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ISSUE NO. 15 OCTOBER 2025 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

About Time

Australia's National Prison Newspaper



Welcome Western Australia!

For the first time ever, all people who are incarcerated in WA prisons will be able to read Australia's national prison newspaper. This is a paper just for you.

You now join six other states and territories who already receive *About Time*. We're so thrilled to be able to distribute to WA.

To learn more about who we are and what this is all about, turn over to page 2.

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EXPERIENCES

Using Your Voice for Change

Former prisoner Shane Cuthbert on being political and speaking to politicians

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Ike Curtis

NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

'Question Everything': Rethinking Wrongful Convictions in Australia

By Denham Sadler

Kathleen Folbigg walked free from a prison in New South Wales in 2023 after serving 20 years in jail following a wrongful conviction.

Folbigg's name was cleared in 2023 and she was released but only after spending two decades behind bars. Recently she was awarded $2 million for the time she spent in prison – or $100,000 for each year she was wrongly imprisoned.

The case is one of several high-profile examples of wrongful convictions in Australia and one that took 20 years to overturn.

There are growing calls on the back of the Folbigg case and others for Australia to reconsider its approach to the chance of wrongful convictions, including a campaign for a criminal cases review commission, which would investigate claims of innocence.

A new book, *Innocence Unveiled*, written by a number of workers at RMIT University's Bridge of Hope Innocence Initiative, has called for a new approach to understanding wrongful convictions in Australia and efforts to prevent them.

The director of the innocence project, Professor Michele Ruyters, said the aim of the book is to change the thinking about wrongful convictions and to place them in an Australian context.

"There are a lot of people who have been genuinely wrongfully convicted, whether they are factually innocent or not, who will never be exonerated," Ruyters told *About Time*.

"We're always looking back at why a wrongful conviction happened, rather than moving the dialogue to working out why this is happening and putting things in place to stop it happening in the future."

Wrongful convictions should be looked at in terms of risk factors, she said, such as poor funding of defence lawyers and prosecutors, socio-economic and racial disadvantage, and police misconduct.

These factors then intersect and can lead to someone being wrongfully convicted.

"The main idea is that wrongful convictions happen because there are a bunch of socio-economic, psychological and emotional harms and inequalities that intersect and accumulate," Ruyters said.

"This could be a very tiny mistake, something that happens in the system and then it shifts and changes everything it comes into contact with, and that mistake then accumulates.

"It just keeps building and building and filters into other areas of the criminal justice system. We wanted to give a voice to those risks."

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Letters

Parole: Best Practice Leads to Better Outcomes

By Russell

Russell writes from a prison in QLD.

Hi fellow writers and readers,

A quick thank you to About Time for the national paper. I really enjoy reading about the ins and outs of Australian jail life.

I've been around awhile. Presently I'm looking at the back end of a 21-year sentence and approaching 50 years old fast. Currently, the Crisafulli government (in Queensland) is asking for submissions into the latest review on how to improve the parole process for victims and community safety.

I strongly believe the last few Queensland governments' hardline policies of being tough on crime started a community view of "lock them up and throw away the key". Politically generated views, like these, lead to the victims and the community having misguided notions that the community would be better served if offenders did full time.

There has to be a time in an individual's sentence when the punishment for crimes committed must stop and rehabilitation for community re-entry must start, regardless of sentence or crime.

I feel where previous governments have failed is by not informing victims and the community about the role that parole serves to protect the community.

The Queensland Ministerial Guidelines to the Parole Board (1.3), quote: "The only purpose of parole is to reintegrate a prisoner into the community before the end of a prison sentence to decrease the chance that the prisoner will ever reoffend. The only rationale for parole is to keep the community safe from crime." So how does parole reduce reoffending and keep the community safe?

Parole is a supervised release with a truckload of conditions and some level of support – for accommodation, finances, psychological help, extra rehabilitative courses and employment. It's different for everyone. Regardless of how many conditions and support an individual has, we all know occasionally they still make mistakes. This is why supervision is so important.

It's easy for governments and corrective services to wipe their hands of an offender at full time. What happens after is not their fault – right! Far from it. An offender leaving custody at full time is a great risk to the community. Many have no support, no accommodation. They can be untreated. But, most of all, none are supervised.

The thing is, most of the time, it's not the person who has failed; it's the system who has failed the offender.

Here in Queensland, QCS regularly tells inmates it does not recognise parole dates, only full time dates. This is just one part of a larger system failure. By not ensuring inmates have completed rehabilitation courses, found accommodation and gained support, there can be no parole. Many inmates become so frustrated after years of requesting programs that full time is no longer their last option. It's their only option.

If the government is serious about change, I would encourage them to be more open-minded. Use the procedures within the prison system for what they are designed for – e.g. allowing long-term offenders access to low-security farms to reduce the risks. I feel the prison system would benefit if it was more transparent so the victims and community could be better educated on how and why things happen.

Community safety depends on the seamless reintegration of released prisoners – the more the better if supervised.

This may not be the most popular vote. However, it is the best practice. I'm not sure a constructive change is possible but I hope that, maybe through education, the best practice will become the popular vote.

The Sun and Moon

By Karie

Karie writes from a prison in QLD.

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 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.



About Time in WA!

If you're currently in prison somewhere in Western Australia, it's likely that you're reading this paper for the first time. We launched in July last year, and over the last 15 or so months we've been gradually increasing our reach.

You might be wondering what this is all about. Essentially, *About Time* is a newspaper for incarcerated people across the country. The aim is to give people in prison a voice – a way to share their stories and express themselves. We do this by publishing your letters in the paper each month, so please write to us!

You can share your journey, send a message to a loved one or pass on some advice to others in similar positions. You can write a poem, a comic or a short story, or you can even send us a piece of artwork – whatever you like.

As you'll see from the Letters and Experience pieces throughout this paper, anything goes.

We'd be thrilled to hear from you, and we're thrilled to share the paper and its wisdom with you.

All the best,
The team at About Time

You can 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

Unjust Justice

By Adrian

Adrian writes from a prison in NSW.

This is my fifth (unfortunate) incarceration – twice in WA, three times in NSW. It seems that the introduction of Post Sentence Supervision Orders, Community Correction Orders and others prohibiting a return to "normal" life post prison sentence is a significant issue in the recidivism rates across Australia.

There are limited benefits from both a moral and just point of view. Significantly, it stands to reason that because of those post sentence orders you are limited in what you can do and where you can go and, once breached, again return to prison.

Although it seems proactive to the wider community that we are keeping these vile and nasty criminals off our streets, have the bureaucrats considered the mental and emotional effect that it is having on the subject?

I have been subject to reporting to both police and parole for the better part of the past four years, since my return to NSW in 2021 from WA, where I was originally convicted.

Each time I am released, there is a tightening of the orders or other orders that I have had to adhere to, whereby I feel less and less valued as a human being.

This time I even lost my own patience as, being 52, it must be my fault.

I struggle with anxiety, depression and PTSD but now also suffer paranoia because, when released and even inside with a lack of mental health care, I am that afraid even to walk out my door, go to the shops, park or invite a friend over (if I had any) because I might be arrested again.

How is this situation helping anyone who gets thrown into the system?

Across Australia, but especially in NSW, we need a review of prisons and the way we treat people. Are we punishing the ones who are already being punished? Or are we just castaways and the only future – due to being unable to escape – is every single prison is full because of breaching a pre-existing order that they maybe could have been given a little help for?

A Message of Compassion and Care

By David

David writes from a prison in NSW.

Included is a poem written by Michael and my honest response of encouragement. May it offer hope to anyone who challenges themselves to choose to heal toward being a quality human. There are so many men wanting to transform. There are many who hear their pain. There are too few who truly listen. About Time gives all a voice to proclaim their sorrow and continue their amends. This challenges all to honestly listen with compassion and care. Thanks to you and your professionalism for making transformation possible.

Shalom, David.

Michael:
Alone in my cell, in my cell each
day I cry.
It doesn't matter if I live or die.
People laugh at me and don't
feel my pain,
Even when it's sunny it feels like rain.

Each day I know I'm losing hope.
What's gone, can no longer cope.
A man can no longer cope when he has
lost everything he loved,
When he's the only one.

My children have forgotten me,
My shadow has befriended me.
One day you're nothing, a forgotten
king,
And the next, a clown.
And in the sea of sadness I will drown.

God was once my heart, but now I feel
we are no longer anything more.
We are held deep, far apart.
I have no more to thrive to live, no more
to give.
Just close my eyes and never more weep,
That I may eternally finally sleep.

David:
Michael, you stand at another crossroad of your life. Your poem expresses your feelings of powerlessness.

Your sketches show your desire for goodness. Your sharing indicates seeking wisdom. Your tears are the balm of healing. Your wise words to others are filled with compassion.

It is time to decide: self-honesty or self-pity? Stay powerless or ask for power? Trust in yourself or trust in God's care? Remain selfish or live selflessly? Choose death or transformation? Die, or live.

David

Demonised Fringes

By Anonymous

Anonymous writes from a prison in Australia.

As I watch another "special news report" or read an article about how easily prisoners are doing their time (in any prison around Australia), I get the distinct feeling that the media are trying to hard-sell a narrative: that we prisoners live in some kind of holiday camp/caravan park environment, with all the freedoms that narrative conjures. A blacked-out figure in a chair is labelled "Joe Public", a supposedly disgruntled ex-prison officer who claims that prisoners are "getting away with" these said freedoms and that they felt in danger the whole time they were employed at the prison.

I don't know which prison this officer came from, but in my current location, if you so much as look at an officer the wrong way or say anything threatening or derogatory, you will be slotted – a clear message of "don't do it again". I'm not saying that there aren't situations where officers may feel threatened or in harm's way; but this would depend on the security rating of the prisons – i.e. maximum (A), medium (B) and low-level (C). So, if they're feeling threatened or in danger as a prison officer (in any of those security levels), they have either been put into the wrong security level/position or chosen the wrong profession.

The narrative being pushed is that we, the prisoners, are not being punished as harshly as we deserve – that "Joe Public" should shout from the rafters, "They should all be put in the stocks! Throw human and animal excrement at them! Lock 'em all in dark, dark caves, and let the rats and disease kill 'em slowly! I want my pound of flesh, god damn it!"

Then out trots the opposition "Minister for Prisons" (let's call it that, because "Corrections" is so far from what the system actually is) like a diva being trolleyed out stage right for his or her aria, claiming the current government is not doing enough to protect the public. "They're soft on crime!" and "Under an opposition government the public and all officers will be better off!"

Deep down we all know nothing will ever change unless "Joe Public" is given the correct and honest information about the prison system so they can make an informed decision. Hatred and distrust of others will only increase the number of offenders in society. And that will produce terrible outcomes for all involved.

Prisoner, in any prison in Australia

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

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

Write to Us

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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Don't Be Quick to Judge

By Jake

Jake writes from a prison in VIC.

I have written the poem below knowing full well a good percentage of those who read it will be quick to judge. Some may ignorantly say, "Just do the right thing and live a normal life," but I can say from the bottom of my heart that it's not that black and white. People need to open their eyes to the real problems people face in life once they have made a few bad choices.

We are all human beings and we have all had very different experiences in life. We have faced different mental health issues, and we all handle things differently. Some can do things better than others and some struggle with issues some of us find easy to manage in our lives.

We are quick to judge, and I am guilty of that.

I have been that person before, and it's a real eye-opener when you find out the real issues that some people are facing. You try to put yourself in their shoes and try to imagine facing the same circumstances as them. But we can't because we are not them.

There is no way to accurately make judgement on someone for what they have done or are doing at times in their lives.

Tonight, I found out that my cousin who was three months younger than I am took his own life. It made me think of everything that I have written above. As much as I tried to think what could have been that bad for him to take such a dramatic path, I just couldn't do it. Because it's not me.

I have no clue what he was feeling, no clue what he had been through, and it was not my place to make judgment. We can't say he was selfish; we can't say anything because we don't know what he was feeling. I can only say that it's an extremely dark and lonely place to be when you are in that mindset, when ending your own life comes into mind. I can say that because I have experienced it, and thankfully I am still here to write about it.

Some of the poem has nothing to do with the news of my cousin's passing, but it made me think of my life and the judgements I have faced and thought about myself. We tend to forget that the ones that judge us more than anyone else are ourselves.

We are our biggest critics. We criticise ourselves for hurting loved ones, being a failure, letting people down, and we judge ourselves harshly. Then dealing with the judgement from others on top is sometimes too much to bear.

The main thing I want people to take from this is don't be quick to make judgement.

Don't say that you know how someone feels, because you simply don't.
Think about how you and your actions affect others and what you can do to make someone feel better or to help someone who's struggling. Try to be open minded and think to yourself that, just because you see things in a different way, it doesn't mean that that's how everyone sees it. Leave the past in the past and focus on the now. Be the best person you can be for yourself and others.

If what I have written helps one person think differently, then I am grateful that I have made a positive difference in someone's life!

Thanks for reading,
Jake

To Jonno – By Jake
Disappointment once more, once
again I'm not there.
For my family who spend every
day in despair,
I selfishly think about how I've been
wronged,
When the trauma for those outside
is sadly prolonged.

I've missed weddings and funerals,
opportunities gone.
Three meals a day, shelter, while out
there, hearts are torn.
Why do I keep hurting my loved ones
that care?
And all I can think is why me? It's
not fair.

We're blind to think that we don't
cause them pain,
When we come back to prison again
and again.
This place, a reunion, we laugh and
we joke,
Talking shit, drinking coffee with
a tea-bacco smoke.

We're put here for punishment, rehab
and such,
But we learn about how to do crime just
as much.
The government, cops, judges, have
nothing to lose,
We are all just statistics, they've never
walked in our shoes.

We are all just numbers, caged and
herded like cattle,
Lacking resources for the hundreds, and
the demons we battle.
What's rehabilitation? Freedom taken
by force?
Let's load them up with opiates and
methadone of course!!

We live in a world where the
media rules,
And you believe what they say,
you idiots, you fools.
Innocent until proven guilty, what
an absolute lie.
In fact, it's the opposite, they
cannot deny.

Let's load them with charges,
cops lie under oath,
Yet they wonder why prisons have
seen such growth.
Do the crime, do the time, that's
justice they say,
Then why are we judged until
the end of our days?

Each time from now on that we
make a mistake,
We question how much of our
lives they will take.
We're not judged on the crime,
but our past is used,
In a system that is broken and has
been abused.

Breaking Down the Stigma Surrounding Work Experience Inside

By Jamie

Jamie writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear About Time,

After reading Issue #13, I am looking forward to reading the highlights from the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in upcoming issues. In particular, I would appreciate "extended highlights" from the Queensland Injectors (QuIVAA) presentations. Being in Queensland and reading your newspaper, as well as queer newsletter Inside Out, our "Sunshine State" seems to be lacking the number of post-release support services that are offered and available in other states. It would be great to find out some more information about QuIVAA as well as other Queensland-based support services.

I think lived experience support services are an important reintegration tool, as well as an important support for those who are still inside, knowing that there are positive experiences and paths for us post release.

Another stigma that I think needs to be broken down is the working experience that most prisoners receive while they are serving their time. Some prisoners spend years in the same job while in prison, continually building on their skills and also training other prisoners. All this experience is then essentially washed down the drain when we walk through the gate. How can we break down this stigma to enable these skills to be used and appreciated post release?

Thanks for providing us with a great monthly source of information and entertainment.

Response from About Time:
Thank you for your letter, Jamie! We will write more from QuIVAA in the next edition. Stay tuned.

The Paradox of Time

By Anonymous

Anonymous writes from a prison in VIC.

On one hand, how can we deny the reality of time? We need it to go from here to there, to prepare ingredients for a meal. Build a house, read this story. You need time to grow up, to learn new skills. Whatever you do seems to take time. Everything you do is subject to time, and eventually it is going to kill you.

"Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time," as Shakespeare once wrote.

You can compare it to a raging river that drags you along its muddy banks as it flows. Or like a fire in which everything is burnt up and consumed in a puff of smoke. The only way to deal with time is to be here and now in the present as it's happening. It's the happenings that make our past, present and future – that control our life's destiny.

So after reading this, if we can take five minutes and look through the other end of the looking glass, it just might help some of us find what we're looking for or help with the now.

Some of this is how I've interpreted what I have read in Eckhart Tolle's book *The Power of Now*.

This has helped me in the NOW.

Note for NSW

Have you experienced issues with accessing About Time on the electronic tablets?

A new edition of About Time should arrive on your tablet each month of the year, no matter which prison you are in.

If it doesn't appear or you're experiencing issues, please send us a letter, or tell a friend or family member to email us, and we will try to assist.

Write To:
About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

Email:
info@abouttime.org.au

An Idea to Support Good Mental Health

By King

King writes from a prison in QLD.

Hello! My name is King. I'm 26 years old and currently incarcerated in Queensland. I'm writing to About Time with an idea in mind that I believe could help our nation's prisoners' morale – giving hope to the hopeless and saving some lonely souls that believe they have lost everyone, no friends and family to ring or write to, no one that checks on them, to support them, to make them feel understood and accepted or even someone to just talk to – on the inside with them or the outside!

The saying "don't make friends in jail" doesn't make sense to me because, right now (this is just my experience but I'm sure I'm not the only only one that feels this way), some of the girls I have met in jail have been bigger supports than a lot of people I knew prior to being arrested! They've hugged me for no reason. They walk me back to the unit. They sit up with me if I'm waiting to go to medical at night. They tell me they love me every day and night. It's also said that a friendly smile and a quick "hi" from a stranger can change a person's mood, their outlook on life, and help them feel seen! It can save someone's life!

With all that constantly on my mind, I can't help but wonder what can be done to help the mental health of our fellow inmates around Australia. So I've come up with an idea! A readily available penpal list that could be published monthly in the About Time newspaper and posted fortnightly or monthly on the notice boards around the jails all over Australia. It would be completely voluntary, with prisoners able to request their name or initials and CRNs along with what centre they're at to be put on said lists or removed. I understand my idea isn't perfect, so feedback, tips, suggestions, criticism (good or bad) – it's all welcome.

Response from About Time:
Hi King!

Thank you for your letter and the suggestion. Unfortunately we're unable to facilitate pen pal connections, though we wrote an article in a previous edition of About Time about the importance of letter writing in prison and the need for pen pals to better mental health. We hope corrections departments around the country take your suggestion on board!



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Tim, J.B., Elizabeth, Atila, Ahmed, Brett, Chris, S, Daniel, Sam, Andrew, Kyam, David, Robert, Scott, Matthew, Aiken, T, M, Edward, Mick, Fergal, Grant, Ed, Travis, Sam, Deoni, Roland, Jacqueline, Shane, Roy, Russell, Karie, Adrian, David, Jake, Jamie, King, Gazza, Garth, R.B., all those that chose to remain anonymous and many more.

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

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

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

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Letters From the Outside

Responses to your letters and submissions, provided via our comment section on the About Time website.

In response to "Luv Ya Bro, on the 'Inside' and the 'Outside'" by David
It's that lived experience of feeling the luv that gets to incarcerated men over the line and mentally safe. Words and actions that demonstrate connection between men are extremely healing. From my experience as a coach working in the prison system. Great article David. – Brendan

In response to "Special Moments Do Happen in Prison" by Samantha, on her engagement to Thor
That's a great story and I wish you both every success and happiness. As I approach my 30th wedding anniversary, if I may offer some advice ... keep communicating honestly with each other and you will be fine. – Peter

In response to 'Vickie Roach's Message to People Inside'
What an inspirational piece. So much good she has done. – Fran

In response to 'The Dark Side of Gains'
Great article Ronin! It's not talked about enough, hey. I work at a service called Peer Qnect and we have a peer steroid educator who has lived experience of steroids. Our number is 1800 175 889 – free confidential service weekdays 9am-4pm. If you're interested in other info you can email peerqnect@quivaa.org.au – Emily

In response to "Picturing the Impact of Prison Through Photovoice" by Mr Bevan Argent and Dr Patricia Morgan
I met you at the conference in Mparntwe, Bevan, and you are an inspiration. – Patrick

In response to "Great Balls of Fibre!": Knitting in Prison
You're a legend Sam! – Brendan

In response to Gazza's question about debts in prison
Unfortunately by the time someone is released, the debts have increased significantly due to the compounding of interest and penalties. A team of financial counsellors have been advocating for some measures such as a checklist to prompt individuals before they go in, to attend to. These measures can include contacting banks, landlords, utility providers, motor vehicle financiers etc. It is also helpful to contact the National Debt Helpline and authorise a financial counsellor to act on behalf of the individual before going in. If authorisation is not done beforehand, it can take months before it is executed. Without the individual's authority, a financial counsellor will not be able to advocate on the individual's behalf due to privacy and consent. With authorisation in place, a financial counsellor can contact all creditors and negotiate moratoriums, hardships, account closures etc. The service is at no cost to the individual and is confidential. Not all prisons give access to financial counsellors, but those that do will either enable face-to-face consultations, online or phone. Good luck Gazza. – CJ

In response to "Changes in the Law: Machete Ban in Victoria"
Travellers in RVs, caravans etc. frequently crooks into Victoria for short periods and many do possess machetes used for all sorts of jobs in the bunch when camped. What are they supposed to do, get rid of their camping tool before entering the state and then buy a new one when they move on? When do we finally get parity with our laws Australia wide? – John



News and Investigations

'Question Everything': Rethinking Wrongful Convictions in Australia



By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

A key issue in Australia is the level of underfunding for legal aid across the country, with Ruyters saying these organisations are stretched so thin they are unable to spend enough time on each case.

"They are all in absolute crisis, and so are the prosecution bodies," Ruyters said.

"Everything is stacked against a legally-aided accused."

Racial disadvantage and police misconduct also "permeate everything", Ruyters said.

There has been a long-running push in Australia for the establishment of a criminal cases review commission, which would investigate claims of innocence and have the power to refer cases back to courts of criminal appeal.

Similar commissions have been established in New Zealand, Canada and England.

New Zealand's Criminal Cases Review Commission allows anyone convicted of a crime who believes they have suffered a miscarriage of justice to apply for an independent review. The commission is independent of ministers, the courts and the government.

Since it launched in mid-2020, it has received nearly 550 applications and referred four cases back to appeals courts.

The United Kingdom's Criminal Case Review Commission was launched in 1997. In 2024–25, it received more than 1,500 applications and referred 31 cases back to the courts.

Across Australia, someone convicted of a crime can request one appeal against the conviction. If they fail, they can then attempt to appeal to the High Court.

But these courts do not re-hear a case from scratch, and new evidence can only be reintroduced if it could not have reasonably been presented at the original trial.

In all jurisdictions except for New South Wales and the Northern Territory, you can also ask for a second appeal from the state or territory appeal court, if there is fresh and compelling evidence proving that a miscarriage of justice has taken place.

For Ruyters and the Bridge of Hope team, reforming these appeals processes would be more important than creating a new commission.

"We're not opposed to the idea of a commission, but it's not going to help, because it'll always be tied to our appeal provisions," she said.

"Unless you break those open and make it easier for people to appeal, there's no point in having a criminal case body that'll pump more people through the same system and get the same narrow logjam."

Ruyters said it's important for people caught up in the criminal justice system to make sure they understand what is going on and ask questions if they don't.

"Question everything," she said. "Don't hesitate to speak out if you don't understand.

"This is your life, and they're your rights. Ask questions of your lawyers and everyone you come into contact with. If there's something you don't understand, it's your right to understand everything you're presented with. You need to be in charge of your own life."

Mental Health Services in Prison Successfully Billed to Medicare

By Damien Linnane

Damien Linnane is the editor of Paper Chained, a quarterly journal for art and writing which is made available to all people in NSW prisons.

Earlier this year, in what may be an Australian first, over-the-phone mental health appointments from prison were arranged and bulk-billed under Medicare. This was a concerted effort from me and a small team of legal and medical professionals.

Medicare is defined as a "universal health scheme" available to all Australian citizens and some foreign nationals. Prisons, however, have never billed services to Medicare as they believe that legislation forbids them from doing so. In the absence of Medicare, state-run or state-funded private prison health services are often not equipped to provide the level of care required. Some services are not provided simply because no non-Medicare equivalent of them exists, while others are not funded appropriately to meet the needs of a vulnerable and growing prison population.

However, inmates themselves don't lose their Medicare coverage. If someone inside has ever had a Medicare card, there is still an active one in their name, even if they don't have the physical green card in their property. Medicare cards automatically renew, and inmates have always been allowed to use Medicare services on day release.

After much research, last year I co-wrote an article with Medicare expert Dr Margaret Faux and human rights lawyer Anthony Levin, which was published in the Journal of Law and Medicine. Due to the wording of the relevant legislation, and existing High Court precedent, the article argued that legislation does not actually prevent the billing of health services in prison to Medicare and that it is also not legal to deny billing to Medicare in prison when no equivalent services are provided by the prison.



Willy Pleasance

People in prison have the right to book a private medical appointment with their own practitioners via video or phone. However, this option is rarely used, partially as appointments must be paid for by incarcerated people or their families. So far, this has occurred without Medicare rebates, as there was a commonly held belief that this was not allowed. The independent legal advice our team sought outlined that billing mental health telehealth services to Medicare is completely legal. Additionally, if a prison were to refuse to allow access to an external appointment on the grounds that it was being billed to Medicare, Dr Faux has suggested it would "likely be the trigger for a legal challenge".

There are unfortunately logistical issues with this option. Firstly, it is not always easy to arrange an external medical appointment over telehealth in custody. Our first attempt to schedule a requested appointment with a prisoner was delayed by the prison for months, while the second attempt at a different prison was approved in only a week. Obviously, some medical conditions also can't be treated over telehealth, and not all medical professionals offer telehealth appointments. If you want a mental health care plan, the referral needs to come from your existing GP in the community, rather than a GP employed by the prison. Furthermore, most health professionals charge more than the rebates provided by Medicare, meaning people in custody or their families will have to pay the full fee upfront and claim back their Medicare rebate – online systems make this process easy, and the health professional will often do it for you.

People in custody also have the right to apply to be taken to a medical practitioner in the community. However, they must pay for their own transport and escort by correctional officers. In NSW, the average cost of paying for transport to see a medical professional in the community, such as a psychologist, is $1,060 per trip. Paying the telehealth fee upfront and then claiming a Medicare rebate is considerably cheaper, and the fact that this option exists is something people in prison need to be aware of.

If you attempt to access Medicare services via telehealth in prison and face any difficulties, you can write to Damien for advice:

Damien Linnane
PO Box 2073
Dangar, NSW 2309

Parole Undermined

The current parole system often results in more harm than good

By Daniel Vansetten

Daniel Vansetten spent nearly 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study a Bachelor of Laws. He uses his lived experience and study to advocate for prison reform and support the rights of people in prison.

Parole is the conditional release of an incarcerated person from prison before their sentence is complete. The New South Wales Government says that the purpose of parole is "to supervise and support the reintegration of offenders". Ideally, parole should enhance rehabilitation and reintegration. In the recent decade, however, rules restricting the granting of parole and a lack of housing options undermine these intended benefits.

Judges decide how long a person may spend on parole when setting a head sentence and a non-parole period. Presumably, judges spend a lot of time considering all the relevant factors when setting non-parole and parole periods, including past circumstances, any prior offences, prospects of rehabilitation and, most importantly, the appropriate length of time on parole for best outcomes.

Today, it is common for people to be incarcerated for many months, sometimes years, over their non-parole period – not because of inappropriate behaviour but due to unjustified delays.

Two of the most common causes of delay are difficulties gaining housing and the inability for a person in prison to be enrolled in prison-run rehabilitation programs prior to parole. In my own experience, after serving almost 10 years in prison, I was due to see the parole board around February 2020. Administrative delays and difficulty finding "suitable accommodation" resulted in me spending an extra two years in prison. Although my parole was due in February 2020, I was released on parole in February 2022.

Many parolees wait many months, sometimes years, for housing considered "suitable for release". Australia is experiencing a housing crisis. Rentals are expensive and hard to obtain. People applying for government housing are on waiting lists said to be up to eight years long.

Furthermore, strict rules often prevent parolees from living with family members who may have criminal convictions. The contradiction is evident in the fact that a parolee can live in a sharehouse with many other parolees or a block of flats containing tenants that pose more risk than the prohibited homes owned by family members. Such rules are particularly detrimental to Indigenous people, who have deep connections to family, which is said to be the cornerstone of Aboriginal culture as well as social, emotional and spiritual support.

Poor administration of rehabilitation programs in prisons also causes delays for parole. While corrections may deem it necessary for a person to complete certain programs, they often fail to deliver them in a timely manner. In South Australia, for example, it was not uncommon for prisoners to be informed of a requirement to complete a program after their application for parole, despite already having spent many years in prison. Enrolment and completion of such programs can then take up to two years.

Spending longer than expected in prison is extremely distressing.

People who do the right thing in prison should have an expectation of release on parole close to the date determined by the courts.

Every extra day spent in prison is another day in a hostile environment, another day away from children and other loved ones, another day prohibiting positive activities to get life back on track, another day of increased institutionalisation.

The uncertainty of the elusive release date can also be extremely distressing. One would think that the best chance of success for parole requires as much certainty as possible with respect to a release date. Not knowing a release date well in advance results in an inability to plan and prepare. Parolees cannot organise employment or accommodation well in advance without the risk of letting a potential employee or landlord down. In my circumstances, I was informed on a Friday afternoon that I would be released Monday morning – just two and a half days' notice. I did not have clothes, bedding or other basics ready for my first day in the community after almost 12 years inside.

Even those indifferent to the plight of prisoners should be critical of the burden of the current system on state finances. Australians spent $6.4 billion last year on housing imprisoned people. At $100,000–$150,000 per head per year, keeping imprisoned people over their non-parole periods is wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.

The administration of justice is also undermined by the current system. Corrections and the parole boards wield the power to simply disregard the wisdom and careful consideration that judges put into sentencing. This is demonstrated by the advice that corrections gives to prisoners, with one state routinely advising that "we prioritise program enrolment with consideration to the end date of a sentence".

The ultimate tragedy of delaying parole was exemplified in the Victorian Coroner's recent findings on the death of Heather Calgaret. Ms Calgaret died in custody because of healthcare failures, one month after having her parole denied. Ms Calgaret's parole was denied because her nominated residence, her mother's house, was deemed to be "unsuitable". The coroner criticised the parole process, stating,

"Whether and how a parole application progresses has the potential to impact on a person's continuing incarceration, and all that flows from being in custody of the state."

The current system often results in more harm than good. While change is difficult to see, this coronial finding appears to put prison authorities on notice.



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ACT

Overcrowding impacting service delivery in youth prison
A sharp increase in the number of children and young people detained in the ACT has led to concerns over a lack of access to education and other programs.

The ACT National Preventive Mechanism conducted inspections of the territory's Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and flagged potential issues over staffing pressures, incidents of excessive use of force and a lack of trauma-informed approaches.

The youth prison can hold up to 40 people but is staffed to support 21 young people. In April this year, the average daily number of people held at the centre was 27.

The report found that this "significant and sustained increase" in the number of young people in detention has led to issues in the centre upholding the rights and wellbeing of the young people in its care.

"Young people are spending too long in their unit with little to do, which is not good for their mental health and can heighten tension in the centre," the report said.

"Without active, busy days, young people do not have enough outlets to let off steam, and tensions are likely to fester, heightening safety and security risk."

Commission calls for human rights training for prison staff
The ACT Human Rights Commission has called for workers at the Alexander Maconochie Centre to receive ongoing human rights education and training.

The recommendations came after the ACT Supreme Court found in early September that the human rights of a First Nations woman in the prison had been seriously breached.

The court found that the woman, who had a history of trauma and was in a state of extreme distress after she was denied a request to attend her grandmother's funeral, had her rights breached through use of force against her, an attempted strip search and an actual strip search.

In response to the court's findings, the ACT Human Rights Commission called on the ACT Government to immediately implement comprehensive and ongoing human rights training for all workers at the territory's only prison.



NT

Use of isolation in youth detention in the spotlight
An investigation has found that a First Nations child was kept in solitary confinement for 84 hours and was denied food and medication as a coercion "tactic".

The report by the NT Office of the Children's Commissioner revealed that youth justice officers at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre kept the child in isolation for three and a half days following a riot at the facility early last year.

In an attempt to get the child to move blocks, they then denied him food and medication.

The report found that the boy had pleaded over the intercom for food but was denied.

The commissioner made five recommendations to the NT Government, but three were rejected, including ones relating to food service, administering medication after hours and the detection of weapons.

Prison officers go on strike
A number of prison officers have undertaken industrial action for the first time in Northern Territory history.

In mid-September about 45 corrections facility managers began the action in response to the Northern Territory Government's latest enterprise agreement offer, claiming the government was holding their entitlements "to ransom".

The industrial action included work stoppages for up to two hours, the banning of on-call work and other protected actions.

The Northern Territory Government also confirmed that work had started on a new women's sector at the Darwin Correctional Precinct in September.

This new area will be an 88-bed facility and is expected to open by the end of the year.



WA

Prison farms facing "significant strain"
Western Australia's three minimum-security prison farms are under significant strain due to the number of people in prison.

The Karnet, Pardelup and Wooroloo prison farms provide pre-release programs and also produce food such as meat, eggs, dairy, fruit and vegetables for prisons around the state.

All three of these prison farms are currently close to being full.

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) released a report into the prison farms in September, finding that their rehabilitation and reintegration potential was not being maximised due to population pressures, staffing shortages and ongoing delays in treatment assessments.

"Prison farms have historically played a crucial role in preparing individuals for life beyond prison," OICS Inspector Eamon Ryan said.

"However, they are now facing significant strain due to increasing prisoner numbers, constrained resources and delays in treatment assessments.

"These pressures are limiting the system's ability to meet prisoner needs and diminishing opportunities for meaningful rehabilitation prior to release."

The OICS recommended the WA Government take steps to reduce processing delays in assessment and approval of people in prison for external activities and the employment program, but these recommendations were not supported.

Accelerated prison officer training
The state government has announced a new accelerated training program for people with prior adult custodial experience looking to re-enter the workforce.

It's part of an effort to bring more prison officers on board and is on top of a regional-based training initiative and new regional financial incentives.

The six-week Accelerated Training Program is half the length of the normal 12-week course and is available to qualified individuals from Australia or New Zealand who hold a Certificate III in Correctional Practice.

Twelve graduates have already completed the shorter training in September.



QLD

Class action planned over youth justice conditions
A class action lawsuit is being planned over conditions in youth detention centres in Queensland.

Law firm Levitt Robinson is preparing a class action on behalf of children who were incarcerated at five detention centres across the state, seeking compensation for those subjected to isolation, poorly kept cells, excessive use of force and a lack of services.

The class action will be on behalf of people held at Cleveland, Brisbane, West Moreton, Sir Leslie Wilson and John Oxley youth detention centres.

It will be for people who were subject to lockdowns due to staffing shortages and who were placed in unhygienic cells with no running water or working toilet.

It will allege that these children did not have access to education, meaningful out-of-cell time and psychosocial supports.

Lockyer prison officially opens
The first people have been incarcerated at the new Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre, west of Brisbane.

The centre has capacity for more than 1,500 people and will eventually have 800 prison officers.

Queensland Corrective Services Commissioner Paul Stewart said the high-security prison was designed with a focus on rehabilitation and that there were no bars on the windows.

"We've done things to increase the amount of daylight that prisoners have access to, higher ceilings, better sound, and that's for prisoners and staff," Stewart said.

People incarcerated at other prisons in the state will be moved to the new facility, with no timeline for when it will reach close to its full capacity.



SA

Isolation at youth prison may breach international law
A report into the use of isolation at a South Australian youth detention facility has warned that the regular use of the practice may be in breach of international human rights law.

The investigation, conducted by Training Centre Visitor Shona Reid, found that the use of isolations to manage behaviour was common, with young people locked in their rooms for long periods with reduced access to education, exercise or human connection.

The report found that this may be contrary to the state's Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Training Centres and in breach of international law.

"The use of isolation as a routine response to complexity, behavioural risk or staffing constraints undermines the rehabilitative intent of youth detention and reflects a failure to meet required standards of care," it said.

The investigation found that isolation was being used at the facility without giving thought to a child's development stage, disability, trauma history or cultural identity.

It called on the state government to make amendments to make sure that all isolation practices are regulated and conform with the law, make improvements to record keeping and invest in non-punitive de-escalation practices.

"Until these changes are enacted, the rights and wellbeing of children in custody remain at risk," the report said.

Prison expansion plans revealed
More than 100 new beds will be in place in prisons around the state by the end of next year as part of a new prison expansion plan.

The new beds are on top of a new 40-bed facility at Adelaide Women's Prison, with construction underway.

The 116 new beds will be spread across the state's prison network, with 32 at Mount Gambier Prison, 50 at Adelaide Remand Centre and 34 at Adelaide Women's Prison.

The women's prison will have a total capacity of 326, with the state government also planning to install contraband perimeter fencing and new cameras at the prison.

More than 300 high-security beds are also being built at the Yatala Labour Prison.



VIC

Second set of bail reforms pass
A second tranche of bail reforms has been passed by the Victorian Parliament.

The changes will make it harder to receive bail if you are a repeat offender and introduce tougher bail tests for "high-risk offenders".

There will be new bail tests applied to anyone on bail who is then charged with home invasions, carjackings, armed robberies and aggravated burglaries.

The courts will be ordered to deny bail unless they are satisfied there is a high degree of probability the person will not commit one of these offences if bail were to be granted.

There will also be a tougher bail test for those accused of repeatedly committing crimes such as burglary, car theft, assault, riot and affray, and weapon offences.

The new bail laws were opposed in parliament by the Greens, the Legalise Cannabis Party and the Animal Justice Party.

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service said the bail reforms will disproportionately impact First Nations Victorians.

"These dangerous bail laws are a crisis for Aboriginal people who, when charged with offences they have not even been found guilty of, are unable to remain connected to family, community and culture or access support services," the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service said in a statement.



NSW

First voluntary assisted dying case
A man incarcerated in a NSW prison has accessed the voluntary assisted dying scheme for the first time.

The man, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer after seven years in custody, died in hospital in late August after his application for voluntary assisted dying was approved by Justice Health.

Accessing this scheme is based on set criteria and governed by the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board, which is an independent oversight and decision-making body.

Corrective Services NSW does not play a role in this decision-making process.

Record number of Aboriginal deaths in prison
There were a record number of First Nations deaths in prisons in New South Wales in the last year.

In 2024–25, 10 First Nations people died in prison in NSW, the highest number in the last decade, of a total of 27 deaths in custody.

Four First Nations people died at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre, and two died at Parklea Correctional Centre. The four other deaths in custody occurred in other prisons around the state.

The highest number of First Nations deaths in prison in NSW before this last year was six, in 2019-20.



TAS

Prison visitor charged with bringing drugs in
A visitor to the Risdon prison has been charged with allegedly bringing drugs into the facility during a professional visit with an inmate.

The individual has been charged with two counts of possessing drugs and two counts of unlawfully taking unauthorised articles into a prison.

They were "intercepted" while trying to carry the drugs into the Tasmanian prison in late August, while conducting an "authorised meeting" with a person in the prison.

The woman will appear before the Hobart Magistrates Court at a later date.



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Pentridge Prison's Hidden Music History Unearthed

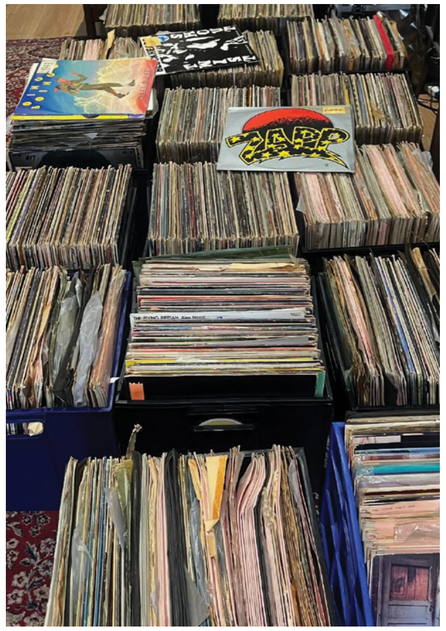

Image supplied by Footscray Records

A rediscovered record collection sheds light on everyday life inside one of Victoria's most notorious prisons

By Allison Harding

Did you know the bluestone walls of Pentridge Prison once reverberated with the sounds of reggae, punk, pop and country? The music came from the cell of the chosen DJ who operated the prison-only network for other incarcerated people.

It's a part of the jail's history that had been largely lost in time until a Melbourne record shop owner shared on social media in late August that he had purchased a collection of 2,000 records from Pentridge.

Joshua Smith, the owner of Footscray Records, in Melbourne's inner west, now wants to hear from anybody who can fill him in on the history of the collection and its importance to those at "Bluestone College".

Pentridge, in Melbourne's north, was established in 1851 and officially closed in 1997. The site is now home to apartments, a cinema, shops, a piazza, and creative studios. The National Trust runs tours of the former prison buildings.

Josh, who has owned the store for nearly four years, was intrigued when a woman reached out to him earlier this year.

"We regularly advertise that we buy and sell records, and one day we had a cold call from a woman who said she had a collection of records from Pentridge," he told About Time.

While the records were not in immaculate condition – about one quarter sat in plain folders rather than the original jackets, and some had songs scratched out – Josh felt it was important cultural memorabilia.

"The collection is not what I would normally look for, but it obviously has historical value," he said. "It is mainly LPs, but there are also 12-inch singles and even old 78s (made from shellac, rather than vinyl)."

Josh said the seller was connected to one of the companies involved in the redevelopment of the Pentridge site and believes the records had been in storage for at least 20 years.

He is now cataloguing the titles, which include everything from novelty records, soundtracks, poetry, pop and country to punk, psychedelic and hard rock.

"It's a real mix of genres – a lot of popular music, a surprising number of reggae recordings and even albums from 1960s French singer Françoise Hardy," he said.

"Considering how brutal I believe the place was, it's surprising those at Pentridge were allowed to have access and enjoy music – it's an interesting piece of humanity."

Doug Morgan, who served more than a decade at Pentridge in the 1970s and 1980s, told About Time that the radio station was set up in D Division, which was home to prisoners on remand and sometimes those in protection.

"Before televisions were allowed in cells, music was pretty much the only form of entertainment," he said. "The DJ, who was usually an older guy who had done a fair amount of jail, had the cell set up with equipment and records. The music would be broadcast to speakers in other cells.

"It was good entertainment because reading was the only other option. Guys could drop their requests into a box and sometimes request songs that they knew would annoy other people. It passed the time and was a bit of fun and entertainment."

Doug, who now mentors and supports at-risk youth, added that it was a "different style of jail" in the 1970s and 1980s. While he doesn't know where the records came from, he said there was more community involvement, with drama groups coming in and the guys making wooden or stuffed toys for children.

"It was definitely a different style of jail compared to these days," he said.

Since the story of the record collection spread on social media, Josh has heard from at least three parties interested in purchasing the collection, but he is not sure if he wants to sell.

"I want to do what's best for the collection given it's such an interesting piece of history," he said. "There are not many scribbles on the covers, but there is one that simply says, 'I hate this place.'"

Josh is keen to hear from anybody with information about the collection and the prison radio.

You can email him at:
footscrayrecords@gmail.com

or write to us at:

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Entrance to Drug Court at Dandenong

What are Drug Courts?

A deep dive into the workings of Victoria's specialist drug courts

By Stacey Stokes

Drug Courts are specialist courts that can provide an alternative to imprisonment for those who have offended due to drug dependency. Drug Courts are designed with the intention of addressing the underlying causes of offending – the drug use itself – rather than simply placing a person in prison without fixing the problem. The first thing that struck me during my visit were participants thanking the magistrate for the opportunity to be on the order. Each time, the magistrate responded by saying that people should thank the politicians that made the laws to do so. In the current tough-on-crime climate, this stood out as different and important.

The Drug Court in Victoria was formed in 2002 by the state government, as a way to tackle drug related offending. It allows for people to be sentenced to intensive treatment orders rather than imprisonment or other more punishing sentencing options.

The orders seem very intensive. They're supposedly made this way so they can benefit people who haven't been able to do it alone, who maybe have exhausted every other option and everyone else in the process. It's for those struggling to the point they are now facing prison.

Participants are sentenced to a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order (DATO). The order is managed by a Drug Court magistrate, with support provided by a large team including case managers who are specialist community corrections officers, a clinical advisor, drug and alcohol counsellors, a Victoria Legal Aid solicitor, housing support workers and more.

While this article only explores the workings of drug courts in Victoria, other states also have similar courts. New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia have similar specialist drug courts, Queensland has the Drug and Alcohol Court (QDAC), and the ACT has the Drug and Alcohol Sentencing List (DASL). In Tasmania, a drug diversion program gives a magistrate the option to divert an eligible person into a drug treatment program. If you're interested in learning more about the specifics of these drug courts, please contact legal aid, your lawyer or your community legal centre.

To be eligible for Drug Court in Victoria a person must:

- plead guilty
- live in a Drug Court catchment area
- be dependent on drugs and/or alcohol and have had this lead to their offending
- agree to the order
- not be on a Parole Order, a Combined Custody and Treatment Order or a Sentencing Order of the County or Supreme Court.

The offence/s must also not be sex offences or offences involving bodily harm (unless of a minor nature), and it also must be likely that the person would get a prison sentence – but not one that is more than two years long. If someone is homeless, there's an option for short-term housing as a part of their order, with a co-contribution to be paid by the participant. Finding stable accommodation would then be made a goal of the order.

There are a range of core conditions to comply with, as with other community based orders, including to undergo treatment for drug and/or alcohol dependency.

The magistrate must attach at least one program condition to the order. The orders are hard, but there is also a lot of possibility for the order to be tailored to the individual, which is part of what allows it to help lift people up.

The order comprises three phases: stabilisation, consolidation and maintenance, and reintegration. It is not uncommon for participants to move back and forth between the phases over the two-year order, depending on their progress and treatment needs.

PHASE 1: STABILISATION

The participant is supported with their immediate needs. Participants are not punished for their drug or alcohol use provided they are honest about what they have used. In this phase, they:

- are assigned a CCS Drug Court case manager
- have a detailed case management plan developed
- terminate criminal associations
- commence and actively participate in the case management program
- meet weekly with the members of their Drug Court team and arrive to appointments on time
- attend court weekly
- submit to urine tests, three times a week.

PHASE 2: CONSOLIDATION

Participants are promoted to phase 2 when they have established control over their drug or alcohol use. In this phase, they:

- meet fortnightly with the members of their Drug Court team and arrive at appointments on time
- commence and actively participate in life skills programs which may include financial/ budget, vocational/educational, cognitive skills training, parenting/ relationships, life skills, counselling etc.
- attend court fortnightly
- submit random urine tests, twice a week
- develop new leisure activities.

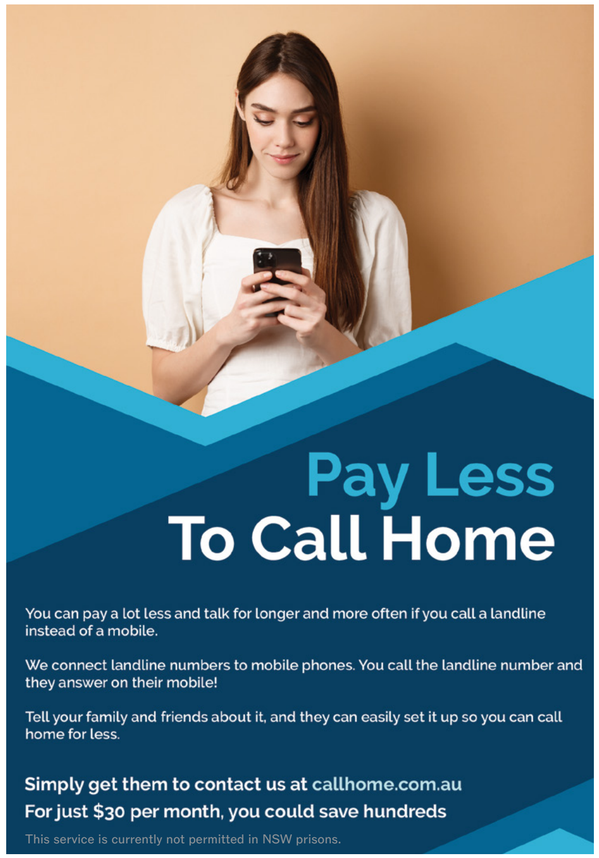
PHASE 3: MAINTENANCE AND REINTEGRATION

It is expected that participants will be abstinent from drugs and alcohol. Participants are supported to maintain the changes they have made and be reintegrated into the community through work or study. In this phase, they:

- attend court monthly
- submit random urine tests, twice a week
- seek/gain employment or commence an educational or vocational training program
- meet monthly with the members of their Drug Court team and arrive to appointments on time
- have a crime-free lifestyle
- have stable accommodation/income.

Regular hearings will occur as the person attends court, as directed by their order. During these hearings, the magistrate will speak to the order, assess compliance and determine the appropriate program phase. If they think the DATO should be terminated, then a breach hearing is scheduled. If after the hearing the magistrate decides to cancel the order, then the participant can be required to serve some or all of the prison sentence that was suspended when they were placed on the order.

All of this may sound like a lot – and it is. Jail may be easier in many people's eyes, as this order is not the easy way out. It is hard work. But that is what real change takes. Those on this order must approach it with a genuine commitment to fix the things behind the drug use, not just the drug use itself.



● Experiences

Using Your Voice for Change

By Daniel Vansetten

The following is a summary of a recent discussion on the Advocacy in Action Podcast, run by Daniel Vansetten.

Continued from page 1.



Shane Cuthbert was once in prison – now he is in politics, fighting for rights of the criminalised. Shane advocates for youth, human rights, homelessness and mental health. "I probably would call myself an advocate," he told the podcast. "I recently graduated law. When we are studying law, we talk a lot about advocacy, particularly advocacy in the courtroom and advocacy for your clients."

Shane started studying right after his release from prison. "I had a really good psychologist when I left prison. I actually started out studying psychology because I thought, 'I wanna be a psychologist like this guy that's helped me change my life. I wanna go and help other people change their lives.'"

Always pushing barriers, Shane was not content with one degree. "I thought, well, look, I'll do a double degree. I'm sort of interested in the law. It's been used against me plenty in my life. So I started out originally focused on psychology and the law."

Shane's journey to politics began after a university assignment required him to develop a submission for a parliamentary committee. "We're only meant to submit it to the university, for grading. But I thought, hey, I've worked really hard on this thing. I'm actually going to submit it to the parliamentary inquiry. And I did. A couple of weeks later, I get a phone call from one of the staff there at parliament [saying] the members of parliament and this committee wants to speak to you about some of your submissions."

Shane recalled the emotion he experienced the first time he was asked to speak to a parliamentary committee.

"You know, from a prison cell 10 years ago, I would never have thought that some parliamentarian wanted to come down and talk to me and consider my story. I guess it was a bit of a spin out. I sort of had to take a back step and think, wait, what? These guys wanna talk to me. It did wonders for me on a personal level."

Shane ran for seats in the 2024 Cairns Regional Council election and Queensland state election. During both elections, the media regularly raised his criminal history. "It was tough," Shane told the podcast. "There were a lot of moments there where I'm thinking, 'What am I doing?' The anxiety is such a killer."

In facing and overcoming that adversity, Shane built more confidence and motivation to push forward. "It opened up these narratives of confronting the stigma, the bias that the general public [held]. Most people were saying, 'Hey, he's having a go and he's doing something with his life.'"

Today, Shane feels his work in advocacy has given him purpose and meaning in his life that helps keep him focused. "Meaning is really important. If you're not doing something you love and are passionate about, when you have those moments of self-doubt or things aren't going well in your life, it's so easy to resort back to what you knew – running amok and ending up back in jail."

Achieving change is one of the greatest rewards Shane experiences from advocacy.

"What do I love the most? Change, change, mate. On a personal level, it's that gratification. Externally, we're helping other people and we're changing other people."

Shane's advocacy champions community-based measures to prevent youth crime. When asked what he'd do if he had a magic wand, Shane confirmed, "I'd get that 24-hour youth centre. I've been banging on about it for six years." Hopefully, those in power in the Cairns area see the wisdom in this idea.

This discussion with Shane was inspiring, showing that everyday people can get involved in politics in meaningful ways.

If you want more information to understand how to make submissions in parliament, please do not hesitate to write to Shane or Dan at:

Daniel Vansetten
PO Box 8
Black Forest SA 5035



Supporting Those I Left Behind in Prison

One woman's journey back inside to support those who remained behind. An excerpt from the soon-to-be-released book by Project:herSELF

By Tahlia Isaac

Tahlia Isaac is the Founder and CEO of Project:herSELF, an organisation supporting women with conviction histories. Drawing on her own journey through addiction and incarceration, Tahlia uses storytelling to advocate for justice and empower women to shape their futures.



Image supplied by author

I drive through the gate and see women in blue. They're going about their morning, just like everyone else in the world – except they're in prison. Every time I see them, I'm reminded of how I used to go about my day.

I'd wake to the sound of the morning bell, the voice over the intercom: "Wake up, wake up, it's time to wake up." Some officers would sing it, others would scream it – as if prison wasn't already harsh enough. I'd get up, take the sheets down from my bed, fold them and have a shower.

From the shower, I'd step out cautiously, making sure no one was looking through my window as I got dressed. The blue. Always the blue. Socks and thongs. My favourite time of year was winter, when we could wear trackies. The elastic waistband means you're never conscious of how unhealthy you're becoming from all the sedentary days and bread. There are no mirrors either, so a quick brush of the hair into a high ponytail, and I'm ready for the day.

"Muster up! Muster up!" I'm brought back to reality by the guard's voice. It's time to muster for headcount. After a while, this bizarre ritual becomes normalised. But, really, we've all been locked in concrete cells with 100 kilogram steel doors for the past 20 hours. No one can escape. We are all still here. And why are we calling it muster, like we're cattle out on a farm?

As I drive into the prison today, I'm reminded of the work women do to keep the place running. I see them going about their duties like it's normal – mowing lawns, taking out rubbish, packing other women's buy-up bags, raking leaves. The colour they wear will always be what connects us.

As I enter, I see the dog squad running over the top of women's lifelines – the mail.

Mail is such a critical connection to the outside world. While we in the community rarely think about sending a letter – we don't even know what it costs – women in prison trade their most prized possessions for an envelope. There's something disrespectful about the way officers let dogs walk over kids' drawings, lovers' notes, lawyers' letters telling the women when they might get free.

I'm given a duress alarm. It's mandatory for all visitors to a correctional facility, except during personal visits. It must be worn and visible, to protect you in case a woman attacks. I hate these alarms. To me, it's a silent signal to the women that they can't be trusted. That they're dangerous. That I don't feel safe. Which isn't true.

I move through the airlock. The sound of the lock dragging into the heavy steel. It takes your full body weight to push the door open. I'm finally inside the compound.

Morning chatter. The jingle of officers' keys. Occasional loud noises. I can't quite tell if it's a woman yelling with anger or joy. Words are muffled against the concrete buildings and wire fences. The concrete is only broken up by stunning murals painted by the women themselves. Acts of creativity. Culture. Storytelling. Hope in a place with so little. Dreams painted on walls as expressions of self.

These murals remind me that, although prison walls steal identity, the women still find ways to reclaim it.

I head to education to sit with 10 women and help plan for their release. When I get there, I'm met with confused looks. "We're in lockdown today," the education officers say.

I can feel the rage boil up, like two-minute noodles in the microwave. I think, "Are you for real? I drove two hours to get here to provide this service."

Then I remember lockdown days. The women would have been looking forward to getting out today. They'd be pissed to find out they're stuck – 12 women in a unit built for six. Tensions run high.

I curse myself for being so self-absorbed. So what if it inconveniences me? Imagine being the one locked in.

I think back to that time before, when I was in blue. It's frightening how quickly the drug scene became my entire identity. In my mind, everything I was and had was because of the gear. I never saw a life without it and never thought there could be a way out. Seven years ago, I was in the thick of it. I was smoking the most gear I had ever been smoking. I was dosing myself with frank every day. I was driving stolen cars, getting robbed and being an absolute menace to the community. Inside, I was scared and traumatised – imprisonment looming.

I've often been asked how I changed my life so dramatically: from being in blue to coming and going from prison as a service provider. All I can say is that it wasn't one thing that changed it all for me. It took so much time and continued focus to get to this point, but it started by deciding that I wasn't going to be coming back to this place – no matter the cost.

That meant letting go of everything I held true in my life and my identity. It meant humbling myself, realising I didn't know it all and I couldn't do it all without help. It meant letting go of all connection to that world and starting fresh. Letting go of debts owed, everything I owned, all my relationships.

Most of all, I just did the next thing. I just kept looking forward and with every setback I found a way around it, never losing sight of what I wanted: to stay the fuck out of prison and to stay off the gear. It was never easy, but, for my life now, it was all worth it. Through it all, a couple of people believed in me, even when I didn't think I was worthy of much. That's why I started Project:HerSELF, because I'm not special.

We are all worthy – every single one of us – of living our lives in the ways we want, even if all we know is what we don't want.

Project:HerSELF are looking for women who have been incarcerated to share their vision of justice, what needs to change and how lived experiences can drive meaningful changes in our systems and our communities.

Write to:
Project:HerSELF
P.O. Box 273
Cardwell QLD 4849

Email:
tahlia@projectherself.org.au

When Prison Feels More Like Home: A Cry for Change From Inside the System

By F.T.S.

F.T.S writes from a prison in NSW.



"Inside Out Outside In" by Megan, available to purchase from Boom Gate Gallery

I am raising this issue in the hope that sharing my story will spark change in the future. I am currently incarcerated in NSW. I've been in and out of prison ever since trying ice when I was 23 years old. I am now 29 years old.

I've been to seven different prisons in the last six years of my life, so far. The reason why I say "so far" is because, based on the current prison and justice system, I not only believe that I have a high chance of ending up back in prison in the future but also know for a fact that my current sentence here has physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually exhausted me. It has gotten to the point where my mind has now accepted this place as my home and I don't think I will be able to function as a normal person on the outside ever again.

I have pushed every single person who loves me and cares about me away due to my drug addiction and mental health problems. This has ultimately contributed to me being homeless and having no support systems or people in the outside world that I can truly depend on. I am now what society would call institutionalised.

I can still remember thinking to myself before the very first time I went to prison, "I am tired of living my life in fear, sleeping on the streets and depending on the generosity and kindness of complete strangers to get by."

So I literally did a petty crime on purpose, just so I could have a safe place to rest and some food to eat. It meant that I had to sacrifice my freedom for it – but it already felt like I was a prisoner of my own mind.

I know you may be thinking, "Surely there are better ways of handling situations like homelessness and drug addiction." But, honestly, I felt like I tried everything a person in my position could have possibly done at the time.

Obviously, I wouldn't have put myself in prison on purpose if I had felt like there was a better way, if I could have instead sought some sort of support from a prison prevention service which offered a stable living environment and food for people in that situation. I think that there still aren't even any available services like that in this day and age, whose purpose is solely focused on preventing prison time and/or reoffending amongst individuals – at least not where I'm from anyway. The current government seems more committed to locking people up and keeping them locked up rather than offering support services for people to avoid prison time or to help people get out of prisons and reintegrate them back into the community.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to give a hall pass to crime or justify criminal behaviour. I am merely trying to shed light from a personal perspective on an extremely important issue we have here in this supposedly "lucky country" (Australia).

It is even more unlucky for First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We only have an Indigenous population of around 3 per cent out of around 26 million people. But we make up a staggering of 33 per cent of people incarcerated in juvenile and prison systems in Australia. That's an alarming amount of our mob who are continually discriminated against and controlled by the system. I mean, c'mon now! Aren't these statistics enough evidence that just proves that this system is completely unfair and unjust? It's been like this for a long time now.

Don't you think that our own government would want to at least try to implement a different way of handling this by now? I mean, are they truly invested in Closing the Gap and wanting to stop history repeating itself? Isn't it ironic how they must think that we're the crazy ones, yet the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different outcome.

It's time for us as people to speak up about this hidden agenda of suppressing and isolating not just Indigenous people in prison systems around the country but also the disadvantaged.

It's time we unite to fix a broken system. This is a failing system – an unnecessary, inhumane, unbeneficial form of ancient punishment. It is not helping anybody – if anything, it's making broken people even more broken – and it's tearing families apart. Enough is enough.

Instead of putting the billions of dollars – yes, I said "billions", Google it (if you can) – on better things such as health, education, housing, rehab and prison prevention and reintegration services, to name a few, all would help prevent people from getting locked up in the first place and/or reoffending once released.

What we are in desperate need of is more help and understanding, rather than judgement and punishment.

People in prisons around the nation have already suffered enough for our own mistakes, and most of us continue to suffer long past prison times. Prisons do make us feel like we aren't worthy of forgiveness or acceptance from society.

Even if or when we do eventually get out of prison, we have missed out on a whole lot and have to start all over again. We are constantly trying to play catch up with the rest of the world, struggling to fit in.

We've been locked up for so long, with little to no real-life education courses or programs to do in prisons, we leave with no workplace experience, skills or qualifications to even attempt to be a part of this invisible void that consumes us – and so it brings us back home ... to prison. In prison, at least we have a sense of belonging and equality because, sadly, it's all we've grown to know.

As human beings, we all just want to feel valued and appreciated. We all long for love and acceptance. But if society wants people in prison to feel like we don't belong or to be continually ostracised for our past mistakes, then why would anyone in their right mind want to be a part of that society?



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:

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PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

• Learn

Gods, Battles and Hidden Messages: An Intro to Greek Mythology



By About Time



The Release of Prometheus, 1864 oil on canvas by Carl Bloch, Athens

What Is Greek Mythology?

Greek mythology is a collection of stories about gods, heroes, monsters, and the beliefs of Ancient Greece. The myths often include battles and adventures, and they taught lessons about bravery, love, intelligence, morality and more.

These stories were created by the Ancient Greeks, developed over centuries and passed down through generations. They used these stories to explain things happening in the world around them, like storms or earthquakes. That's why they had many different gods – for the sky, the sea, the forests, and even heroes who were half-human and half-god. Greek gods are not necessarily 'good' like many modern conceptions of 'god' tend to be. Instead, they are often flawed and obsessed with power. The Greeks therefore believed that the gods could be rewarded or punished for their actions, just like people.

It's hard to know exactly when Greek mythology started, but we know it's very old – about 4,000 years old! Despite this, the stories are still widely told and adapted to this day, and have been depicted in paintings, plays, books, movies, video games and hold many lessons for modern times.

Greek mythology includes many stories – it would take hundreds of editions of About Time to tell them all! We can include here short summaries of a few famous Greek myths. Maybe you've heard of some of them (or some gods!).



The Titanomachy, source: Greek Mythology

1. Theogony: Clash of the Titans (and the beginning of the Earth)

At the beginning of everything, there was only Chaos – a dark, empty, shapeless space. (This is where the English word 'chaos' meaning disorder or confusion comes from!). There was no Earth, no sky, no sea – just dense darkness. Then the Earth – personified by Gaia – was born out of Chaos. Gaia is Mother Earth, the matriarch of all existence. Gaia then gave birth to the sky – personified by Uranus (not to be confused with the planet – that was the name chosen by humans much later on!). Gaia also produced the mountains, the sea, the sun, the moon and stars. She did this all alone – from her own being.

After this, Gaia and Uranus mated together and had many children, including the Titans. Soon however, Uranus was afraid that his children would try to take his power, so he hid the Titans deep inside the earth.

But one of the Titans, Cronus, was stronger and braver than all the rest. He rose up and defeated his father Uranus to become the new ruler. Cronus then married Rhea – goddess of fertility, childhood and motherhood (also a child of Gaia and Uranus). They had children together that would eventually become gods, or the Olympians.

However, Cronus, like his father, was anxious that one of his children would take his throne. So, every time a baby was born, he swallowed it to keep it from growing up and rising against him.

But when his wife Rhea was pregnant with her sixth child, she wanted to save it. She secretly gave birth on a mountain in Crete and hid the baby. She named him Zeus.

To fool Cronus, Rhea gave him a rock wrapped in cloth, and Cronus swallowed it, thinking it was the baby. (This doesn't seem like a healthy relationship!)

Zeus, hidden in a cave in Crete, was raised by nymphs – these are less powerful female deities, often personifying nature like rivers, trees and mountains. When Zeus grew up, he found out what happened to his brother and sisters and sought to save them. He found his father Cronus, and tricked him into drinking a mixture of wine and mustard. The drink made him vomit – and in doing so, vomit up his five siblings – who came out fully grown! These five children, and Zeus, became 'the gods':

- Hera: (Queen of the gods)
- Hestia: (Goddess of the hearth)
- Demeter: (Goddess of the harvest)
- Hades: (God of the underworld)
- Poseidon: (God of the sea)

There was now a battle for power between Cronus' children (the gods) and the Titans. The huge war was called the Titanomachy and it lasted for ten years. In the end, Zeus and the gods won and sent the Titans to Tartarus, a dark and deep prison in the underworld.

Later, the gods also fought another long and violent war against the Giants, called the Gigantomachy. The gods won again.

Finally, the warfare stopped and Zeus became the king of the world. The gods went to live on Mount Olympus, ruling over everything.



Zeus, as depicted in Age of Empires



Prometheus depicted in a sculpture by Nicolas-Sébastien Adam, 1762 (Louvre)

2. Prometheus and the Fire

Zeus often gave gifts of power and nature to gods – but he didn't care much about humans (or mortals as they were often referred). But the Titan Prometheus had a sweet spot for the mortals – and wanted to help them. So, he climbed Mount Olympus, stole fire from the gods and gave it to people down below. With fire, the humans could now stay warm, cook, build tools and materials – all the important things to build civilisation! How nice of Prometheus!

Zeus, however, was furious. His punishment to Prometheus was ruthless. He chained him to a mountain and every day, an eagle came and ate his liver. Because Prometheus was an immortal god, the liver would grow back each night – only for the eagle to come and eat it again. This went on for 30 years, until Hercules (the hero – who also happens to be Zeus' son) came and set Prometheus free.



Three scenes depicting Pandora and her cursed container, illustrated by Walter Crane (1845-1915), via Creative Commons

3. Pandora's Box

After Prometheus gave fire to humans, Zeus also wanted revenge on all humanity. So, he told Hephaestus (God of blacksmiths, artisans, fire, and volcanoes), to make the first woman from earth and water.

Each god gave her a special gift: wisdom, beauty, cleverness, and more. Her name was Pandora, which means "all gifts."

Zeus gave Pandora a jar (often called a box) and told her never to open it. Then he sent her to Epimetheus, Prometheus' brother, as a gift as a bride.

Even though Prometheus had warned his brother not to accept any gifts from Zeus, Epimetheus accepted Pandora as his bride.

One day, Pandora couldn't resist her curiosity and opened the jar. Suddenly, all the evils of the world – like sickness, war, death, and pain – escaped and spread everywhere.



• Write to Us

What do you think these stories mean? What purpose do you think they serve? Can you find any hidden messages in them?

We'd love to hear your thoughts!

We would also love to hear if you have any other topics you'd like to learn more about.

You can write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Injury & Compensation Lawyers

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Speak directly to our Principal Lawyer Hanina Rind

Call 0478 861 131

• Legal Corner

What to Do: Mandatory Visa Cancellation Letters

By RACS (Refugee Advice and Casework Service)

This information is for people who have received a mandatory visa cancellation letter. This is information and not legal advice.

The letter usually looks like this:



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Registered Post

In reply please quote:
Client Name:
Date of Birth:
Alias:
Client ID:
File Number:

Dear

Notice of visa cancellation under s501(3A) of the *Migration Act 1958*

Purpose of this notice
You were granted a (your visa). The purpose of this notice is to advise you that on your visa was cancelled under s501(3A) of the Migration Act 1958 (the Act).

Section 501(3A) of the Act is a mandatory cancellation power, and provides that the Minister must cancel your visa if the Minister is satisfied that:
- you do not pass the character test, either because:
  - you have a substantial criminal record (as defined by s501(7)(a)) and the reason that you have a substantial criminal record is because of s501(7)(a), (b), or (c) of the Act; or
  - you do not pass the character test under s501(6)(a) because a court in Australia or a foreign country has convicted you of one or more sexually based offences involving a child; or the court has found you guilty of such an offence or found a charge for such an offence proved against you, even though you were discharged without a conviction; and
- you are serving a full-time sentence of imprisonment in a custodial institution because you have committed an offence or offences against Australian law.

Particulars of relevant information

Failure to pass the character test

What does it mean?

You got this letter to say that your visa has been cancelled due to your offending. This means you no longer hold a visa.

If you received a letter from the Department of Home Affairs about the cancellation of your visa, you should have also received a Revocation Request Form and a Personal Details Form.

What do I do?

If you want to ask the department to revoke the cancellation of your visa, you should complete and lodge these two forms within 28 days of receiving your visa cancellation notice.

You can lodge it by emailing it to the email address on the letter with the "in reply please quote" details.

It is very important that you lodge these forms within the 28-day time limit as no extensions can be granted. Immigration deadlines are very strict.

In addition to the Revocation Request Form and the Personal Details Form, you can write a short letter to the department with information that you want them to consider when they make a decision about whether they should revoke your visa cancellation.

After these have been submitted within 28 days, you can continue submitting supporting documents until a decision has been made. A list of documents we suggest you get is in this factsheet.

The department may consider the following things in making their decision:

- the protection of the Australian community
  - This includes the seriousness and nature of your conduct and the risk that you might re-offend
  - They can consider any courses or rehabilitation efforts you have engaged in
- the best interests of any children in Australia
- If you are able to complete the revocation form with as much detail about these children and, if available, include photos of them with you
- if you wouldn't be safe if you were returned to your home country
- your ties to Australia
- how long you have been here for, any work you've done here, any family you have here. (The Revocation Request Form asks you all these details)
- the difficulties you might face if you have to return to your country of origin (i.e. difficulties surrounding your age, health, lack of ties to the country that you will be returned to, hardship likely to result from deportation and your level of education).

If you get a negative decision, you will likely only have nine days to appeal. We ask that you then get legal help immediately.

Documents to collect

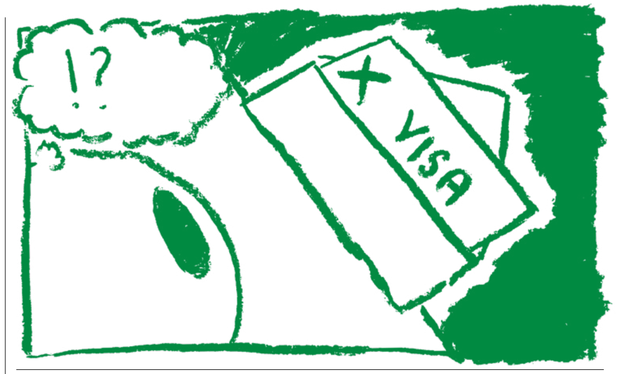
Set out below is a list of documents it would be good to obtain in support of a character test submission.

These documents should be submitted in addition to completing the Revocation Request Form and submitting it within 28 days.

Don't wait to have all these documents before submitting your revocation request. You can submit them afterwards.

Documents you may have in connection with your criminal case:

- professional psychiatric or psychological reports presented to the court
- sentencing reports that include positive information such as:
  - mitigating circumstances
  - positive comments on the unlikelihood of re-offending
  - comments that the offending was not of the most serious kind.
- parole assessments, parole reports (including a separate reference from the parole officer)
- probation reports.



Documents you could get from your time in prison:

- written references from prison counsellors or prison officers, who might talk about your behaviour in prison and rehabilitation
- evidence of any work, study or other programs that you have done in prison
- reference from the prison chaplain.

Medical documents:

- details of any medical or psychiatric treatment received overseas or in Australia, including any drug or alcohol rehabilitation
- your IHMS records from your time in immigration detention – you just ask your IHMS service provider for them
- evidence of any arrangements for treatment or other rehabilitation programs if you are released.

Documents from your time in the community:

- evidence of membership of social clubs or church groups
- evidence of membership of a trade union or professional association
- evidence of any offices held in community or public affairs
- evidence of any guarantee of future work
- any other evidence of your ties with and contributions to the community.

Documents from family and friends:

- written statements (or letters) from your family and friends, especially anyone who depends on you
- statement from your partner about your relationship, their intentions about the future of that relationship and how cancellation of your visa affects them
- statements from friends who live in Australia
- statement from a leader of a community group.

If you have a child/children:

- written statements from other caregivers describing your relationship with the child, positive influence on the child's life and impact of the visa cancellation on the child
- evidence of any courses, programs or counselling that will help you to be a positive part of the child's life – for example, parenting courses, anger management courses or seeing a psychologist or psychiatrist
- a copy of any court order about the child/children
- photos reflecting your positive relationship with the child
- if your child has any health issues, medical reports
- depending on the age of the child and whether the caregiver thinks it is appropriate, a letter from your child.

Getting legal help from RACS

RACS is entirely independent of the Department of Home Affairs. All assistance is free. RACS can provide refugees with legal advice on visa cancellation matters, but we rarely can represent them at the AAT. If your matter is at the AAT on a visa cancellation, or if you have no fears of persecution in your home country, we suggest at first instance you contact Legal Aid NSW's immigration team to see if they can assist you: (02) 9219 5790.

Legal Aid ACT Migration Clinic:
1300 654 314

Refugee Legal Vic:
(03) 9413 0100
(Wednesday & Friday 10am–2pm)

Legal Services Commission SA:
1300 366 424

Tasmania Refugee Legal Service:
(03) 6169 9473

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service QLD:
(07) 3846 9300

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission:
1800 019 343

Legal Aid WA Infoline:
1300 650 579



Legal Q&A

Why do some people get sentenced more for the same crime than others?

Question from someone imprisoned in VIC

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

Response by Volunteer Barristers for About Time

There are lots of reasons why people may get lighter or heavier sentences than someone else who has committed the same crime.

Firstly, when a judge or magistrate decides what sentence to give someone for a crime, they have to balance lots of competing considerations and principles, including some that are explicitly listed in legislation like the *Victorian Sentencing Act 1991* before deciding the penalty.

Reasonable minds might have different opinions as to what the appropriate sentence is in a case. It is not as simple as a mathematical exercise, and we can't know exactly how much weight they put on every factor.

Secondly, the judge or magistrate has to think about the offending itself and the nature and seriousness of the crime before arriving at the sentence.

Two different people might commit the same offence, such as assault, but this offence may have been carried out in different circumstances, which impacts the overall seriousness of the assault.

Thirdly, the judge or magistrate has to consider the matters that relate to the offender. Each offender who is sentenced is unique, and that has to be taken into account. This includes things like any prior criminal history, age, personal circumstances and story, their prospects of rehabilitation and whether they have experienced childhood deprivation or are living with mental health conditions.

When two people have committed the same crime together in the same case, the judge or magistrate might sentence them to different sentences because they had different roles in the crime and/or have different personal circumstances.

For example, one offender may have a longer criminal history or may have contested the matter at trial, meaning they may receive a longer sentence. The other offender may have a shorter criminal history and may have pleaded guilty to the crime, meaning they would likely receive a shorter sentence.



• Have a Question?

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

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

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

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

Write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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Reintegration

Sticking to the Road With Simon Fenech



Simon Fenech, Fruit2Work

An interview with About Time

Simon Fenech is the General Manager/Director at social enterprise Fruit2Work in Victoria. His transformation from a drug addict, buried deep in Australia's criminal underworld, to an inspirational figure, intent on changing the lives of others, is remarkable. Simon's leadership at Fruit2Work earnt him the nomination for a prestigious national award that recognises positive impact on the lives of others.

Thanks for speaking with *About Time*, Simon. Today, I want to ask you about reintegration. What should you be doing when you're inside, to prepare for release?

As soon as possible, try and mend as many bridges as you can. While you're in the right frame of mind under no influences or nothing, take the opportunity to pick up the phone or write a letter. Pick who you're going to come home to. You know who are the right influences in your life and who aren't. If you are planning on doing the right thing, you're not going to go moving in with one of your dealer's mates, right? You're gonna go with where there's some stability and normality ... It's about making sure you spend that time and effort while you're inside to foster good relationships, safe relationships, so that on the outside you're less likely to flip into the rest.

You need that for two reasons. One, you might need a parole address. Two, there's nothing better than having support when you come home. When I was in prison, they would ask me, "Have you got support when you go home?" And I'd say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." But I didn't. I thought by telling them that I had support when I came home it would make it easier, it would look better for me. In actual fact, what I did was cut my nose off to spite my face because then there was really no hope when I first came home.

If the prison has some sort of pre-employment programs, I would investigate those. I know in Victoria they do in a few of the prisons, and a lot of times you're lined up with a job before you come home.

What about for the first few weeks on release?

The first couple of weeks when you come home are probably the hardest. You have been away for a long period of time, been off everything, temptation is there, you bump into old friends. But, if you're going to do the same shit as you did before jail, guess what's going to happen?

You need to try something new. Meeting new people, talking about different stuff and putting your mind in a different place is a big help.

There's nothing better than you coming home and you walk straight into a job and you meet new people and you do different stuff. But it isn't going to be easy. When I came home, I thought I would be able to go straight back to a normal good life if I did the right thing. There are struggles when you come home – your shit gets stolen, your girlfriend runs off ... It's not as easy as you expect. But it's super important that you stick to the right road because, you do the right thing, good things come your way.

Do you have any tips to help people stick to that road?

From my experience, the best results I have seen are the ones that actually isolate themselves from the people who caused trouble.

There is an old saying: "If you sit in a barber's chair long enough, you will get a haircut." In other words, if you think that you can go hang around some old acquaintances and not do what you used to do, sooner or later that will happen.

Key to this is: don't use. It's clear as day. You've just spent time away. Your system is fairly clean. Don't go back to that world, because, if you think you can delve in that world and not go back to jail, you're fooling yourself.

When I was away, a guy came in from AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, and he said something to me, and I treat it as gospel and I teach everybody the same saying, and it really works:

"When you come home, try your life for six months without alcohol or drugs. If it's not any better, you can go back to that other life. What have you got to lose?"

But I guarantee you, if you don't use drugs or alcohol, your life will be a hundred times better.

I'm not going to educate you all about the dangers of using and your tolerance levels and all of the above. Don't put yourself in that position. If you're on a treatment program, like methadone or suboxone, stick to it. Try to reduce it. But don't use – by using, you're not only committing an offence but you're falling back into your old world again. Try to do it straight.

Take one day and one problem at a time. When I came home, all my stuff was stolen. I didn't really have a place to live, didn't have a licence and I couldn't get a job. I had to do 380 hours of community work, drug and alcohol programs, mental health programs, urine screens at the drop of a hat, see my case worker – it all seemed too hard. Going back to prison seemed easier, but it was not. That was for 18 months, and in the first three months I thought I wasn't going to succeed, that it was going to go so slowly, but it actually flew by.

The first three months are intensive when you come home with parole and corrections orders. Then they start to ease and you get through that order and nobody owns you anymore. Then you are really free. It's the best feeling in the world.

You've just spent all this time away, locked up. Now you're home, you've still got some hoops to jump through, so you're not entirely free, but you're on the way to being free. Just do what you have to do. Get it done. Make sure you pick up that phone if you're late for an appointment, make sure you communicate. It is the key. Otherwise you get breached. If you get breached, you're going back inside.

It's the basic stuff that made such a difference, right? I got a breach the first two times because I never picked up the phone. I avoided the phone calls coming. I couldn't get to my parole appointment. Then all these things breached me.

Set yourself up before you come home. Do the very best that you can. When you come home, have a good crack at doing the right thing. And it's not going to be easy. You're gonna have your good days and your bad days, but, if you stick with it, it will be worthwhile.



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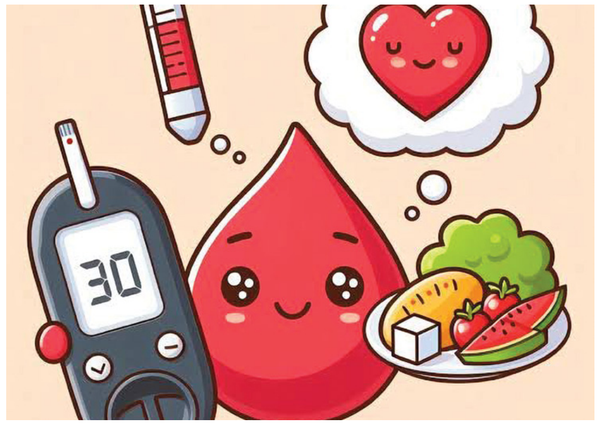
• Health

Ask the Doctor: Diabetes



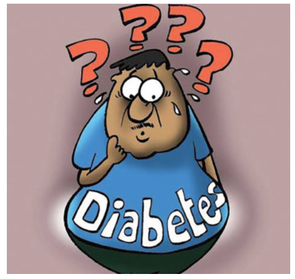
A doctor explains what diabetes is, what to look for and how to treat it

By Harley Stiebel

Harley Stiebel is a Resident Medical Officer at The Royal Children's Hospital and Founder of Scrublets.

Hello! I'm Harley, a doctor working in Victoria. I hope to be able to answer some of your health questions and explain a bit about how our bodies work (and sometimes don't work!) along the way. Please write to About Time with any questions you have or suggestions for future topics. Trust me, nothing is off limits – most of my day is spent asking whether people have opened their bowels or farted yet.

Today, inspired by a question from Jon in Victoria, we are talking about diabetes.



What is diabetes?

Diabetes is an illness in which the body struggles to process sugar. Sugar comes in many forms – for example, from a soft drink, a piece of bread or an apple.

When you munch on an apple, the body breaks it down into smaller and smaller parts. The final breakdown leads to a type of sugar called glucose. Glucose is then used by each cell in our body for energy.

So the stomach breaks down the apple, and glucose makes its way through our intestinal wall into our bloodstream. Now, glucose needs to get into our cells, which isn't so easy. Cells have many doors that each need keys – they aren't just letting everyone in. There are different keys depending on what is trying to get through a particular door. For glucose the key is called insulin.

Insulin is a chemical made by your pancreas. The pancreas sits in your abdomen, behind your stomach. This is where things get interesting. The pancreas has a small factory of cells called beta cells. These cells are responsible for producing the insulin key that glucose needs.

In diabetes, these beta cell factories begin to fail.

Now, there are two main types of diabetes. Type 1 and Type 2.

Type 1 (10 per cent of diabetics)
Type 1 is an autoimmune process, where the body's immune system gets confused and kills all the beta cell factories. We usually find this in people under the age of 30. People with type 1 diabetes need regular injections with the insulin key to get glucose into their cells and stop their bodies from shutting down.

Type 2 (90 per cent of diabetics)
Type 2 is much more common; we usually see this begin in people above the age of 40. As you might already be aware, type 2 is strongly linked to obesity. Our basic understanding is that being obese and having lots of fat and extra glucose in our blood overwhelms the doors of our cells. Instead of opening the doors and allowing a free-for-all, they close even tighter and start rejecting some of the insulin keys. The beta cell factory hears about this and starts making even more insulin keys, to help keep up with demand. Initially, this works – it helps get the glucose into the cells. But, after time, the beta cells in the factor begin to burn out; they are working too hard and slowly begin to die.

What's so bad about having extra glucose in my blood?

Sweet blood – who wouldn't want that?! Well, probably you. When our insulin key system becomes faulty, we are left with high levels of glucose in our blood. This begins to cause issues. Just like that jam you inexplicably got stuck on your elbow, glucose starts to stick to things in your blood. Initially, it's a little here and a little there; you wouldn't notice a thing. But, eventually, there's so much jam that your elbows are stuck together – well, not really, but the sticky delights meet sticky ends!

These sticky patches are happening in your blood vessels, which means now your blood vessels start to have issues getting glucose energy to your cells. Because of this, your cells begin to die.

What are some of the issues that come from diabetes?

There are many parts of the body that are affected, but I'll talk about two here.

The first is the blood vessels themselves. These sticky patches can get bigger and bigger, and eventually they can block the blood flow completely. When this happens in the heart, this is a heart attack, and, when it happens in the brain, it's a stroke. Heart attacks are the biggest killer in diabetes.

Another issue is neuropathy. A neuropathy is a broad term for a dysfunction of your nerves. Diabetes first damages the nerves in your feet; this is because they are the furthest away from your heart and therefore most vulnerable to a poor blood supply caused by the sticky vessels. Slowly, you would begin to lose feeling in your feet. And, unfortunately, sometimes it's not just numb feet but painful feet that can result.

Now to the question that brought us to this topic.

Jon from Victoria wrote to us asking for help with his diabetic neuropathy. He told us, "I have no feeling in my feet, and as the nerves have nothing to do they attack my feet 24/7."

Well, firstly, I'm sorry to hear of your chronic nerve condition, Jon. It sounds unbearable. I imagine you've already tried a few things, so I'm sorry if I suggest things you've already tried. The first choice for most doctors would be medications, such as: pregabalin, gabapentin and duloxetine. Another option is capsaicin cream applied to the painful area.

If possible, you may also benefit from stretches and weight-bearing exercises which involve your legs.

Please discuss these suggestions with your doctor, as they are best placed to know what is right for you.

How do I stop myself from getting diabetes?

Well, for type 1 diabetes, you can't. But if you're over 30 then your likelihood of getting this illness is very low.

Type 2 is more avoidable, and prevention mostly comes down to weight loss.

That can be done by:

- **Changing diet:** If swapping foods isn't possible, smaller portions can still help.
- **Exercise:** Activities like weights, push-ups or cardio burn calories and build muscle, which increases your body's ability to burn energy even at rest.

How do I know if I have diabetes?

The most common symptoms are:

1. peeing more often
2. being more thirsty
3. being more tired.

Though all these symptoms can also be caused by other illnesses.

It's best to speak to your doctor. They can check your blood glucose level and give you advice.

A Warrior Sequence

By Prison Phoenix Trust

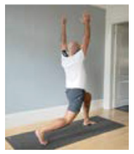
These are challenging postures that stretch and strengthen the whole body and challenge the mind. As you breathe in each posture, notice how you feel.



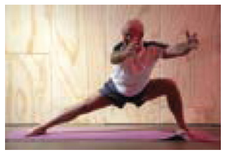
1. Mountain
Stand tall, steady, and strong like a mountain for 5 slow, steady breaths.



2. Lunge
Drop your right knee to the ground, keeping your back upright. Stay for up to 5 breaths.



3. Warrior 1
Step your left leg back, bend your right knee, hips facing forward. Raise your arms and stay for 5 breaths.



4. Side lunge
Point your right foot forwards. Bend your knee in line with your ankle. Stay for up to 5 breaths.



5. Warrior 2
Check your feet and knee alignment. Relax your shoulders and bend your right knee. Stretch out your arms and look beyond your fingertips. Take 5 breaths to the right side.



6. Side angle
Rest your right arm on your right thigh. Circle your left arm across your body. Keep your weight pushing into the ground. Up to 5 breaths on this side.

Now repeat this sequence with your left foot leading.



7. Home posture
Keep your knees apart to allow your upper body to rest on the ground. Arms by your side or out in front. Rest here for as long as you wish.

All exercises reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.



• Health Q&A

Do you have a question for a doctor or a psychiatrist? About Time has volunteer professionals who are ready to answer.

Please keep them general in nature so all people can benefit from them!

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We cannot guarantee we can answer every question, and it might take some time until we can respond to them, but please don't let that put you off!

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."*

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Mob

Storytelling Through Painting

By Michael

Michael writes from a prison in Tasmania.

Hi

My name's Michael. I am writing to show you my paintings. I am a proud Palawa man from North East Tasmania.

The painting's story is: we hunt the food that lives on this country as our ancestors did in the past and give thanks to the food and return what we can't take, and the Spirit goes back to the land.

I had a blast painting these two paintings. Hope you enjoy also.

Kind regards,
Michael





A True Hero

By Brothers from a prison in VIC

Hello, About Time readers. I will start off by paying respects to Mr Murray and his family in whom this story is about and would also like to say thank you to Mr Fred Cahir, the historian who did the research and wrote the book *They Rescued Us: Aboriginal Heroes on Country*.

This is the story about a true hero, Mr Lawrence Murray, and I am honoured to be able to write this story for you to read.

In March 1960, an unlikely and remarkable rescue occurred in Bogantungan, a rural town in the locality of Willows, in the central Highlands region of Queensland.
It was unlikely, because the rescue exploit occurred after a train crash.
The Canberra Times reported it thus:

"BAREFOOT ABORIGINE HERO OF QLD TRAIN CRASH"

BRISBANE, Friday – Ignoring shattered glass which gashed his feet, a full blooded aboriginal fettler, Mr Lawrence Murray, stood in waist deep rushing water to rescue 15 children from the wrecked Midlander in Medway Creek early on the morning of February 26.

This story was told today to the Board of Inquiry investigating the rail crash at Bogantungan. Mr Murray was the last witness to be heard by the board. With his wife, three children and infant granddaughter, he was travelling in the last carriage of the Midlander when it crashed.

He was among the first down to the wrecked carriages, and waded into the rushing stream to carry the children to the riverbank as they were handed to him. Then he swam across the creek to the Bogantungan side and helped hand up tools to men working on the wrecked carriages.

Mr Lawrence also helped four injured men and women to the creek bank, after that he went through the darkened carriages searching for other people to help to safety.

He continued to work on the wreckage until daylight. Mr Murray said that he had taken off his shoes and could not find them afterwards. He said that he had a sliver of glass in his foot early.

Eventually he received treatment for his injuries in Emerald. Telling about the loss of his shoes. Mr Murray said, "That is why I am barefooted now."
The chairman of the board of Inquiry. Mr V. F. Hall, warmly complimenting Mr Murray on his actions, said that the board would do something about getting him some shoes.

Now that, in my opinion, is what you call a true hero. It goes to show how resilient and compassionate the Aboriginal people really are, even though we have been stigmatised as a race and have been massacred, colonised and stolen from our families for generations. This is one of many, many stories that I'll be telling in future articles.

Even after all that Aboriginal people have gone through, it goes to show we are heroes too. So I would like to say to all you brothers and sisters as a final note that we are all heroes in our own way, so don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Keep your chins up and stay deadly and be proud of who you are.

Thank you.

Regards,
Brothers from a prison in Victoria

Land Back

By Paul

Paul writes from a prison in NSW.

Our land being invaded
Our women and children being taken
Rabbit-Proof Fence no escaping
Our Ancestors from Sky and Sea
Are who we thought we were inviting
Now it's our history they are rewriting
Gifts disguised we're being deceived
Alcohol blankets white man's disease
Live like you instead of in harmony
With each other Flora Fauna and
Mother Country
Murris put clay on their heads
Preparing for war preparing for death
Tribal warrior from long ago
Tribal warrior I stand alone
The Dreaming created me to be
a nightmare
To these while Devilshare
I stand alone Pemelway this is my home
I show no fear
Armed with knowledge of Country my
Ancestral spirits and spear
I will show them a feverish nightmare
fuelled Dreamtime warrior
For my People I am worrying
Land women and children taken from us
Culture art and stories thrown under
the bus
Rainbow Prophecy a chosen few, who
will your dollars feed
When poisoned is every river sea animal
and tree birds and bees
Rise up like a phoenix bring our land
back to us
Welcome to Country, now you're one
of us



Send Your Work

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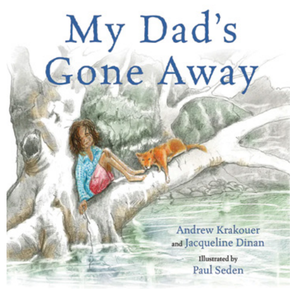
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Culture



Australia's First Picture Book About Parents in Prison

By Jacqueline Dinan

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this article contains a name and image of a deceased person.

A new children's book addresses the incarceration of parents. It's titled *My Dad's Gone Away* and was written by Andrew Krakouer and Jacqueline Dinan. In the story, Tarah's dad has gone away, and she doesn't know where. She imagines he is doing all the things he loves, but, when she asks her mum, everything changes. This heartfelt, honest and sensitively told story explores the challenges faced by a child when their parent is incarcerated. *My Dad's Gone Away* sheds light on an unspoken issue and gently encourages children and families to talk about how they feel, prepare for visiting day and bolster their resilience to help pass the time.

This age-appropriate story will help encourage such children to have safe conversations with a trusted adult, whether that's a family member, caseworker, teacher, social worker, coach or carer. For children whose lives are not affected by parental incarceration, this story should promote empathy and compassion as they become aware of different life experiences.

My Dad's Gone Away is written from a child's perspective and is illustrated with care, complemented by soft, warm tones. The story captures the confusion, curiosity and heartache of dealing with missing a parent.

It was created by acclaimed Australian rules footballer the late Andrew Krakouer and former foster carer and host mother Jacqueline Dinan, in collaboration with illustrator Paul Seden. It is a tool to help children feel that they are not alone and to break down stigmas surrounding their circumstances.

An Indigenous girl named Tarah was chosen as the main character to help shine a light on the disproportional incarceration rates incurred by First Nations people in this country. First Nations people account for 3.2 per cent of the Australian population but for 32 per cent of Australia's incarcerated population.

The book was published by Magabala Books and generously endorsed by Australian singer and songwriter Paul Kelly. *My Dad's Gone Away* is a strong, direct and important story, beautifully told and illustrated.



Ask your prison to order the book for the library, and it can also be purchased at bookstores and online at Magabala books: **www.magabala.com**

Artists With Conviction Celebrates 15 Years!

By Sara

Prison is a noisy place, yet at Risdon Prison, in Tasmania – nestled near bushland and close to the Risdon Brook Dam – the sounds of nature still break through. Despite the din, the calls of native birds are unmistakable. With a bird enthusiast "on the inside", creative learning staff and a correctional officer bird expert, we've counted 32 bird species around the prison, including sulphur-crested cockatoos, wedge-tailed eagles, superb fairywrens, masked lapwings and Tasmanian nativehens.

It's fitting, then, that the theme for the 15th anniversary of the Artists with Conviction (AWC) exhibition is Jail Birds. *Artists with Conviction* is a creative showcase featuring artwork and writing by individuals connected to the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS), including incarcerated people, people on parole or community corrections orders and even Department of Justice staff. This year, the exhibition will be held at Good Grief Studios, an artist-run space in Hobart.

One of the many highlights of the exhibition includes a giant knitted sculpture called The Gentle Serpent, perched on two-metre-tall knitting needles. The needles are made from sustainable Tasmanian wood by an incarcerated person in the woodwork studios at Ron Barwick Prison. This impressive creation is being developed in the men's knitting workshop, Great Balls of Fibre (featured in *About Time*, June 2025), with staff members also contributing to the project.

Another exciting piece is a "blind collaboration" between two artists – one from Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison and the other from Ron Barwick Men's Prison. They are collaborating on a Jail Birds themed drawing, taking turns contributing to the piece before providing it to the other artist.

Visitors to the gallery will be able to take home printed poems written by people in prison, beautifully presented on parchment paper, and read "Tiny Books" created by artists inside, which will sit in a giant nest of leaves found in the bush nearby the prison.

Opening night will feature a live performance of a hip-hop track recorded by local artists Hermit Kovacic and RooBoy, created in collaboration with incarcerated people through the Bars Behind Bars music program.
This initiative has transformed the Risdon Prison gym into a recording studio, where participants have been taking part in writing and recording workshops.

Paintings, drawings, sculptures and woodwork pieces made by incarcerated people will be sold during the exhibition, with all funds going directly to the artists. Artists and writers are eligible for awards judged by Tasmanian authors and members of the local arts community.

Sharing personal stories through art takes courage. It builds confidence and a sense of achievement. We're proud to be celebrating 15 years of *Artists with Conviction*, and we look forward to sharing images and stories once the exhibition wraps up at the end of November.

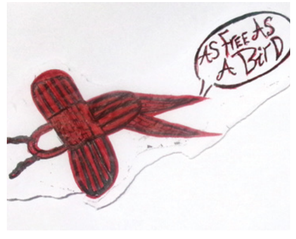
Artists with Conviction runs from 8–20 November 2025 at Good Grief Studios, Hobart.



Jail Birds by Peter



Off to Court by Bobby



My Jail Bird by Ryan

Creative

Human Being

By Matthew

Matthew writes from a prison in NSW.

As I come back to jail
I walk through that familiar door
I promised by mum and kids
I wouldn't break the law
Now here I am sitting
In a cell like before
4 × 4 cement walls
Bunk beds and all
It's my birthday
I'm 35 today
Once released
I will not lead astray
I have done just over
12 years since turning eighteen
I'm sober and off the drugs
I will leave jail clean
This is my story
This is what I mean
We all make mistakes
After all I'm a human being

The Darkness Returns

By Leslie

Leslie writes from a prison in VIC.

Facing the darkness, the pain and cold
travelling through the body, the soul
taking me back to when I played alone
when hell exists, the place my home
I spend years, months, days wearing
the mask
trying to pretend there is no fear or pain
That I am happy, feel loved, nurtured
at peace, strong, brave, carefree.
Masks are meant to protect not hide
the anguish, the pain, suffering, hurt.
The struggle, the desire, the longing,
want
for a kind word, a gentle touch
The feeling of being wanted, needed,
loved
Feelings that have been far from my soul
so long, too long
They are barely echoes, the memories
the times from long ago when I felt
happy, loved, nurtured, strong, brave
Now I feel numb, cold, alone, afraid,
weak
The darkness returns.

Sam Kerr

By Henry

Henry writes from a prison in VIC.

The big idea behind this painting is to display a very strong, tough Australian sportswoman. Through her athleticism she has helped to inspire a huge number of young Australian girls to take up soccer as their favourite game. I do not care about anyone's opinion about her, but Kerr to me is the most decorated sportswoman in Australian sports, if not in the world. Reason being, she is the only female soccer player in the world to have won the Golden Boot in three different leagues and three different countries. Because of my love of controversial figures and Sam Kerr's audacity to withstand harassment and defamation by United Kingdom police, this inspired me to paint her as a symbol of solidarity and what she stands for as a strong woman.

My inspiration for this artwork also came from watching her play during the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup semi-finals against England. Down a goal after the first half, Kerr equalized for Australia with her first goal of the tournament, which was widely praised as one of the best goals of the tournament.

The (Powdered) Milky Way

By Jeff

Jeff writes from a prison in QLD.

An ode to our last 750-gram powdered milk, taken from our treasured weekly Buy-Up Sheet.

The full cream milk I get today,
and in my cell it has to stay.
Of fault, not mine, I cannot get
to fridge afar, not now, not yet.
I have a drink, of fresh to taste
of fault, not mine, it goes to waste.
A day without brings me to thirst,
I think of powder, or not the worst.
To have of this, could be the choice,
upon the buy-up, to have the voice.
Oh, let at Woodford, bring it back,
The milk of powder, in the sack!



Sam Kerr by Henry

Butterflies

By Wormy

Wormy writes from a prison in NSW.

Butterflies,
Can be the colour of your eyes.
They start life as tiny eggs,
finally having wings and six legs.

From their life start to life,
they can be a gardener's strife.
When they are slinky caterpillars,
they eat all the succulent cultivars.

When they grow some more,
and have a good food store
You may find their diamond chrysalis,
where there is magic stasis.

From the pupa stage,
when they are the right age,
A new butterfly will emerge,
with mother nature's gentle urge.
Then you will see the fresh flight of
the children's delight.

You can see the summer dance,
as thirsty butterflies do chance.
They dare to cross the gravel path;
butterflies come to visit gardens and
soft earth.
In their colourful staggered flight,
they drink petals distilled in sunlight.

They sip sweet flower nectar,
as they fluster the garden director.
With a shout and sudden dash,
at the butterfly the man does lash
But we know the butterfly will win,
you can see his cheeky grin.

Across the beds she does fly
As summer sun begins to die.
Butterflies will dance and jest
For their love is the best.
Never fear the garden's net,
For we will fly free yet.



Send Us Your Art

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

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About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Play

This Month in Sport!

By Goal Mouth

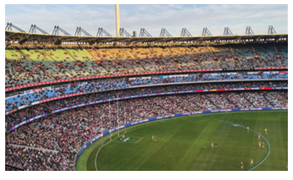


Nasiah Wanganeen-Milera, source St Kilda Football Club

Football: Pay packets soar
St Kilda star Nasiah Wanganeen-Milera agreed to stay at the club, but only after the Saints offered him $2 million a season. This makes him the highest paid AFL player. The two-year deal came after several agonising months for Saints fans when 'Nas' was considering other monster offers from Adelaide and Port Adelaide.

The highest paid NRL player is reportedly Newcastle Knights captain and fullback Kalyn Ponga (about $1.4 million in 2025).

These pay packets are peanuts compared with what soccer players earn in the Premier League (UK). Liverpool star Mohamed Salah earns a reported $824,000 a week – that's almost $42 million a season. The average salary of a Premier League player is about $7 million a season. Good work if you can get it.



Melbourne Cricket Ground – Daniel Tait for Unsplash

AFL/NRL: The final answers
In the NRL and AFL, the minor premiers (Canberra and Adelaide) disappeared from the flag race without a whimper. And, by the time you read this, some of the biggest questions of the football finals will have been answered.

In the NRL, can Penrith's premiership run be broken? Is Melbourne – last year's runner-up and minor premier – the team to do it? All will be revealed in the grand final on 5 October.

In the AFL, Collingwood, who seemed to be running out of puff before the finals, fell to Brisbane, who are aiming to go back-to-back against the probable favourite, Geelong, in the grand final on 27 September.

Never one to shy away from the big calls, my flag fancies are Melbourne in the NRL and Geelong in the AFL. To those reading after the event – am I right?



Logo for Heidelberg United

Soccer: Fairytale lives on as part-timers take another scalp
The part-timers who play for Heidelberg United, in Melbourne's north, have upset a third consecutive A-League team to reach the final of the Australia Cup. It's the first time a semi-professional team has made the Australia Cup final, and, along the way, the Bergers (as they're known) have kept all their opponents scoreless.

As Roy Ward reported in *The Age*, the Bergers are a team of civil engineers, aviation managers, mortgage brokers, shop assistants, labourers, students and Uber drivers. Their latest victim, Auckland FC, is owned by an American billionaire.

Now the Bergers face another A-League team, Newcastle Jets, in the final on 4 October at Lakeside Stadium, in Melbourne, having sent Western Sydney Wanderers and Wellington Phoenix packing in the first two rounds.

The tournament is Australia's version of Britain's FA Cup. Among the most unlikely FA Cup winners was rank underdog Wimbledon in 1988, who faced the might of Liverpool. Despite being in the football league only 11 years, the Dons took the lead early, but it looked like their aggression would be their undoing when Liverpool won a penalty. Goalkeeper Dave Beasant saved the penalty – the first time in FA Cup final history – and the Dons took the trophy, against all the odds.



Clement Delacre for Unsplash

F1: Piastri's threat from within
Oscar Piastri has had one hand on the Formula 1 world title, but the 24-year-old Australian's supporters fear his teammate, Englishman Lando Norris.

Piastri went 34 points clear in the championship after his victory in the Dutch Grand Prix (his seventh win of the year), but that was cut to 31 points when he came third in the Italian GP, having been ordered by his McLaren team to let Norris overtake him after the Brit's slow pit stop.

The last six races this year are in the Americas and Middle East, with 25 points for each win.



Sam Konstas, source Cricket Australia

Cricket: Not OK, for openers
The two Ks opening Australia's batting in the West Indies in the most recent test series come from opposite ends of their careers, and both are struggling.

Teenager Sam Konstas, who famously thrashed the world's best fast bowler, India's Jasprit Bumrah, in the Boxing Day test last year, scored only 50 runs across the three tests in the Caribbean.

His partner, Usman Khawaja, who will turn 39 in December, did a little better, scoring 117. As usual, the bowlers had to rescue Australia, who won the series 3–0.

Where do the selectors turn for opening bats as they eye the old enemy, England, in the Ashes, beginning on 21 November? Khawaja, the 84-test veteran, has made it plain he wants to retire at the end of the series – but are we happy with players dictating when to hang up their bats or boots? I'm certainly not.

Konstas scored a century for Australia against India in Lucknow recently, but he needs to score plenty of runs in the early state matches, otherwise someone else will be facing England's new ball bowlers in the first test in Perth. As for Khawaja, we will see whether the old saying – that it's harder to get out of, rather than into, the Australian team – is still true.



Jessica Hull, source Olympics Australia

Athletics: Long and winding road to the final
Australia's Jessica Hull took the long way to the 800 metres final in the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo. In her heat, a tangle of legs early in the race led to her falling, but she got up and completed the race.

Her appeal for a place in the semi-final was upheld, and she ran third, claiming one of two non-automatic qualifying spots for the final and breaking the Australian record. In doing so, Hull became the first woman to hold the 800- and 1,500-metre Australian records at the same time, but she came last in the final.

Earlier in the championships, Hull took the bronze medal in the 1,500 metres and said the 800 metres was her "side quest" – not a bad one either.

One of the highlights of the championships for Australia was the performance of 17-year-old Gout Gout, who came fourth in the 200-metre semi-finals. It certainly looks like he will have an exciting future.



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'm just waiting for a mate"
Aiken, QLD



Strange Animal Quiz

Test your general animal knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. Which Aussie bird can copy the sound of a chainsaw?
2. What shape is wombat poo?
3. How many hearts does an octopus have?
4. Name the animal that changes colour to blend in?
5. Which sea creature has dads that give birth instead of mums?
6. Which animal in Australia is known to ride waves for fun?
7. Name the animal that can run on water.
8. Which Aussie animal can sleep for up to 20 hours a day?
9. Which insect can carry over 50 times its own body weight?
10. Name the animal that has the strongest bite force in the world?

Word Master

Find the nine-letter word in the grid. Then see how many other words you can find of three or more letters. You can only use each letter once and every word must contain the centre letter.

Targets:
0–10 words good, 11–23 brainy, 24–40 wizard, 41–50 mastermind, 51+ legend!

I	M	Y
E	C	N
A	R	H

Quiz Answers

1. Lyrebird
2. Cube-shaped
3. Three
4. Chameleon
5. Seahorse
6. Dolphin
7. Basilisk lizard
8. Koala
9. Ant
10. Saltwater Crocodile

Bad Jokes (by Dougie)

A big thank you to Dougie, who writes from a Victorian prison, for sharing his jokes with us!

Q: Which US state has the most streets?
A: Rhode Island!

Q: Why did the picture go to prison?
A: Because it was framed!

Q: Why do doctors stay calm during an emergency?
A: They've got a lot of patients!

Q: What do you call a twitching cow?
A: Beef jerky!

Rolling Stone Card Game

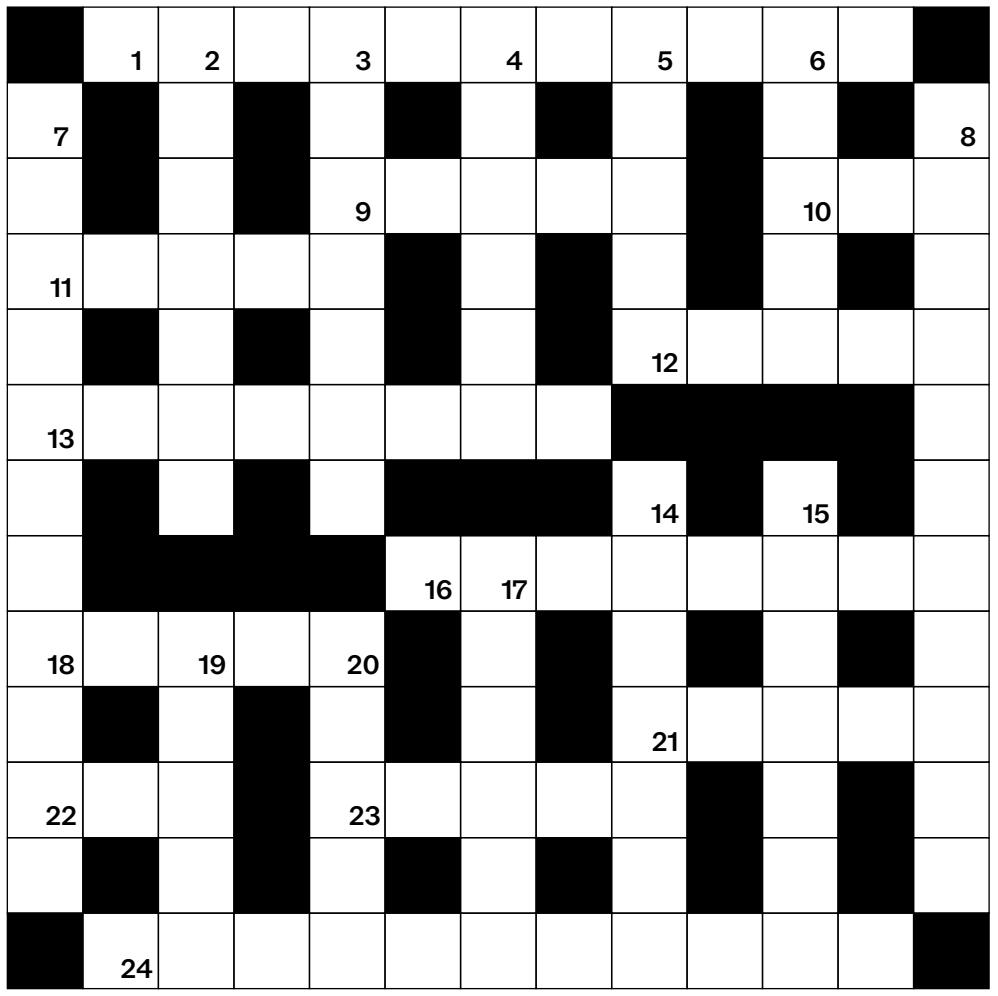
Rolling Stone is a game for four players. You'll need a 32-card deck (remove 2s through to 6s). Aces are high and 7s are low. The aim of Rolling Stone is to be the first player to discard all their cards.

Set Up
The dealer shuffles the deck and distributes eight cards to each player.

How to Play
The player left of the dealer begins by playing any card. Going clockwise, players must follow suit. If a player cannot follow suit, they must pick up the cards played, add them to their hand and begin a new round.

If play gets back to the original player and everybody follows suit, then the person who played the highest card takes the pile and begins a new round. The player who gets rid of all of their cards first wins the game.

Crossword



ACROSS

1. A word used to connect clauses or sentences (11)
9. A person of great strength (5)
10. Consume a meal (3)
11. Suggest (5)
12. A willingness to take action (3-2)
13. Went to an event (8)
16. In spite of the fact (8)
18. Extremely small (5)
21. Landlord (5)
22. Quick sleep (3)
23. Christmas creatures with pointing ears (5)
24. Founded (11)

DOWN

2. Condition of being overweight (7)
3. High-pressure water cleaning (7)
4. Character of a person (6)
5. Cloak (5)
6. Pacific or Atlantic (5)
7. Substitute (11)
8. Weather related (11)
14. Selects (7)
15. Jones or Smith (7)
17. Relating to baby insects (6)
19. Manages (5)
20. Last greek letter (5)

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Conjunction
9. Titan
10. Eat
11. Posit
12. Can-do
13. Attended
16. Although
18. Micro
21. Owner
22. Nap
23. Elves
24. Established

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

2. Obesity
3. Jetting
4. Nature
5. Tunic
6. Ocean
7. Replacement
8. Atmospheric
14. Chooses
15. Surname
17. Larval
19. Copes
20. Omega

Word Master Nine Letter Word

Machinery