiming you're
innocent
There's a price we each must pay
"It's a privilege not a right"
You'll hear the screws say
But the moment you're behind
those bars
Your control is taken away
"Get back to your cluster, get ready
for muster"
We're herded around like we're cattle
Caged, enraged and feeling enslaved
Most not prepared for the battle
Requests fall on deaf ears, for months
sometimes years
A game they don't teach you to play
You think that you're winning and
walk around grinning
But the Parole Board will have the
last say
When they get something wrong
we laugh and sing songs
But then we face lockaway
Finding a ning who'll admit their
mistake
I won't hold my breath for that day
Wearing the blue with black
polished shoes
They sit in the bowl and they dwell
Coming in crews with the power
they abuse
And try to make our lives hell
We sit and we wait 'til they open
the gate
To finally be out of this hole
From my head to my feet, with
every heartbeat
I know I'm losing control



Mr Challis draws from a prison in Queensland

The Sun and Moon

By Karie

Karie writes from a prison in Queensland.

Dear About Time,

Keep up the good work. The girls at Numinbah enjoy reading your paper. Just thought I'd send in some words of I guess comfort to those having a hard time.

Regardless of how we are feeling, days still start and end.
Regardless of what I do, what others do, What happens to me or what happens to them.
In a time in our lives where control is in someone else's hands,
It is somewhat comforting to know that no matter what
There will always be a sunrise and a sunset.
In a world full of change,
Unknowns, and choices
The sun and moon
are of great comfort.

Beautiful Souls

By RM

RM writes from a prison in Queensland.

Why should you suffer for my pain.
Knowledge in this I should try to gain.

Does it feel I have left you alone?
It may feel I have cut you to the bone,

But please believe me, my love is true,
I know in the past I didn't know what
to do,

Because being a father was new to me,
Over the years I was blind, but now
I see,

That my responsibility is to be a Dad,
Even me writing this poem, makes
me sad,

Thinking of you all from this cell,
You beautiful things, I must have put
you all through hell.

So now I have made some new goals,
And that is to save your beautiful souls.

The Silent Path

By Denis

Denis writes from a prison in Victoria.

On an icy day, we'll meet again,
On a silent path, free from pain.
No greetings spoken, no sparks to fly,
Just a quiet knowing in each other's eye.

In a fleeting second, let the past awake,
The hidden love we dared not stake.
Memories rush in, a flood so sweet,
Of whispered promises we could not
keep.

Consoled by remembrance, from depths
so deep,
Emerge the moments that we still keep.
From the well of the elapsed, our story
told,
A love once hidden, now brave and bold.

Send Your Work

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



Learn

Our Living Planet: Wild Facts About Earth



These facts were drawn from and inspired by "Bits & Pieces", a long running newsletter to fellows at St John's, the hospital section of Port Phillip Prison in Victoria

Is the Earth one big living thing?
There is a theory that Earth, including everything that makes it up, is one living organism.

This is known as the "Gaia Theory" and was popularised by a British scientist, James Lovelock.

If you think of the human body as composed of many millions of different living parts but all working as ONE body, the theory is that everything that goes to make up Earth (minerals, air, water, plants, animals etc) all work together as one huge interdependent living thing!

And like a living thing it heals itself (after earthquakes and diseases etc) like sores in the body heal... interesting theory!!



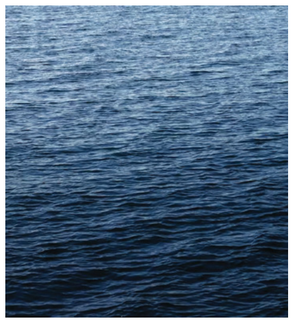
Was Earth once purple?
Today, Earth looks blue and green – with oceans, forests and plants. But, billions of years ago, Earth may have looked purple!

Back then, there were no plants. Instead, tiny life forms called microbes lived in the oceans. Some scientists think these early microbes used a purple chemical called retinal to get energy from sunlight.

Retinal reflects red and blue light, which mix to look purple. So, if lots of these microbes lived in the oceans, Earth may have looked purple from space!

Later, new microbes appeared that used chlorophyll – the green chemical plants use today. Chlorophyll works better than retinal, so green microbes took over. That's when Earth began to look like it does now – blue and green.

This idea is still being studied, but it shows how even tiny life can change a whole planet!



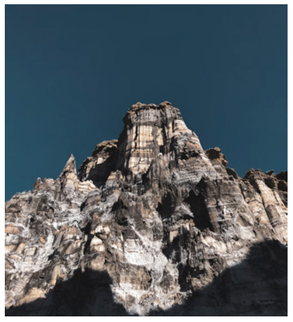
Did Earth's water come from space?
Earth has lots of water now – oceans, lakes and rain. But 4.5 billion years ago, Earth was hot and dry. So where did all the water come from?

Scientists have two main ideas:

1. From inside Earth itself: When Earth formed, some water was trapped deep underground. Later, volcanoes let out steam and gases. The steam turned into rain and helped fill the oceans.
2. From space: A long time ago, Earth was hit by comets and asteroids. Some of these space rocks had ice or watery minerals. When they crashed, they may have brought water to Earth.

Most scientists think both ideas are true: Some water came from inside Earth, and some came from space.

Fun fact: Water has also been found on the Moon, Mars and even some asteroids!



A mountain made of salt?
Yes – in southern Iran, there's a huge mountain made of salt! It's called a salt dome.

Here's how it formed:

Millions of years ago, this area was covered by the ocean. When the ocean dried up, it left thick layers of salt. Over time, rock and dirt pressed down on the salt.

Salt is softer and lighter than most rocks. So, instead of staying flat underground, the salt slowly pushed upward – like toothpaste from a tube! That created a dome-shaped mountain under the ground. In some places, the salt even breaks through the surface.

One of the most famous salt domes is in the Zagros Mountains in Iran. It's so big, you can see it from space! Some of the salt even moves slowly like a glacier.

Salt domes are not just cool – they help scientists learn about Earth's history. Sometimes they even trap oil and gas, which people use for energy.

Amazing, right? All that from simple salt!



Curious for More?

Want to learn more about a certain topic? If there's anything you want to learn about, please write to us!

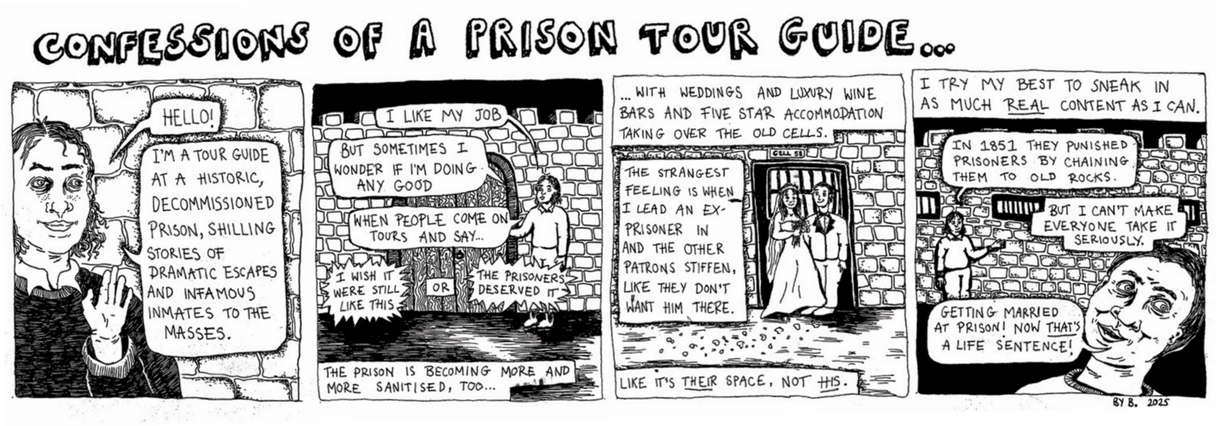
Write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Play



Food to Die For

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is a retired inmate.

This is intended as satire!

Following years of fruitless negotiations with prison inmates, Mr I Lash from the NSW Department of Corrective Services today announced a breakthrough – a joint venture with the Australian Psychology Enterprise (APE) to improve the quality of food provided to inmates.

It was announced that celebrity chefs George Calamari and Heston Bloomingood will completely revamp the prison menu.

Finally, it seems, prisoners will get their just desserts.

Mr Lash went on to say that inmates had been belly-aching that their food was no good and that they've been getting the rough end of the prison pineapple for too long.

Ms Irene C Nothing, President of the APEs, agreed that Corrective Services had been monkeying around for years, ever since Australia had its last banana republic.

"They've been floundering; one half-baked idea after another," she said. "However, this is not the Hilton, and inmates still need to realise that they're in prison. Thanks to the input from psychologists, the names of each new meal will reflect this reality."

A sample menu has now been provided, and we're able to report that the following meals will be trialled: battered fish; flathead fillets; pulled pork; rack of lamb with lashings of mashed potato; smashed avocado; skewered prawns; and crushed pineapple and whipped cream. Prisoners who do not like diced capsicum will be told to get stuffed... capsicum instead. For the first time, two imitation cocktails will be on trial from behind the bars: a grasshopper and a rusty nail. Authorities are hoping that no adverse comment will be forthcoming from either the Entomology Society, nor from Bunnings Warehouse.

Asked for his verdict on the new menu, one of the leading advocates for progress Mr Homer Neanderthal grunted, "Er, do we get any bananas, and what about our tomato sauce ration?"

This revamp will come at significant cost, and there is much at steak. According to Mr Lash, "This is no trifling matter; it will cost money, but that's how the cookie crumbles."

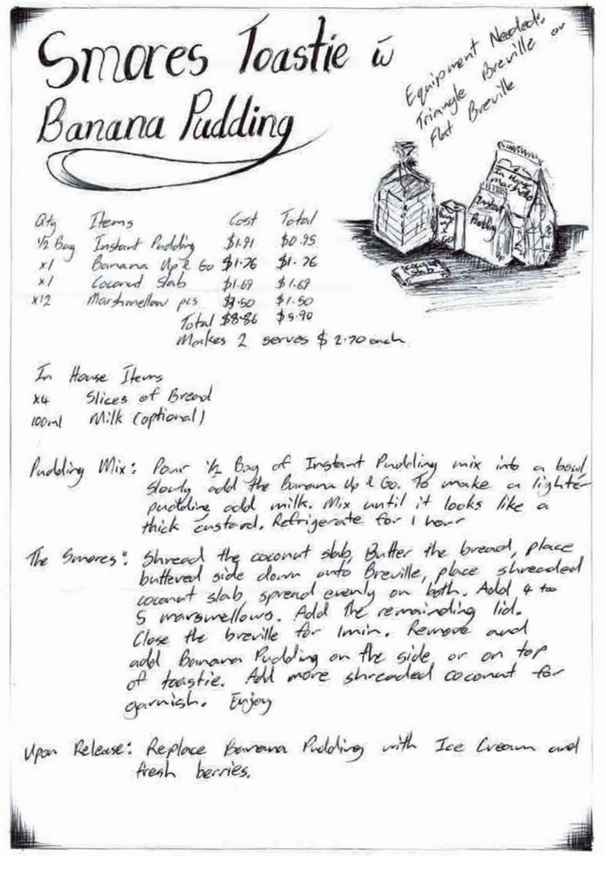
Hopefully, with this new strategy, everyone will be as happy as pie.

Note to readers:
If you've got a humorous, light hearted story to share (it can be made up or real – we don't mind!) then please send it our way, and we'll aim to publish it in an upcoming edition of About Time. Thanks!

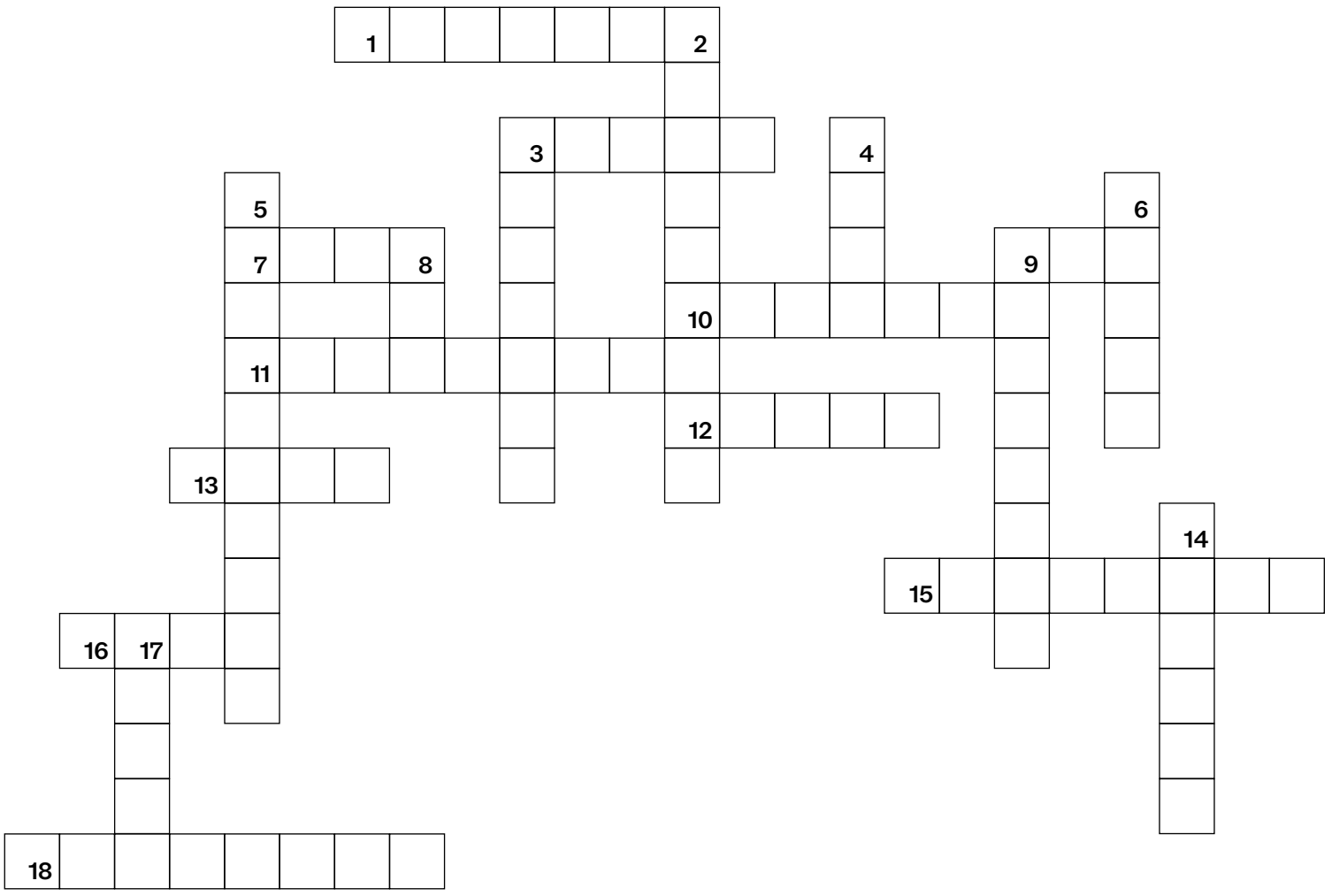
Sudoku

Fill in the box with numbers from 1-9 with no repeated numbers in each line, horizontally or vertically.

3		4					9	8
	6			8	3		7	2
								3
			1		9	8	6	
6	8			4	2		5	
	7		5	6	8	2		
		8	9			7	2	
1							8	5
7				2	4	3		



Crossword



ACROSS

1. Biggest ocean in the world (7)
3. Shrek's home (5)
7. Left side of a boat (4)
9. Golf peg (3)
10. Native Australian animal with spikes (7)
11. Legal protection over a piece of work (9)
12. Marry in private (5)
13. Frozen rain (4)
15. Immature (8)
16. Out of danger (4)
18. Capital of South Australia (8)

DOWN

2. Finished (9)
3. Old way to tell the time (7)
4. Fuzzy brown fruit (4)
5. Glasses (10)
6. Actor _____ Ledger (5)
8. Make an attempt (3)
9. Smallest Australian state (8)
14. Coldest season (6)
17. Maker of iPhones (5)

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What is the main ingredient in guacamole?
2. In what city were the first modern Olympic Games held?
3. What year was the very first model of the iPhone released?
4. Which planet is the hottest in the solar system?
5. What is the name of the actor who played Jack Dawson in Titanic?
6. What popular TV show featured House Targaryen and Stark?
7. Which animal can be seen on the Porsche logo?
8. Which Jamaican runner is an 11-time world champion and holds the record in the 100-metre and 200-metre race?
9. Which popular soft drink was originally created as a medicine in the 19th century?

TriPeaks Solitaire: How to Play

TriPeaks is one of the simplest ways to play Solitaire. The goal is to clear all the cards from the tableau by selecting cards that are either one number higher or lower than the current card.

At the start of the game, three overlapping pyramids (or "peaks") are laid out. All cards are face-down except for the bottom row. You'll also have a stockpile of face-up cards, starting with one visible card.

Using the card from the stockpile as your base, you can remove any face-up card from the set up that is one rank higher or lower. For example, if your current card is a 3, you can remove either a 2 or a 4. The card you remove becomes the new base for your next move.

Only cards that are fully uncovered (with no cards overlapping them) can be played. If you can't make a move, you may draw a new card from the stockpile–but use it wisely! Once the stockpile is empty, you can't reshuffle or reuse it.

The game ends when all cards are cleared, or when you run out of moves.



Caption This...

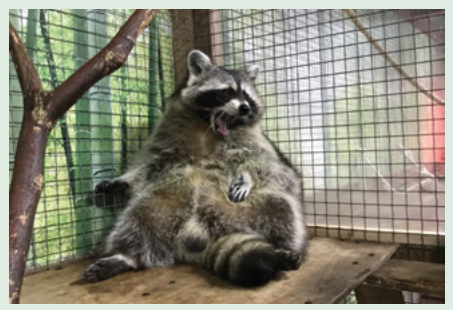
Submit a caption to this photo, and we will print the three finalists (including the winner) in the next edition.

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au



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

WINNER!
I gotta be able to get on ozempic now, yeah?
Bukks, Victoria

Runner up!
'No more reception pies'
Belly, Queensland

'They said I couldn't eat all that food by myself. I showed them!'
Mark, Victoria

'Leave me alone! Stop yelling at me!'
Chicken Little, Victoria

Bad Jokes

Q: What kind of shoes do frogs wear?
A: Open toad.

Q: My neighbour gave me a new roof for free.
A: He said it was on the house.

Q: Where do surfers learn to surf?
A: At boarding school.

Q: Why was the Incredible Hulk so good at gardening?
A: He had a green thumb.

Quiz Answers

1. Avocado
2. Athens, Greece
3. 2007
4. Venus
5. Leonardo DiCaprio
6. Game of Thrones
7. Horse
8. Usain Bolt
9. Coca-Cola

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Pacific
3. Swamp
7. Port
9. Tee
10. Echidna
11. Copyright
12. Elope
13. Hail
15. Childish
16. Safe
18. Adelaide

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

2. Completed
3. Sundial
4. Kiwi
5. Spectacles
6. Heath
8. Try
9. Tasmania
14. Winter
17. Apple