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About Time

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Australia's National Prison Newspaper

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About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000



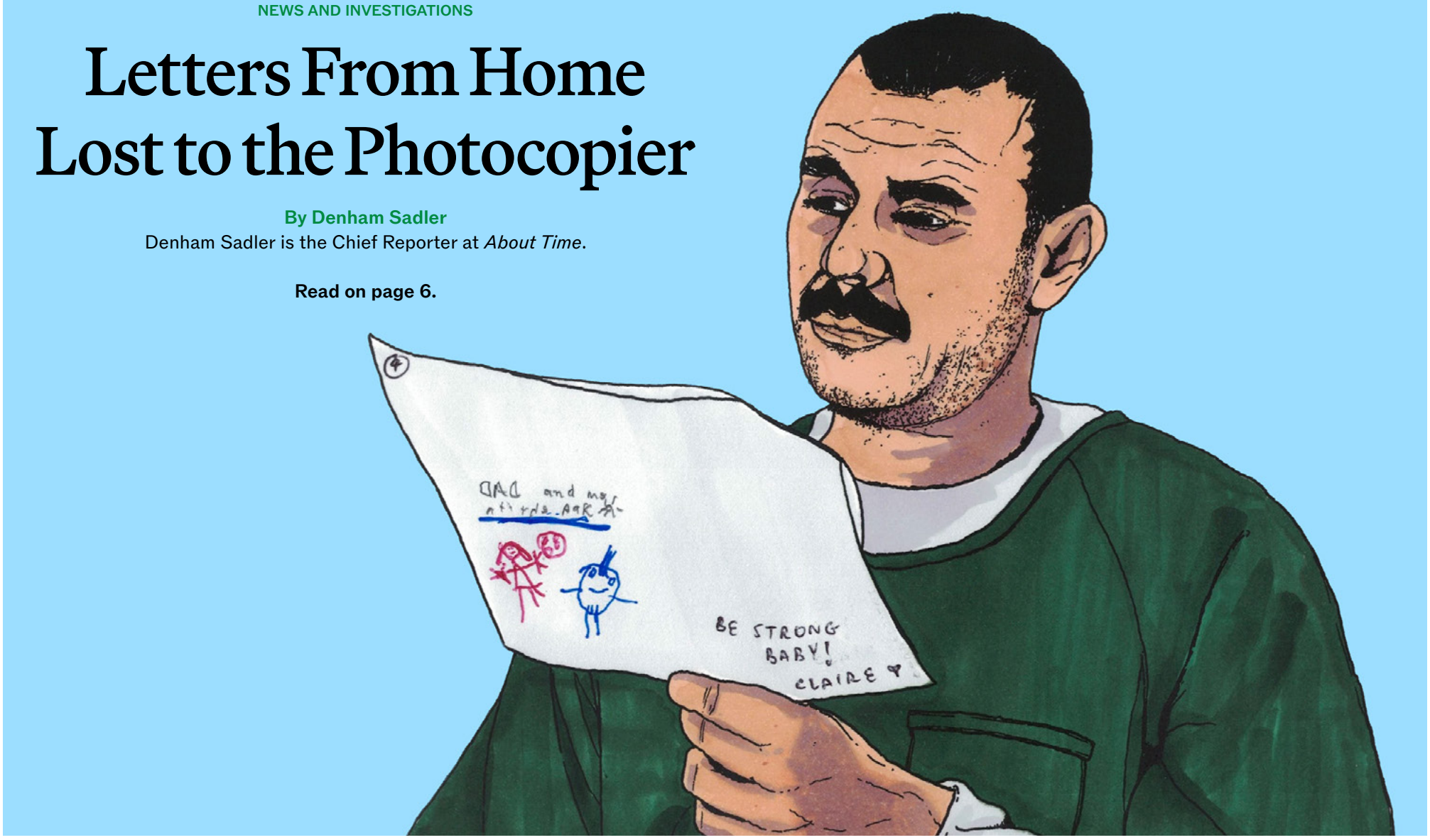
NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Letters From Home Lost to the Photocopier

By Denham Sadler

Denham Sadler is the Chief Reporter at *About Time*.

Read on page 6.



Ike Curtis

EXPERIENCES

Violence as the Exception: Care and Camaraderie in Prisons

Prisoners have much more pain in common than reasons to inflict it onto each other.

By Kyle Magee

Kyle Magee is a writer and advocate for democratic media systems and has spent time in prison in Victoria.

The entertainment and news media loves to show a confrontational and violent "don't back down" version of prison life, but what they don't show is the genuine care and openness between strangers in prison. People ask strangers in the cells if they are okay, just because they look like they're not. They share stories and feel each other's pain and frustration, crack jokes and laugh it up, just to make it a little more bearable.

This is happening all the time, every day – violence and conflict is the rare exception to this – although the threat of violence is real and its shadow lingers over everything.

I don't like violence one bit. Of course I would defend myself if it came to that, but I'll do everything I can to avoid violent conflict. I didn't grow up with high levels of violence like most people in prison did. When I was first in prison in my early 20s, I got the feeling that everyone could see I hadn't suffered through a childhood and life of violence like they had. It took me a while to understand that threats against me were more an attempt to intimidate than a statement of intention and that rattling me was for some both entertaining and made them feel stronger – it was the armour they wore for their scars.

I went to prison many times for my peaceful protests against what I saw as the violence of our global political order, which, along with my veganism at the time, automatically made me stand out as a "hippy" in prison.

While some other prisoners thought I was mentally ill for taking a stance that led me to jail repeatedly for no clear personal gain (or just wanted to joke that I was going to get sent upstairs to the psych wing), I found most people understood my grievances with the world, immediately and instinctively, much more so than the privileged, educated people I met at university.

Prisoners know from their experience of dehumanisation (being treated like you are not a human who matters or deserves any kind of respect) that this system is stacked against the people who find themselves on the bottom.

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Letters

'Kids Need Their Dads Too': Four Years Without Seeing My Children

By Tim

Tim writes from a prison in VIC.

To About Time,

My name is Tim, and I have been incarcerated for four years, during which time I haven't been afforded the opportunity to see my kids once.

I am just one of many people living inside prison while having children on "the outside". It's one of the hardest things to deal with, for a start. I am just like everyone else who is serving a sentence in that I have had my freedom and my rights taken from me. Then on top of that, as a dad, I am restricted from seeing my kids.

My kids mean the absolute world to me, and I have always sworn to be their protector, their teacher, their friend and someone who will always be there to listen to them anytime they need an ear. Regrettably, I made some mistakes in my life that led me to be incarcerated and lose so many things and people that others might take for granted.

That includes having face-to-face contact with my kids. I call them every couple of days at least and I cherish every second that I get to talk to them. Two of the hardest things during my calls with them are when we say goodbye and when the kids ask me when they can see me.

I have no other answer for them except that the decision is entirely up to the prison. I have applied through this prison twice now to see the kids and have been rejected both times. I have completed the appropriate programs asked of me by the General Manager. These include offender specific programs and also programs that I have opted to do of my own will which include programs such as the positive parenting programs and alcohol and other drugs programs.

I have done a lot of soul searching, self-help education and programs while I have been incarcerated to help better myself as a person and as a father. I have no IVOs or court orders against me stating that I cannot see my kids, yet the jail still refuses to let me see them face-to-face or even facilitate supervised Zoom visits with them.

I will go seven years without seeing my kids at the choice of this jail.

I am only one of many blokes who have reached the same outcome when applying to see their children.

The jail preaches about priding themselves on keeping family connections, yet they are rejecting child visit applications.

I believe that our children deserve better than being told they can't see their dads solely based on a decision made by the jail. Kids need their dads too.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our opinions in something like *About Time*.

Having Faith in a Fresh Start

By Chris

Chris writes from a prison in QLD.

About Time,

Being in here is a massive change to my family and those around me.

We can't always do what we want – some of us are programmed to do our day-to-day chores or jobs and responsibilities.

However, if you are determined enough, you can accomplish anything.

I understand that people have done a lot in my life to better my future – that includes my whole family. And for that I am so grateful to all. "God is good to us all."

I have enough time to come to a point in my life where I can make a new and fresh start by making it up to my children. Getting a job and actually being in work clothes on the outside, brothers and sisters, is something that makes me excited for our futures.

Sorry if I sound like I'm bragging, but I want to yarn at the same time.

Once my younger sister said to me: "You're a leader, not a follower."

Very true to her and my words together. With that it has accomplished more than I can ever dream of.

I can say now our prayers for my family have brought us through the tests and trials we all sometimes have to endure. With all that said and done, thanks be to God above, who recognised me and my family.

We can start to mend each other's hearts, as our parents taught us, and for me our rocks so that we can move forward, and I personally hope they take the life God wants us to have so we can stay humbled and look out for each other.

Cheaper Phone Calls Are Finally Available

By Robert

Robert writes from a prison in QLD.

To my fellow inmates across Australia,

I have read in quite a few issues that other inmates have been feeling the same sting of phone charges that I was.

And now that most facilities won't allow "engine" numbers to be added, it has made things even worse.

The reason why these services have been banned is that they use some kind of redirection service – or something like that.

Now, the reason I'm writing this is to help others that are in the same position as I was, up until recently.

There is a brand new service out now called Call Me App – www.callmeapp.com.au. I have been using it for about a month now, and it's been awesome. My partner pays $30 per month for a local number, and I just pay for a 30-cent local call.

The best part is that it is actually allowed/permitted.

My girl called up to ask if it would be okay to use, and the lady at the jail said yes because they don't use any redirection. So she signed up, and I've had 30-cent calls since.

Hope this helps some of you who are struggling with the crazy costs of phone calls.

Note:
About Time is unaware of the availability of this service across the country, and it might different from state to state, prison to prison.



Gratefulness and Grit

By Daniel

Daniel writes from a prison in VIC.

Dear About Time,

I wanted to write to share my story in the hope it will help others. I've had a problem with alcohol probably since I was 17 and got in a blue with my dad at the football. We ran a dairy farm in South-West Victoria and when a farmer and his family work 12 hours a day, seven days a week and receive a paltry amount that isn't enough – it's defeating. I ended up getting into work, did a trade, worked full time for 10 years and even spent two years abroad working. When I got back, I had a nervous breakdown or mental health episode. I was in and out of psych wards, tried to work, went on disability payments and started drinking heavily. A good thing during this time was I went to university and got a 3-year degree in applied science. I got some professional work in a lab and at a zoo. However, the competition for jobs at that level is high and my drinking did continue, and I broke the law for the first time in 2019. Since then, I've been out for a couple of 18-month blocks but I've done a few sentences. I seem to get fit and then hit alcohol when out and re-offend. As we all know, it is difficult to get work in the outside world, and this is something I hope to change. Some people think one crime and you should be locked up for life. I read former offenders are good at labouring jobs. I hope to stay fit this time when I get out, buy some nice clothes with my money. If one looks respectable, one can more likely be treated with respect. Perhaps the dream is to be fit, respectable, look good, listen to authority, earn money, pay tax, be a good citizen, not drink or smoke and be happy.

We must learn to face our demons. Perhaps your demon is the bottleshop or the pub or the smokes counter. For me, I would go three months without a drink and a weak moment on a Saturday afternoon will bring me undone. What will we do in the moment of weakness?

The housing crisis is a big one that impacted me. I was in about 25 different rentals from when I was 18-36 years old, and then I got blacklisted, became homeless and went on a public housing waitlist. It took almost five years to get housing, and that's why I did about 12 months in jail due to not having housing and doing stupid stuff when drunk in public or stealing food or getting angry at a shopkeeper.

It's just a bit rough, I feel, when I have been a qualified tradesman working on people's houses and I don't or can't own a house myself. Supposedly, the other half is there to house us in a jail cell.

Well, thanks, but I'd rather live in my car or on the street most of the time than in a cell. As tough as the street is, you have the open air, your kit and the ability to move around.

We hear about the minefield of mental health crisis in prisons. It's true that a large number of prisoners have mental or physical health problems. I am not the only one. Some of us are fortunate that we will get an opportunity to go back into society and have a new chance.

You can have as many support workers and parole officers as you can get, but it will never make you stop doing crimes. It has to come from within yourself.

I just wish people in the general public would be more accepting of us with lived experience. The attitude of "oh, he is weird or different – lock him up" is a poor attitude in my opinion. Give us men the median-average income, and we will be well. Give us access to doctors, nurses and support workers, and we will be well.

We in Australia are all fortunate that we have found ourselves on one of the greatest pieces of land in the world. In Aboriginal spirituality, if we look after the land, its people and others, the land will look after us. My great-grandfather and grandfather were in WWI and WWII – I am lucky to be here writing this. It is gratefulness and gratitude and grit that can get us to sobriety and wellbeing.



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

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

Write to Us

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

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PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

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How Metal and Punk Music Saved My Life

By Aidan

Aidan writes from a prison in TAS.

Dear About Time,

My name is Aidan. I am 25 years old and would love to share my love of metal and punk and how it has helped change my mental attitude and helped me cope with the hardest parts of my life.

I was raised in a household of my mum and two sisters, and being the only male felt very lonely.

The only friend I found was music, namely death metal and hardcore punk. I grew up with a mother who was always blasting music at home or in the car. Whether it was Slayer or Madonna, Deicide or Portishead or Pantera or The Cure, she was playing it.

I remember our living room used to be filled with hundreds of CDs. My mum is where my love of music came from.

I was 11 when I got into my first band, which was Korn, with their self-titled debut album. I fell in love with the darkness and rawness of it, and the rest was history.

Being able to have CDs sent in has been a heaven sent. I have nearly 40 and would struggle severely without them.

Every time I have a rough day or feel crap, I will pop a CD in and hear the thundering drums, raw and sharp guitars and the intense, cathartic and highly emotive vocals. A lot of people don't like it, and I understand that, but for me it's a pure cathartic release and a purging of all the negative shit building up inside of me.

The metal and punk communities are full of some of the friendliest and most accepting people you'll meet, and the biggest reason for this is that most of these people are the outcasts, the freaks and geeks, the people that don't feel like they belong anywhere else and are also highly protective of each other.

If I didn't have my music I would probably not even be alive right now. Metal and punk gave an outcast like me somewhere to belong and something to believe in.

The pure emotion and depth in this music is something I relate to on a deeper level. I know there would be others that can relate.

Some of my favourite bands include: Code Orange, Converge, Slayer, Suffocation, Napalm Death and many, many others.

Thank you for taking the time and letting me talk about something I love.

Drawing My Way Out of Prison

By Edward

Edward writes from a prison in NSW

I was always drawing as a kid, and when the opportunity came up to do an art course at age 17 I went for it. Twenty-three years later with multiple certificates and a degree in Maori Visual Arts, I decided to do one more course: Level 3 Cooking and Hospitality.



And ever since then I have never come back to art. Another 20 years passed cooking as a pro chef in New Zealand and Australia, till I was arrested a year ago. Coming into prison not knowing what my future was going to be, all I could do was train every day, until I saw another inmate drawing. Then I remembered I know how to draw.

So I started sending drawings home to my partner – she has over 300 drawings to date.

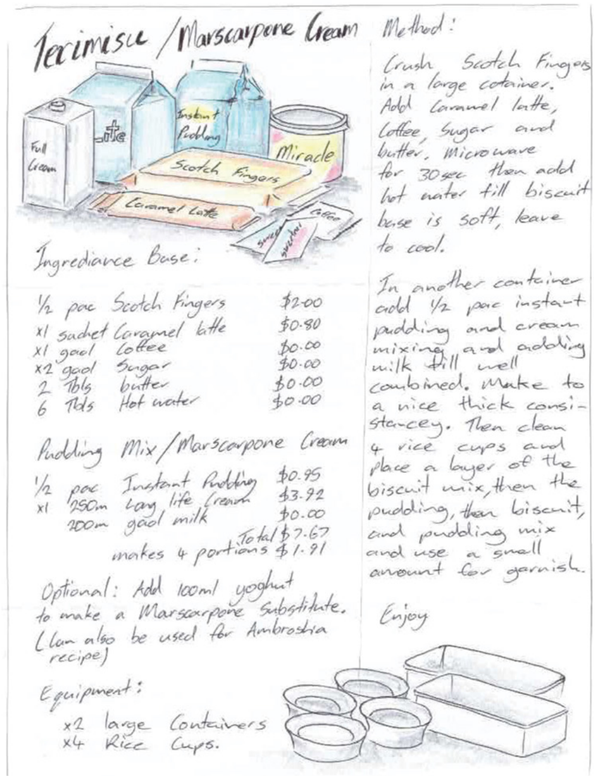
Eventually I started turning the drawings into cards with a bar code on the back with my min number.

Eventually other inmates wanted cards as well, which I was always happy to do. During this time, the chef at work asked if I wanted to paint on the wall and do a mural. Then I was asked to do all four PODs and then the clinic.

The paintings are of Australian animals and landscapes – as well as an ANZAC memorial in every POD. I think this is an awesome representation of all nations, which I am not only privileged to do but grateful for, with the opportunities it has given me and other inmates.

I have just given drawings to the chapel and will continue if I am sentenced to more time or I am to be deported back to New Zealand. No matter which way this goes, I will continue to draw and paint murals in or out of prison.

Until then, I will draw my way out of prison.



Sent by Edward, from a prison in NSW



The Importance of Solitude in Rehabilitation

By Mick

Mick writes from a prison in QLD.

Look how lucky we inmates are ... the Queensland Government is opening a new, state-of-the-art facility in the Lockyer Valley, which will focus on rehabilitation!

Well, that's what they want you to hear. What they don't say is that the government has focused all this rehabilitation around a few courses, most of which are already being used in other centres, developed for those serving shorter sentences or who are coming up for release.

Anyone with more than five years is simply the forgotten furniture that gets placed in storage. The longer the sentence, the more you are forgotten.

The courses are certainly a factor in the rehabilitation process, but a few short courses at the end of your sentence do not bring about lasting change. Changing your mindset is by far the most critical component and something the government has completely ignored.

So how can we change our mindset? It isn't easy and it takes a lot of deep and honest self-reflection over your past, present and future.

Learning how to manage your emotions, reduce your materialistic mindset and understand the reasons behind substance use is a process. And this process requires the right conditions: a quiet and safe space where we can reflect, meditate and learn about our individual coping mechanisms.

How can this be provided in jail? There needs to be the ability to live in a single-out cell. It is only the quietness and solitude of a single-out cell that allows for this personal space and deep reflection.

Lying there at night, alone and silent, forces you to reflect upon the good times you want back and the bad times you wish you could change, what you should have done differently and not at all, what you want in the future and how you need to change.

It is not a pleasurable experience. It is very difficult to face all those emotions and reflect over the course of your whole life.

But, in the end, all you want is the chance to get out and be with your loved ones. This provides the motivation to change, and only once you start changing your mindset do the courses actually help to produce lasting rehabilitation.

But unfortunately single-out cells are deemed as unnecessary, and overcrowding is used as an excuse. Locking up as many people as possible and filling the prisons has become a priority.

They speak about rehabilitation as if it is a tick-and-flick questionnaire, yet entirely ignore the ongoing process of therapy, education and, most importantly, self-reflection. No wonder the recidivism rate is so high!

Even in this new centre, in which they are priding themselves on rehabilitation, the government has turned all of the single-out cells into a bunk-bed double up. Furthermore, they have increased the amount of inmates in one yard, up to 260 inmates together – an amount that creates a pressure-cooker environment.

And so, even though they will provide a few courses that may help, due to the very large number of inmates forced to be in one yard, along with no chance for any personal space, nothing good will come.

Some inmates will now be forced to spend up to two decades, or even more, with no personal space for self-reflection.

Building super-jails, increasing the numbers of inmates in one unit, removing incentives to behave and taking away any chance for personal space will only lead to a significant increase in violence within jail.

Now the only way an inmate can get any time alone is not through good behaviour but through extreme violence and misbehaviour.

Time alone is not a privilege; it is a critical component of rehabilitation that allows for self-reflection, motivates change and provides the only real incentive for good behaviour.

Mick



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Fergal, Michael, Kaiya, Timothy, Andrew, Robert, Denis, Jameelia, A, Adrielle, Adam, Alexandra, Mohammed, M Challis, Mathew, K, APS, Bourkey, all those that wish 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:

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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



News and Investigations

Letters From Home Lost to the Photocopier

By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

When Oscar* was in prison earlier this year, receiving a letter from his wife was the highlight of his week.

He would often get back from his work in the prison and hope to see the sign saying that he had mail to collect.

But, due to a blanket ban on physical mail in New South Wales prisons, these letters were photocopied and then thrown out, with Oscar receiving a photocopied version instead.

He said that often the letters would be photocopied so poorly that they were unreadable, and sometimes pages were missing or given to the wrong people. On one occasion, a hand print had been photocopied on top of a letter.

"You'd receive mail and get excited – it's such a big thing receiving mail – only to open it up and it would just be unreadable or have pages missing," Oscar told *About Time*.

"It's a false promise – it gives false hope. You open it up, and it's unreadable.

"So many people have their mail lost. There were guys with kids getting their school reports sent in, and it was just unreadable garbage."

For Oscar's wife, Sarah*, it was demoralising to know that much of what she was sending her husband on the inside was not making it to him.

"I went from writing every day to basically not writing at all by the end, because it was so poorly photocopied or it was delayed," Sarah told *About Time*.

"It just felt like my efforts to document our memories and keep in contact were being destroyed and my efforts to keep his morale up were ending up being something that would make him upset.

"In some of the letters I poured my heart out, but he's not gotten it, which is pretty deflating."

Since 2020, all letters sent to prisons in New South Wales have been photocopied and then thrown out or shredded, with the photocopy provided to the inmate.

The regulation was introduced during the Covid pandemic with the aim of preventing drugs being sent in through the mail or on the letters.

There have been widespread concerns that letters are regularly being photocopied in a way that makes them unreadable, with some pages lost and others provided to the wrong people. It is also preventing people in prison from having physical copies of things like birthday cards and drawings by their children.

Despite calls by the NSW prison inspector for the policy to be overhauled and questions over its legality, all mail to prisons in the state is still being photocopied.

A similar regulation has been in place in Victoria since 2021, allowing for non-exempt mail to be photocopied and the original destroyed. In Victoria, not all mail is photocopied, with a decision to do so made based on "intelligence and known risk factors", including a history of drug use and trafficking, a government spokesperson told *About Time*.

"Mail is one of the most common methods used by people attempting to smuggle contraband into Victorian prison, with some mail photocopied to prevent this from occurring," the spokesperson said.

It's understood that no other state has a blanket rule for all physical mail to be photocopied then thrown out or shredded.

"It seems like they're trying to isolate prisoners even further from their families," Sarah said.

"Why would you be doing that when we all know that having strong family connections and support reduces recidivism?"

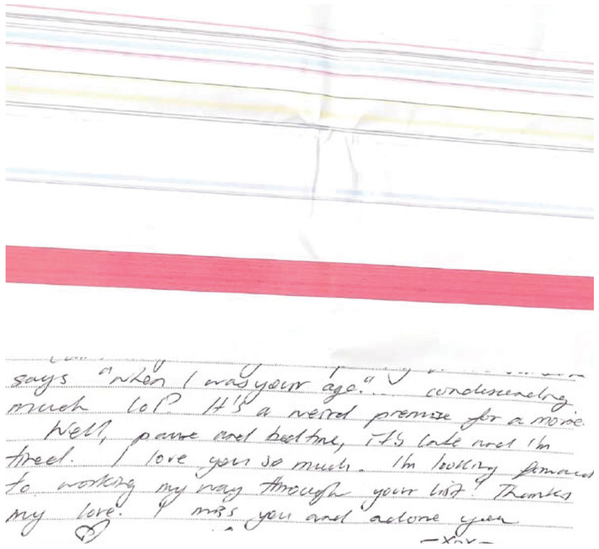
The NSW Inspector of Custodial Services first raised the issue in a 2023 report in which it called on the destruction of inmate mail to "cease entirely".

"The persistent implementation issues mean we cannot support the continuation of this practice, even if it should be found to be lawful," the report said.

"In the absence of evidence that correspondence is imprinted with an illicit substance, original mail should be either provided to the inmate or stored in their property."

This recommendation was rejected by the state government.

The prison inspector found the rule was having a significant negative psychological impact by denying people the sentimental value of original mail, particularly the smell of home or a child's drawing.



An example of a poorly photocopied letter to someone in prison in NSW, provided to About Time

In 2021–22, the first full year since the policy was implemented in NSW, there were 260 instances of contraband found in mail sent to prisons in the state. This number has fallen to 53 in 2023–24.

At the privately-run Clarence Correctional Centre, in New South Wales, physical mail is scanned and then the photocopied version is sent digitally to inmates on their tablets.

The prison has also introduced a secure messaging service on the tablets, allowing immediate communication with approved contacts.

It uses artificial intelligence technology to scan these messages for sentiment analysis and key words.

Other states and territories employ different security screening methods for mail, including sniffer dogs.

In Victoria, the rules are that mail can be photocopied based on "sound rationale", including if the recipient has a history of trafficking or there is intelligence suggesting they might.

The rules state that it is "critical that there is justification" for the photocopying to be done.

Several states in the United States use scanners to check for contraband in mail, with the original physical versions then provided to inmates.

A VeroVision scanner costs just over $225,000 ($US150,000) and would allow for all mail going into prison to be scanned for drugs and other contraband.

Oscar said it would make a big difference for people in prison in the state.

"It would have a huge impact. It's such a big thing for guys inside to get mail," he said.

"They have enough issues to deal with – they're trying to work through mistakes they've made – and this is just an extra punishment."

Sarah said that making sure that the original letter goes to someone in prison would encourage more loved ones in the community to write.

"I went from writing every day to not at all, and I can only imagine others doing the same," she said.

"It would be a big morale boost for people inside and give them something to look forward to.

"They'd be able to stick things up on the wall like their kids' drawings – it's not the same when you receive a digital copy on a tablet or something poorly photocopied with lines through it.

"It would improve the quality of life – it's a small but significant detail. It would turn letters from a source of frustration to one of hope again."

*Not their real names

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NSW

Bar lowered to prove prison misconduct

The NSW Government has moved to lower the level of proof needed to prove misconduct by inmates in prison.

Under legislation introduced to the state parliament, the burden of proof for prison offences will be changed to "satisfied on the balance of probabilities", rather than "beyond reasonable doubt", as is currently required.

NSW Minister for Corrections Anoulack Chanthivong said this was being done to "better protect Corrective Services NSW staff and the community".

"The government has the shared goal with the union of making sure correctional centres are the safest environment possible for staff," Chanthivong said.

"We are introducing this legislation as a way to best meet this shared goal. These changes come after many months of consultation and engagement on a revised inmate misconduct system between Corrective Services NSW and the Public Service Association."

Investigations into criminal conduct in prisons will still be dealt with by NSW Police according to the criminal standard of proof.

Police to monitor phones of some DV offenders

Police officers in NSW now have the power to monitor the phones of some domestic violence offenders under a scheme beginning at the start of October.

Under the serious domestic abuse prevention order (SDAPO) scheme, courts will be able to issue the new type of protection order against domestic violence offenders.

The orders will allow police to access the phone login details of the offender and to download its contents in real time. An offender can also be ordered to tell the police if they open a dating app profile or enter into a new relationship, under such an order.

NSW Police and prosecutors can apply for such an order to be imposed on someone charged with a "serious domestic violence offence", and they can be applied whether the person has been tried, acquitted or had their conviction squashed or set aside.

An order lasts for up to 5 years, and a 7-year prison sentence and $33,000 fine can be imposed if it is breached.

The NSW Government has invested $9.3 million into the new SDAPO scheme.



ACT

Man arrested for trying to fly contraband into prison on drone

A man has been arrested after he allegedly tried to fly contraband attached to a drone into the ACT's prison.

The 22-year-old was spotted allegedly flying a drone near the perimeter fence of the Alexander Maconochie Centre in late September and was arrested shortly after.

According to ACT Police, the drone was found with an attached drink container that had a smart watch, SIM card, drugs and nicotine patches inside it. A second item attached to the drone also had drugs, USB memory sticks and nicotine patches, police said.

Government says it wants to improve youth justice

Ten months after it was handed a report into the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the ACT government has responded to its recommendations.

The territory government has accepted or noted 14 of the 15 recommendations made by the ACT Custodial Inspector, including to define the purpose of the centre and its model of care.

In its response, the government said it wanted to create "long-lasting and systemic change" and over the next 12 months will undertake a "critical exploration" to better articulate the strategic purpose of the youth justice centre.

"This is a significant piece of work for government," it said.

"The review of Bimberi's model of care will need to be holistic and will therefore take time to complete."

The ACT Government is also developing the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, a 5-year roadmap aimed at strengthening the youth justice system.



TAS

Prison whistleblower protections proposed

New whistleblower protections for people in prison have passed the Tasmanian lower house.

The legislation, put forward by the state Greens, aims to ensure that people in prison who report an issue are protected from reprisal.

It comes after the Tasmanian Custodial Inspector raised concerns that whistleblowers in prison are fearful of reprisal and called for legislated protections.

"With Tasmania's corrections system in crisis, now more than ever we need people to speak out about what's happening inside our prisons," Greens MP Cecily Rosol said.

"Whistleblowers provide invaluable insights into the state of Tasmania's corrections system, where overcrowding, excessive lockdowns and barriers to rehabilitation have all been reported."

Prison watchdog calls for improvements to late release processes

The Tasmanian prison watchdog has recommended people in prison be given the option to voluntarily remain in custody overnight after their release if they cannot find transport in the community.

In a new report, the Custodial Inspector raised concerns about people in prison in the state sometimes being released after business hours without their personal items or money, due to an unexpected release decision by the court.

For those living in Tasmania's north or north-west, there may not be public transport options, and, if someone can't find a friend or family member "who can drop everything and pick them up or money to pay for private transport, the prospect of sleeping rough is real".

The Inspector found "regular and positive examples" of prison staff "going above and beyond" in these situations, such as by working later to facilitate the release of property or finances, waiting with someone in the dark until they were picked up and trying to find last-minute crisis accommodation.

But "relying on goodwill is not a long-term solution to this problem".

The Inspector recommended that the Tasmanian Government make a legislative change to allow people in prison to voluntarily stay another night. The report acknowledges that for most people this would be "repugnant" but "for those with no option [it] would likely be welcomed".

This would allow someone to voluntarily request to stay overnight in prison after their release date if there is a sufficient reason to do so, such as a lack of transport.

New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia allow for people in prison to request to stay up to an extra four days after their release date. The person in custody must request this or consent to it happening.



WA

First Nations man dies in custody

A 30-year-old First Nations man has died at Hakea Prison.

WA Corrective Services said that prison staff had provided first aid to the man before paramedics arrived and that "preliminary reports indicate that there were no suspicious circumstances" involved in his death.

A report will now be prepared for the coroner.

This is the 25th First Nations death in custody this year and the 77th death in custody overall.

The WA prison inspector recently said the conditions at Hakea were "entirely unacceptable" and were in breach of international human rights.

In early October a district judge described the conditions at the prison as "dangerously unstable", with "severe overcrowding" leading to "cramped, unhygienic and undignified conditions".



SA

Use of isolation in youth justice in the spotlight

Children in custody in South Australia will "remain at risk" until urgent changes around the use of isolation are implemented, a new report by the Training Centre Visitor has found.

The report focused on the use of isolation at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre and is based on a long-running review of isolation records, contemporaneous logs and operational practices over six months.

Its investigation found a range of issues, including an apparent normalisation of isolation to manage behavior, inconsistencies in the application of thresholds and times when uses of isolation were not properly recorded or justified.

The investigation found that many of these instances may be in breach of state legislation and international conventions.

"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," SA Training Centre Visitor Shona Reid said in the report.

From April to June last year, there were 176 staff-ordered isolations at the youth prison. In the following three months, there were 215 isolations.

The Training Centre Visitor called on the state government to ensure that all uses of isolation are regulated and conform with human rights standards, mandate improved record keeping and invest in non-punitive de-escalation practices.



VIC

Double the time allowed to lodge criminal appeal

A trial has been launched effectively allowing double the amount of time to file a criminal appeal, following concerns that not enough time was being given to complete the needed documents.

Currently, an appeal against a conviction or sentence must be filed within 28 days.

But, under a procedural rule that came into effect at the start of October, a further 28-day extension will be on offer, with no explanation required.

This new rule will apply during a trial period running from October to the end of March next year.

The directive said that lawyers in Victoria had raised concerns about difficulties in completing the necessary documentation before the 28-day deadline closed.

Criminal age of responsibility rises to 12

The age of criminal responsibility in Victoria has officially risen to 12 years old.

The Victorian parliament passed legislation last year raising the age from 10 to 12 years old, and this change came into effect from the start of October.

Victoria is now the second Australian jurisdiction to increase the age of criminal responsibility from 10 years old, after the ACT increased it to 14 earlier this year.

The Commission for Children and Young People welcomed the change but said the state government should go further and increase the age to 14 years old.

"This is an important step in keeping children and young people out of the criminal justice system, reflecting the evidence about what works to make communities safer," the commission said.

"However, more needs to be done to ensure lasting impact."



NT

Territory government launches 3-year prison-to-employment plan

The NT Government has announced a $2 million, 3-year reform agenda that it said would help people in prison gain useful skills and access employment when they are released.

The industries, skills and employment initiative will aim to "transform time in custody into real pathways to employment – directly tackling the root causes of crime: poor education, lack of skills and long-term unemployment".

The plan will include a 4-stage, case-managed pathway from custody to community which will include pre-release support, assistance on the day of release and a 12-month workplace mentoring program.

The Territory government will also "modernise" the education provided in prison with improvements to learning, literacy and numeracy and a "revitalised" training partnership that will tie Charles Darwin University to labour demands in the area.

There will also be industry-specific training that leads directly to job placements, and training and work programs for people on bail and those transitioning from remand.

Men sentenced for prison riot

Nine men incarcerated at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre have received sentences after being involved in a riot at the prison early last year.

The men received 8-month sentences after they escaped from their cells in January last year and rioted.

In the sentencing, the judge acknowledged the "harsh" and "oppressive" conditions in the prison at the time and accepted that this "unpleasant" environment led them to escape their cells.

One of the man's lawyers said that his client had been sharing a dorm with 18 other men at the time, with only four fans between them, and that they had to wear the same clothes for up to six days in a row, "without the ability to change or wash properly".



QLD

New domestic violence laws and police powers

The Queensland Government has passed legislation that will allow Queensland Police to issue on-the-spot 12-month Police Protection Directions (PPDs).

Currently, police can only issue a 5-day protection order before they are required to apply to the court for a longer term Domestic Violence Order (DVO).

PPDs will extend this period from five days to 12 months, allowing police to enforce longer restrictions without immediate court involvement.

The Queensland Government has stated that police officers will be able to issue PPDs from 1 January 2026.

A PPD will always prohibit the respondent from committing domestic violence against a named person for 12 months. It may also include non-contact conditions and conditions about places where the respondent can and cannot go.

Breaching a PPD will be a criminal offence and can result in a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment.

The new laws contain rules that the police need to follow when issuing PPDs. People can seek an internal review with the Queensland Police and/or apply to the Magistrates Court for review of a PPD.

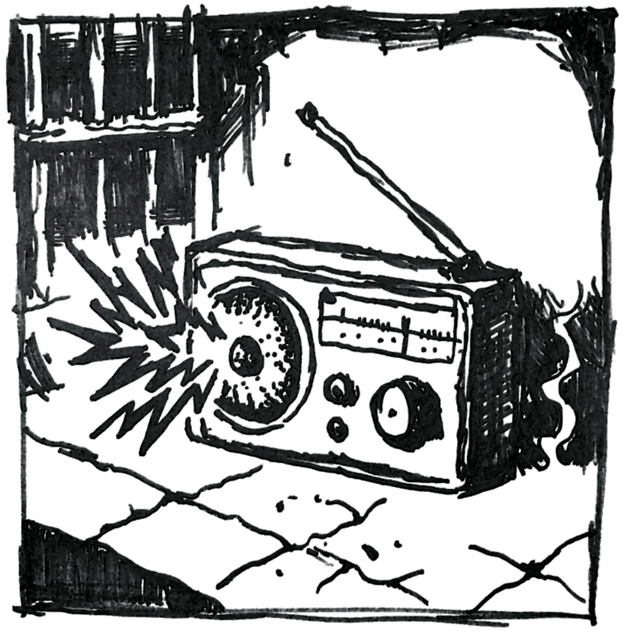
The new laws will also roll out GPS tracking for "high-risk domestic violence offenders". This means that, in some circumstances, a court may make electronic monitoring a condition of a DVO.

The Queensland Government has stated they expect that electronic monitoring will commence for at least 150 "high-risk offenders" by the end of 2025.

PLS does not assist with domestic violence orders or criminal law. If you require legal advice about a PPD in the future, you can contact Legal Aid for free on the Arunta Telephone System by dialing *#04.

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

The Importance of Radio in Prison



Benjamin Aitken

Finding connection through airwaves

By Benjamin Aitken

Benjamin Aitken is an artist whose work is influenced by personal experience of imprisonment and a commitment to social change. Aitken is curious about how his two passions, art and criminology, can intersect and influence each other.

Prisons are built of concrete that holds residents as tightly as it holds the noise around them. Noise lingers in its walls, bouncing around the unit. Beneath that, silence persists, a silence borne from being cut off.

One of the few things that can break through is radio – a minor distraction from the endless hours, a way to pass time and, sometimes, a spark of nostalgia. But who gets to listen, what they hear and what it means inside prison is more complicated than it first seems.

In most Australian prisons, radios are still accessible, sometimes through small transistor sets sold at the canteen, sometimes built into prison-issued devices. They're not free. That means those without money or outside support are left without access.

Yet, for those who tune in, the radio can be a quiet escape. I remember the feeling of hearing a song I knew well. I might listen for hours on end, not knowing what would come next or if I would even hear that song at all. It's a reminder that life continues.



For some, it's comforting. For others, it sharpens the sense of being left behind.

Radio also fills a gap that prison life rarely provides: a choice. Well, depending on your celly. You can switch the dial and choose a station. That choice matters in a place where almost everything else is decided for you.



A certain song at the right moment can anchor someone to memories, to hope or simply to themselves.

But radio is not without tension. Access is limited, and not everyone can tune in, which can create conflict among those who want it most. It can fuel the feeling of disconnection or anger at a system that already feels stacked against you. And sometimes the lack of representation is apparent: so many voices on the airwaves but rarely those from inside.

This absence only deepens the sense that prisoners are silenced – spoken about but not spoken with. Radio made by and for prisoners is a unique response to the challenges of prison life, which are often unseen and unheard.

Prisoner-run radio offers powerful ways to challenge the silence. In Queensland, Locked In shares messages and song requests sent in by prisoners each week, giving priority to those inside.

In Victoria, Beyond the Bars amplifies the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through annual live broadcasts. And, since 1976, 3CR has kept prisoner radio alive, starting with a show that exposed conditions in Melbourne's notorious Pentridge Prison H Division.

The Inside Voice program on Vision Australia Radio (VAR) has been amplifying the perspectives of those who know the system best, and they do it well. Recently, the show was even nominated as a finalist for the Best Program: News & Current Affairs award by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

Recognition like this shows that prisoner-focused broadcasting isn't just valuable on the inside; it's being taken seriously in the wider media landscape too.

But what happens when commercial radio just doesn't cut it? Prisoners create their own.

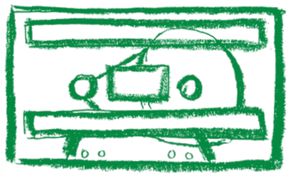
I remember helping a friend as I passed the yard next to my unit, on the way to the doctor. Alongside the fence, a group of African inmates was posted, waiting expectantly.

I slipped them a cassette tape through the gap – freestyles our friend had recorded on a radio's tape recorder.

Those tapes circulated from hand to hand, fence to fence, becoming their version of radio.

For them, it was a way to keep culture close, to fill the silence in whatever ways they could.

In that context, even a rough tape carried more weight than anything blasting from a mainstream station. That moment showed me something important.



Radio, whether transmitted through airwaves or held in someone's pocket on a cassette, is about connection. It can be a bridge in a place designed to cut bridges down. It can bring the outside in, but it can also amplify the inside out.

The question isn't only who gets to listen in prison but who gets to speak. Given that space, prisoners' voices could carry more than just background noise. They could carry change.

"Inside Voice" provides access to news and creative writing content for and by incarcerated people and features content from *About Time* and *Paper Chained*. It is broadcast across the Vision Australia Radio Network every Thursday from 4.30pm and repeated on Monday at 4.30pm (including Adelaide).

A Year of Being 'Tough on Crime'

By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender girl who had a 10 and a half year sentence in a men's prison. She has an undergraduate in creative writing and has recently been published extensively, most notably, "Nothing to hide, tales of trans and gender diverse Australia", which was published and distributed internationally by Allen & Unwin. Stacey was a recipient of the 2025 Varuna Trans and Gender Diverse Fellowship to develop her manuscript, *My World*.

It's been over a year since the Country Liberal Party won the Northern Territory election, promising "community safety" and tough-on-crime policies. They tightened bail laws, introduced more offences, increased penalties and lowered the age of criminal responsibility to 10, which has faced heavy criticism from a range of groups. So what is the result a year on?



Rico via Unsplash

For one, these policies have driven prisoner numbers up by around 600, with a daily average of 2,834 people in the prison system in June 2025. Indigenous people make up 88 per cent of the adult prison population, and Indigenous children are close to 100 per cent of the youth detention population.

When comparing NT to countries around the world, the incarceration rate is second only to El Salvador. This cements the NT as Australia's most imprisoned place, with an incarceration rate three times greater than the next highest jurisdiction, Western Australia. It also has the highest recidivism rate in the country, according to the Australian Productivity Commission, with six out of 10 prisoners returning to jail within two years after being released.

The NT is also running out of prisons, and there's not enough staff. A growing number of people are being imprisoned in police watch houses, due to capacity constraints at Territory prisons, and they've had to contract private security firm G4S to cover staff shortages, with ever-expanding responsibilities. The NT Aboriginal land councils are accusing the government of human rights abuses due to overcrowding and overt racism at the overincarceration of Aboriginal people.

Spit hoods and restraint chairs have also been reinstated. The NT Police Force has confirmed that, since October 2024, spit hoods had once again been made available to use on youths in police watch houses and cells. Spit hoods have been subject to controversy due to a 2016 ABC *Four Corners* report, containing a shocking video showing a 17-year-old boy being strapped into a mechanical restraint chair in an NT facility. This led then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull to announce the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. The royal commission recommended the spit hoods be outlawed.

The age of criminal responsibility in the NT has also been lowered to 10, two years after it had been raised to 12 by the previous government. This is despite the United Nations recommending raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14. Considering youth justice contains nearly 100 per cent Indigenous children, it can be inferred that this will greatly impact Aboriginal communities.

All this change and serious crime isn't improving. Data from the NT Police Force shows an increase in violent crimes. Between December 2024 and July 2025, 8,579 offences against the person – including assault, sexual assault, robbery and homicide – were recorded across the Northern Territory, a 2.5 per cent increase from the same period a year prior. However, there has been a reduction of property crime in the same period, which the government has claimed shows the success of their policies. The medium to longer term impacts of such policies, however, are yet to be seen.

So the NT Government has kept their election promises. But the question remains: is being tough on crime and being serious about crime reduction the same thing? Is the NT walking into a more criminalised and less safe future? And what about Aboriginal children? It makes you think: is this an eye for an eye until we are all blind – or until everyone is in jail?

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Reports of Unsafe Drinking Water in Prison



By Denham Sadler

Access to clean drinking water is a basic human right for people in prison.

But there have been a number of recent reports raising concerns about dirty and metallic-tasting drinking water in prisons around the country, leading to calls for testing to be conducted in these facilities to ensure the water is safe.

In a recent inspection of the Acacia Prison, in Western Australia, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) said it received several complaints from people in the prison and staff that the drinking water had sediment in it and tasted metallic.

"[There were] significant concerns over the quality and potential contamination of the water supply," the OICS report said.

"We heard persistent complaints that the water contained black fragments and that it had a strong metallic taste. People in custody were highly frustrated [that] they were expected to continue drinking the water, without any option to purchase bottled water."

Tasmania is understood to be the only jurisdiction to currently test the water in its prisons.

According to the head of Curtin University's Justice Health Group, Stuart Kinner, safe drinking water is a "basic necessity for life and health" and it would make sense to test the water available in prisons.

"People in prison are entitled to the same standard of healthcare as people in the community, and that extends to healthy living conditions," Kinner told *About Time*.

"Across Australia, drinking water is tested regularly at multiple points in the supply chain. Including prisons in routine water quality testing is a no-brainer."

Along with the recent inspection in Western Australia, the issue spans nationwide.

In New South Wales, an inspection report found that the tap water at the Broken Hill Correctional Centre was "undrinkable" and if you weren't a local it "makes you sick".

In 2021, the Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania published a special report looking at environmental health and hygiene in the state's prison, including the results of testing of the drinking water.

It found high levels of metal in some of the drinking water and recommended that taps should be run cold for 30 seconds before drinking.

The Tasmania Prison Service confirmed to *About Time* that a plumbing company is now contracted to undertake water sampling from a number of sites around the prisons in the state every six months.

These samples are then analysed by a Tasmanian laboratory to ensure it meets Australian drinking water standards.

But there are concerns that ageing infrastructure at many prisons around the country is contributing to drinking water being potentially dirty or unsafe to drink.

"The drinking water quality in buildings can deteriorate due to poor design and management of internal plumbing systems," a spokesperson for the National Health and Medical Research Council told *About Time*.

"For example, a potential issue is the leaching of metals from plumbing products into drinking water. This may result from long periods of stagnation, where drinking water is sitting in contact with plumbing products for extended periods, or from plumbing products that have deteriorated or corroded.

"Older plumbing products may introduce higher than regulated levels of lead, copper or other metals."



Willy Pleasance

Rising Remand Numbers Drive Increase to Victoria's Prison Population

By About Time

The increase in the size of Victoria's prison population over the last two decades has been driven by the growing number of people held on remand rather than more people committing offences, a landmark report has found.

The Sentencing Advisory Council report tracks the prison population in Victoria from 2004 to 2024, finding that it grew by 62 per cent in this time, far more than the less than 40 per cent increase in the general population of the state.

The report identifies three key periods for this.

After a period of relative stability from 2004 to 2011, there was a significant increase in the number of people in prison from 2012 to 2019.

Then, from 2020 to 2024, there was a "unique decline" in the prison population.

The report does not cover the rapid increase in the number of people in prison in Victoria since June 2024.

The report found that these volatile changes in the number of people in prison in the state are because of the number of people on remand, rather than the number of crimes being committed.

Until 2011, only about 20 per cent of the prison population were on remand, but this jumped to 37 per cent in 2019 and peaked at 44 per cent in 2021.

There was then a steady decline in the next three years, although this figure has increased to 38 per cent as of August this year.

There have also been a lot more short-term prison sentences of less than six months.

"There are many more people in prison, particularly people held on remand prior to trial or sentencing," Sentencing Advisory Council director Stan Winford said.

"As a result, people are receiving shorter prison sentences, many of which are time served prison sentences.

"But, at the same time, people committing serious offences such as murder, rape and other violent crimes are now receiving much longer prison sentences than they did previously."

There are also far more First Nations people in custody compared to two decades ago, with the per capita imprisonment rate increasing by just under 70 per cent in this time.

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Experiences

Violence as the Exception: Care and Camaraderie in Prisons

By Kyle Magee

Continued from page 1.

They know the systemic injustices of the world because they've lived them firsthand. The "crime problem" is really an injustice problem. Crime in society will only decrease as justice increases.

In some prisons, prisoners are pitted against each other, as if it's part of the punishment. Very little is done to stop a culture of violence and intimidation in prison – the cycle of violence and ongoing trauma is then used to justify the continuous scapegoating and incarceration of the criminal class.

If "rehabilitation" or processing your own trauma and healing your spirit is possible in prison, it is a personal choice.

I remember a guy a bit older than me opening up to me at Port Phillip Prison and telling me, "It's easy when you don't care – you can do whatever and you don't give a fuck – but when you care it's real hard."

He was making the hard choice because he wanted to care, wanted to be accountable for himself and his actions, and not just spread his pain around in a society that most of the time doesn't seem to care. I really respected that.

Prisoners of like mind can find each other, show each other care and camaraderie, help each other understand their wounds and get out of the cycle of reacting to the bullshit life has served them in a way that further harms them.

There are examples of prisoners starting and running groups all around the world, groups that talk about the traps of hyper-masculinity and how to be strong by encouraging the strength in others. They are hugely successful, and any of you can start one.

Prisoners have many of the same struggles in common. If we recognise this and work with each other, the positive impact goes far beyond the personal.

Prisoners know something from experience, something that cannot be taught: how it feels and how wrong it is to dehumanise anyone.

A person who processes their trauma is a fighter for real justice, and the best fighters for real justice come from the bottom.

Hold your head up high, be accountable, and the world is yours. Getting stuck reacting to unexamined pain and clinging on to excuses is a recipe for misery. To me, the most vital part of masculinity is to love your brothers and sisters, fight for justice and protect country. I don't care what slur anyone would use against me for saying this: I love you brothers, I feel your pain, and I genuinely want the best for you and hope you do too. You deserve it after all you have been through.



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Kairos Prison Ministry Australia

Rachel attended a Kairos Outside weekend and said:

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

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Living With Autism in Prison



By Ashleigh Chapman and Dan Vansetten

Ashleigh Chapman has autism spectrum disorder and spent 10 years in prison and two years in solitary confinement. She uses her time learning, unlearning and relearning to help and advocate for those who are incarcerated.

Dan Vansetten has autism spectrum disorder. He 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 the rights of people in prison.

Prisons de-individualise and dehumanise people. This is often more apparent for people who already do not fit the mold of a "normal person", such as those with autism spectrum disorder (autism).

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects how people interact, communicate and perceive the world. There are many symptoms of autism that can cause issues in prison: lack of eye contact, which people sometimes associate with being untruthful; sensitivity to sounds, noises and tastes that you cannot control in a prison environment; unusual or disjointed speech patterns, which people sometimes misinterpret; a tendency to be solution focused rather than expressing sympathy, which people may interpret as being non-caring.

On the flip side, there can be many benefits. Autistic people can have excellent memories, a keen eye for detail, strong logical thinking styles, creativity and tenacity, and often a strong sense of justice (which makes them awesome advocates!)

Autism presents in various severity levels, which is what the term "spectrum" in "autism spectrum" means. People who think of "autism" probably think of Dustin Hoffman's character in the movie *Rain Man*, Sheldon in *The Big Bang Theory* or Dr Shaun Murphy in *The Good Doctor*. However, people "on the spectrum" do not all experience the same issues (or benefits). Many do not display the obvious outward symptoms like those portrayed in these television shows. They may, nevertheless, experience significant difficulties in certain environments, particularly in prison, where a person has little to no control over the environment. Our experiences highlight the need for greater awareness by prison authorities for all people with neurodiversity.

Ashleigh's experience

My imprisonment caused more issues for my autism spectrum disorder than I could have ever imagined. I masked – strategies neurodivergent people use in an attempt to "fit in" – a lot growing up because I had to and because I was able to. Masking for me was forcing myself into social situations, pretending to understand tasks I could not understand and appearing as if I had no problems and that I was able to understand everything someone was saying and wanting me to do. I had to look you in the eyes and engage, even though I felt uncomfortable. I had to, to survive. This meant I would bottle everything up until I couldn't take it anymore. The lights, the keys, the large metal door would bang, and it would come out in bad language, or I would tell people to leave me alone in a more abusive way.

Masking in prison is very hard, because it strips you down and makes you wear what they want you to wear, eat what they want you to eat and deal with the sensory issues by yourself. And, if you respond in a way that is due to your autism, it is often a problem and you are then mislabelled as a trouble-maker – rather than understanding this is because of an overload of sensory input and you have just responded to how it feels to you. Covering light sources due to it being so bright is something I would do often, but I would get into trouble because you are not allowed to cover the light. So you suffer.

Lights are bright, fans are loud, smells are more intense, keys are jangling loudly – everything for me is louder than what those without autism might hear. I would often ask people, "Can you smell that?" and people would ask, "What is in this food? Tell me what you can smell?" and make bets. I hated this because it was a sensory overload. I would also have officers saying, "I did not slam the door. You are overreacting," or, "My child has autism, and they do not act like you." Misjudging me, dehumanising me and de-individualising me and others with autism spectrum disorder is quite common in everyday life but more so in a prison environment.

Dan's experience

My imprisonment led to the discovery of my autism. Prior to imprisonment, I had managed my life in a way that mitigated the negative effects of autism. In prison, however, there was no escaping the environment that caused distress. It was like I was serving an additional punishment because of the effects of autism in the prison environment.

The two biggest issues for me were the cell fans and fluorescent lighting. People incarcerated in South Australian prisons can buy an electric fan to have in their cell. Most of the cells in the men's prisons are double ups, meaning two blokes in each cell. Nearly every one of my cellmates had a fan. Many of my cellmates said they slept better with a fan on during the night. For me, the fan was a torturous device – the repetitive low volume whirring sound from the motor and the fan blades would keep me awake. It's no understatement to say I hated these fans!

Sleep is crucial for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing. Sleep deprivation causes irritation. Luckily for me there was no such thing as "thought police" in prison – the thoughts that would go through my mind when subjected to long-term sleep deprivation might at times have given me a life sentence! It was not a good circumstance. I am certainly grateful to all the brothers that accommodated my hatred of the fan, especially through the 40-degree heatwaves during summer at Port Augusta Prison.

Fluorescent lights (fluoros) are known to cause significant distress to people with autism.The fluoros certainly drove me up the wall. I felt as though cells the size of a small bathroom were lit up like the Melbourne Cricket Ground. There was no dimmer switch; the lights were on or off. Most cells had no reading light so the only option for light was the fluoro. I could feel the cortisol (stress hormone) rising through my body when these lights were on for extended periods. Sometimes, at the risk of being told off by officers, I would cover lights with toilet paper or towels to lower the intensity or try to get maintenance workers to remove a globe.

Conclusion

We have autism spectrum disorder. We are human beings. We are just like everyone else. We can do things others cannot, others can do things we cannot. We all learn differently, we all react differently, we all need understanding and patience. Sometimes we need more than others, sometimes others need more than us. We are all the same though we are all different.

Prison authorities need to do more to gain an understanding of people with autism and listen to those with autism spectrum disorder to make it better for everyone.

The one-size-fits-all approach for imprisonment and rehabilitation simply does not cater for people with autism.

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‘On the Bus’: The Toll of Moving In and Between Prisons



“Glen Innes Compound” by Tony, available to purchase from Boom Gate Gallery

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in VIC.

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, Tim Robbins’s character is locked in the same cell with Morgan Freeman’s character for 15 years. When I entered the prison system, that’s sort of what I expected: stuck in the same cell, with the same person, for the majority of my sentence.

I’d never have guessed at the amount of movement happening within the prison system. Not just within a particular prison – that in itself was eye-opening – but movement between prisons.

I’m a newbie to the corrections system, but I’ve already resided in three different prisons. The bus (prison transports) arrives three days a week. Moving day is marked by inmates pushing trolleys stacked with green tubs holding their meagre belongings.

The “bus rides” themselves are torture. For example: Ravenhall to Hopkins is a three and a half hour of sitting on unforgiving metal benches, with up to four inmates crammed shoulder to shoulder in a 1-metre by 1-metre box. I swear the bus had no suspension and that the driver aimed for every bone-jarring pothole. If you need to urinate, the guards offer you a plastic bag.

There are many reasons for moving between prisons: being sentenced, attending court or undergoing medical treatment. You can get ‘tipped’ (expelled from the prison) for various infractions or if someone ‘drops a note on you’. I’ve heard stories of troublesome inmates touring the corrections system, tipped from one prison after another, finding themselves locked down 23 hours per day in special management cells. Other reasons to ‘get on the bus’ include attending a program not offered at your current location or moving to a ‘lower rated’ prison as part of your parole journey.

The best reason is when you go home – an occasion for handshakes, best wishes and the obligatory ‘don’t let me see you back here’.

Moves are stressful. You pack your belongings, even if you’re just going for a week. This is because there is no guarantee you’ll be reallocated to the same cell, or the same job, as the one before you left. You may be in a cottage (top-tier accommodation) before you leave and return to a three-out in central when you get back. Then you have to start over. It’s a roll of the dice.

If you’re inside for a long-term, it’s better to choose friends with similar terms. Short-timers are known as “tourists” – they come, they go. How many years until you pass tourist status? Three? Five? Definitions vary. If your friends have a similar term, there’s a better chance they’ll be around for a while – but it’s never guaranteed.

One day you’re living with someone, or working with them, and the next they’re gone. There’s rarely any notice; you just don’t see them again.

Rumours abound, but you can rarely believe them. Maintaining a support group is not easy. You find someone you trust, and then suddenly they’re ‘on the bus’. Sometimes you’ll get a letter or an email – usually they just disappear from your life.

So far at this location, I’ve been in seven different cells in three different communities, with many more changes of cellmates – I’ve roomed with other inmates for as long as 9 months or as short as 1 day.

The continual movement does little for one’s sense of permanency or security. It’s not your cell – it’s the prison’s. There’s an ongoing sense of anxiety, when you could be rousted from your cell at a moment’s notice: “You go where we tell you!”

The first thing you learn in prison? Never get attached. Everything can change in a day. Fifteen years in the same cell? Not a chance!



● Reintegration

Recognising the Trauma of Imprisonment



Willy Pleasance

By Steve Rothwell

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

“You’ve been through a lot, son.”

My mother’s words hit me like a rubber bat – knocking me flat with the realisation that I’d been to hell and back.

Yet those simple words of validation, spoken a year after my release, nourished me. They recognised my ordeal, and that recognition mattered.

Like many ex-prisoners, I had never stopped to ask: “What have I been through? How did I survive?”

The soul-grinding act of staying tough, of force-coping, carries on long after release. Emotions remain numbed. Expectations shrink. Hope feels like a luxury we can’t afford.

Prison is endured, not processed. The trauma often goes unrecognised and unacknowledged. Many of us hide the damage, even from ourselves. Without validation, we carry it alone – mistaking struggle for weakness, layering self-blame on top of trauma and finding no clear path to relief.

Nobody tells us: “You’ve been through a lot.” Nobody validates the trauma.

Yet this validation is crucial. Without it, poisonous self-talk creeps in: “I’m weak because I feel traumatised by prison.”

No. That’s not true. I survived one of the most stressful experiences a human being can endure. It is completely normal to feel traumatised by it. Prison leaves a mark. We should not ignore that mark. We need to acknowledge the suffering and consciously mark the transition back into life outside. Without this, we risk staying trapped in hypervigilant prison mode.

Learning to self-validate – and ideally receiving validation from others – is vital for mental reintegration. It creates the space to acknowledge and accept what has happened, reducing the risk of being haunted by imprisonment or carrying the sense of ongoing punishment.

It is about granting ourselves permission to process the ordeal, to draw a line between prison and release. Otherwise, we risk lingering in an emotional halfway house – neither fully in prison nor fully free.

We did our time. We made it through. That took strength. Recovery takes time, but it comes easier when we accept that prison was tough – and that it is behind us. The bruises and wounds are real, but scars heal faster when we stop denying their existence.

About a month after my mum first said, “You’ve been through a lot”, she added: “You’ve lost that haunted look.”

She was right. I had allowed myself to grieve the lost time and trauma. I began to come to terms with it, to separate myself from the blurred line between doing time and being out. I reminded myself daily: “I am out. I can make new plans.”

I was finally in the adjustment period – with good days and bad – but my core self and my sense of hope slowly returned.

Yet one niggling doubt remained. I couldn’t quite name it – until one day the words came.

“I let the system treat me inhumanely, and I went along with it. I deserved everything.”

The moment I thought it, I saw how damaging it was. There is something psychologically injurious about feeling as though you cooperated in your own punishment – as if by enduring it you somehow endorsed it.

Giving in to a system that torments you leaves a bitter aftertaste. It makes you feel weak.

Remaining meek and compliant in the face of psychological torture can feel like complicity. But then I realised:

“Yes, you were treated inhumanely – and it’s natural to grieve that. You never had a real choice about ‘going along with it.’. You endured what you had to endure, and you did it with remarkable self-control.”

That endurance is not weakness. It is strength. Surviving does not make you complicit; it makes you resilient.

Now it’s time to honour that resilience. To restore your sense of humanity. To move forward with pride and a renewed sense of self-worth.

Coping with a term of imprisonment is no small feat. It leaves its mark. But you can look that damage in the eye, acknowledge it for what it is and still take pride in having made it through.

After release, you have the chance to draw a line under that experience and, at the same time, validate what you’ve been through in order to fend off the silent haunting of unacknowledged prison trauma.

And, if guilt ever whispers that you “went along with it” too passively, remind yourself: you never had a choice. Blending into the system wasn’t weakness; it was survival. It gave you the best chance of getting out – and that was strength.



● Have a Question?

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Legal Corner

Whistleblowing Laws: Protecting Those Who Speak Out



Iqro Rinaldi via Unsplash

By Human Rights Law Centre lawyers Madeleine Howle and Kieran Pender

Madeleine Howle is a lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre's Whistleblower Project. Kieran Pender is an associate legal director with the project. You or someone on your behalf can contact the Whistleblower Project via www.hrlc.org.au.

Wrongdoing thrives in the darkness. Too often, it is only because of brave people who speak out that the public learns what is happening in the shadows. Those brave people are whistleblowers, and they play a vital role in protecting the wellbeing and dignity of people in prisons.

In 2022, Tasmanian youth detention worker Alysha spoke out about abuse at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Her whistleblowing sparked a government inquiry and paved the way for a class action lawsuit. In Victoria in recent years whistleblowers have spoken up about unsafe conditions in youth detention, while whistleblowers in immigration detention have likewise exposed mistreatment that would have otherwise stayed hidden.

Without whistleblowers, the actions of governments and companies would often go unchecked. In places where a culture of silence can thrive, speaking up is more important than ever.

Protections for whistleblowers

In Australia, whistleblowing laws protect people who speak out or "blow the whistle". Misuse of public funds, human rights abuses, threats to health and safety and misconduct can all be reported under whistleblowing laws.

In every state and territory, there are whistleblowing laws known as "Public Interest Disclosure" (or "PID") laws, which protect people who speak up about wrongdoing in the public sector. PID laws generally protect whistleblowers in their employment or work but can sometimes also protect people in prison, their family members or loved ones.

Under all whistleblowing laws, a person who speaks up by making a report under the legal pathway will be protected from retaliation, including being bullied, harassed, fired from their employment or treated badly because they blew the whistle.

For people in prison, family members and loved ones

In some states, including Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, PID laws protect any person who speaks out about public sector wrongdoing. This means that whistleblowing laws are relevant not only for workers in prisons but for those inside and their family too.

Not all complaints will fall under whistleblowing laws. But, if the problem is serious or involves wrongdoing of prison workers, you may be protected in speaking up.

An example could be where an incarcerated person has a health condition that requires treatment. The health service is provided to the incarcerated person by a company, through an agreement with the public prison. The incarcerated person believes that an officer has documented medical treatments, when those treatments weren't actually provided to them. This might amount to corruption or misuse of public funds by the prison officer.

The incarcerated person could be protected to raise their concerns under PID laws, for example, to the ombudsman in their state or territory. The protections under whistleblowing law would mean that it would be an offence for someone (including other prison officers) to harass, intimidate or treat the incarcerated person badly because they spoke up.

For workers

A culture of silence is particularly dangerous where officers fail to report wrongdoing of their colleagues.

PID laws in each state and territory protect people who work for the government. Many correctional facilities across Australia are serviced by private companies contracted to government – PID laws often apply to those private sector workers, in addition to public servants working in prisons.

Under all PID laws in Australia, government workers or contractors will be protected in speaking up to the head of their agency or to external regulators like an anti-corruption body or the ombudsman. These laws also typically require government agencies to investigate reports of wrongdoing.

There are also whistleblower protection laws for workers of private companies in Australia who speak out about misconduct to someone senior at their company, such as a CEO or director.

How to safely blow the whistle

It can be difficult to know what to do when you see wrongdoing happen.

You can find information about making a complaint or PID by contacting the ombudsman in your state or territory. You can also speak to an Official Visitor if they visit, who can receive complaints from incarcerated people and staff.

For workers, the easiest way to find out how to blow the whistle is to look for your whistleblowing policy – sometimes called a "Speak-Up Policy" or "Public Interest Disclosure Policy".

When thinking about blowing the whistle, consider getting legal advice first. The Whistleblower Project at the Human Rights Law Centre is a free legal service for whistleblowers. You can reach out to us through our website or ask a loved one or a lawyer to contact us on your behalf.

Since launching, the Whistleblower Project has helped many clients safely speak out about wrongdoing in prison settings. We can help you by giving advice on whether you are protected by whistleblowing laws, how to safely report wrongdoing and what to do if you suffer poor treatment for speaking up.

It can be tempting to turn a blind eye to wrongdoing, to think, "This is not my problem." That is particularly the case when there is a culture of silence or a desire not to cause problems.

But bad things happen when good people fail to speak up. Whistleblowers make Australia a better place.

FAQs: Security Classifications in Queensland

By Prisoners' Legal Service

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

Your security classification impacts which prison you are placed in and the level of security that is imposed on you. This article will answer frequently asked questions in relation to security classification decisions in Queensland.

Q: I have a low security classification – why am I still at the high-security prison?

A low classification does not automatically mean you will be transferred to a low-security prison or a work camp. There are restrictions as to who can be accommodated in a low-security prison or a work camp. For example, a prisoner is not eligible to be transferred to a low-security prison if they have been convicted of a sexual offence, have been convicted of murder or are serving a life sentence.

Q: What do Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) consider when deciding my security classification?

QCS must consider the following factors:

- the nature of the offence for which you have been charged or convicted
- the risk of you escaping or attempting to escape from custody
- the risk of you committing a further offence and the impact the further offence is likely to have on the community
- the risk you pose to yourself, other prisoners, staff members and the security of the corrective services facility
- the length of time remaining for you to serve under your sentence
- information about you received from a law enforcement agency.

Q: What if I'm on remand?

If you're on remand and not serving a term of imprisonment for another offence (i.e. on "remand only"), you will be given a high-security classification. Exceptions can be made for women who are on remand for non-violent, non-sexual offences.

Q: How often do QCS have to review my high-security classification?

QCS must review a high-security classification every 3 years. If you request that your security classification be reviewed and you haven't made this request in the past 12 months, QCS must review your security classification.

However, these rules do not apply to you if:

- you are being detained on remand and not serving a term of imprisonment for another offence (i.e. you are on "remand only") or
- you are being held in custody on any of the following orders:
  - a continuing detention order or an interim detention order under the *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003*
  - a preventative detention order under the *Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005*
  - any of the following under the *Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995* section 100.1:
    - a continued preventative detention order
    - an initial preventative detention order
    - an interim post-sentence order
    - a post-sentence order
    - a preventative detention order.

Q: What if I'm unhappy with QCS's decision about my security classification?

QCS should give you a document called an "Information Notice" which says what security classification you have been given and why.

QCS procedures state that an Information Notice must be provided to you in writing within 2 working days after your security classification decision is made.

If QCS has increased your security classification and you are unhappy about it, you have 7 days from when you received the Information Notice to write to QCS by blue letter and request a review of that security classification. You should send that blue letter to the following address:

General Manager, Sentence Management Services
Queensland Corrective Services
GPO Box 1054
Brisbane 4001

Legal reviews of security classification decisions are only available in very limited circumstances. You can seek legal advice if you are not happy with your security classification.

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Health

Treating Hep C: My Story



By Simon

Simon writes from a prison in QLD.

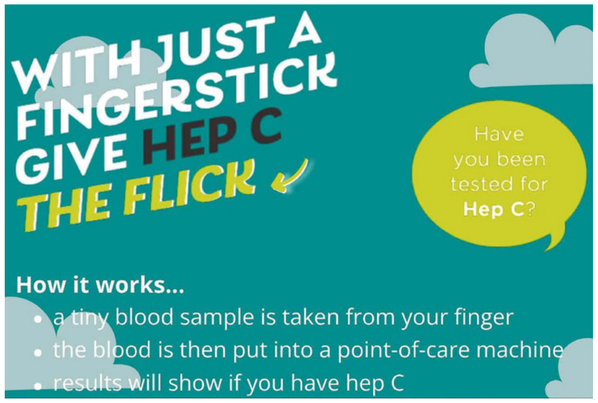
I was incarcerated during COVID. I was transferred to Brisbane Correctional Centre for 1 week and then moved to Woodford Correctional Centre for 4 years. It was a difficult time and, in my own words, I was treated like shit for 4 years.

From the start, I wasn't able to access doctors in the medical centre or mental health staff and everything was difficult. I wanted to focus on my health. I was told by officers to put in a medical form but was not provided any assistance in completing the form. Comments such as "don't ask me about filling in forms ... ask your friends" were what I got.

It's difficult navigating systems when you are naive to the system! I saw that many people in prison including long termers, whites and those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can't read and write. I felt people were singled out, made to feel uncomfortable and made to be seen as "a user". In my opinion, the general population on the outside think prisoners are scum.

Fortunately, I made the most of my time inside and, being self-motivated, I focused on upskilling to relieve the boredom, working my way up to a senior position in the industries sewing unit.

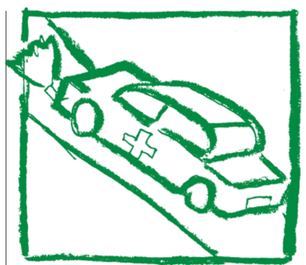




I have a history of hep C and had been on old treatment in the past. However, I was not surprised when I was once again diagnosed as hep C positive during a Kombi Clinic high-intensity testing campaign at my Brisbane prison. During this fingerstick testing process, I was given a purple card for the hep C prison transition worker from QuIHN (Queensland Injectors Health Network). After my diagnosis, I started hep C treatment for a few days but was given a suspended sentence and discharged without my hep C medication.

I was determined to finish my Hep C medication and was motivated enough to ring the hep C prison transition worker straight away following my discharge to tell her I was at home and without my pills. With the working partnerships between different organisations involved in hep C care in Queensland prisons, she was able to communicate with my previous prison nurse and arrange to pick up my hep C medication from the prison.





The hep C prison transition worker then delivered the pills to my home in Queensland, where I completed my full course without missing a single tablet. She has been in regular touch with me and, to help me further, was able to make an active referral to QuIHN counselling service where I continue to this day. Fortunately, I am also linked in with Alcohol and Other Drug Services at Princess Alexandra Hospital for my opioid antagonist therapy and have been assisted by a fabulous social worker. I had a post-treatment test with QuIHN now and I was thrilled with my negative result. This was awesome news and I was both relieved and happy to be cured of hep C.

Ongoing, I see my GP every 6 months for a hep C test. I am currently completing a Certificate 4 in Mental Health and am looking to the future to help people who are homeless. I also want to volunteer and work with "my people". I spoke about establishing a "Brothers on the Inside" support group, and I'm sure with my passion I will be successful.

For all my mates, I always say, "Don't wait and get tested for hep C today." Things are possible and help is out there.

Developed by the Kombi Clinic, a mobile hepatitis C outreach team with a roaming VW Kombi van that visits locations throughout Queensland, destigmatising hepatitis C and offering access to testing and cure since 2017.

Call HepLink (1800 437 222) for hepatitis information and support. HepLink is a free and confidential service and does not require a Medicare card. Normal call rates apply.

You can also call AIVL, the peer-led peak organisation advancing the wellbeing, health and human rights of people who use drugs, on 1800-MYAIVL(692485), for information and peer support. It is free and confidential, and no Medicare is required.

The appropriate treatment for an individual patient is for the healthcare professional to decide, in consultation with the patient.

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Discover Your Strength!

A healthier you starts here

Every exercise in this article is designed for you, to be done in your own space, at your own pace, and without judgment from others.

This is your chance to focus on yourself, take control of your fitness, and to empower your journey one step at a time. Remember, a healthier you starts today.

Commit to completing these exercises daily and become that healthier you!

Why you should make the change

Making small, consistent lifestyle changes today can create powerful results for your future. Even the simplest form of regular exercise can transform your health, boost your confidence, and unlock potential you may not have realised you had. Your only limit is you, so commit to being fit, start today, and let each step move you closer to the best version of yourself. Believe, achieve, and succeed.

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4. memory, improves brain function, and may help prevent cognitive decline associated with aging.
5. You don't need hours of exercise to get fit; shorter, regular workouts are effective.
6. Listening to music can improve your workout performance and motivation.

Staying Healthy?

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

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

Write to us via the below postal address:

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contribute@abouttime.org.au



Monday	Tuesday	Wednsday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM	**AM**	**AM**	**AM**	**AM**	**AM**	**AM**
5 x Push Ups 20 x Squats 10 x Butt Kicks 20-40 x Situps	10 x Kneeling Pushups 20-40 x Squats 15 x Butt Kicks 20-40 Situps	15 x Kneeling Pushups 30-40 x Squats 15-30 x Butt Kicks 30-40 x Situps/ Crunches	20 x Kneeling Pushups 30-40 x Squats 15-30 x Butt Kicks 30-40 x Situps/ Crunches	25 x Kneeling Pushups 35-40 x Squats 15-40 x Butt Kicks 35-40 x Situps/ Crunches	10 x Neck Rotations 20 x Shoulder Rolls 10 x Cross Arm Stretch 45sec Child Pose	Rest day!
PM	**PM**	**PM**	**PM**	**PM**	**PM**	**PM**
30sec Plank 10 x Standing Calf Raises 5-10 x Kneeling Pushups 10 x Lunges (per leg) 10-20 x Star Jumps	30-60sec Plank 15 x Standing Calf Raises 20-40 x Crunches 10 x Lunges (per leg) 15-30 x Star Jumps	30-60sec Plank 20 x Standing Calf Raises 30-40 x Crunches 15 x Lunges (per leg) 20-40 x Star Jumps	30-60sec Plank 25 x Standing Calf Raises 30-40 x Crunches 15 x Lunges (per leg) 20-40 x Star Jumps	30-60sec Plank 30 x Standing Calf Raises 30-40 x Crunches 15 x Lunges (per leg) 20-40 x Star Jumps	10 x Kneeling Push Ups 10-30 x Standing Calf Raises 10 x Lunges (per leg) 15-30 x Bicycle Crunches 30-60sec Plank	Walk Unit or Oval for 15-30mins

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Mob



What Treaty Means for Mob in Prison

By Barry Firebrace-Briggs (First Peoples' Assembly Metro member and Yorta Yorta man)

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the independent and democratically elected body to represent Traditional Owners of Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the lands now known as Victoria. The Assembly has 33 Members – people who have been chosen by their Community throughout Victoria to represent their Traditional Owner group or region. Assembly elections are held every four years. The next election will be held from March to April 2026.

Many countries around the world have treaties between its government and Indigenous people. Treaties are binding agreements between groups, and these agreements often involve land and economic deals, new policies, efforts to resolve historical issues, self-determination and ways to work together in the future.

In Victoria, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria began negotiations with the Victorian government last year on Treaty, and legislation allowing this agreement is now in Parliament.



A number of other Australian states and territories have also started the process of developing a Treaty with their First Peoples.

South Australia, New South Wales and the ACT are working to develop Treaties.

Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory had begun this process too but since stopped it.

About Time spoke with First Peoples' Assembly Metro member and Yorta Yorta man Barry Firebrace-Briggs about what Treaty will mean for Mob in prison.

AT: Where are we up to with Treaty in Victoria?

After nearly 10 years of listening to Aboriginal communities across Victoria, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the State Government have finished Treaty negotiations. Once the law passes, it will be the first Treaty in Australia between a government and First Peoples – a historic step toward truth, justice, and healing.

AT: What will Treaty mean for Mob in prison?

Treaty means more resources and power to create real, practical solutions for Mob and to make systems fairer for our people. For years, we've been listening to Mob inside prison about what they need. We know that we need better support when people leave prison, for things like housing, jobs, and healing. We know that the criminal justice system disproportionately harms our peoples, and that's why we need more say in laws and policies.

We are proud that almost every Victorian Aboriginal person in prison enrolled to vote in the First People's Assembly's last election in 2022.

The voices of Mob inside matter and that's why we've made sure First Peoples in prison can vote in our Treaty as well. If you're in Victoria, keep an eye out of this! Voting in these elections helps to decide who will be doing the negotiating on behalf of First Peoples in Victoria.

AT: How will this be done?

Under the Treaty, a new political body called Gellung Warl will be created. In Gunaikurnai language, Gellung Warl means "tip of the spear." It will be the permanent voice and decision-making body for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Gellung Warl will:

- Make the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria a permanent, more powerful body of elected Traditional Owners.
- Create Nyerna Yoorrook Telkuna, a truth-telling and healing process. (In Wamba Wemba, the name means sitting, listening, remembering; the truth; and healing.)
- Create Nginma Ngainga Wara, an independent office to make sure government keeps its promises to First Peoples. (In Wadi Wadi, this means "you will do.")
- Set up a First Peoples' Institute to train future Aboriginal leaders.
- Include truth-telling in schools and celebrate culture, including restoring Traditional place names.
- Support Aboriginal-led organisations through a new First Peoples' Infrastructure Fund.

This is a historic moment – and we hope other States and Territories follow suit!

If you want to get involved and have access to email, please contact:

engagement@firstpeoplesvic.org

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body can be contacted at:

GPO Box 158
Canberra
ACT 2601

If you have access to the internet, the New South Wales Treaty Commission can be contacted at:

treatynsw.info/contact-us

The South Australian First Nations Voice to Parliament at:

firstnationsvoice.sa.gov.au/contact

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Advisory Group can be emailed at:

aboriginaladvisorygroup@dpac.tas.gov.au



Torres Strait Islander Headdress, by Antony, Meriam, 2024



Gwoya Tjungurrayi Portrait (from the $2 coin), by Steven, 2024

Learn

Learn Sign Language!

People who are Deaf have been communicating with each other since the beginning of time – now is your chance to join in!

By About Time, with help with DeafNav and BetterHelp

What is sign language?

There is a common myth around the world that there is one universal sign language that Deaf people use to communicate. But this is far from the truth – there are many sign languages! Each sign language – like British Sign Language, French Sign Language and Chinese Sign Language – is different and influenced by the culture, traditions and language of the country where it originated.

Auslan is the name of Australian Sign Language, and it was developed by the Deaf community in Australia. Auslan is not simply "translating" English into gestures and other manual communication styles but its own language in its own right, with different grammar and vocabulary. Like any other language, it can convey nuance and tone and other important aspects of communication. It's pretty extraordinary!

How did Auslan come about?

Since British colonisation of Australia, migrants who were Deaf brought their own sign languages from England, Ireland and Scotland. Over time, Australian Sign Language developed to reflect the unique culture and traditions of this country.

How is Auslan structured?

There are less set rules than English, but there is different grammar – for example, words have different roles and are placed in different parts of the sentence.

Examples:

English:	Auslan:
What (subject) is (verb) your dog's name (object)?	Dog (topic) name what (question)?
I (subject) am going (verb) to the shop tomorrow (object).	Tomorrow (time) shop (topic) me go (comment).

In Auslan, the topic of conversation usually goes near the beginning, and then there's usually a pause after the topic so that everyone understands. Then the comment or question goes after.

Elements of Auslan

Auslan elements can be summarised by this anagram: HOLME

Each sign has a combination of the following elements that make up meaning.

- **H:** Handshapes: shape of the hands. There are 38 major hand shapes and 28 variants.
- **O:** Orientation: the direction of the palm and finger and how they face.
- **L:** Location: where the palm is placed in relation to the body.
- **M:** Movement: how hands move, and the speed in which they move.
- **E:** Expression: facial expression in sign is like intonation in speech. Expression includes raising eyebrows for questions and shaking heads for negative emotion and can convey a lot of meaning.

For things that don't have a specific sign, it can be spelt out through fingerspelling the alphabet (i.e. someone's name).

Have a go trying with the alphabet to spell out your name in Auslan!

How do people who are Deaf from other countries communicate with each other?

People who are Deaf have been communicating with each other since Deaf people have lived on this planet, and there are many ways people can make things work! But, in 1951, International Sign was developed to assist in gatherings of Deaf people, such as the Deaflympics and other meetings. It doesn't have fully developed grammar rules, but people communicate through a set of shared gestures and mimes.

We hope you enjoyed this piece on sign language! If there's anything you'd like to learn about, please send us a letter!

Curious for More?

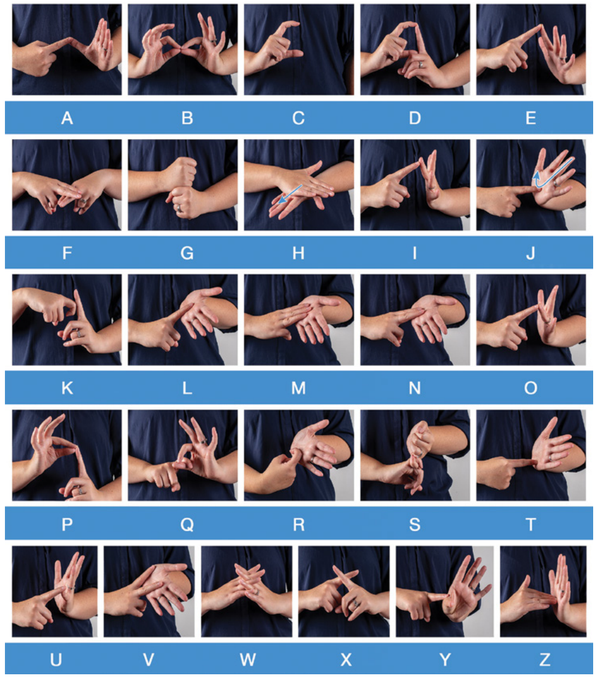
Want to learn more about a certain topic? If there's anything you want to learn about, please write to us!

Write to us via the below postal address:

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

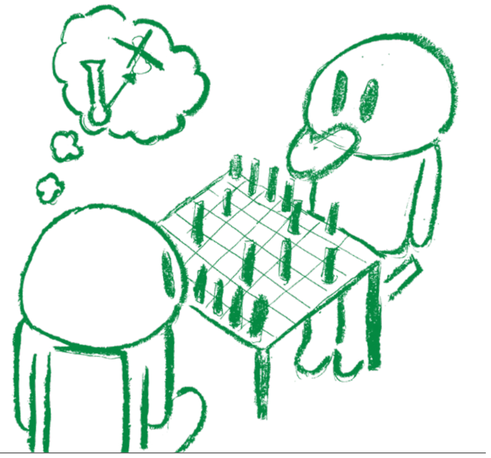
contribute@abouttime.org.au





Culture

Games in Prison: An Interview with Bull Press



By About Time and Bull Press

AT: Who are you and what do you do?

BP: We're Bull Press. We make games – conversational tabletop games – for a prison environment. Most of us have spent time in prison, and we're based in the USA.

What games do you make and why?

Oh dang, where to start? We have a variety of games – our biggest are Illadelph (a hip-hop game set in 90s Philadelphia), Corpse Thieves (kung fu and mystery solving) and Stirring Giant (cyberpunk neo-noir). Please see the game printed in this edition of the paper called "Rot", which was made by a friend in Texas. It's a blast to play.

To play the games, you get a group of people and you all work together to solve a mystery or track down a ring of tomb robbers – or whatever scenario the game you're playing presents. Our conversational tabletop games are basically cooperative storytelling, which everybody knows how to do. It's inherently pro-social. It's also the only hobby I know of that can bring a crew of five strangers of completely different backgrounds to the same table and keep them coming back every week for years.

Tabletop games in general are fully analogue: no electricity, no internet, no screens. Our subgenre, conversational games, don't even require a board or pieces – just people to chat with.

They're unlimited in their creative enrichment. The more time a player puts into drawing, writing, designing interesting scenarios for their crew, the better the games get. That's more time spent building with people, practising creative skills and less time getting up to the bad shit we're all prone to when we're bored.

They force you to take others' perspectives. That's the central engine of gameplay: creating main characters – characters who are very different from you – and then putting them in interesting situations. Taking these perspectives and navigating the uncertain social scenarios the game presents is a powerful builder of emotional intelligence.

What inspired you to do this?

Back when I was getting in trouble as a kid and in prison, I wanted to get games going inside. Tricky, since it's not exactly an environment that rewards going around asking people if they wanna play pretend wizards. Also, we weren't allowed dice, hardcovers or maps – barriers and barriers.

Are there restrictions on materials or content for people in prison in the USA – and, if so, how do you design games for people in prison?

Content restrictions vary prison-to-prison and by whoever's working the mail room that day.

Component-wise, the big restriction is no dice, since they can be used for gambling. While we sometimes include spinners in games, an easy DIY is filling an index card with all the numbers in your dice's range. To roll, just close your eyes and point, and whatever number your finger lands closest to is the result.

It's also crucial to be able to pitch a game that's respectable in the prison environment, which can be asking a lot: not too nerdy, not too soft – but also nothing that's gonna get the game thrown out in the mail room.

Prison staff familiar with the hobby love it, since they know how the hobby builds community and social skills. Some have been very supportive.

How are your games distributed to prisons?

For easy distribution, we design everything into a single book (scenarios, character sheets, spinners etc.) and then mostly send boxes of these books to our friends at the dozen-ish books-to-prisoners workspaces (volunteer run initiatives that send books to incarcerated people in the USA). We also mail sourcebooks directly when prisoners or their people request them.

What kind of feedback have you received from people inside?

We get some thank-you letters, which, I'm not such a knuckledragger I won't admit, I've gotten misty-eyed reading at times.

Knowing you were able to open up a door to better worlds for somebody, those same doors that helped us escape nightmare childhoods and personal tragedies, gave us a connection with hobbyists even through razorwire and concrete – you can't put a price on any of that.

What are your hopes for the future of gaming in prisons?

Conversational games are the most fun you can have just talking with people. It's just a structured conversation, a method of cooperative storytelling. Because it gets everybody on the same team, gets them solving problems and navigating social scenarios together, it builds social intelligence, creates community, gets people taking others' perspective and gets everybody feeling all on the same side.

The hobby's inherent creative element also completely obliterates boredom (perhaps the prisoner's greatest enemy) and throws open endless doors of possibility. There's a specific moment when many first-timers realize the hobby can bring to life absolutely any fiction they can think of – all those years of daydreams and interior stories. You can see how their eyes light up at that realisation and the worlds of creativity it brings out of them over the years – the joy I've seen it create is truly unquantifiable.

Can people in prison in Australia access these games?

Our distribution network definitely covers Australia. If you're interested, just have your people shoot us an email at **requests@bullpress.org** or send the request in letter via *About Time*, and, so long as our fund allows, we'll mail you some sourcebooks.

Write to Us

Interested in learning more about games from Bull Press? Get in contact and let us know – we'll do our best to help!

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

Sports Round Up!

By Goal Mouth



Bathurst 1000

MOTOR RACING:

Stormy times on and off the track

The Formula 1 world championship is in its final quarter, and Australian title favourite Oscar Piastri's fans fear his McLaren team will dud him.

Piastri led by 22 points after 18 of 24 races, but there is a perception that McLaren would prefer its British driver Lando Norris to become champion. Piastri's future may be at Ferrari.

The Bathurst 1000 has been called the Great Race for decades, but the 12 October edition was arguably the greatest.

In torrential conditions with little visibility, young New Zealander Matt Payne added to the long line of Kiwis to win the classic. It was his veteran co-driver Garth Tander's sixth victory. The pair drove a Ford Mustang.

Toyota joins the Supercar series next year.



Brisbane Local Marketing via Unsplash

AFL/NRL:

Is Brisbane our new sporting capital?

Has Brisbane taken over from Melbourne as the nation's new sporting capital? In both the NRL and AFL grand finals, Brisbane beat a Melbourne team (although to be fair, Geelong is about an hour down the highway from Melbourne). Brisbane also won the NRL women's premiership. And, remember, the Queensland capital will host the 2032 Olympic Games.

For some, it was amusing that no Sydney team made either big dance especially because the NRL showpiece was played there.

The NRL Grand Final was a tough and nailbiting affair, with the injury-hit Broncos able to win narrowly, withstanding late charges by the Storm, who had been in control in the first half. More than 80,000 watched the game at Accor Stadium, and 4.46 million tuned in on TV.

In the AFL, Geelong stayed with Brisbane until halfway through the third quarter but, in the end, could not match the tough and talented Lions. The day was a triumph for the back-to-back premiers, with more than 100,000 at the game and a TV audience of 6.1 million, making it the year's most watched program so far.

Not sure about the performances of Snoop Dogg (AFL) and Teddy Swims (NRL). Why don't we just save the money and give Paul Kelly both gigs for the rest of his life? Mr Dogg and Mr Swims cost millions. Was it worth it?



Manoj Poosam

CRICKET:

England pins Ashes hopes on pace

England has named a pace-heavy but injury-plagued squad the Ashes. The squad of 16 includes 11 who have never played a test in Australia.

England's six pacemen are headed by the lightning fast Jofra Archer and Mark Wood. Archer played two tests against India in the northern summer after enduring four years of injuries. Wood, who turns 36 during the Australian summer, missed the whole series in England after having a knee operation. Captain Ben Stokes (shoulder) may not be able to bowl but is in no doubt for the series.

Australia has its own injury concerns, with captain Pat Cummins (back) in doubt for the first test beginning in Perth on 21 November. Keeping key players on the park will be crucial for both sides, with five tests in 7 weeks.

Australia's batting looks shaky, and England will be relying on its pacemen to lead it to victory. But history is against the visitors. They last won a test in Australia 11 years ago and have won only six of the past 43 tests Down Under.

It goes against the grain to even give England a chance, but I suspect Australia's bowlers are getting on a bit, and, if the Poms can find enough fit players, they could sneak away with the Ashes. I'm tipping a 3-2 result their way – but I hope like hell I'm wrong.

Aussie women keep finding a way to win

Australia is finding new and more unlikely ways to win in the Women's World Cup in the sub-continent. After tumbling to 7/76 against Pakistan, Beth Mooney (109) and tailender Alana King (51 not out) put on a record century stand to lead Australia to 9/221. The unbeaten Aussies then skittled Pakistan for 114.

Then, a few days later, Australia triumphed in a runfest against the might of India, chasing down the home side's 330 with an over to spare. Captain Alyssa Healy (142) spearheaded the successful chase, the largest in women's one-day internationals.

The Australians now face Bangladesh, England and South Africa in the last of the round-robin matches.



Edgar Plmenta via Unsplash

RUGBY UNION:

Changing of the guard?

Are Australia's Wallabies finding their mojo at last, and can they match it with the world's best?

That's what rugby fans were asking after the Wallabies' 38-22 defeat of world champions South Africa in Johannesburg and an honourable 30-22 loss to the Springboks in Cape Town in the Rugby Championship (formerly known as the Tri Nations Series).

Then a try in the dying moments took the Wallabies to a 28-24 win over Argentina's Pumas, who led 21-7 at half-time in the match in Townsville, but the Pumas got their revenge with a 28-26 win in Sydney.

In the last round, the Wallabies met the super-powerful All Blacks twice in the Bledisloe Cup. Predictably, the Australians had their moments but couldn't sustain the pressure over the full 80 minutes, losing 33-14 in Auckland and 28-14 in Perth.

South Africa and New Zealand finished equal top, with four wins and two losses, with the Springboks winning on points difference. The jury is still out on the Wallabies, who finished third, just in front of Argentina.



Heidelberg United team

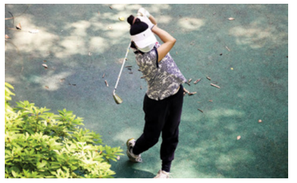
SOCCER:

Fairytale ends in extra-time heartbreak

The Uber drivers, students and shop assistants who play for Heidelberg United, in Melbourne's north, had the biggest night of their semi-professional sporting lives in the Australia Cup final, but came up short against A-League team Newcastle Jets at a packed Lakeside Stadium.

After Heidelberg (known as the Bergers) scored in the eighth minute to wild excitement from their fans, the Jets replied in the 21st minute and the 1-1 scoreline remained into extra time. The Bergers ran out of gas in extra time, and the Jets scored twice, for a final score of 3-1.

It was the first time a semi-professional team had made the Australia Cup final after the Bergers defeated two other A-League teams, Western Sydney Wanderers and Wellington Phoenix.



Xiangkun ZHU via Unsplash

GOLF:

Loutish crowd behaviour mars Ryder Cup

Golf's famous team event, the Ryder Cup, in which the best European players clash with those from the United States, turned into a display of ill-mannered, foul-mouthed abuse of the European players by a hostile crowd at the Bethpage Black course in New York.

Rory McIlroy, one of the European stars, backed out of putts many times due to insults and other crowd noise. At one stage, beer was thrown at McIlroy's wife. Tournament officials eventually got the message and increased security, including police dogs, to maintain order.

"There was a lot of language that was unacceptable and abusive behaviour," McIlroy said. "It should be off-limits, but obviously it wasn't this week."
Who said golf is a gentleman's game? Not in America at the moment. The Europeans had the last laugh, winning the event 15-13, and they have now taken out 11 of the past 15 Ryder Cups.

Creative

Rage on a Saturday Morning

By Georgia Sheales

Georgia Sheales recently spent 5 months in prison and is using her subsequent freedom and lived experience to advocate for those still incarcerated – notably through her work with FIGJAM. She also spends her time studying fashion, as well as dabbling in art, writing and music.

This piece was originally taken from the author's journal, written during their time in prison in Victoria.

Locked down for the third time this week, sixth time this past fortnight, with Bird of Prey playing on Rage, the shitty fuzzy speakers on the shitty fuzzy TV barely able to conjure up something that resembles bass. The man in the video is zooming through the air like I used to – up and down, round and round – while now in prison I look up at the sky through bars. The sky looks infinite, but that's just an illusion. You could say the same about freedom. You haul yourself out of that airplane door, then flip onto your back to watch how quickly the plane shrinks into a speck. It seems as though it's speeding away from you, but really that's how quickly you are plummeting toward the ground. When you're in the middle of the sky's vastness by yourself, you don't realise how much you're moving, how much space you have. You feel as though you're suspended in mid-air somewhere between the clouds and the moon. You can scream, you can shout, you can lose control – flop around like a ragdoll – and then you regain control as quickly as you lost it. Because the loss of control was a choice, a taste of chaos.

And, before you know it, the clouds that seemed so far away are creeping up on you – mountainous, cascading puffs ready to envelop you. It somehow always surprises you that they feel like nothing (if you're lucky) or razorblades (if it's raining).

You look at your wrist – it tells you that it's 4,000 feet to death, almost time to slow down. You throw the pilot chute into the wind like a grenade, look up and pray to something that the flapping of fabric will turn into the pop of a parachute. It does, most of the time.

You glide over the clouds like an airplane, skimming them with your toes, and suddenly you feel like a trespasser on God's terrain – but you make yourself at home, basking in the sunlight before the mass of mist swallows you whole. It's almost completely silent apart from your canopy whispering above you. Everywhere you look, it's the same white. You're corkscrewing straight down, but your brain tells you that you're still; there's no up or down or anything in between – just the white belly of the beast painted onto your eyes. You call out to the other jumpers in the sky. You scream as loud as you can.

Nothing. It's way too vast. This cloud is yours.

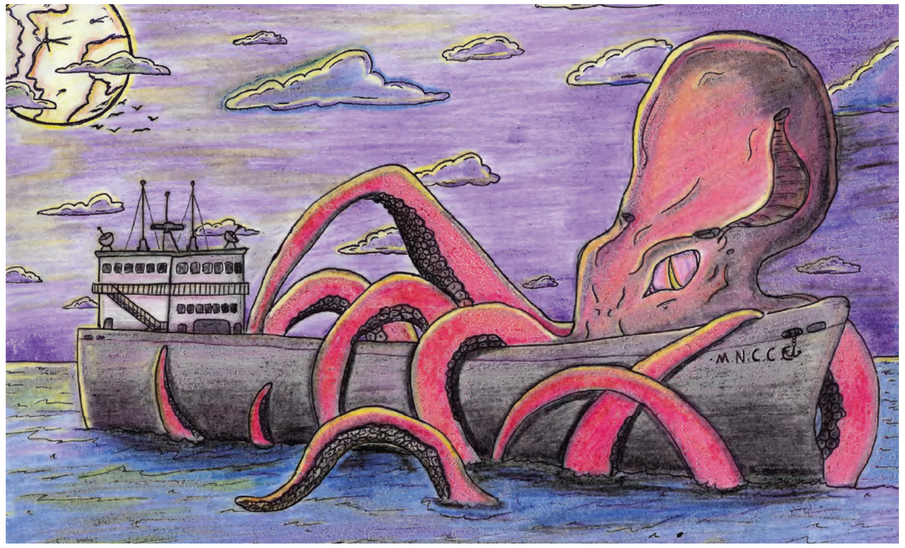
Eventually the space beneath your feet darkens to reveal the ever-growing ground; a paradox screaming toward you. Contact will either grant you some more time in this life or completely end it.

And now here I am – pondering the sky's infinity from a 3 × 3.5 metre cell, where I've been locked for over 16 hours at a time with no warning multiple times this week. Through a hole in my heavy metal door, I'm offered cold toast, which was cooked in a toaster that a pigeon ate from yesterday, with bread that is almost definitely mouldy.

Before here, I was too lost in my freedom to feel the ground rushing toward me. This is my raincloud, and my skin is burning. I used to leave the house and not know when I'd come back. Now I go into a cell and not know when I'll get out. I used to play in the sky and now I'm tied to the ground.

Focus on landing – don't crash. You'll jump again, but don't flirt with the clouds.

Rage on a Saturday morning.



Sent by Robert, from a prison in NSW

An Incarcerated Truth

By Travis

Travis writes from a prison in VIC.

Belief in a future, they do persist
For everyone has the right to exist
But in my mind, for myself I despair
My life and potential, I am aware
Faces barriers, they say are deserved
'Til death's how long I will truly serve
I have no ability to repent
When I have everlasting punishment
What more can I do with this useless breath
Still I do mourn the loss of her caress
Her strength failed when she turned her back on me
Replacing love with hate so callously
My light, my hope, asunder is now torn.
I wither away beneath the world's scorn.

Faith in Recovery

By RB

RB writes from a prison in VIC.

The pressure of the pain inside,
Formed diamonds in my mind,
Tempting me to throw it in,
To leave it all behind.

My mind sitting in dark rambling,
What pulled me out was friends and family.
They taught me love and affection,
Because of them I had hope through connection.

I can't believe I was once so lonely,
But now my heart feels warm and homely.
This world is one I no longer fear,
My mind is straight and spirit is clear.

As I walk this path of self-discovery,
I now have faith in my recovery.



Send Your Work

We'd love to see your creative pursuits! Please send any of your work 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

Morgana

By Alex

Alex writes from a prison in NSW.

I remember the day I saw you
I held your tiny form
The chilly air made you tremble
So we took you home

You grew up so quickly
To our great surprise
And tore around the unit
Right before our eyes

Your way of playing
Seemed unable to control
But when I asked you to stop
It stilled your restless soul

And now I've lost you
For a mistake before your birth
And my existence from now on
Is diminished on this earth

Never will I see you
Or hear your joyful cries
I wonder if you remember me
As I wipe my flooded eyes

The fault is mine and always was
I've known that from the start
But knowing I've lost you forever
Has shattered my worthless heart

I know your life is going well
And you have everything you need
But I'll always wonder if you would want me
If I had been freed

So as I sit here writing
You've probably gone to bed
With images of sea creatures
Swimming through your head

There's just one thing more
That I need to say
And that is just "I love you
And I miss you every day"

I Will Always Love You

By Jack

Jack writes from a prison in VIC.

A poem for the one true love of my life. I wish I could change the past, but I can only change my future. To About Time: Thanks for giving us something to look forward to every month. It means a lot.

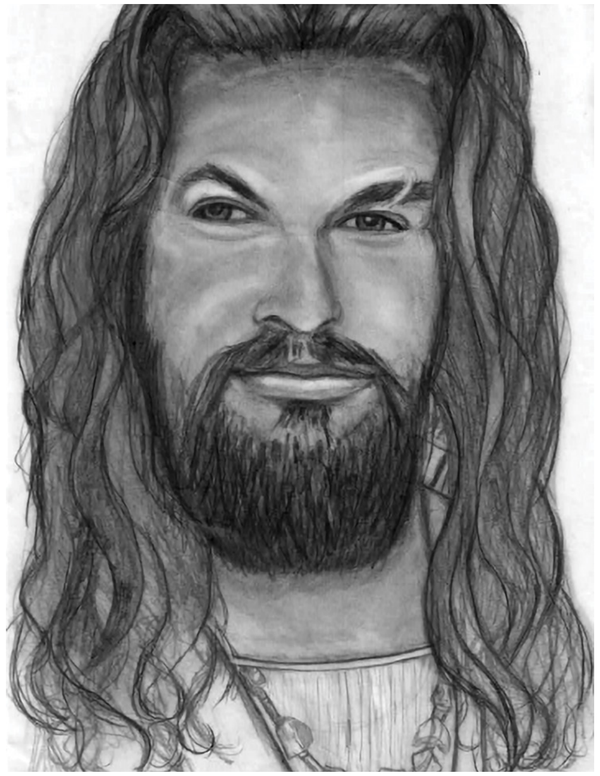
I will always love you
Something special, something true,
The perfect future I wanted with you,
Something crazy, something great,
All of the things that are worth the wait,
Know that you're hurting, and aching inside,
For all of the times that made you cry,
The way that I hurt you, the things that I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

In My Cell

By Bart

Bart writes from a prison in QLD.

Here I sit inside my cell
Thinking to myself
Is this Hell
Cold and dark
with a terrible smell
I think it is
Only time will tell.
The Devil Himself
will visit me
if this is Hell
I'm yet to see
One things for certain
I yearn to be
living life so generously
please help me from this Darkness
I see
As the light will shine bright
So I Can See
Oh what a marvelous creation
The earth is to me.



Sent by Derek, from a prison in VIC

Expressing Emotions While on Remand

By Derek

Derek writes from a prison in VIC.

Hi guys.

Thanks for what you are doing with the newspaper. It is great to get updates and hear from others going through the same struggles. My name is Derek. I am a 40-year-old male currently going through my first time in the prison system. I've served 6 months of an unknown sentence and sharing a couple of artistic pieces while being inside.

The poem was written in the early weeks of being on remand, expressing my raw emotions while coming to terms with it all.

The drawing is a recent piece from a crossword book I have. Sketching has been my escape during lockdowns. I find the hours flying by when working on a piece. My skills have developed a lot over the last few months, and I may even look to do it as a career when I get out.

Forgiveness – A Poem

Staring at my locked up cell, how did this come to be.
A broken mind, destructive path, a fate I did not see.

The guilt and shame I carry now, I cannot comprehend.
A burden I have passed to all, their hearts I hope will mend.

So close I came to end it all, was at an all time low.
The angels watching over me, was not my time to go.

I dig for strength, my head held high, this challenge I'll defeat.
Endless support from selfless mum, a love you cannot beat.

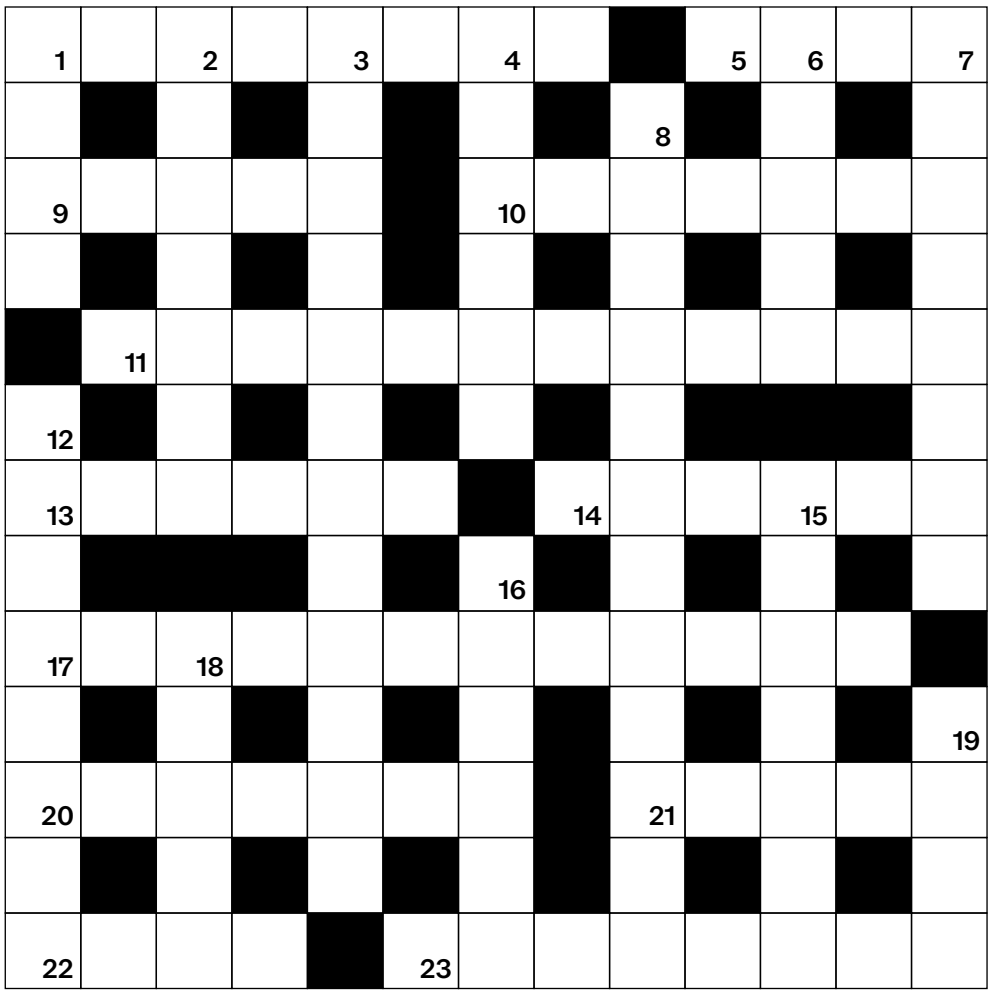
So now I lay to count the days and dream of when I'm free.
In God I trust, the path He lay, embrace my destiny.

My family I miss the most, a sadness deep within.
Pray I close my eyes and to God, forgive me for my sins.

Derek.

Play

Crossword



ACROSS
1. Cloudy (8)
5. Alone (4)
9. Unfasten (5)
10. Sterile (7)
11. Environment (12)
13. Builds a house (6)
14. Emperor of Japan (6)
17. Things in common (12)
20. Attributed to (7)
21. Produce emotion (5)
22. Opposite of odd (4)
23. Short film (8)

DOWN
1. Burden (4)
2. Adopt or support (7)
3. Express well wishes (12)
4. Sculpture of a person (6)
6. Many times (5)
7. Particular event (8)
8. Female school boss (12)
12. Sweat (8)
15. Nail polish remover (7)
16. Hold a baby (6)
18. Tree syrup (5)
19. Meat from a calf (4)

Colouring In



By Edward, from a prison in NSW

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What is the only country that starts with the letter O?
2. What is the name for a word or series of words that reads the same backwards as forward?
3. What is the most common surname in Australia?
4. What date is Halloween celebrated?
5. What planet is closest to the sun?
6. What is the national sport of Japan?
7. What is a group of geese called?
8. What is the tallest land animal?
9. What is the tallest mountain in the world?
10. What Australian TV show is set on Ramsay Street?

Card Game – Uno

Setup

Use a standard 52-card deck, including the Jokers. Shuffle and deal 7 cards to each player. Place remaining cards face down as the draw pile. Turn the top card face up to start the discard pile.

Rules and Special Cards:

- Match either suit or rank (number) of the top card on the discard pile.
- 8 = Skip → next player misses a turn
- Jack = Reverse → reverse play order
- Queen = Draw Two → next player draws 2 cards and misses turn
- King = Wild → change the suit to any colour
- Joker = Draw 4 → next player draws 4 cards and misses turn

Gameplay

1. Take turns playing one card that matches the top card's suit or rank.
2. If you cannot play, draw one card from the draw pile.
3. Play continues clockwise (or reversed if a Reverse card is played).
4. When you have one card left, shout "UNO!"
5. If you forget to shout "Uno!" and another player says it first, pick up one card.
6. The first player to discard all their cards wins.



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

Quiz Answers

1. Oman
2. Palindrome
3. Smith
4. 31st October
5. Mercury
6. Sumo wrestling
7. A gaggle
8. Giraffe
9. Mount Everest
10. Neighbours

Bad Jokes

If you have some better jokes please send them to us!

Q: What do you get if you cross a snowman and a dog?
A: Frostbite!

Q: Why don't you ever see Santa in the hospital?
A: Because he has private elf care!

Q: Why did the gingerbread man go to school?
A: Because he wanted to be a smart cookie!

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

1. Overcast
5. Solo
9. Unpin
10. Aseptic
11. Surroundings
13. Erects
14. Mikado
17. Similarities
20. Imputed
21. Evoke
22. Even
23. Newsreel

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Onus
2. Espouse
3. Congratulate
4. Statue
6. Often
7. Occasion
8. Headmistress
12. Perspire
15. Acetone
16. Cradle
18. Maple
19. Veal