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About Time

Australia's National Prison Newspaper

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NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Sweltering Behind Bars: 'Stifling' Heat in Australian Prisons

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

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EXPERIENCES

Trapped by Rituals: How to Avoid the Mundanity of Prison

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in VIC.

Ritual (Noun): "A series of actions or types of behaviour regularly and invariably followed by someone."

Do you have any rituals? I'm not talking about religious or ceremonial practices, but little routines you repeat every day when completing certain tasks.

Apart from military service, prison is the most ritualistic environment in our society.

Being incarcerated means adapting to a host of rules, regulations and formalised processes. Everyone is required to know what is expected of them, how they should act, and where they should be at a given time. This applies as much to prison staff as to inmates themselves.

In prison, rituals control every aspect of our lives – just read any one of the dozens of procedural documents located on the prison intranet: Commissioner's Requirements, Deputy Commissioner's Requirements, Local Operating Procedures, etc.

From laundry, to working, to appropriate clothing – we have a ritual for everything. Even being involved in an accident requires particular rituals. From counts (How we stand. Where we stand. If we say our names); to movement (Always have your card. Where you can and can't go); how medication is dispensed (Set times. "Hat off". "Card in the slot." "Say your name."); to how we receive our meals ("Line up, in cell order, by last name."); and when we attend contact visits (pat-down before entry. Where we sit. How we interact with our visitors. And of course – the post-visit strip search).

And if the regular rituals don't go to plan? There are more rituals to fall back on – they're called "codes".

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Letters

G'day From Long Bay

By Andy

Andy writes from a prison in NSW.

G'day,

Thanks for providing *About Time* and explaining things – it's helpful for understanding life behind bars and other things. It sometimes seems that life has become so complicated with government making so many new laws that you almost need a team of lawyers to consult to check what you think, say and do is not against the law every morning, and that it won't be used against you by someone.

Just before I was jailed, I read a report in a newspaper about the dangers of Aspartame. They say sugar can be used to brew alcohol in jail so by providing Aspartame (also called Splendour and other names) they stop it – but it's not good for our gut bacteria! They feed us a lot of chemicals and processed food in here.

Another thing to know about prison is that some beds are so short in jail that tall people have to sleep in the foetal position or bump their heads two feet at night.

In Issue 12, Kelly mentioned a man called Paul who spent some of his life in custody and said he found that whatever state he found himself in, he would be content. I found some comfort in this, but I do miss the dogs a lot.

Bye from LBJ

We Are One

By Adrian

Adrian writes from a prison in NSW.

Hi all,

I don't know when or if this will be published but since my last published letter 'Unjust Justice', a lot has happened. It seems we have gone through so much and at the same time we still haven't changed a bit.

I hope that this creed can move through the world. It is something I have been thinking of for a long time, and have only now been able to put into words. I actually wrote this on Sunday morning of the 14th December 2025 – the day of the Bondi shooting.

My heart goes out to all affected but especially to all who were touched by Rabbi Eli. It is felt within all of us in prison, as it hits home no matter where we are – it is a small world.

I believe to benefit all people.

I must dedicate myself, purify my mind and begin to purge emotions that will harm others and bring about negative thoughts, feelings and actions.

I believe my spirit guides my mind to an understanding of truth, compassion and generosity. I believe all people have the right to exist without discrimination and I will not judge another for who, what, where, how or why they are on their journey.

I believe all teachings, religious or secular have a message regarding the oneness of life, death and rebirth, and will always seek a deeper understanding rather than just superficial in what I hear or read.

I will promote and put forward this understanding to all who are willing to listen and meditate this becomes One Universal Understanding.

I want this to move everyone. We need to change.

Adrian

Autism in Prison: Finding Peace and Quiet

By Caitlin

Caitlin writes from a prison in NSW.

Dear About Time,

I loved the article on autism. I've been in jail since January 2024 and was diagnosed in March/April 2024. I relate to Ashleigh's experience as females tend to mask their autism to try to fit in with everyone.

For me, I struggle socially with people. Prison hasn't been the easiest ride for me with my autism, as I'm easily manipulated particularly by people I think have good intentions and that I think are my friend when it turns out they're not.

This has happened a few times and got to a point now that after about two years, I'd rather not be around people continually as I don't deal well with strong personalities. I'm a natural introvert and I prefer more 'me' time than I do 'people' time. I'm like this on the outside.

I can't deal well with crowds and loud noises in small crowded places. Shopping centres at Christmas and Easter are hell to me. Same with pubs and RSLs at Christmas. I get overstimulated. Max-security buildings where there's 60ish people aren't ideal for me either.

Food texture is another thing I struggle with. Whilst I normally don't eat bananas on the outside due to smell/taste/texture, I've gotten into eating them since being in jail. Cucumbers I still refuse to eat. Though I've found I can sort of eat them if seeds are removed and they're thinly sliced and mixed in with sauces (like ABC sauce).

Like Ashleigh and Dan, I learn and react differently and deal differently.

For me, a small amount of people and being in my cell overnight by myself is joyful to me.

From Caitlin

Letters from the Outside:

In response to *Christmas in Prison: Good Friends and Grape Juice* by Stacey Stokes:
This story really touched me. This was my first Christmas out for 9 years and it was so lonely. During my time in prison we went to great lengths to make it a good day and I remember so many Christmases with fond memories. Good friends sharing a meal and lifting everyone's spirits. – Mathew

In response to *The Real Cost Of Staying Connected: Why Prison Phone Calls Must Be Fair* by Peter, QLD:
I agree totally with Peter – Annie

In response to *Palliative Care in Prison and the Push for Change* by Sophie Lawson:
Excellent article that highlights an issue that most people don't think about assuming that incarcerated people needing palliative care would automatically receive it in prison. Well written and concise. Well done Sophie. – Kerry

In response to *Staight Outta Risdon: Bars Behind Bars*:
Great article, inspiring stuff from Risdon, congratulations team – Claire

In response to *My Advice to Others Inside* by Aaron, NSW:
What an inspiring letter. I would be very interested to read how you re-wrote the two courses. I was fascinated. Thanks so much Aaron for sharing your successes. Truly uplifting. – Erika

You Are Not a Number

By Rhiannon

Rhiannon writes from NSW.

To anyone reading this inside,

I don't know your name, your story, or the road that brought you here but I do know this: you matter. Right now. Exactly as you are.

Some days inside are heavier than others. Time drags. Walls feel closer. The noise gets louder, or the silence does. On those days, I hope you remember this: you are not forgotten, even when it feels like the world has gone quiet.

You are more than a number.

More than your worst mistake.

More than the version of yourself you're still trying to understand.

There are people out here who see you as human, who believe growth is real, change is possible, and that hearts don't stop beating just because doors are locked.

You are still worthy of kindness, laughter, and moments that make you smile, even if they come in small pieces right now.

If today is rough, take it one breath at a time. If you're tired, rest where you can. If you're angry, know it doesn't make you broken. If you're hurting, it doesn't make you weak. Surviving takes strength and you've already proven you have it.

One day this chapter will be behind you. It won't define your whole story. The future is still listening, still waiting for the person you're becoming.

Until then, please remember this: you are loved more than you realise, even by people you haven't met yet. And someone, somewhere, is wishing you peace tonight.

Keep going.

You're not alone,
We see you.



There Are No Friends in Drugs

By Michelle

Michelle writes from a prison in WA.

To the About Time newspaper team,

My name is Michelle, this is my second time in prison. I'm 30 years old from W.A.

At the start of this prison leg, I struggled with the harsh reality (that I knew right from the start) that there are no friends in drugs. I'm currently in prison for drug offending and the people I spent most of my time with before incarceration were drug buddies. In the early days of this leg I wrote this:

There are no friends in drugs.

One of the hardest lessons, from being part of the drug scene then going to prison, is the feeling of loneliness, withdrawing and coming down, you miss your mates.

You forget that during your early days on the drugs, you always told yourself, "these people are not my friends."

Time goes by, you call them mates and you forget what you said at the start.

Now you're in jail, life goes on, you know you'll be forgotten.

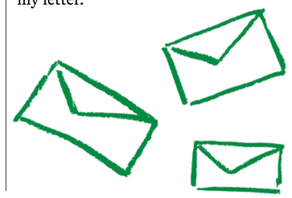
Remember right at the start, you knew it was only for the drugs.

You try to make contact, not knowing why, it's still sad, when you realise, you've been forgotten. Your "mates" have moved on; but you're still here.

After all, right at the start, remember you told yourself:

These people are not your friends. Cos there are no friends in drugs.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.





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

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

Write to Us

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

About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3000

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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How Music Helped Me Express Myself in Prison

By Sam

Sam writes from a prison in NSW.

To all at About Time,

I've been reading your newsletters for a while now, all the way back to issue one and I suppose like some people, I had my doubts about the longevity as I've seen many things that can be informative and beneficial to us all just fade into nothing in a short period of time.

So far, so good, and I do enjoy reading peoples' letters with meaningful dialogue so I hope and pray that through all our interests and contributions, you're in it for the long haul.

I came into the system at the age of 27, now I'm almost 70. It doesn't hurt as much if one says it quickly, lol. (Still looking for the Yellow Brick Road but I do see a lot of Wicked Witches and Scarecrows around).

I read in one of the articles about a music program (Songs Inside) being run in Adelaide's Women's Prison in the South of Oz (Issue 13) where those participants are encouraged to write their own stories and put them to song.

To all those who participated, congratulations as I hope that you got something out of your efforts as I'm sure that others in their own way, some are able to relate to your story where they may see parts of themselves in there.

It's a positive and strange feeling hearing your own story through the words of another and here was me thinking I was alone in my travels as many of us do.

At my prison, we have music and a hip hop program that is mentored by a few professional musicians (one is an ARIA award winning musician no less) who (all) I can only describe as simply absolutely beautiful and talented people!

Our program has been running since 2019 and we too are encouraged to write and perform. I've been able to express what's inside in a meaningful and constructive way that others have been able to relate to.

Throughout my years, I've done a lot of courses including some intensive behavioural ones which went on for several months where I, like others, are seeking answers or solutions to my own problems, keeping journals and what-not.

But in this format of writing a song, I wrote about my own journey, my feelings and expressions like I've never been able to do before and I'm proud of the end result.

The words are all mine (nothing's embellished) but I've had help with the musical arrangement and delivery (can't sing to save myself but I keep on trying) and when it's done right, and on more than one occasion, it evokes emotion that many try to hide – tears!

On a personal level, I've even had to choke back the feelings and I wrote the bloody song!

We do get the opportunity to record (isn't that an overwhelming experience?) and get them placed in the Gaol Podcast that will be available to us here.

At present, that's as far as it goes but we are hopeful that those recordings are put into a format where we can share them with our family and friends in some way, maybe even video?

It would be great if programs like this or others were permitted to communicate in real time via AVL or something along those lines where we are able to share and / or exchange. So if you're sitting there somewhere and the opportunity is there, get involved in some way, you might just surprise yourself.

Here is my song with the chord arrangement – we play it with an electronic piano, lead electric guitar, bass electric guitar, acoustic guitars, vocals including back-ups. There's no percussion in this song, we have drums but the delivery of this song is better without them.

I must say that we're spoiled here as we have two people (lead singers) who can deliver this in their own style in such an impassioned way.

Sincerely and with thanks for all that you're doing for all and sundry.

To My Heart I Cry

INTRO: | F | C | G | Am | F | C | G | . |

V1
F C G Am
Life is a journey, we travel each day.
F C G Am
Up every morning, to move through the day.
F C G Am
This life's not our own, but we move and we breathe.
F C G G
Conform to the rule, go where – ever they please.

CHORUS
C G Am F
I've seen the worst that people can be.
C G Am Am
I'm sad to admit at times it's been me!
C G Am F
I'm not the same man who walked through that door.
C G Am .
When they carry me out, life is no more.

| F | C | G | Am | F | C | G | . |

V2
F C G Am
Imprisonment is physical, the confinement is mental.
F C G Am
My state of mind is now elemental!
F C G Am
We stumble, we struggle, we win and we lose.
F C G G
It's an everyday fight just to keep out the blues!

V3
F C G Am
We cry, we bleed, some can try to succeed.
F C G Am
Yet the efforts of some will do naught but impede.
F C G Am
Take time, look about you, what is it you see?
F C G G
I'm surrounded by kindness, drowning in blindness.



CHORUS
C G Am F
I've seen the worst that people can be.
C G Am Am
I'm sad to admit at times it's been me!
C G Am F
I'm not the same man who walked through that door.
C G Am .
When they carry me out, life is no more.

| F | C | G | Am | F | C | G | . |

V4
F C G Am
The hours are endless, just like the years.
F C G Am
Hours, days and weeks, then months turn to years.
(ORGAN PLAYS THE NEXT 2 LINES)
F C G Am
Depression is likely, for some it's self-harm.
F C G G
To lessen one's burden, some bought the farm.

V5
F C G Am
I have inner strength, maybe not common sense.
F C G Am
It's sad, it feels cruel, but I did break the rule.
F C G Am
I fight to survive, the spirit is strong.
F C G G
Under no illusion, I've been here that long.

CHORUS
C G Am F
I've seen the worst that people can be.
C G Am Am
I'm sad to admit at times it's been me!
C G Am F
I'm not the same man who walked through that door.
C G Am .
When they carry me out, life is no more.

| F | C | G | Am | F | C | G | . |

V6 (PIANO & VOCAL ONLY)
F C G Am
Did you ever love some-one from far far away?
F C G Am
They're so far away; it's just so hard to say.
F C G Am
To hold them so close, when my emotions run high,
(BAND BACK IN)
F C G G
I can't help but retreat, to my heart and I cry.

CHORUS
C G Am F
I've seen the worst that people can be.
C G Am Am
I'm sad to admit at times it's been me!
C G Am F
I'm not the same man who walked through that door.
C G Am .
When they carry me out, life is no more.

Writing Competition!



This competition is not available for readers in South Australia.

About Time is excited to launch a new publishing opportunity for people in prison around the country. The competition is free to enter, and you don't need to pay for a stamp.

Four times this year, we will provide a writing prompt and a certain style, such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction or art, and we will accept submissions based on this prompt for the 2 months that follow.

The first prompt will be judged by a special guest – Australian author Bri Lee. Lee is the author of several books including the award-winning *Eggshell Skull*, and she is also the co-founder of the fREADom INSIDE Project, which helps donate books to women incarcerated in NSW.

She will select a piece of writing to be published on the front page of the next edition of About Time, with several other shortlisted pieces to appear in the later pages. She will also provide you feedback on your piece!

This month's prompt is:
My Happy Place

- No more than 500 words
- The story can be fiction or non-fiction
- Submissions are due by 1 March

To enter, send us a letter with your entry and Writing Competition up the top.

Please include this on the envelope – you do not need to include a stamp:

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Shout Out to the Salvos

By Nathan

Nathan writes from a prison in VIC.

My Name is Nathan and I'm currently serving an 18 month sentence. Hopefully getting parole around Feb, fingers crossed.

I read the *About Time* newspaper every month and I'm always looking forward to the next month's one! This is my first time writing to you guys and I want to thank you for reading my letter.

I just wanted to give a big shout out to the amazing people at the Salvation Army for everything that they do for us in prison and outside in the community over the Christmas period. I lost my mum last year and my dad has never been in my life so this Christmas was a bit sad and lonely. But when I got their gift pack and Christmas Carols it definitely made my day and the day for a lot of the other prisoners! Just to know that there are people who care and don't forget us is really amazing. They also did a church service and carols which was awesome too.

But yeah, I just wanted to write in to give a shout out to the Salvos and also just wanted to say to all the readers doing it tough and lonely over this period to keep your chins up and try to stay positive and hope you all have a happy new year!

Thanks,
Nathan

We Need to Talk About Steroids

By Ahmed

Ahmed writes from a prison in VIC.

Hello About Time.

Thanks for publishing my article in Issue 14. Reading through it, I came across another article that got my attention: *'The Dark Side of Gains'* by Ronin Cruise.

I would like to agree – why is steroid use not discussed in any drug programs?

I was also a steroid user in my life, starting at the age of 15 or so, seeing all those big boys and being around older friends doing roids. I wanted to be like them, plus I was being bullied all the time.

It is true; it was about gains and looking good but also for me it was to look intimidating, so as I progressed from a skinny bloke to a guy that was buffed, it made me more confident – talking, walking the streets and standing up for myself.

It was also the mentality I had about women: "If a man can take care of himself then he can take care of me and they feel safe around big boys like that."

So yes, there are positives about steroids but negatives as well and it doesn't help if someone has anger issues and uses other drugs. I've had a few run-ins with road rage and incidents around town, including a run-in with cops one nice summer night with my girlfriend.

It was good to see the bullies from my past back away while all jacked, but in reality, it creates more bullies that want to try you.

When I get out I'm going to be hitting the gym but not sure if I'll be taking steroids.

It all comes down to willpower, money and attitude, mentality.

Anyway, great paper, keep it rolling.

Very Few People Know How to Use Sign Language

By Seleena

Seleena writes from a prison in WA.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Seleena and I am a prisoner in WA. While being incarcerated, I have learnt how many members of the community are Deaf and have a lot of trouble communicating as very few people know how to use sign language.

I am aware of how many Indigenous families have Deaf family members and the embarrassment that comes along with it when people can't communicate with their family.

I would love to be part of spreading awareness and learning Auslan myself, as I only know the bare essentials. I have at least 10 more years in prison and would like to run some programs with girls willing to learn.

If there is any information or starter packs you could provide I would be very grateful.

Thank you for your time,
Seleena

Response From About Time:
Hi Seleena – thank you for your letter about Deaf people in prison, and it's great you want to learn more about Auslan. We included some basic Auslan in Issue 16. We will try to include more! You might also like to contact Western Australian Association of the Deaf that might be able to help. If you have access to email, their email is info@waad.org.au.

Western Sydney Vibe

Western Sydney is vibrant. It's a buzz. It's alive. Its people move with purpose. They are confident in themselves and each other. Together we stand so strong we are. There is competition. It's a push for quality. A respectful and healthy check that the customer gets the best. Only the best for The West. Try and hustle or barter. They'll do it for you. Yes $30 for one, but for you it's $50. Just buy two. Self checkouts. What's that? Have a chat. Taste this. Nice to meet ya, I might see ya. Every store slightly different. The product and the people. From every corner they have come. Now home. It's called Australia. You lift us up. Your spirit's strong. Always working, ever harder. Thank you Western Sydney. Pride you have in where you live and it carries through to the inside. Your purposeful pace. Your confident speech. It's sharing now through no barter. Have some my bud. I'll leave them by your door. A handful of raspberry bullets. It ain't much, but when you're in Segro it sure is something. Thank you my bread. There's so much love in The West. It's forever after. Thank you The West. Your vibes the best!

'We are all here now and we all belong. Let's care for the land and care for each other. Let's be happy'
Uncle Basil
-The Happy Man-



Bear
The West



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Jeff, Anthony, Andrew, Stu, Aaron, TJ, Brody, David, Melissa, Joeby, Norman, Carolyn, Phillip, Kane, Jonathan, Gabrielle, 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 write to us via the below postal details.

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

News and Investigations

Sweltering Behind Bars: 'Stifling' Heat in Australian Prisons

By Denham Sadler

In mid-January, temperatures at the Loddon Prison Precinct in Victoria hit more than 42 degrees, while a significant bushfire raged just 10 kilometres away.

The only relief for the incarcerated came from small desk fans that must be purchased from buy-up, and cost $45 at the Loddon prison.

Sarah's* partner is incarcerated at Loddon prison, and said that the heat leads everyone to get "cranky and irritable".

"My partner has really been struggling with the heat, all they have is one small fan in their room," Sarah told *About Time*.

"I just tell him to keep drinking water so he doesn't get heat stroke. I understand they're in prison but I do wish they had more cooling available."

For several days following the fire, power was not fully restored at the prison, and those incarcerated there had no access to TV or radio.

The recent situation at Loddon is common in prisons around the state and country.

It comes as people in prisons around the country face extreme heat during the summer period.

The conditions at the Metropolitan Remand Centre in Melbourne were "stifling" this summer one man said.

A woman whose partner was on a separation order at the centre during the January heat wave said he was kept in lockdown all day with no air-conditioning and "constant heat blowing" into the cell.

"He was just using wet towels and sitting there naked and having cold showers constantly," they told *About Time*.

At Hopkins Correctional Centre in Ararat, there is only air-conditioning in the prison officers' watch posts, and the library, and the water temperature of the showers can't be turned down so people can have a cold shower to cool down.

A number of prison watchdogs around the country have warned of "stifling" and "extreme" heat in ageing and poorly ventilated facilities, and have repeatedly called for better climate control through air-conditioning, fans and more shade in outdoor areas.

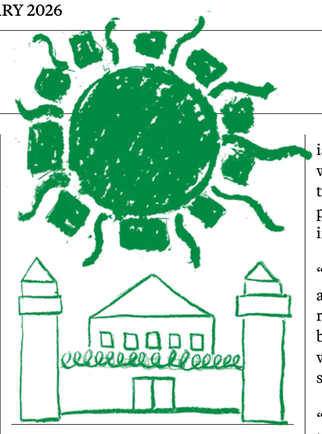
Despite the extreme temperatures recorded across Australia during summer, and that most prisons are located in regional areas that are typically hotter than cities, most prisons still do not have air-conditioning and other temperature controls.

Prisons in some of the hottest parts of Australia, such as the Alice Springs Correctional Centre, do not have air-conditioning at all, despite decades of campaigning and recommendations from the Ombudsman, who has found that temperature in the cells can reach 34 degrees.

After a number of men attempted to escape this heat in the cells and tore a hole in the ceiling, the Northern Territory government did a comprehensive assessment to improve ventilation, with plans to put in more shading and evaporative cooling and airflow systems. But it does not plan to install air-conditioning.

Roebourne Regional Prison in Western Australia is commonly regarded as the hottest prison in the country. In July this year, following more than a decade of campaigning by advocates, the state government confirmed that all the cells at the prison now had air-conditioning.

The Tasmanian prison watchdog in 2018 raised serious concerns with extreme heat at the Launceston Reception Prison, saying that "female prisoners



were seen coming out of cells gasping for air and dehydrated".

"The female cells back onto a solid brick wall, which is a heat conductor, and there is no air ventilation," the inspector said at the time.

The inspector found that concerned staff had recorded temperatures of up to 40 degrees at the prison over two nights in summer.

Following a recent inspection of the Bathurst Correctional Centre, the NSW prison inspector said that some areas of the prison were "dark, dilapidated, susceptible to extreme temperatures [and] lacking ventilation and natural light".

It also said that the area set aside for people in prison to have video calls with their loved ones exposed them to extreme temperatures.

The inspector also said that heat at the Broken Hill Correctional Centre was "stifling", with little relief available to those incarcerated there.

"The men had no capacity to cool down other than by using the water tap on top of the toilet cistern," the inspector said.

The infrastructure at these prisons is from the 1800s, with windows that are always open, with temperatures at the prison ranging from -2.9 to 46.3 degrees, the watchdog found.

A spokesperson for NSW Corrections said that a Heat Event Response Plan is implemented during extreme heat, with enhanced ventilation, adjustments to daily routines during peak heat periods, additional hydration points and increased medical monitoring.

"To help manage heat inside accommodation areas, centres use a range of measures such as insulation, building design, air-conditioning where installed, and natural ventilation systems," the spokesperson said.

"These approaches typically keep internal temperatures about eight to 12 degrees cooler than outside conditions."

In Queensland prisons, air flow and temperature levels are monitored regularly, and there is a specialised unit within Queensland Corrective Services which "closely monitors and provides advice about how to manage high-risk weather, including heatwaves".

Under a "safer cell design" program, more than 90 percent of prison cells in Queensland now have air-conditioning by default.

In Victoria, air-conditioning is only available in some accommodation units for "more vulnerable people", a spokesperson said, including pregnant women, those with babies and the elderly.

In the ACT's Alexander Manonochie Centre, the only cells with air-conditioning are in the Crisis Support Unit, with no plans to install cooling more widely.

The cells at the prison are designed "using passive solar principles, incorporating features such as strategic window placement, wall orientation, insulation and flooring materials to reduce heat during warmer months".

There are no nation-wide policies or guidelines for managing extreme heat in Australian prisons, or for the regular measurement of temperatures within prison buildings and cells.

The "Guiding principles for corrections in Australia" from 2018 does not mention heat or temperature guidelines.



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QLD Moves to Restrict Voting Rights of People in Prison

By Denham Sadler

The Liberal National government has announced plans to significantly minimise the rights to vote for people in prison.

Currently, people in prison serving a sentence of fewer than three years in the state can vote in state and local government elections, as well as federal elections. This plan would restrict voting rights to only those serving a sentence of one year or less for state elections.

In a media release announcing the changes, the Queensland government said this would "restore fairness to electoral laws" and was about "putting victims first".

The state Parliament is currently holding an inquiry into the legislation that would enact the restrictions.

In a submission to the inquiry, Project:herSELF, an organisation that works with women who have experienced incarceration, raised "significant concerns" with the reforms.

"Rather than restoring fairness, measures that narrow participation risk entrenching inequality and silencing the voices of people most affected by government policy," the submission said.

"We urge the committee to consider the real world impact of these reforms on people who are already underrepresented in our democratic system. Safeguarding democracy means safeguarding participation – especially for those whose voices are often unheard."

The Australia Institute also pushed back on the changes in a submission to the state government.

"Prisoners are more exposed to the operation of the state government than almost anyone else in Queensland," the submission said.

"In addition, those with less than four years left on their sentences will be re-joining the community during the term of the parliament. They should not have their voting rights further restricted."

A spokesperson for Queensland Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Deb Frecklington said that the changes bring Queensland into line with arrangements in other states.

"Consistent with the Crisafulli Government's commitment to put victims first, the changes recognise that people serving sentences for serious offences should not have a role in choosing lawmakers while they are in custody," the spokesperson told *About Time*.

If passed by Parliament, this would place Queensland alongside New South Wales and Western Australia as the most restrictive jurisdictions when it comes to the right of people in prison to vote.

In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, those serving sentences of fewer than three years are eligible to vote in state and local elections, while this cap is set at five years in Victoria.

In South Australia and the ACT, there is no limitation at all.

The restrictions come in the same year that a record number of people in prison around the country voted in the May federal election, with over 9700 people in prison casting a vote, compared with just 274 in 2022.

In Queensland, Australian Electoral Commission data shows that just under 2000 people incarcerated in Queensland voted in the 2025 federal election, nearly 20 percent of the state's prison population.

This was thanks in part to, for the first time, mobile polling booths being placed in 82 of Australia's 110 prisons, making voting more accessible.

Court Finds Prisons Are Not Providing Adequate 'Open Air'

By Denham Sadler

A number of Victorian prisons may have to be renovated or rebuilt after the Supreme Court found that no "open air" was being provided to inmates in multiple units.

In a judgment handed down in January, Justice Claire Harris found that George Marrogi, who has been incarcerated at Barwon Prison and the Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC), was treated in a way contrary to laws and regulations because he was denied his right to have at least 1 hour outside "in the open air".

The court also found that Marrogi had his human rights breached on a number of occasions when he was strip-searched in prison.

The judgment hinged on what constitutes "open air" and whether the cell yards and exercise areas in many high-protection units in Victorian prisons were providing the minimum 1 hour outside that the Corrections Act requires.

After visiting the prison units in question in person, Justice Harris found that those incarcerated at the Acacia, Olearia and Melaleuca Units at Barwon Prison and the Exford and Loss of Privileges Units at MRC were being denied their right to have 1 hour per day in the "open air".

The Victorian Government will now likely have to renovate or rebuild these units to make them compliant with the law.

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice and Community Safety told *About Time* it would "take the time to fully consider the court's findings".

Justice Harris said the requirement for all people in prison to receive at least 1 hour in the open air was not dependent "in any way" on the behaviour of that person and is a minimum standard.

"There is no clear bright line delineating what will constitute a space which enables a prisoner to 'be in the open air'," Justice Harris wrote.

"It is to a significant degree an evaluative exercise having regard to factors including whether the space permits access to the sun, rain, wind and other aspects of the prevailing weather and whether it otherwise provides a sense of being exposed to the weather and in the open air."

The court also considered factors such as the size of the area and whether it allows for exercise and walking around that is not possible indoors.

"A space that is barely larger than a prisoner's cell is unlikely to satisfy the implicit requirements of the space being an 'open air' space by enabling movement and a sense of being outdoors," Justice Harris said.

It is also relevant whether a person can look out to more open space or vegetation and whether they are able to move around in the space, the court found.

The protection units at MRC and Barwon Prison have rear yards attached to the cells, allowing those being held there to go outdoors at specific times of the day, but the presence of concrete walls, layered mesh, metal roofs and limited space meant these areas did not amount to providing open air, Justice Harris found.

After visiting the rear yards in the Exford unit at MRC, the court found that "there is no possibility of feeling the rain" and "no sensation of being exposed to the sun".

The exercise yards at Olearia and Acacia do have enough exposure to weather and enough room to move to constitute providing open air to those incarcerated there.

The court also declared that every time Marrogi was strip-searched from May 2023 to June 2025 he was not allowed to dress privately immediately afterwards, in breach of the Corrections Regulations and his human rights under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

A similar legal challenge centred on the right to 1 hour of open air each day has been launched by a number of men incarcerated at the newly opened Western Plains Correctional Centre and by a man incarcerated at the Melaleuca unit at Barwon.

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TAS

Seven children escape youth detention

Seven children being held at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre escaped and stole a car from the prison parking lot before later being found.

The children, aged 14 to 17, escaped the youth prison and drove away in a stolen car. Three staff members at the centre were injured during the escape, authorities said.

All seven of the children are now back in custody.

Children to be transferred to adult prison

The decision to "secretly" transfer children from a youth detention centre to an adult prison is a "serious breach of human rights and Australia's obligations to children", the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) has said.

On Christmas Eve, the TAC said that a number of First Nations children held at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre were expected to be imminently moved to an adult facility.

The centre said that some of these children were unsentenced and that this was a "serious breach of the presumption of innocence and basic legal protections that apply to all children deprived of their liberty."

TAC CEO Rebecca Digney said that the decision to transfer the youths was made without telling them or their families.

"These young people have the right to know what the state plans to do to them," Digney said.

"By failing to tell them or their families, the state has effectively denied these young people the chance to seek legal advice or advocacy at the very moment they need it most."



SA

Four-day strike leads to mass prison lockdowns

A 96-hour strike by prison officers led to most prisons in South Australia being placed in extended lockdowns in mid-December.

The strikes are over an ongoing pay dispute, with the Public Service Association pushing for a 20 per cent pay rise over 18 months, something which has been rejected by the state government.

Sheriff's officers, court officers and home detention officers have also joined the strike, along with prison officers from seven of the state's public prisons.

The union voted to end the strike after it had run for 96 hours.

Investigation launched into prison drones, fake IDs

Investigations have been launched into two security incidents in South Australian prisons in recent weeks.

In late December a drone was spotted flying into Yatala Labour Prison, allegedly trying to smuggle a phone to an inmate through their cell window. According to authorities, a remote-controlled drone flew over the prison three times.

Another security breach is also being looked into, with an unauthorised person gaining entry to high-security areas of Yatala and the state's women's prison, allegedly by using a forged access pass.

The identification card was confiscated and suspended at the gatehouse of the Yatala prison.



NSW

TikTok 'prison chef' facing charges

An incarcerated person in a New South Wales prison who came to prominence for posting cooking videos on TikTok has been charged for having a contraband phone and was set to face court in late January.

The "prison chef" began posting on TikTok in late December and gained nearly 400,000 viewers in just 2 weeks.

The videos involved him making "simple and easy" recipes from a prison cell.

On Christmas Eve the man was arrested by police and days later was charged with use or possession of a mobile phone in place of detention.

Former prison worker charged with stealing money

A former prison finance officer has been found guilty of stealing $315,000 from family members trying to pay for their loved ones' bail or provide them with money for buy-up.

The man charged was employed by Corrective Services NSW as Sole Finance Officer of Public Funds at the Silverwater prison from January 2012 to August 2014.

The court found that he had abused this position and stolen or misappropriated more than $300,000.

This was done 63 times when he took cash from envelopes deposited by friends and family of incarcerated people before it was taken to the bank.

The man was sentenced to a 3-year intensive correction order for more than 100 larceny and fraud offences.



QLD

Two men charged over prison murder

Two men have been charged over the alleged prison murder of a fellow inmate in late November.

A 28-year-old man was found unresponsive at Maryborough Correctional Centre in late November, with injuries allegedly sustained from an altercation with two other people incarcerated at the prison.

The man was transported to Hervey Bay Hospital but died from his injuries on 1 December.

A 29-year-old man and a 31-year-old-man have now been charged with murder, and faced Brisbane Magistrates Court in early January.

New Supreme Court bail procedure

The Supreme Court of Queensland has introduced a new Bail List in an effort to improve efficiency.

From late January, the court now hears bail matters on this separate list, managed by a dedicated Bail List Judge and with a Bail List Manager as the administrator.

Before being allocated a court date, applicants will need to file supporting documents and are required to send the necessary forms, affidavits, argument outline and an estimated hearing length. Once these documents are received the matter will be listed for a mandatory Review Hearing.

At this hearing, the judge will either grant or deny the bail application on the spot, ask for more information or list the matter for a traditional bail hearing at a later date.

This information was supplied by Prisoner Legal Service Queensland. This is information and not legal advice.





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WA

State's largest prison to be expanded

Western Australia's largest prison will become even bigger under a $180 million expansion that will see 320 new beds available.

The two-unit expansion will mean that Acacia Prison, which is privately run by Serco, will be able to hold 1,920 people.

The Western Australian Government has opened expressions of interest for companies to manage this expansion.

Justice department struggled to address strained prison system: review

The Western Australian Department of Justice is struggling to manage a strained prison system and is lacking strategic leadership, a review by the Public Sector Commission has found.

Poorly run processes are "distracting the agency's leadership from more strategic matters", the review found, and addressing overcrowding in the state's prisons will need "strategic leadership and coordinated reform", according to the report.

"Bottlenecks in prison-based treatment and assessment programs and a lack of transitional housing are inhibiting eligible prisoners from meeting parole requirements, contributing to a growing prison population and overcrowding," the review said.

"The agency is largely reactive in managing these pressures, which has created a cycle of short-term responses that do not address the root causes of systemic stress."



NT

Coroner pushes for ban on spit hoods in prison

An NT Coroner has called for spit hoods to be banned in prisons in the territory after finding that the device had been placed on a "dying and vulnerable man" in late 2023.

As part of a coronial inquest into the death of an Aboriginal man in custody at Alice Springs hospital, the Coroner said that spit hoods are not effective in protecting against transmissible diseases, and should be outlawed in the territory.

The inquest found that the man, who was experiencing homelessness and had an alcohol use disorder and cognitive impairment, had a spit hood placed on him in hospital after spitting at guards on two occasions.

The coroner found that while there was no indication the spit hood contributed to the man's death, it still would have been distressing for the man.

Spit hoods are already banned in South Australian and Tasmanian prisons, and banned by police in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

In 2023, the Australian Federal Police and ACT Police banned the use of spithoods, with the NT Coroner finding that an internal review concluded they were "ineffective in protecting against transmissible disease".

High Court challenge to NT bail crackdown

A High Court challenge has been launched against the Northern Territory government's crackdown on bail.

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency is arguing that the bail crackdown is "unconstitutional" and is punishing people before they are able to receive a fair trial.

The bail laws were passed in May, with the territory government using extraordinary powers to ensure their passage in a single day.

Under the reforms, a judge can only grant someone bail if they have a "high degree of confidence" they will not commit a serious offence or endanger the safety of the community.

There is also now a presumption against bail for some serious offences, with the onus reversed onto defendants.

According to the legal challenge, this has set an "impossibly high threshold" for bail.

There are now about 2790 people in prison in the NT, and more than 40% of these people are being held on remand after being denied bail.



VIC

New provider to take over prison and court transportation

A new private provider has been selected to transport people in prison and handle court operations.

After a competitive tender process, the Victorian government will end its contracts with UK conglomerate G4S in March.

The state government has inked a deal with Wilson and Serco to provide security screenings and operations in Victorian courts, work that G4S has previously done for more than a decade.

The G4S contract for court services ran from October 2017 to the end of 2025 and was worth $181 million.

The company's contract to provide prison transportation was worth $182 million and ran from May 2015 to September 2024.

New trauma counselling services launched

Trauma counselling services are now available at Marngoneet Correctional Centre and Western Plains Correctional Centre, the first time that such programs will be available in men's prisons.

The Victorian Government has signed a deal with private provider Caraniche to run these programs for the next 2 and a half years.

The programs will provide tailored support to help people in prison understand the impact of trauma, develop healthier coping strategies and assist with rehabilitation. It will include individual counselling and group sessions.

It will initially operate at Western Plains prison and the Ripley Youth Unit at Marngoneet, beginning in early 2026.

Caraniche provides forensic alcohol and other drug treatment programs around the country.

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Shedding More Light: Phone Call Costs in Prison



Rhea Ong via Unsplash

By Damien Linnane

Damien Linnane is the editor of Paper Chained, a quarterly journal for art and writing. During his time in prison, he wrote a crime novel, Scarred, and then taught himself to draw. He is currently completing a PhD on the history of prison newsletters in Australia.

As a person who has worked, albeit infrequently, as a journalist since 2019, I can tell you first hand that most published articles come and go with little fanfare. Newspapers in the community are read one day and then in the bin the next. Online articles get their day in the limelight on a home page and then fade into the background with the others.

But occasionally an article can help make real changes for the lives of thousands of people and their families. In October 2024, Kelly Flanagan, then incarcerated at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, wrote an article for About Time on the exorbitant price of prison phone calls in Victoria. As Kelly's article highlighted, she was paid $1.56 an hour as a sewing machinist. However, a 12-minute phone call in Victorian prisons cost $6.84. If she made two calls a week, this would not allow her to buy items like stamps and toiletries, which were not provided.

Kelly's personal story of how this impacted her ability to stay in touch with family struck a chord in a way that cold facts alone cannot. Her article was picked up by mainstream media, including 7News. "Prison newspaper *About Time* shedding light on mental health toll of costly prison phone calls", read the title of their article from later that month. The story also made waves on social media.

It must be noted that many people and organisations have been lobbying for cheaper or even free prison phone calls in Victoria and elsewhere for years. Only a few months earlier, SBS News reported that 13 organisations had pushed for free calls in Victoria, stating that people in custody should not be forced to choose between calling their family and purchasing basic items. The article brought much-needed attention to an important issue, but it lacked insight from anyone currently impacted. This is not too surprising since journalists cannot legally interview people incarcerated in Victoria. However, lived experience of incarceration brings a deeper understanding of prison issues that simply cannot be replicated.

State / Territory	Mobile Rate (per Minute)	Mobile Rate (per 10 Minutes)	State Landline (If Different)	National Landline	Phone Contract Held By
WA	$0.10	$1.00	$0.95	$0.95	Telstra
ACT	$0.19	$1.87			Telstra
QLD	$0.20*	$2.15*			Commsec TR
SA	$0.22	$2.20	$0.39	$2.20	Telstra
VIC	$0.25	$2.50			Commsec TR
NSW	$0.26	$2.60	$0.25	$0.25	Telstra
TAS	$0.36	$3.60	$0.25	$1.50	Commsec TR
NT	$0.40	$4.00			NT Government

*Calls in Queensland are reported to be $0.20 a minute plus a $0.15 initial connection fee.

It's impossible to know exactly how much impact Kelly's article had on the subsequent reduction of call costs. However, after many years of things remaining the same, changes were finally implemented only a few months later. At the beginning of February 2025, the maximum price of a phone call in Victoria was reduced to $3 – still more expensive than some jurisdictions in Australia, although undeniably a step in the right direction.

Since then there's been many changes to prison phone call costs around Australia. Corrections in all jurisdictions were contacted and provided prices, except Queensland, although costs were only obtained in South Australia following a freedom of information request. A media request to Queensland Corrective Services for prices was denied, and they also delayed a subsequent right to information request for the data "due to the number of applications received and the subsequent workload on [their] business unit". Costs in Queensland were accordingly provided by released prisoners. Call durations are mostly capped at 10 minutes around the country, although they are 12 minutes in Victoria, and are reported to be 8 minutes for some prisoners in Queensland.

Since Kelly's article was printed, prison phone costs have also been reduced in South Australia. The ACT and Queensland have also significantly reduced the costs of calls to mobiles. However, in both jurisdictions the cheaper rate for landline calls, which was around 30 or 40 cents, has been removed. Landline calls now face the same rate as mobiles. This has significantly increased costs for numerous people to stay in contact with their families, many of whom had purchased landline phones specifically to allow for affordable contact.

Conversely, while the rate for mobiles remains largely unchanged in NSW, the cost of all landline calls has been reduced significantly to only 25 cents. Sentenced prisoners in NSW now also get one free landline and one free mobile call per week, and remand prisoners receive three landline calls and one mobile. Rates apply once free calls are used. However, prices will still be higher for many people than they were before June 2023, when Corrections in NSW removed the ability to access third-party services that reduced call costs.

Prices in the Northern Territory and Tasmania, which now have the highest and second highest costs for calls to mobiles respectively, remain unchanged, as do those in Western Australia, which has long had the cheapest mobile calls in Australia.

While for the most part calls to mobiles are becoming cheaper, we clearly still have a long way to go. The removal of discounted landline calls, as well as third-party services, is also particularly concerning. There's no denying that contact with family is a proven way of reducing reoffending and improving mental health. Recognising this, prison phone calls have been made free in at least four states in the US.

A campaign is currently underway to try and make phone calls free in NSW. People outside prison can learn more by visiting:

www.yungprodigy.org/campaigns

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Should Prison Mean No Human Touch?



With Victoria the only state still allowing limited residential visits, Australia must ask whether denying physical contact protects the public – or deepens harm to families, human dignity and long-term reintegration.



By Benjamin Aitken

Benjamin Aitken is a multidisciplinary artist whose work is deeply influenced by personal experience in prison and a commitment to social change. Aitken is a five-time finalist in the Archibald Prize and has also been honoured with the Tony Fini Foundation Prize at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Should going to prison mean never being allowed to hug your partner or child? Is denying physical contact a just punishment, or does it harm families and human dignity? And what do human rights have to say about it?

Known in Victoria as the residential visits program (sometimes called conjugal or extended family visits), these visits allow eligible prisoners to spend extended private time with approved family members or partners without supervision by prison officers. Visits usually take place in a motel-style unit or on a nearby property outside the prison grounds and may last between 3 and 24 hours, depending on the prisoner's stage in the program.

In Australia, these visits are rare. Victoria is the only state that still permits them and only at five prisons: Beechworth, Fulham, Loddon, Marngoneet and Tarrengower. Approval sits with prison management and can be granted or withdrawn at discretion. Outside Victoria, residential visits are no longer allowed.

There is no publicly available data on how many residential visits are approved. In 2017, a Corrections Victoria spokesperson said the department could not comment on approval numbers or processes for security reasons, noting that the program had been "significantly strengthened in recent years", with special-category offenders subject to a much higher approval threshold. In a recent request for comment, a Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety spokesperson said: "We recognise that maintaining a person in custody's support network is critical in helping them successfully return to the community. We will facilitate residential visits for eligible prisoners in appropriate and safe settings."

The program in Victoria has strict eligibility criteria, including matters such as sentence length and the relationship between the prisoner and the intended visitor, as well as the security, conduct and good order of the prison. Prisoners must be classified as minimum or medium security and serving a sentence of at least 18 months. Visitations of this nature are not automatically guaranteed and are individually assessed. There are two types of visits: intimate contact visits between a prisoner and their partner or spouse and extended visits with children. These programs operate under the *Corrections Act 1986* (VIC), which allows contact and residential visits under specific conditions defined by the state. Visitors may be searched under the Corrections Act and can be refused entry or restricted to non-contact visits if security risks are identified.

Debates about residential visits in Australia often centre on safety, cost and fairness. Critics argue that intimacy is a privilege that should be removed as part of punishment and that these visits place extra strain on prison resources. Others raise concerns about inequity – that some prisoners qualify while others never will – and about public perception, particularly fears of appearing soft on crime.

Internationally, conjugal visits are more normalised. In Nordic countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark, conjugal visits are seen as a way to help people in prison maintain close relationships. Based on the principle of "normality" – a central tenet of the Nordic prison model – prisoners keep many everyday rights and responsibilities, including intimacy, often in private rooms. Brazil, Canada, France and Mexico allow family visits in many forms, and even prisons in the Philippines allow for conjugal visits between legally married spouses. Supporters believe that maintaining these connections helps to improve mental health, reduce violence in prisons and improve reintegration prospects, lowering the chances of reoffending after release. When people leave prison feeling connected rather than isolated, communities tend to be safer and the negative impacts of imprisonment on families are also mitigated.

Australia's stance on these visits therefore doesn't align with these principles, which are also outlined in international human rights. *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (the Nelson Mandela Rules) highlights that imprisonment should not cut individuals off from the outside world. They stress the importance of regular contact and visits with family and friends, showing how vital maintaining family ties and community contact is for successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Given that other countries permit residential visits, Australia should question why such visits are restricted or unavailable in many places and consider the harm this may be causing to prisoners, their families and long-term reintegration. Prison is already brutal. The real question is whether cutting people off from human connection makes anyone safer in the long run.



Experiences

Trapped by Rituals: How to Avoid the Mundanity of Prison

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in VIC.

Continued from page 1.

The daily repetition of prison rituals becomes familiar, comforting and, after a while, mind-numbing. Some inmates find such comfort in routine that they ritualise virtually every aspect of their prison lives. Creating day-long repetition; from the time they get out of bed in the morning to when their head hits the pillow at night. To me this feels like "total surrender to the system" – to be avoided at all costs.

Once inmates have been lulled into a sense of passivity and conformity, any disruption to those rituals causes fear, anxiety and frustration. "Why can't they be consistent with unlock times?" "Stupid public holiday – I want to go to work so I'm not bored." "Dammit! We were supposed to have hot dogs for lunch!"

This highly ritualised environment is most likely one of the chief causes of inmate institutionalisation. The reliance on order and ritual becomes so all-encompassing that the average inmate can no longer function of their own volition once released. Life is too chaotic, too random – prison becomes their safe-haven.

One way to survive this creeping indoctrination process is to vary the rituals where possible; eating at whatever time suits you; doing your laundry on different days; varying your fitness regime; even taking random moments to just sit and relax.

I try to stop and appreciate natural beauty around me – the weather, the mountains beyond the wall, and the bird life.

Although ironically even nature follows its own rituals.

Self-catered cottage living allows you to extract a measure of independence from the mundanity of prison life. Keeping your mind and body active through education and physical fitness also helps.

Ultimately, if you can see the rituals for what they are – control measures – then you can set them aside as irritants, and structure (or de-structure) your day to reduce their impact.

Nobody wants to become a hostage to these rituals, but the insidious creep of institutionalisation will happen – if you let it.



Share Your Story

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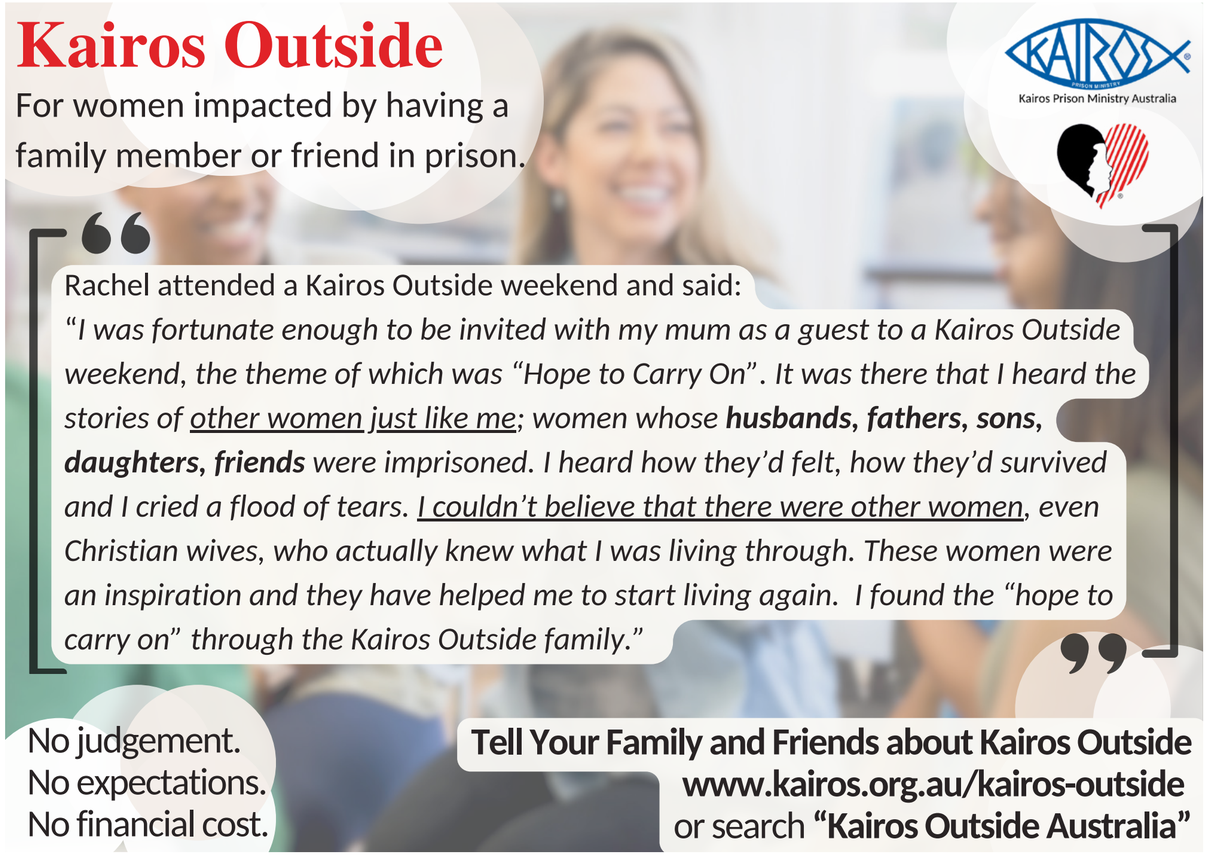
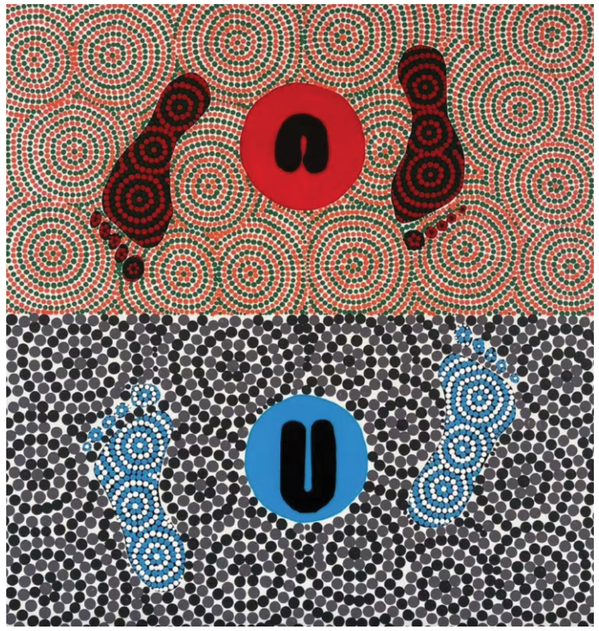


‘You Are Worth Loving’: Reflections on Choosing Yourself



Boomgate Gallery: “Father and Son” by Nathan, $750, #6014, 80cm x 80cm, acrylic on canvas

The moment you start loving yourself, you will achieve more than you know

By Hoani

Hoani writes from a prison in WA.

After multiple sentences and long stints in prison, I am in the process of understanding myself and the impacts of my behaviours. I am writing to *About Time* to share with others what I have learnt. I hope this is helpful to others in similar situations to me.

Being an Indigenous Man

I am a 40-year-old Indigenous man of Maori and Aboriginal descent. I am a result of inter-generational trauma (although this is not the reason I am incarcerated). Colonisation has had a significant impact on Indigenous people’s culture and way of life. Indigenous people are a minority population in this country but here, in Western Australia, we fill these jails.

I refuse to feel anger, humiliation, resentment, and powerlessness which some attribute to colonialism. I find negative rumination detrimental to my health and wellbeing. I believe that racism is a taught and learned behaviour as are all behaviours, views and traditions.

When considering interactions and social acceptance, I feel strongly that a person’s character and virtues should be his measure and never his race, class or mistakes – it’s how we learn from our mistakes that matters.

Accountability – what Is It?

True accountability comes after a thorough self-assessment of one’s actions. Denial, blame, and justification profoundly impact upon an individual’s ability to see themselves as others do.

I have seen so much pain, anger and shame in here. Trauma can affect different people in different ways. But I have seen quality interactions here too – brotherly love and respect.

A lot of us in this situation are not malicious, nor do we lack empathy. The feeling of shame is an indicator of this. I live with a sense of shame but this only strengthens my resolve for change. To achieve this, an honest account of my thoughts and behaviours was warranted, and that is accountability.

Our minds

The mind is a place within itself – it can make a hell of heaven and a heaven from hell. Perceptions and beliefs are usually formed from our experiences – what we learnt in childhood through to what we’ve seen and been taught. Our younger developmental years are when we learn a lot of our worst behaviours and as we age, we either deny their presence, potency, or justify them with reason.

If we’re able to be honest with ourselves and our pasts, then we can rectify years of negative behaviours through understanding, then fundamentally changing, negative attitudes and beliefs. This is how I’ve managed to overcome years of self-destructive and self-serving thoughts and behaviours.

I’m okay with not getting my way

Sometimes I won’t get what I want, or win, or have it my way. I now realise this is okay, and I don’t mind when others have good days and I can only hope that they don’t mind when I do. Everyone has different views, beliefs, traditions, and opinions. This is okay too.

I stopped measuring myself against others and am working towards being a better me. Life is complex and I know that it’s disheartening to see people make it while you feel left behind. But it’s okay.

You can say no

We have the right to say no, and we should feel safe in doing so. It is important to feel confident in starting over, and the only true limits are how hard you’re willing to work for it.

“I shall not argue complexities as an excuse for in-action.”

I’m focused on growing as an individual, by ensuring quality health and wellbeing, as well as having strong, loving and productive relationships. This will strengthen my resolve towards staying drug-free, thus eliminating my chances of coming back to prison. I don’t want the past to affect my present because it will only distort my future.

Friend, whatever it is you choose to do with your life, I for one salute you!

Myself, I have dreams and aspirations, and I have set goals in order to fulfill my plans. I acknowledge that I have challenges ahead, but I don’t think they’re insurmountable. I realised that I have a duty to my family. I was meant to provide safety, security, and love to the ones that mean the most to me. You know what? No matter the time that has elapsed in my absence, I endeavour to be there for them. Life is truly short, and squandering the unique time that we humans have available to us (I hope is at the forefront of your conscious thoughts now) is worth thinking about.

My ancestors that came before me are either looking down on me, or not. One thing is certain, their survival and eventual coupling has borne me an opportunity at life. It’s time to be accountable and make mature decisions. I will finish with these parting words: you are worth loving and the moment you start loving yourself, you will achieve more than you know!



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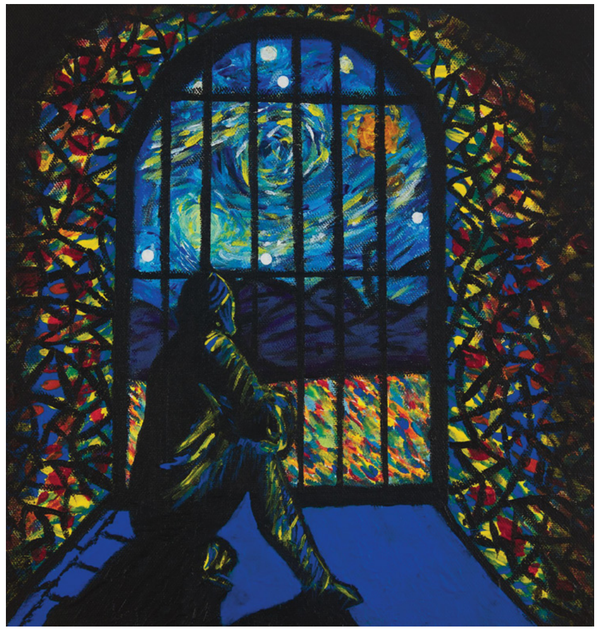
Leaving the Scene, Clean



My Sentence, painted by Kelly Flanagan, 2023

“Drugs and alcohol are cunning, baffling, and powerful. For us, the addict, the bodily reaction is an allergy, and the craving is something that kicks in once we start drinking.” – Alcoholics Anonymous

By Kelly Flanagan

Kelly Flanagan is a First Nations artist with lived experience in the Victorian prison system. She is an advocate for those women who are still suffering inside the prison. Kelly is also using her lived experience to write her first book.

Alcohol sets off both a physical allergy and a mental obsession.

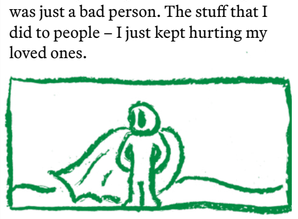


When I am drugging and drinking, I am selfish and foolish. I have no problem telling myself and anyone that asks me, that everyone else is the problem, not me. My sponsor explained to me that I had an allergy. I had been seriously ill – bodily and mentally – and just like having a peanut allergy, if you keep eating peanuts you are going to keep swelling up. If you keep drinking/drugging, your body is going to react to this allergy in ways which you would not normally act when you are sober. The only relief is complete abstinence from ANY substance.



To classify an addict is exceedingly difficult. When I talk about ‘addiction’, I refer to addiction to both alcohol and drugs – there is no difference. Alcohol is a drug, and it is one of the most dangerous drugs of all. Some people may be able to have a few drinks a day and stop. Not have any more for a month or so, while others cannot stop drinking every day. However, if you are behaving in a way that is unacceptable to other people and you wake up feeling shame, guilt and remorse after drinking, chances are you are an addict.

I used to be ashamed that there was something wrong with me. I thought I was just a bad person. The stuff that I did to people – I just kept hurting my loved ones.



Now my motto is: “how do I want to show up as a sober woman today?” I keep working with my sponsor and she keeps humbling me. I know this is cliche, but your life truly hasn’t started until you’ve given up what you’re addicted to. I’m getting to experience life in a whole different way and it’s better than I ever thought possible. I’m not saying it’s easy – it’s hard. But I am sick of prison, death, violence and the loneliness that comes with not trusting and not appreciating good people and the things they do for me.



When the AA/NA literature talks about ‘God’, don’t look at the guy up there with the beard. God can mean whatever you want it to mean. It’s your higher power. When I was in prison, my higher power was the light switch on my bench where I would sit for hours reading my AA/NA literature. Something my sponsor told me is that God means ‘grow or die’ for her, as she is not religious, and I like that. It’s a program of spiritual principles, not religious ones.

If the prison you’re in offers an AA/NA program – go and check it out. Do not just go once – go twice, go three times. Go, go even if you do not want to. It is not like there is much going on in prison anyway. You might find that you like it.





You can also write to this address and ask to get some material sent to you:

Alcoholics Anonymous
1/ 36 Church St
Richmond VIC 3124

For other states, ask your case worker.

If you have a good caseworker, they could email administration@aavictoria.org.au and get some literature sent to you personally. AA and NA are based on the same principles: look for the similarities, not the differences in your story.





You’ve paid the price for a seat in recovery.

Come to a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting and discover how to stay clean on the outside.

Your chair is waiting:

Text: 0488 811 247
With your suburb, state/territory for local meeting details

Call: 1300 652 820
For a confidential chat

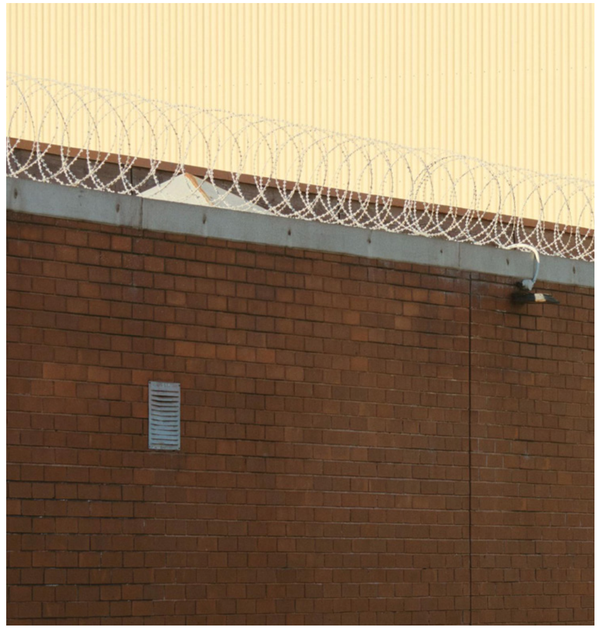
Visit: www.na.org.au
For more information

Inside Insights: A Survivor's Guide to Jailhouse Etiquette

A tongue in cheek satirical piece, made for us to have a laugh at ourselves and others (in good spirits of course), and help us pass the time.

By Jonny

Jonny writes from a prison in VIC.



Willy Pleasance



When count's not correct

Here's an idea: don't do count.

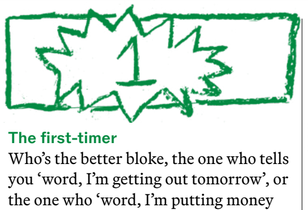
All this worry about people escaping — from my experience, everyone ends up coming back quicker than a boomerang anyway.

Save the dramas, forget the muster, and if one or two people are missing, they'll be out, charged, denied bail, and back in before the next count anyway.



Who left their milk in the toaster?

Some blokes treat the unit kitchen like it's an episode of *MasterChef*. They cook up a storm, feed half the unit, then vanish like its canteen day, leaving behind a sink full of arguments and a bench that looks like it's been cleaned with botulism bench spray. Usually, it's the same guy who cooks sardines for breakfast and doesn't know how a spoon works.



The first-timer

Who's the better bloke, the one who tells you 'word, I'm getting out tomorrow', or the one who 'word, I'm putting money in your account when I get out'?

They're as good as each other -mostly because they're usually the same bloke.

May God bless the men who come into jail for the first time, promise you it's their last, leave you everything they own, go to court, and come back carrying a three-year sentence.

And if he does manage to keep his word and get out, he's nice enough to keep my word and not put money in my account. Not my first time, sport.



When your celly snores: A symphony of suffering

Sharing a cell with a snorer is like living inside a faulty leaf blower. You don't sleep – you just lie there, contemplating your life choices.

It starts off gentle, like a distant chainsaw. Then it builds into a full-blown Bunnings warehouse demo. You try everything: earplugs, pillows, kicking the TV.

By 3am, you've memorised every time you've been shit go-ed, and written three novels in your head. He wakes up revitalized. You wake up crazy eyed.



The soiled celly: Welcome to the walking biohazard

He's got his tradies in the sink, socks on the ceiling, and a smell that could evacuate a sewage plant. Asking him to clean up his toe nail clippings causes confrontation and you're gaslighted by being told you didn't make your bed.

You go through all the potential diseases you could have from the time you confused his towel with yours, and you start thinking polio and footrot would be the best outcome.



Jailhouse lawyer: Legal advice from a bloke who failed parole

Who needs legal aid when you've got regal mates?

My first time in jail, I copped three months from his honour, but from other inmates I copped a two-week, a seven-month, an eighteen-month, and a three-to-four-year sentence. If I'd stayed any longer, I was heading for life with no chance of parole.



The celly who sleeps all day

He's horizontal more than a bench press. Sleeps through muster, his debts, and his own release date. Wakes up just in time for lock-in and yawns like he's done hard labour.

To him the word fit doesn't mean exercise.



Whooshing to the front of the prison line

A blessing in disguise, because without these people, we wouldn't know who's better than us.

I've wanted to do it and it's not that I don't think I've got it in me – I just don't like to rush through my prison sentence. Wouldn't surprise me if the joke's on me, though. Can anyone tell me if pushing in makes your end date come sooner?

I'll let you know when I see one of these blokes walking out the front gate with a spring in their step. Maybe I'll ask the bloke who's been here since Kevin Rudd was PM – he seems to have all the answers.

samsn
SURVIVORS & MATES SUPPORT NETWORK

Michael Walsh: Empowering Change as a SAMSN Outreach Prison Worker

Profile of commitment, support, and hope



Michael Walsh: Here to support you

Michael's passion for helping and supporting men is at the heart of everything he does. With over 10 years experience as a counsellor working in mental health and trauma settings, he brings both professional expertise and genuine care to the role. Michael's qualifications in mental health and complex trauma give him the tools to offer practical, down-to-earth support—whether you're just starting your recovery or looking for new ways to cope. His own journey through personal challenges means he truly understands what it's like to face tough times, and he's committed to walking alongside you, not just as a worker, but as someone who's been there too.

Michael's philosophy is simple: recovery from trauma takes time, patience, and the right kind of support. He believes that every man deserves respect, honesty, and a fair go, and that healing is always possible with the right help. As part of the SAMSN team, Michael's focus is on building trust, encouraging growth, and making sure no one feels alone on their journey. His combination of lived experience and professional skills means you'll always get straight talk and solid support, whether you're having a yarn or planning your next steps.

If you're keen to chat or want to know more about the support SAMSN offers, just ask. We're all about giving you the tools and confidence to make positive changes.

A WORD FROM MICHAEL

Personal growth: Finding your strength behind bars

I've been through my own battles and know how important it is to keep learning and growing. The challenges you face inside can feel massive, but they're not impossible to tackle. My goal is to help you find hope and a new direction—whether that's through group chats, one-on-one support, or just having someone who understands what you're going through. At SAMSN, we believe every man deserves a chance to heal and build a better future.

Why I do this: Making prison a place for change

I'm passionate about making sure every man inside knows he's not forgotten. I want to help break the stigma around mental health and make it easier for you to talk, get help, and look forward to a brighter future. Whether you want to chat about what's on your mind or work towards a new start.

I'm committed to helping you make positive changes, both in here and when you're back on the outside. My vision is to keep growing in this work and make a real difference for men in the prison system. If you're keen for a yarn or want to know more about SAMSN and what we offer, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

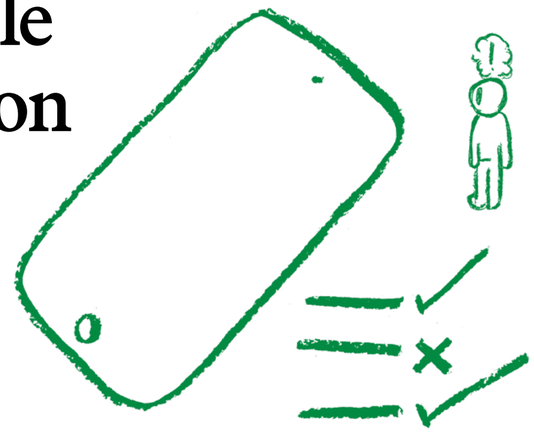
Contact us today at **samsn.org.au**, email on **support@samsn.org.au** or call us on **1800 472 676** for support.





● Legal Corner

Be Prepared: New Restrictions on Mobile Phones in Immigration Detention



New laws give detention officers broader powers to confiscate phones and internet devices. Here's what's changing, how it may affect you, and how to prepare before entering immigration detention.

By Josephine Langbien

Josephine is an Associate Legal Director at the Human Rights Law Centre.

New laws mean that immigration detention officers can now confiscate things like mobile phones, iPads and laptops, which were previously allowed in detention centres. If you're facing time in immigration detention at the end of your sentence, this article gives some practical tips to prepare for the new rules before you go.

Prison and immigration detention – what's the difference?

For many people in prison who are not Australian citizens, getting parole or finishing a sentence doesn't mean going home – it means moving to immigration detention. People are held in immigration detention while they fight to get their visa back or wait to be deported. Immigration detention is not supposed to be a punishment, so there are different rules to prisons. That's why mobile phones and internet access have previously been allowed – but the rules are changing.

New powers to take away mobile phones

New laws allow the Government to decide that certain items can be confiscated from people in immigration detention. It can be anything the Government believes is a risk to the health, safety or security of people (or staff) in detention, or threatens the 'order' of the detention centre.

Once the Government has decided that a particular thing is dangerous, detention officers then have the power to search people and confiscate the item if they think it is a risk. This includes using strip searches or searches with dogs.

Some items like weapons were already banned. But in November 2025, the Government decided that the following items can also be searched for and confiscated:

- mobile phones;
- SIM cards;
- devices that have the internet, including tablets and computers; and
- alcohol.

This does not mean that mobile phones or computers are automatically banned for everyone. So far, they have only been taken away from some people. But the Government could decide to ban them entirely, or for certain groups of people, at any time. Other items might be banned in future too.

What difference will this make?

Mobile phones and the internet help people in detention to pass the time, keep in touch with family and friends, and work on their legal cases to get their visa back. People have also used camera phones to report poor conditions and mistreatment in detention to journalists or social media. And mobile phones let people call for urgent help if they are about to be deported.

Detention officers have a lot of power to decide who gets to keep a mobile phone and who does not. It's easy to see how that power might be misused.

What are my rights?

Despite the new laws, people in detention still have important rights:

1. **Right to contact a lawyer:** People in detention have the right to contact a lawyer to get advice about their visa. Officers cannot take away your mobile phone just to stop you from talking to your lawyer.
2. **Right to express political views:** People in detention have the right to communicate about political issues. That might involve talking on the phone, posting online or participating in protests about your political views or your opinion on government laws and policies. Detention officers cannot interfere with that communication without a good reason.
3. **Right to access alternative means of communication:** If officers take away your phone or computer, they must provide you with another way to contact your immediate family and your lawyer, or to communicate your political views.

What should I do?

Before you go to immigration detention, you should write down on paper:

- phone numbers for family and friends;
- phone number and email address for your lawyer or the free legal service in your State or Territory;
- other important information that might be stored in your phone, like passwords.

Once you are in immigration detention, if an officer confiscates your phone, computer or other device, you should:

1. Ask why the item has been taken from you.
2. Ask for the item to be returned to you. If the officer doesn't give it back, then ask why – they must have a reason to hold onto your property.
3. Ask what other method of communication will be made available to you. Ask for access to a phone during business hours so you can get legal advice about what has happened.
4. Make notes about what has happened. Write down what the officers said in answer to your questions.
5. Call a migration lawyer to get advice (phone numbers below).

Getting familiar with these new rules now might help you to stand up for your rights when you arrive in immigration detention.

Legal services assisting people in detention

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Ph: (03) 9274 9889 (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 10am-12:45pm)
legal@asrc.org.au

Refugee Legal
Ph: (03) 9413 0101 (Monday-Friday: 9am-5pm)

Refugee Advice and Casework Service
Ph: (02) 8355 7227 (Monday-Friday: 10am-1pm and 2pm-4pm)
admin@racs.org.au

Victoria Legal Aid
Ph: 1300 792 387 (Monday-Friday: 8am – 6pm)

NSW Legal Aid
Ph: (02) 9219 5790 (select option 1) or 1300 888 529 (Law Access) (Monday-Friday: 9am- 5pm)

Practical Self-Advocacy Tips: Part 1 – Using Prison Policies

The first in a series on self-advocacy tips

By Daniel Vansetten

Dan Vansetten spent nearly 12 years in prison and has since gone on to study a Bachelor of Laws. He uses his lived experience and study to advocate for the rights of prisoners as well as writing for *About Time* and producing podcasts with formerly incarcerated people.

One of the most important aspects of self-advocacy in prison is to understand the rights of prisoners and the limitations of power of prison authorities. Prison policies can be a good place to start to understand these rights and limitations.

How to access prison policies

Each state and territory has its own rules for disclosure of prison policies to prisoners and the community. New South Wales, for example, has legislation, the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, that requires prison authorities to proactively make prison policies available to the public. A quick google search for 'prison policies in NSW' reveals a significant database of prison policies, procedures, memorandums, guidelines and more.

Other jurisdictions, however, may not be required to disclose prison policies to the public. They therefore may disclose some policies and not others. Some jurisdictions choose generally not to disclose policies. People seeking to access prison policies may therefore be required to lodge applications for policy via Freedom of Information or Right to Information processes.

Why is it important to obtain prison policies?

Obtaining actual policy documents may be crucial. For example, a certain state had introduced a policy for prisoner case reviews during around 2010. The case review process was important: it was the process used to determine whether prisoners could progress through from high to medium and to low security prisons. The process allowed prisoners to take part and provide written submissions for consideration for the case review and allowed prisoners to appeal decisions on those case reviews. The corrections authority, however, did not inform prisoners of their right to appeal these decisions. Further, the policies were only accessible by Freedom of Information. Around 2018, a prisoner decided to obtain a copy of the policy via Freedom of Information and discovered the right of appeal. Up until 2018, some eight years after the policy was released, prisoners did not know about or exercise this extremely important right. It was only through accessing the document did prisoners learn their rights.

My tips for identifying and obtaining policy documents are:

1. ask the prison authorities for relevant policies;
2. have a friend or family member do an online search for relevant policies;
3. submit a Freedom of Information or Right to Information request for a list of all policies.

This should give you a list of all policies available from which a further application for information can be made for specific policies.



● Legal Q&A

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

So far we've written about bail, parole, remand, freedom of information, making complaints, disability support, financial stress, and more. All information that we publish is of a general nature, and is not a substitute for professional legal advice.

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- Sexual Assault
- Police Misconduct
- Workplace Injuries
- Road Accidents
- Medical negligence
- Public Place Injuries (Slip, Trip or Fall)

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Web: www.injurycarecompensationlawyers.com.au
Mail: PO BOX 2093 Berala NSW 2141

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Aadil Ahmed
Accredited Specialist in Personal Injury Law NSW, Law Society of NSW Accredited Mediator
Call: 02 9158 9650

Reintegration

Breaking the Cycle: How I Gave Myself Another Chance



Willy Pleasance

By Gary Griffiths

Gary was incarcerated in WA. He now runs 'Recovery Tapes', a podcast of raw stories from ones who made it back.

Walking out of jail here in Perth wasn't the moment my life changed. I found myself back in two weeks – back in green, back in Hakea prison on remand again. I didn't realise it at the time but this would be the start of me spending the next three years of my life in prison. I was only 18 years old – young, dumb and addicted to gear. The cycle had begun.

Since the age of 15, I'd been in and out of court getting charged for stolen cars, aggravated burglaries – but I never actually got locked up until I was 18. I just kept getting curfews, intensive supervision orders, reporting three times a week, drug and alcohol tests – the whole lot.

Being addicted to gear at such a young age fueled a lot of the crime and at that time, I was at the start of what would become a 10 year battle with the needle. Once I turned 18, I got locked up pretty much straight away and started 12 months of going in and out of jail on remand.

I was in this toxic cycle I'd created for myself where I would get out, do good for like a week, get straight back on the gear, breach whatever I had hanging over my head and end up with a warrant for my arrest out again. I reckon I went in and out of Hakea prison about four times over those 12 months before getting slapped with two years.

This was not a good way for me to start out my adult life where most people are finishing up their apprenticeships and going traveling or saving for a first home. I was starting my jail experience with a dirty addiction and not realising how far I was setting myself back. At the time, a lot of my mates were caught up in the same cycle as I was and where I grew up on the north side of the river in Perth was flooded with gear – the reality of it was most people I knew or grew up with were on the gear, selling gear or involved with drugs and crime somehow.

So all of this was kind of normal to be honest and as I was in jail with the boys from the outside – it didn't really hit me what had happened until my parole was denied and my two mates were moved on to other prisons – for the first time I was in jail by myself.

I guess this was the wake up call I had needed. The truth of it was I was addicted to the group of friends I had as well. Looking back I was weak and seeking validation in all the wrong places. I guess I was scared of trying to be different from the group of friends I was involved in because without all of the drugs and crime, who was I?

I found myself searching more and more like who I really am. I started reading a lot – like a lot. I also got a unit job as the wing cleaner and started saving for a stereo and making plans for my release. After about three months of being quiet and reading, training and playing a lot of chop, I had grown and I was making small progress and then randomly I finally got my security rating dropped to medium. I could go to Acacia with the boys again.

And bang, just like that, any progress I had made prior was gone, all the reading, all the planning and even my little savings had gone as well. I could get whatever I wanted up on the hill out there. It was like being free. There were meat packs full of cable weight gym and a school proper little library. I remember thinking this is too easy, like for real.

At Casuarina in the max where I had done 18 months prior we got proper slop food every night and so with this extra freedom I started to unravel again.

It hit me like a ton of bricks. I was strong by myself but weak when surrounded by my friends and temptations. I started going to school again and did my year 10, 11 and 12 in the little school in Acacia which kept me away from the units but any time that a chance came up I took it.

I didn't get clean for another five years after getting out – so it took me nearly eight full years to acknowledge the first positive thoughts I had about my growth as a person.

I have written this article in hopes that someone reads it and hears this message: the change comes from within. There is no one and nothing that will change for you – not the birth of a child, not a high paying job, not the woman of your wildest dreams. It doesn't work like that.

If you want to break your cycle, it's lonely and it's hard. It's also scary to cut off friends and family – but the truth is, if you stand alone with a vision of a better life, you will win.

It's not about getting it done quickly and seeing huge changes straight away. Focus on small achievable goals and appreciate the days you're free. Remember what that feels like the next time you're gonna commit crimes or make silly decisions – the only person who can give you another chance is you!

You deserve more from yourself than living as a number is the system – it's a waste of your life. You could be free to build your life with your family – think about it like that. This is your life and you only get one, don't waste it sitting in a box.



Have a Question?

We want to help prepare you for the outside.

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

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

Health

Three of My Friends Are Alive Because I Had Naloxone



Image Caption

By Marianna Jans

Marianna Jans is a writer and criminology student at Deakin University.

I am lucky to have not lost anyone close to me from a drug overdose, but I know many people who have. The impact that a fatal overdose can cause is devastating and they are completely avoidable and unnecessary.

Naloxone was created to prevent overdoses from being fatal or causing health issues. As drug users, it's our job to make sure that information on how to use safely and how to obtain and administer naloxone is shared within the drug using community so that no one else has to die from overdosing.

I have had three friends drop on me, and if I didn't have naloxone in my possession those friends would not be here today.

Looking back, it's scary to think that I came extremely close to losing these friends.

There have been many studies done in Australia and overseas that show the most likely time someone will have a fatal overdose is the first two weeks after being released from prison.

It's clear that not all opiate users end up incarcerated, but out of those who do, the risk of overdosing directly after being released from prison is very high and the percentage of those being fatal is even higher.

When someone is released from prison they either don't realise that their tolerance is no longer the same, or they forget that the strength of what they are using is no longer the same, and that's when a lot of accidental overdoses occur.

Some of you reading this may be thinking that fatal overdoses are unavoidable, but that isn't the case.

The Medically Supervised Injecting Room opened in Richmond in Melbourne in 2018 and since then they have had 561,000 visits. Out of these visits they have handled over 10,000 overdoses with not a single fatality.

Drugs can be used safely and no one has to die.

Life is hard enough – there is no need to complicate it by putting oneself in dangerous situations when using opiates, or any substances. Drugs can be used safely.

How can you use safely?

There are several ways in which you can use opiates and other drugs without risking your life. Here are some ways in which you can reduce the likelihood of a fatal overdose.

1. Get your drugs checked
There are various ways and methods of getting substances checked. There is now a fixed site drug checking service opening in Melbourne – a great service where you can get opiates as well as other substances tested for free and get the opportunity to speak to a professional about the results,what they mean and what those substances really are, as well as what effect they may have on you.

There are other drug checking kits that can be purchased from sex stores if you aren't able to access the drug checking fixed site. No one should have to lose their life due to a dangerous batch and getting your drugs checked can put your mind at ease as well as those of your friends and family.

2. Go to an injecting room
If you have the luxury of living in Melbourne or Sydney, the safest way to use opiates is by using the supervised injecting room. The injecting room allows you to access clean and sterile injecting equipment, a clean environment and nurses who are there to monitor you and treat you in case you do happen to overdose.

3. Carry naloxone
Naloxone comes as a nasal spray or as a liquid in which you inject into the muscle. Naloxone is free at most chemists (which do the suboxone or methadone program) or you can obtain it through needle and syringe programs.

If you know you are going to use, it's a good idea to be prepared and get naloxone, so if someone overdoses you can administer it. It's better to have naloxone and not need to use it than to not have naloxone and need to use it. While providing CPR can save someone's life until paramedics arrive to administer naloxone, that isn't always the case, so having naloxone and learning how to administer it is really important.

4. Don't use alone
Using alone is the leading cause of overdoses resulting in death, and while overdoses can still be fatal when using with someone else, the chance of this drops significantly. If you have to use alone, try to let your neighbour or someone close know that you will be using, and for them to check on you in a couple of minutes just to make sure you're alright.

5. Wait before having more
While it may be impractical or annoying, if you are using alone, just remember, you can always have more, but you can't have less. It's important to keep in mind that sometimes it takes a little bit to fully feel the effects you are injecting, so give it another 10 to 15 minutes before deciding you need or want to use more.



Health Q&A

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

Please keep them general in nature so all people can benefit from them! Send your questions to:

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



Ask the Doctor: Stroke

By Harley Stiebel

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

Hello! I'm Harley, a doctor working in Victoria. Welcome back to Ask the Doctor!

Today, we are talking about stroke.

What is a stroke?

A stroke describes death to brain tissue caused by disrupted blood supply.

There are two main types of strokes:

1. Blood vessel blockage (ischaemic stroke) – most common
An ischaemic stroke is a blockage of an artery in your brain. It's basically the brain's version of a heart attack. These blockages are usually caused by bits of fat or blood clots.

2. Burst blood vessel (haemorrhagic stroke)
A haemorrhagic stroke occurs when an artery bursts. In young people this can occur from a big whack to the head. In older people, arteries become more fragile over time, due to normal aging, high blood pressure, and other habits your doctor probably complains about.

If the blood supply to the brain is impaired, how quickly does the brain start to die?

Brain tissue is extremely hungry – it uses more energy than any other part of your body. Brain cells begin to die after five minutes without a fresh blood supply; they'd rather die than starve.

What does it look like when someone has a stroke?

This is a tricky question. The symptoms of a stroke will differ depending on the area of blood supply to the brain that is disrupted.

Things you might see are:

- A drooping appearance of the face on one side
- Slurred speech, like they are drunk
- Weakness of the arm and leg on the same side of the body
- Confusion

So what is a mini-stroke?

You might have heard people use the term "mini-stroke" – the medical term for this is Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA).

Put simply, a mini-stroke occurs when the disrupted blood supply to the brain is brief. The brain is starved of oxygen long enough for the symptoms to appear, but not long enough for the brain tissue to die. Therefore, the person will not have any lasting symptoms (such as weakness of their arm).

However, it's important to recognise that a mini-stroke is a BIG warning sign. If someone has had a mini-stroke they are much more likely to have a not-so-mini stroke in the future.

How do I prevent myself from having a stroke?

1. Treating high blood pressure and high cholesterol
2. 150mins of moderate exercise a week
3. Being in a healthy body weight
4. Not smoking cigarettes

If you think you might need to make changes to improve your health, please speak to your doctor, they'll be able to give you personalised advice.

Thanks for reading this month's article!

Please write to *About Time* with any questions you have or suggestions for future topics. Trust me, nothing is off limits – most of my day is spent asking whether people have opened their bowels or farted.

Yoga for Good Digestion

Reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*

Determined to make positive changes in life – it can start with digestion!

As well as digesting the food we eat, we also digest emotion and thoughts. Yoga can help with all three of these. Many of us can feel stagnant and stuck – stuck where we are, stuck in the loop of our thoughts and stuck with the same feelings and triggers. Yoga movements can create a healthier digestive process for our food, but also gives us space to digest our thoughts and feelings.

Try moving through these exercises, keeping your focus on breathing in and out. Feel refreshed by having a break from constant thinking and worrying. Spending a minute or more in silence at the end, letting go of thoughts, allows your body to process emotions.

Try this every day if you can. You may soon start to notice you feel fresher and lighter – not just physically – but emotionally too.



1. Pencil stretch

On your bed or the floor stretch your whole body and relax five times.



2. Hug knees

Put your hands below your knees and hug them towards you. Hold this for five slow steady breaths.



3. Knee to chest

Put your hands below one knee and hug it towards you. Hold this for five slow steady breaths and then swap sides.



4. Knees to side

Engage your core muscles to protect your back. Drop your knees on one side and then the other. Keep moving them like windscreen wipers. Repeat this process five times.



5. Rest

Time to rest. Can you let go of thinking? Bring attention to your breathing and let thinking drop away. Stay here for 20 breaths in and out or more.



6. Meditation

Sitting, kneeling or on a chair, can you notice each breath in and out? Count each one up to 10 and start again. When you lose track come back to the counting – this gives the mind a rest from thinking. Start with about one minute and if this feels okay you might like to build up the time. If difficult thoughts or feelings flood in, bring your attention back to where you are. Feel the solid surface beneath you.

Curious for More?

If there's anything you want to learn about, please write to us! Write to us via the below postal details.

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Mob

Walking on History: Sharing Culture and Country



Boom Gate Gallery: 'Walking on Country' by Richard

By the Teelack Brothers

The Teelack Brothers write from a prison in VIC.

Hello *About Time* readers. I would like to tell you about a lecture from someone who came to our prison. This one was by Mr Tya Lovett.

Tya is a teacher for Latrobe Uni and teaches a Cert 4 in Cultural Heritage Management. He teaches about cultural landmarks and landscapes. He is also a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council. Tya is one of the traditional owners of Tjap Wurrung County.

Tya started off by talking about the Langi Ghiran mountain and about all the art there, and Bunjil's cave and the heritage that surrounds the mountain. He spoke about when you dig into the ground and the deeper you go the things that you find in the ground potentially can be thousands of years old artifacts and history and a lot of people overlook the significance of what is in front of them.

Tya also spoke about the landscape and rock art that is 22,500 years old on Gunditjmara Country, of stories of the Land, Sky, and the Sea that is the basis of the Traditional Owners' knowledge, including Ceremonies, Creation stories and Skills involved in the creation of Cultural heritage.

Tya talked about the tools that have been made by the Aboriginal people for cultural purposes like the ground edge axes, grinding bowls that were made of stone and the things that they were being used for,like striping bark from trees, hunting, digging, help making shelters, grinding up wheat, flowers and berries to make food like damper and other foods.

He also spoke about the waterways and how the Aboriginal people use them to fish and live off the water by creating fish traps and digging out water channels from the river, as well as manmade watering holes where they can trap the fish and are able to keep the fish alive and fresh.

He spoke about the volcanoes that are here in Victoria and believe you me there are more than a few out there! Most of the land in Victoria has significant volcano sites.

He spoke about scar trees, ring trees, habitation trees and curved trees. First were the scar trees and what they were used for –depending on the size of the scar it could be used to make canoes or coolamons, to make shelter or even fish traps.

The Habitation trees were used to live in and for birthing and Woman's Business – there are even stories about travelling Spirits using them.

The curved trees were used to identify different tribes' burial grounds and to even warn people off. They were used as landmarks for people to find their ways back to the tribe, and for exploring.

It was a great turnout by both inmates and staff and we all left feeling informed and more vigilant of our surroundings or where we are and where we live.

So, my advice to you is be aware of your surroundings because you never know that what you are walking on, or passing, or could be used as a tool. Even a bit of charcoal that you found buried in the ground could mean something or the pippies shells that you see deep in the sand on the beach could tell us something about the past.

It all has a history. So just take a second to think on how old that could be and where it came from or even who or how it could have got there.

I would like to say a big thank you to Tya Lovett for coming out and speaking with us. It was a great learning experience, and we are looking forward to seeing him back in the future.

Also thank you to the *About Time* newspaper and their readers for giving us the opportunity to inform everyone on what we are doing here, so thank you.

To all you brothers and sisters out there, stay black and deadly, stay strong and keep your chins up.

Kind regards from the Teelack Brothers.

Send Us Your Creative Pursuits!

We're looking to print more artwork from people in prison. If you have any sketches, paintings or other creative pursuits – please send them to us! We'd love to see them.

Staff members at your prison may be able to scan and send them to us via email.

Please send your letters to the following postal details, or to the email address if you have access.

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Learn

Exploring the World Through Animal Senses

While we experience life through five basic senses, other animals possess sharper, faster, or entirely different sensory abilities. Exploring them offers a glimpse into the hidden worlds they inhabit.

By Shae Wiedermann

Shae Wiedermann is a writer and editor based in Naarm, Melbourne.

Humans have five traditional senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. We go about the world using these senses to guide us, and we are heavily reliant on vision as our primary and dominant sense.

Many animals share these same senses as we do, and different species prioritise different senses. For example, dogs rely on smell as their dominant sense.

Some species also have senses entirely different from ours, each helping them understand the world in its own way.

An Immense World by Ed Yong explores the senses of different animals and how they might reveal the hidden worlds around us.

He asks if humans know the world through sight, what could a world look like otherwise?

Here are some interesting things he uncovered about animal senses and what each means for the species' lives they shape.

Sight

Are humans the best at seeing? It would appear not. Though our vision is excellent, many animals outperform us.



Kumas Taverne via Unsplash

Eagles and other birds of prey have substantially sharper vision than ours. The wedge-tailed eagle views the world in more than twice our resolution and can spot prey from over a mile away.

Some spiders, with their eight eyes as opposed to two, see 360 degrees around them, something humans can't do.



David Clode via Unsplash

Chameleons don't ever have to turn their heads to look around, because their two eyes can move independently of each other; they can look in front and behind at the same time.

The killer fly has ultrafast vision that allows it to capture quick-flying insects in the span of a human blink. Even scallops have surprisingly sophisticated sight: the tiny blue dots lining their shells are eyes, each with its own pupil.

Colour

Have you ever heard someone say that dogs are colourblind? Well, they're wrong. Dogs do see colours, just not as many as we do.

Light spans a range of wavelengths, and humans only see a subset of them. Other species can detect wavelengths we can't. Many birds, reptiles, insects and fish, for example, can see ultraviolet light.

Heat

Animal senses are tuned to the temperatures in which they live. A camel isn't as distressed by the desert sun as we are, and penguins aren't that bothered by the chill Antarctic air.

Cold-blooded animals, with their ability to regulate their body temperature so drastically, take this a step further. Some can also sense heat radiating elsewhere.



Michael Jerrard via Unsplash

Some snake species, for example, have heat-sensitive pits that detect infrared radiation. This helps them sense heat from the bodies of mice and other prey.

Touch

Sea otters have ultra-sensitive paws, more sensitive than human hands, that enable them to identify food on the sea floor quickly.

Star-nosed moles use their unique, star-shaped snout to feel their way through soil, building a tactile map of their surroundings. They can identify prey, swallow it, and begin searching for the next mouthful in the time it takes a human to blink.

Seals read the water through their whiskers, which can track the wake of a fish from nearly 200 yards away. Alligators rely on pressure-sensing domes along their jaws to detect tiny vibrations at the water's surface – even a single falling droplet.



Anupa Uthsara via Unsplash

Surface vibrations

Just as humans can feel earthquake tremors, some animals can detect faint surface vibrations with specialised receptors.

Sand scorpions use vibration-sensitive feet to locate prey by its footsteps. Spiders do something similar: they sense anything that touches their web through vibrations. In fact, scientists have found that an orb-weaver's web functions as part of its sensory system, making the spider and web a single unit.



Wally Holden via Unsplash

Sound

Owls are expert listeners, able to pinpoint prey through the faintest sounds.

Birds hear frequencies similar to those of humans, but on a much faster timescale. A song that sounds like three notes to us may contain five or six to them. Zebra finches, for instance, sing so quickly that we miss subtle variations that help them recognise one another.

Some whales, meanwhile, use infrasound to communicate across entire oceans, navigating and connecting through vast acoustic maps.

Echoes

Very few animals have the skills to detect their surroundings through echolocation, and only toothed whales (dolphins, orcas, sperm whales) and bats have really perfected this sense.



Todd Cravens via Unsplash

Bats unleash a stream of short, ultrasonic pulses from their mouth. They then listen for returning echoes and detect and locate objects around them. It's almost like a game of Marco Polo, a bat will speak, and the world shouts back. As nocturnal animals, they can use this sense to detect prey incredibly fast.

Dolphins do the same underwater. The U.S. Navy even trained dolphins to rescue lost divers and equipment because of their superior ability to find things underwater. Dolphins can distinguish between cylinders filled with water and those filled with alcohol, and between steel and brass objects, using echoes.

Electric fields

Electric eels deliver pulses that force the muscles of prey to pulse and vibrate, revealing their location. Stronger pulses can paralyse the prey.

Sharks and rays don't produce their own electric fields, but can detect the electric fields of other animals, which help them catch prey.

The study of electric fish inspired the design of the first synthetic battery.

Magnetic fields

The Earth has a magnetic field, and some animals have tuned in to it to help them find their way. While humans use compasses that detect this field, some animals have compasses built into their sensory systems. This is called magnetoreception.

Loggerhead turtles can go all around the ocean and find their way back to the same beach where they hatched, and they do so by recognising magnetic signposts.

Other species, such as robins, have also developed magnetoreception. It is common in species that have to travel long distances.

Culture

The Potential of Video Games in Prison



Jose Gil via Unsplash

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 was a recipient of the 2025 Varuna Trans and Gender Diverse Fellowship to develop her manuscript, My World.

Video games can be helpful for people both inside and leaving prison. They're not only entertaining, but they can help people deal with the trauma of prison and re-entry in the community.

During the Covid pandemic, games provided a stress relieving and mentally stimulating escape from the effects of lockdown. If gaming can have such positive effects on player well-being during a global pandemic, they may be a game changer in prison environments.



Video games in prison could have many potential benefits. Just like during the pandemic, playing video games can serve as a form of escapism, helping to alleviate stress and anxiety associated with prison life. The mind isn't designed for constant stress and anxiety, and engaging in gaming can provide a temporary reprieve from the harsh realities of confinement.



Saving for a console and the games could be a reason to go to work, and looking forward to new game releases could keep you engaged in what's happening in the world. It would also make staff safer as video games would provide a constructive outlet, reducing frustration and aggression, reducing conflicts and violent incidents within correctional facilities. Keeping your console and games could also be a motivator for good behaviour.



Video games can also be educational. Many video games require reading, strategic and problem-solving skills, which can help enhance cognitive abilities. I learnt how to read from playing video games when I was younger – so did many of my friends. Our school was pretty rubbish, but *Final Fantasy* on PlayStation wasn't. We really wanted to know what the words said. So we asked people to tell us, and we remembered. We really wanted to defeat the bosses, so we figured out the puzzles.



Unfortunately, the use of video games in correctional facilities is not uniform and varies significantly between states and prisons. Some facilities permit limited access. Many strictly prohibit video games due to security concerns or the perception they are an inappropriate luxury. The decision to permit or ban video games often reflects a facility's philosophy regarding punishment versus rehabilitation.



There are obvious concerns about the potential misuse of gaming equipment, and there are occasions where they have been misused. To that I've always said, 'if a person gets hit with a mug, do you ban mugs? Then they get hit with a chair, would you ban chairs?' So, rather than saying why it can't happen, figure out how it can happen.

As I alluded to earlier, there is the unfortunate attitude that prison is a place of punishment and video games are a luxury item that inmates don't deserve. Legally though, going to jail is the punishment, not what happens there.

My jail didn't allow gaming consoles. I remember one of the guys (who was very well-behaved) was utterly determined to get a video gaming console. He lodged constant requests and inquiries, but to no avail. The system just wasn't interested.

After years of longing for my old PlayStation, the first thing I did when I got out was get a Switch.

Now, years later. and I still don't smoke, I don't do drugs or binge drink. I don't even eat much junk food. I do, however, have nightmares of prison. But I play video games every day. And I cope. Maybe I would have coped better in jail if I had an outlet then. Maybe I'd not be having so many nightmares now.

I honestly credit video games as one of the major reasons I'm still free.



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Creative

Trapped Away

By CJ

CJ writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear Readers,

I've just finished reading the newspaper and thought I would share a little song I wrote about being locked up, coming to prison and not being able to be around my loved ones when I want to be – and only seeing them at visits and speaking with them on the phone. I've done almost 10 years in prison and I'm totally done with it now and can't wait to be out away from this place.

Trapped Away
By CJ

Life is the biggest mission always
Wishing and daily praying
Hoping something will start falling
Yet everyday you're always waiting for
that one chance and that
One opportunity in your life for
Someone to come and sweep you up
and start walking by your side.

I have a motive and they
might even tend
To say stop acting like a kid and put all
that shit away
Because when the sun goes down and
The moon starts rising
You start thinking, reminiscing,
How many days you already wasted
in your life
And the bad decisions get you nowhere
And the systems and the prisons
Are more corrupt than believing in
the Jacksons.

Who am I to judge another?
I was built to be a Leader –
I write rhythms to entertain y'all and
perform it like a master
With the lyrics flowing from my brains
Because my life is as big as a hurricane
Because everything I touch in life turns
up looking rough
Screws up in a million pieces
But I'm never giving up with my life,
Rip it apart, with a heart, built like
a rock
I knock down more
Beats than the actor in Hancock.

Mr Macho Man assaulting you with a
verbal attack and
When you hear this you'll be craving for
some more.
This is someone's real life story, so hold
the applause.
I feel lost and I'm searching for the
strength to walk out that door and
Find freedom through my eyes yeah find
freedom yeah yo

Have you ever been trapped
Away from your family and friends
And lost in a world of hate and you
think it'll never end,
Finding out you're lonely and losing the
ones you love.

I have and I can't explain the pain that
it's caused me,
Always rushing through my veins.
I had the urge and intentions to kill and
spill the blood of the guilty
Ones that's messing me up inside but
I still held my head up high upon
the skies,
wiped my eyes and washed away all
those lies.

I was told I was freezing from the
blistering cold.
I hold on like a poker game, Yo it's time
to fold
Yo am I phased, no wait for the better
days
so I can raise on my two feet and be on
my way
To a better future, forgetting my past,
See how long it last before I'm put back
on my ass again and
Yo I love yous all, I'm just over this life
But I'm coming back and be living a
better life again
My life, my story, I shout.

Less

By John

John writes from a prison in VIC.

The outside on the inside
Steals passion for fun
When arrows come from far and wide
Facing the new shiny sun
with dignity
There are ribbons in the fire
And lives still painfully on hold
Beneath the folds of desire
The barred windows still remain cold
indefinitely
When recognition cannot be found
Or trust and pride have no sound
Then those minds roll 'round and round
They cannot find any common ground
respectively
So the outcasts may play together
Live trapped among the barbed wire
Unmasked souls on a sorry tether
Can never form a knowing gyre
insensitivity
For when lives are flung aside
And battle is all they know
Then worth will always hide
Awake for some endless show
expressivity
The outsider on the inside
Wears the mask of the alone
In crowds of waste and glory
They often forget about Home
eternally

For Theo

By Alexandra

Alexandra writes from a prison in VIC.

I dream, and think, and feel from the
opposite side of the city,
In a cell of grey and steel, about our
home – peaceful and pretty.
Concrete and metal, alarms and locks,
an empty queen-sized bed: me in a
cramped and lonely box,
and you on the couch instead.
I miss you, and us dancing. I miss the
night we met.
But from our different windows, we
can see the same sunset.

Sound Advice

By A.S.P.

A.S.P. writes from a prison in NSW.

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

Edward's Recipes

Passiona jelly cheesecake

By Edward

Edward writes from a prison in NSW.



PASSIONA JELLY

Cost and Ingredients
- Passiona Can: $1.30
- Instant Pudding: $1.71

Total cost: $3.21

Method
1. Place Instant Pudding into a bowl slowly add Passiona to the mix until it is all mixed together.



CHEESE CAKE CUPS

Cost and Ingredients
- 1 Cheese Triangle (two if you would prefer): $2.31 each
- ½ Packet of scotch finger biscuits: $2
- 3.75ml Passiona Jelly: $3.21
- 2 Tbsp margarine: $0

Total cost: $8.02

Method
1. Place cheese triangles into a bowl and heat for 20 seconds.
2. Slowly add Passiona Jelly until combined, and save some of the jelly for the topping.
3. Crush scotch fingers and butter and microwave for 20 seconds.
4. Mix the scotch fingers and butter together.
5. Place biscuit mix into four rice cups pressing down to flatten the base.
6. Add the Passiona Cheese mix and pour small amounts of the jelly as a topping.

Play

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What country is both an island and a continent?
2. What is the chemical symbol for gold?
3. Who was the first person to walk on the Moon?
4. What city in India is the Taj Mahal located?
5. What language has the most native speakers?
6. What is the capital of Canada?
7. In which year did World War II end?
8. What ancient civilisation built the pyramids at Giza?
9. What is the name of the line that divides the northern and southern hemispheres?
10. What is the name of a shape with five sides?



Crossword

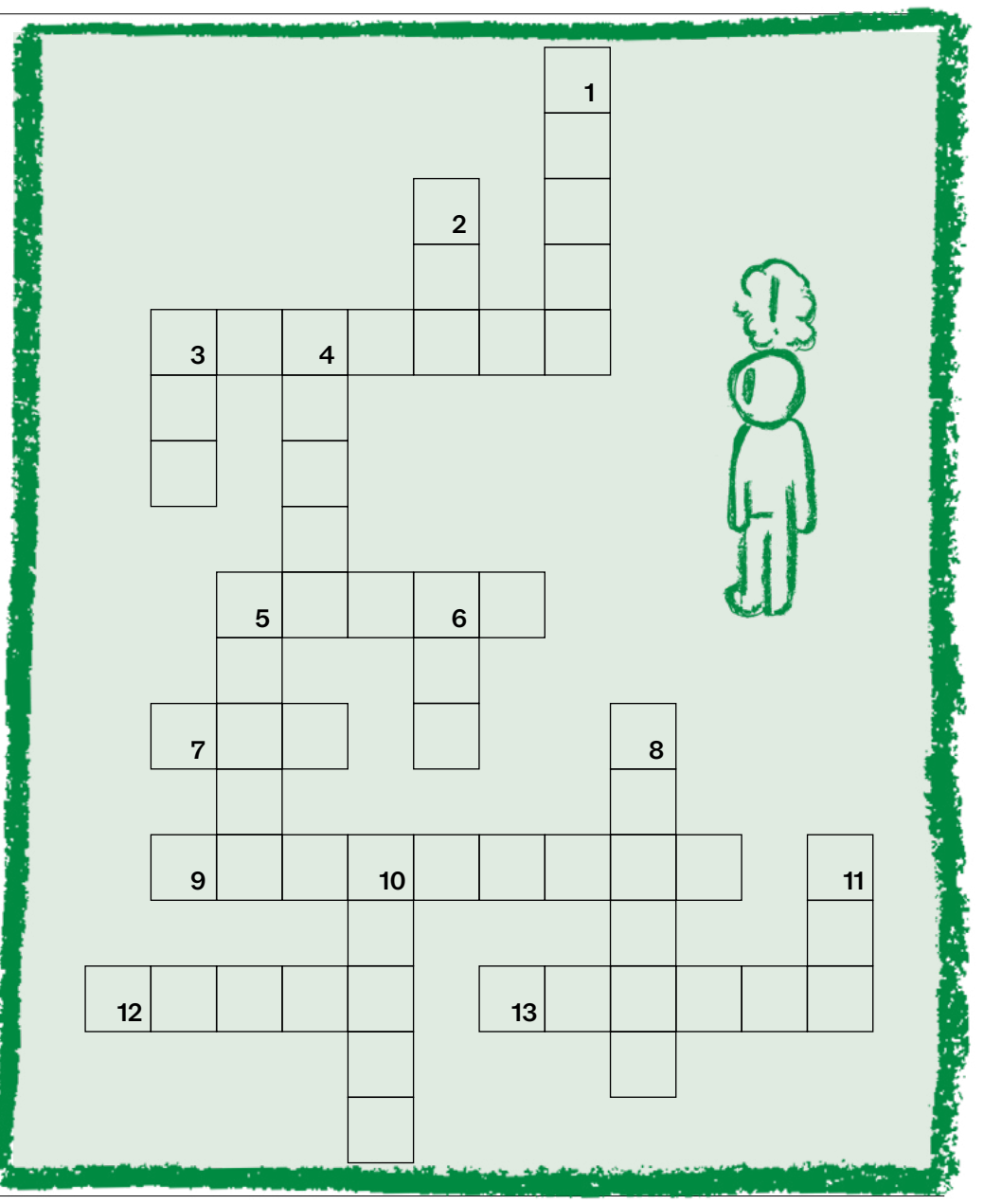
Can you find all the words from the clues?

ACROSS

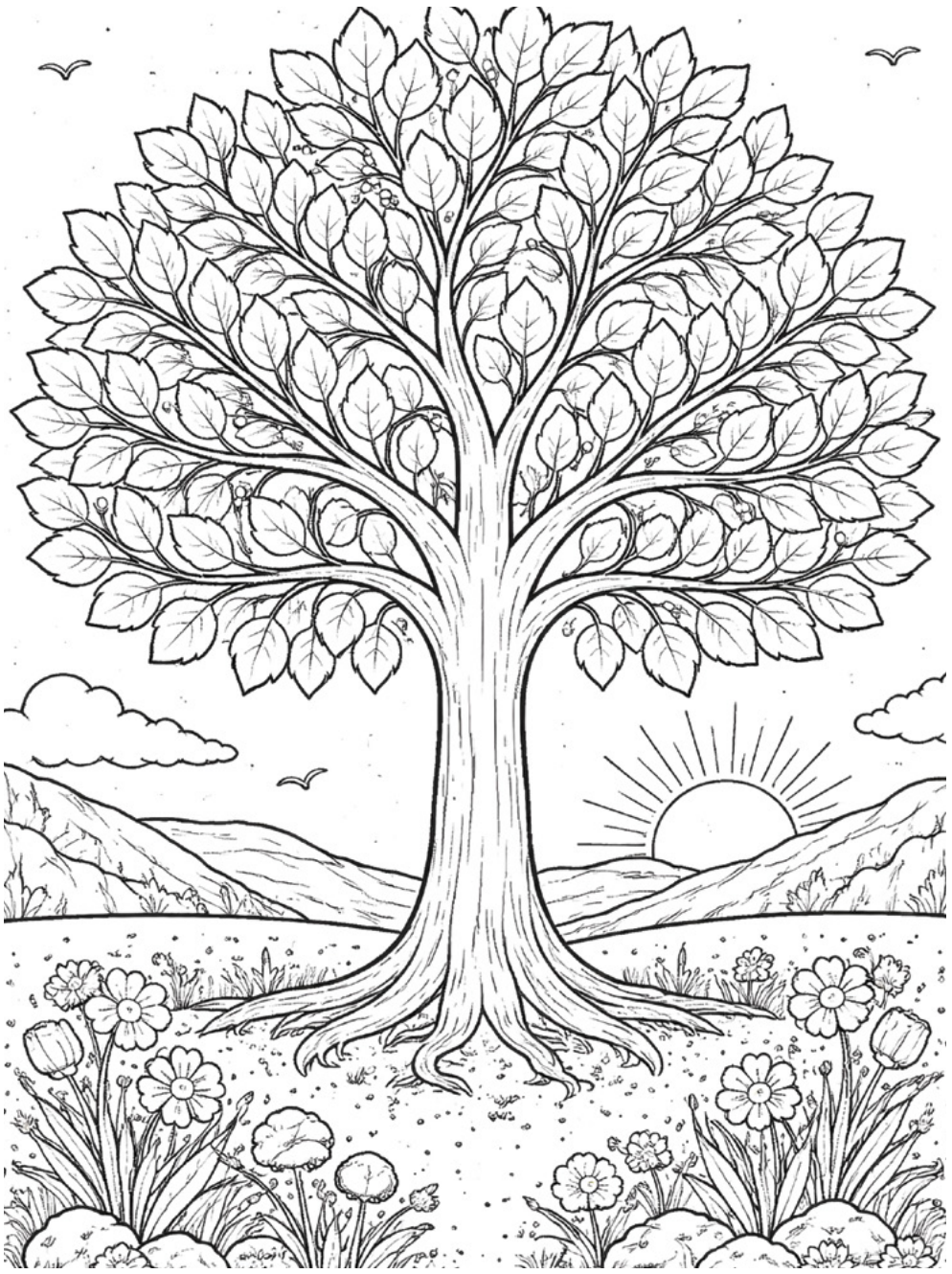
3. The largest planet in the Solar System (7)
5. Capital of France (5)
7. Animal known as man's best friend (3)
9. Second largest city in Australia (9)
12. A large musical instrument with black and white keys (5)
13. Instrument with strings, often played with a bow (6)

DOWN

1. Liquid that we need to live (5)
2. The opposite of cold (3)
3. A flying vehicle or a rapid stream of liquid (3)
4. Popular Italian food sometimes with cheese and tomato sauce (5)
5. Device used to call someone (5)
6. What water turns into when it's frozen (3)
8. Capital of England (6)
10. What you read to gain knowledge (5)
11. The star at the centre of our solar system (3)



Colouring In



Bad Jokes

Q: What do you call fake spaghetti?
A: An impasta.

Q: What do you call an alligator in a vest?
A: An investigator.

Q: Why did the bicycle fall over?
A: Because it was two-tired.

Meme of the Month



By Meicho San from QLD

Sudoku

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

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

Quiz Answers

1. Australia
2. Au
3. Neil Armstrong
4. Agra
5. Mandarin Chinese
6. Ottawa
7. 1945
8. Ancient Egyptians
9. The Equator
10. Pentagon

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

3. Jupiter
5. Paris
7. Dog
9. Melbourne
12. Piano
13. Violin

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Water
2. Hot
3. Jet
4. Pizza
5. Phone
6. Ice
8. London
10. Books
11. Sun