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About Time

ISSUE NO. 20 MARCH 2026 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

Australia’s National Prison Newspaper

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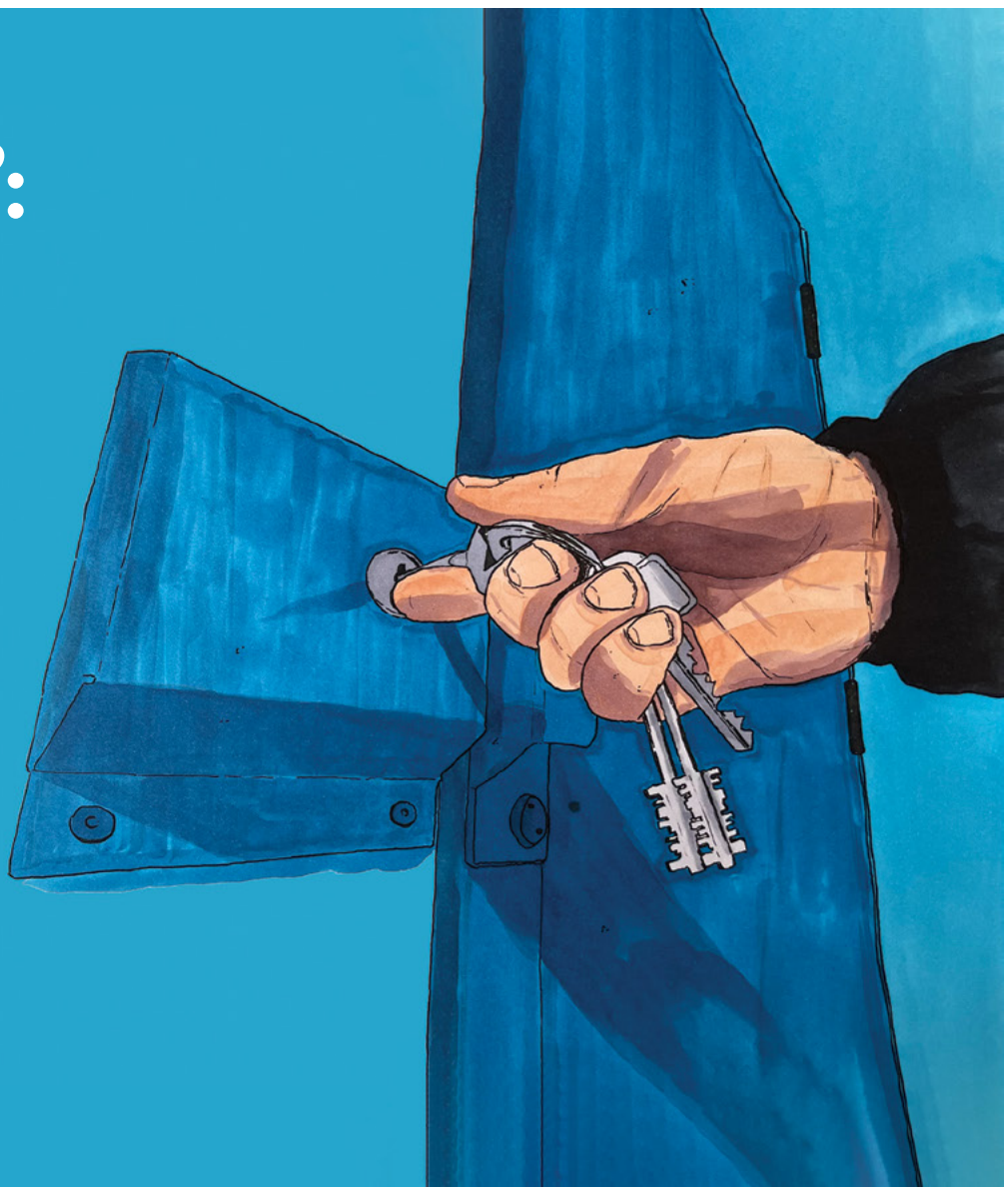
NEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

‘Incredibly Distressing’: When Prison Officers Go On Strike

Cancelled visits, missed court hearings, and days stuck in cells as officers walk off the job.

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

Continued on page 5.



Ike Curtis

EXPERIENCES

The Pain of Leaving Family Behind

On the guilt and heartbreak of not being there when the people you love need you most

By Anonymous

Anonymous writes from a prison in VIC.

Do you still have people on the outside? I’m lucky to have a wife and family that still want to be part of my life. The hardest part of prison for me is not being locked away. It’s easier living on the inside, a simple routine, where boredom is the main enemy.

The hardest part is being cut out of my loved ones’ lives. My participation reduced to: a 12 minute phone call; a 30 minute Zoom; the occasional email or letter; and increasingly rare contact visits.

My loved ones go about their lives, their stories unfolding; while mine is caught in an endless, irrelevant loop. I’m a ghost, haunting their lives as they deal with issues and overcome hardships, with no ability to help them.

My mum’s elderly. I worry she won’t be around when I get out. That plays on my mind – especially when I’m down.

Currently we only exchange letters. I often wonder if the last time I talked to her in person (the day I told her I was going to prison), was the last time I’ll ever talk to her. I hope there will be an opportunity to reconnect.

Talking to my wife on the phone, when she’s sick or in pain, are the most heartbreaking moments for me.

Being unable to help her. She has a lot of ongoing health issues; twice in the last month she’s fallen. First injuring her back, and then her knee. After the second fall, unable to stand, she dragged herself to the front door of our house so she could unlock it. She didn’t want the paramedics to break it down and let the cat out.

She fell around midnight; so the calls to family for help went unanswered. She lay there for two hours. Cold. Alone. And in pain. Waiting for the ambulance to arrive. How can I possibly make that up to her? Would it have happened if I had been there?

What does the rest of her life look like now? These questions hang around my neck like heavy chains, threatening to crush me under their weight.

Continued on page 11.

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Conquering Prison Life

By Cooky

Cooky writes from a prison in VIC.

Hi, my name's Cooky, I'm from the Victorian prison system, I've spent 12 years in prison, this new year.

Throughout my prison sentence, the only consistent thing has been my training – the rest has been a rollercoaster.

I feel I've been subjected to unfair and unequal decisions in my time here. I have come to the unfortunate realisation that I must empower myself.

Having been encouraged by your 11th edition prison newspaper, regarding a 'judicial review' process, I have learned and gained immeasurably, familiarising myself with processes otherwise unknown by the majority of inmates in the Victorian prison system.

For example, inmates in Victoria can handwrite or type then send legal emails, via the 'Prison Admin', like faxes, to any legal organisation nationwide. You can also make requests to the 'Victorian Legal Aid Library' (library@vla.vic.gov.au) and request up to 10 legal documents per fortnight. Such as legal precedents – case transcripts, legislation – Corrections Act 1986, Regulations 2019 or Human rights – the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006)

Don't be a victim or a product of the system by allowing it to beat you and hold you down.

Be a product that succeeds and conquers his battles against the oppressive nature of this system.

Find fulfilment and empower yourself to overcome whatever obstacles that you may face as a prisoner; odds being already stacked against the average or ordinary inmate. Be above-average and be extraordinary! Train your body, mind and soul, by lending them to as many relevant activities you can manage.

Remember that your body and mind respond to stress, through exercises – sets and repetitions. So, whatever you subject and expose your mind and body to, it will always, naturally increase its capacity load, to accommodate more and better.

For physical: Lift, Stretch, Cardio, Boxing, do it all...

For mental: Listen, Learn, Read and Create...

For spiritual: Pray, give to charity, do kind deeds and always think positive thoughts...

I've used training as a key stimulant throughout my time in prison, never having had more than two weeks off in a rest period and rarely having such rest periods, period. It has kept me sane, it has kept me safe, and I've found very profound wisdom in the disciplinary nature of routine and structure it consists of and relies on.

Without structure of anything, you have disorder and without routine you wonder aimlessly and achieve wasted time, with minimal benefit.

Conquer your battles through personal fulfilment and empowerment. Use what you apply and how you occupy your time to overcome what is most worrying you.

Writing Competition!



About Time is excited to launch a new publishing opportunity for people in prison around the country.

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.

Submissions for the first prompt – My Happy Place – is now closed.

This will be judged by a special guest – Australian author Bri Lee – and winner 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!

Lee is the author of several books including theaward-winning Eggshell Skull, and she is also the co-founder of the fREADom INSIDE Project, which helps donate books to women incarcerated in NSW.

Keep an eye out for the next edition! The second prompt is: Food for Thought: Write a story that includes food!

- No more than 500 words
- The story can be fiction or non-fiction
- Submissions are due (post-marked by the prison) by 1 May

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:
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Melbourne VIC 3001

Note:
This competition is not available for readers in South Australia.

Important Note:
The February edition of *About Time* included an article titled Court Finds Victorian Prisons Are Not Providing Adequate 'Open Air'. This article incorrectly referred to the cells in question as "protection units". About Time apologises for this mistake. This case was about high-security management units where Mr Marrogi was housed. Mr Marrogi is not a protection prisoner and has never been housed in a protection unit.

'Don't Be A Statistic': A Message To Those Getting Out Soon

By Vanessa

Vanessa writes from a prison in QLD.

To About Time,

My name is Vanessa, I'm 27 and incarcerated at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre.

It's my first time in jail and unfortunately the start to the vicious failed justice system cycle. It's just unfortunate that some of the most respectful down to earth people are sitting here in jail.

Some of the best people that make some silly mistakes because of drugs that aren't even what they used to be like.

So I guess my message is to those getting out soon. Remember the people that offer you drugs when you get out, they are not your friends. You are better than that.

Don't be a statistic, be that person your kids need you to be.

Teach them to learn from your mistakes not to follow them. Be role models and don't let the system trap you. We are all better than that.

Bread Pizza, Jail Pizza

By Daniel

Daniel writes from a prison in VIC.

Ingredients and Method:

1. 8 pieces of breadwhite/multigrain
2. BBQ sauce and mayonaise as base sauce
3. Sprinkle a bit of cheese on base sauce
4. Top with – mushroom/capsicum/ fresh tomato/Shallots (veg)
5. Meat could be any bacon/chicken or ham you have in stock
6. Put a final layer of cheese and oregano on top and salt and pepper then cook in your little oven

I hate making pizza bases from scratch – it's hard, messy and bread just works really well

This is a meal for two – eg. you and a m8!

Puuurrfect!!

Quote: In life be careful, and don't promise anyone anything, for there are many empty words – Pan, 2026.

Parole in 2027, But No Programs Available

By David

David writes from a prison in WA.

Hi Team,

My name is David. I wanted to write to you with a bit of my story.

I'm currently incarcerated at WA – this is my second incarceration and a major concern of mine is that this time around my parole is going to be affected by unmet treatment needs. I've spoke to other sentenced prisoners and it's similar for them too. My issue is that there aren't enough writers or assessors to do my third assessment which tells you if they have identified any mandatory programmes. So what's happening is when it comes time for prisoners to apply for parole, it seems to trigger their third assessment, identifying they have to do a mandatory program that won't start until or around their earliest parole date.

It seems to be a major issue in the WA system – they are like two years behind and inmates aren't getting the opportunity to meet that earliest parole date.

I've spoken to a independent visitor that came on the 22nd of December and was told that they do realise this to be a major issue and they were looking into it. Apparently it was brought up nine months ago but the independent visitor wasn't sure what actions, if any, had been taken.

I hope this gets sorted as I'm currently eligible for parole in 2027 and fear I won't get the help or programmes in time. I've currently engaged a rehab called Whitehaven at a cost of $3600 to help with my drug addiction in the meantime. The program comes to the prison weekly as I don't want to get to the end of my incarceration and then it be identified that I've spent my time doing nothing to better myself as the current system and the fall behind is failing us.

Thank you,
David



Letters From the Outside:

In response to *How Music Helped Me Expression Myself In Prison* by Sam
Sam, I was so moved by this story. Music has always been a universal language for me, breaking down all man-made barriers and simply a reflection of the soul. I am so very glad it has meant so much to you and others in the prison community. You say your voice is rubbish but I bet it's not! In any event you should let it soar!! Go get'em Sam! – Sarah

In response to *Trapped by Rituals: How to Avoid the Mundanity of Prison* by Anonymous
Excellent article, thank you. – Jane

In response to *There are no Friends in Drugs* by Michelle
Michelle I think you are incredibly wise. I'm so sorry you had to learn this lesson from n such a hard way. I wish you all the best for your journey ahead and know that your strength will see you come through your current experience with dignity and grace, and a beautiful future ahead. You will be a great mentor for kids and teens and young adults moving forward. Best of luck!
– Sarah



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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 twentieth 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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Discovering Buddhism in Prison

By Chris

Chris writes from a prison in VIC.

Just want to thank you for all the effort you all put into getting a national prison newspaper to everyone inside. I've been to many location in VIC and see many inmates enjoying the content so thank you for all the hard work (we appreciate you all).

Experiences of incarcerated
My name is Chris, My Dharma name is Shoten. I'm 33 and have spent 10 years inside prison.

The last 8 years I've said to myself, no more crime, no more jail. There's more to life then drugs, money and running amok.

I started to think about life more deeply. I found myself going to see the Buddhist Chaplin – it became the highlight of my week.

I've been Buddhist just over 12 months now. The beautiful side of Buddhism is how gentle it is. It doesn't demand belief or perfection. It simply invites you to look at your mind, your suffering, your habits with honesty and kindness.

Buddhism teaches that pain is a part of being human, not a failure. Thoughts are not who you are, change is always possible because nothing is permanent. There is beauty in the idea that peace isn't something you chase, it's something you uncover when you stop clinging.

Another beautiful part is compassion for others, yes, but especially for yourself. Buddhism allows you to be human without punishment. It says you can acknowledge harm, learn from it and still move forward with dignity.

Even in confinement loss or chaos the mind can be free. No one can lock that away. Many blessing to you all and may the triple gem always be with you. Shout out to all my Dharma Brothers.

First Time In Prison, 3000km From Family

By Deanno

Deanno writes from a prison in QLD.

I am currently serving a 6 year sentence with 2½ on the bottom. I'm currently awaiting an interstate transfer back home to Perth WA as I was extradited from Perth to Brisbane.

This is my first time in prison, and for the last 9 months of my sentence, I have been trying to get used to how prison is and it's very hard, especially for someone like me with a brain injury and a few disabilities.

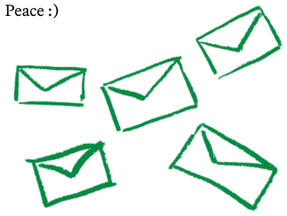
Trying to do my time is very difficult for me as I don't have my family here and not being able to have visits from them or anyone is extremely depressing.

I just want to get back to my home state WA so I can do my time with my family support where I'm happy and have all my supports.

I feel lonely and sad a lot, I feel people don't understand me and there isn't much support for me in this prison. I feel like I have to walk on eggshells all the time just to survive.

Anyway when I get transferred back I will be so much happier. Apart from all that, I hope everyone in prison all over Australia has a great new year.

Peace :)



We Want to Get Healthy in Prison – So Why Can't We Buy Protein Powder?

By Joeby

Joeby writes from a prison in QLD.

I'm an inmate at MCC. I am writing in hope my opinion may reach a broader network. It seems MCC is outdated in regards to basic facilities.

We come to prison in the hope we can get sober, healthy and fit.

While all other prisons in Queensland allow prisoners to not just have access to usable gym equipment that isn't outdated and damaged but also allow prisoners to purchase basic health supplements and equipment related to training gloves, creative and protein powders.

Here at MCC we are limited to weight bags and medicine balls. We cannot purchase creatine or protein powders, training gloves or any other essential items that other prisoners at other centres can purchase.

I don't see this as fair – these items are allowed elsewhere, why can't we buy them here?

These basic things lift morale and give us prisoners that want to train and see results a little more motivation.

At the end of the day, the centres that do allow these supplements are also run via QCS.

We are all entitled to the same buy-ups but not the same fitness-essential items.

Thank you.



An Idea to Reduce Drugs and Violence in Prison

By Melissa

Melissa writes from a prison in WA.

To About Time,

I have been in the system a long time. I believe that we as prisoners should be heard a lot more.

I've written to nearly everyone available to us on the confidential mail envelopes with my idea that I believe will reduce drugs through the prison system and also reduce violence.

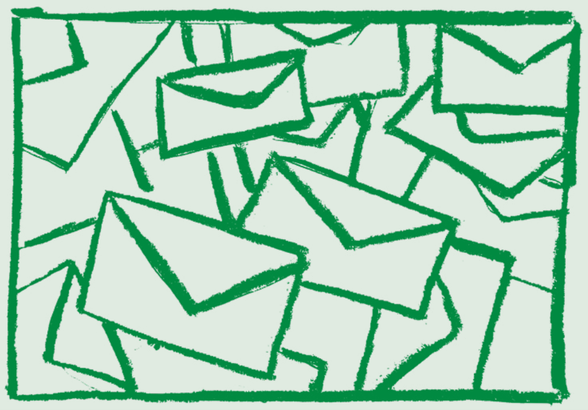
If we had the opportunity to get two months off every 12 months of our sentences for good behaviour, with the condition of being completely drug free with no instigation of violence at all, believe me, every single person will reconsider misbehaving and getting high.

But the decision is left to the prison officers who have daily interactions with us to decide. I don't believe a prisoner review board who know us merely by our past behaviour is sufficient.

The only response I've gotten from my letters with this idea is that it would require legislative changes and not even the Minister for Corrective Services could give me someone to write to to change legislations. Hopefully you can help.

Thank you

Reply from About Time:
Thank you for your letter Melissa. We commend you on your persistent advocacy for people in prison, and I'm sorry it's such a hard slog. Legislative changes means making new laws through the political process. You can try reaching out to your local Member of Parliament to share your story and ideas? Political changes like this can take a very long time and requires persistence advocacy from people like yourself – don't be deterred!



Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from T, Neale, David, Jonathon, Chris, Sam, Gareth, Stephanie, Brian, Pip, Marco, B, Ebony, Charles, Hamish, Bronwen, Charlie, Colleen, Anthony, Mark, Elizabeth, Sina, M, David, Peter, Ben, Naomi, Adrian, Scott, Simon, Melanie, Russell, Triste, DJ, Deanno, Jackson, Carlisle, Nicholas, R, Garry, Manish, those that wish to remain anonymous and many more.

While we cannot respond to all letters we receive, we 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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News and Investigations

'Incredibly Distressing': When Prison Officers Go On Strike

By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

In early December, all public prisons in South Australia were thrown into lockdown after prison officers went on strike.

At Yatala Labour Prison in Adelaide, the lockdown stretched for four and a half days with no time out of the cells across more than 110 hours.

During the lockdown, *About Time* heard that people in prison were unable to shower, and had no access to clean clothes.

There was also no access to phone calls – restricting contact with children, loved ones and legal teams.

Court proceedings, including bail hearings, were also cancelled, as were all visits.

In what could be an Australian first, with just a handful of non-union staff left to run the whole prison, reportedly a number of remanded people were let out of the cells to help run the facility.

The South Australian prison officers went on strike as part of a push for a 20 percent pay rise over the coming 18 months.

There have been several strikes by prison officers recently around the country, with prisons placed into long lockdowns typically as part of bargaining negotiations with the government.

The situation in South Australia is typical of what happens when these strikes occur, with those in prison given little notice before being confined to their cells for hours or days on end.

In October last year, thousands of New South Wales prison officers also went on strike, plunging incarcerated people into abrupt and extended lockdowns.

These lockdowns also led to cancelled legal appointments, court appearances and family visits.

Peter* had a bail application court hearing on the morning the officers went on strike. He was left sitting in the AVL room at Silverwater Correctional Complex until late evening, with no-one telling him that the strike had led to the hearing being cancelled.

"They took him down first thing in the morning and the strike happened not long before lunchtime, but no one explained anything to him," Peter's partner told *About Time*.

"He was left there completely unaware of what was going on. Our lawyer couldn't get a hold of him either because no-one was available to operate the AVL phones.

It was incredibly distressing for everyone involved."

Last year's NSW strike was in protest to the sentence handed to a man found to have assaulted a prison officer at Cessnock Correctional Complex.

Thousands of prison officers across NSW took part in the strike, which lasted for three days, and led to some centres that typically have 60 staff operating with just six people.

Department of Communities and Justice Assistant Commissioner Craig Smith told a commission that the strike had been "catastrophic", and all people in prison in the state were in lockdown because of it.

Skye Humphrey had a scheduled visit with her husband at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre at Silverwater cancelled because of the officers' strike.

"Everyone was punished the week they cancelled visits due to a strike for something that happened in another jail," Humphrey told *About Time*.

"To cancel visits over Christmas and then to continue doing it from the strike onwards has been an absolute heartbreak for everyone involved."

A spokesperson for Corrective Services NSW said that industrial action happens in prisons in the state "from time to time".

"When strikes occur, prisons are operated by a reduced number of staff who provide care and essential services for all inmates," the spokesperson told *About Time*.

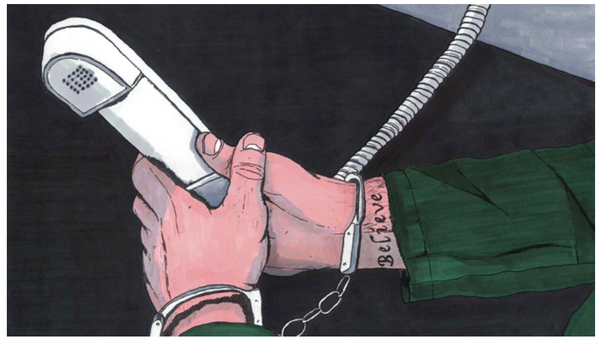
"On some occasions there will be service impacts to court appearances."

*Not his real name.



Willy Pleasance





Ike Curtis

Calls Were Free, People in Prison Charged Anyway

Those incarcerated in Canberra were charged nearly $125,000 for phone calls that should have been free.

By About Time

ACT Corrective Services charged people for prison phone calls when they should have been free. From April 2022 to May 2024, nearly 1000 people at Alexander Maconochie Centre, the only prison in Canberra, were charged just under $125,000 to make phone calls. This was found out through an investigation by the ACT Ombudsman.

The phone calls should have been free because the phone company was not charging the ACT government for them.

People still in prison or were released and then returned to AMC should have the money back in their prison accounts.

There are still about 500 people in the community who still need to be paid back. They can send an email to ACTCSCommissionersOffice@act.gov.au requesting money back.

On its website, ACTCS has said sorry to those who paid for the phone calls, and that they "regret any distress this issue may have caused".

The investigator also said that phone calls costs in the prison were far higher than calls in the general community.

At AMC, it costs 18.7c per minute to make a phone call, or $1.87 for a 10-minute phone call.

Our Voices at the United Nations: A Joint Fight for Human Rights

By Sisters Inside, National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, Scarlet Alliance and Asian Migrant Sex Worker Advisory Group

In July 2025, four organisations came together to make sure the truth about prisons, policing and criminalisation in Australia was heard on the world stage. Sisters Inside, the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, Scarlet Alliance, and the Asian Migrant Sex Worker Advisory Group lodged a joint submission to the United Nations as part of Australia's Fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a process where countries are examined on their human rights record.

This submission was not just another policy document. It was built from the lived experiences of people who have been incarcerated, criminalised, targeted by police, detained at borders, or pushed to the margins. Our communities demanded that their knowledge and reality be included. When it became clear that these perspectives were being sidelined in larger NGO processes, we made the decision to stand together and speak directly to the UN.

The joint submission exposes the ongoing human rights abuses happening across Australia: deaths in custody, the mass-imprisonment of First Nations people, the rapid increase in women's incarceration, the imprisonment of children as young as ten, and the criminalisation of disability, poverty and survival. It also highlights the experiences of migrant and sex worker communities facing racial profiling, detention and police harassment.

The submission called for urgent action, including ending the imprisonment of children, repealing punitive bail laws, abolishing strip searches, banning solitary confinement, and halting prison expansion. It called on investment in community-led solutions instead of punishment: housing, health care, income support, and culturally led services that actually keep communities safe. True safety does not come from more surveillance, more police or more prisons. It comes from meeting people's needs and respecting their dignity.

Importantly, this joint submission represents solidarity across communities often treated separately: incarcerated women, sex workers, migrant workers and criminalised people. Together, we are refusing to allow our lives to be reduced to statistics or ignored entirely.

Taking our voices to the United Nations is about accountability. It is about ensuring that what happens in prisons, watch houses, detention centres and on the streets is not hidden. Most of all, it is about building a future where our experiences shape the solutions, and where human rights are real for everyone, including those behind bars.

Spit Hoods Still Allowed in Prisons

Many states and most police forces have banned the face covering. But they're still being used in prisons.

By About Time

Spit hoods are made of mesh and may be placed over your face by prison officers or police to stop spitting and the spread of diseases.

Their use has been banned in many states and territories in Australia because they're dangerous. The Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Lorraine Finlay, said that using spit hoods brings "significant risks of injury and death".

But spit hoods can still be used in prisons in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Spit hoods are usually used to stop diseases being spread through spitting. But the Australian Federal Police recently said that they weren't good at doing this, and there are many risks with using them.

The NSW government has stopped spit hoods being used in prisons because they can "cause trauma, injury or death to the wearer".

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Police Watch Houses Overflowing

Queensland Police Service has raised concerns about overcrowding in police watch houses and said that police officers have been forced to transport people around the state.

In one incident, police alleged that two women were forced to urinate in disposable devices in the back of a police vehicle after being blocked from entering a Brisbane prison.

The women were flown from Cairns to Brisbane in late January and then driven to Brisbane Women's Jail.

But they were not received at the prison that day and allegedly refused access to the prison's toilets.

Two prison officers have reportedly been referred for investigation over the incident.

New Cannabis Petition Before QLD Parliament

Over 1 million people in Australia legally consume prescription cannabis for medicinal purposes.

In Queensland, it is an offence to operate a motor vehicle if cannabis (specifically the chemical THC) is detectable in your body – even if you have a prescription.

Many workplaces also have a zero-tolerance policy towards employees who test positive to medicinal cannabis.

Recently, an e-Petition has put pressure on QLD parliament to change the laws relating to medicinal cannabis.

To date, over 4,000 people have signed the petition.

The petition seeks a change to the law so that medicinal cannabis users who test positive, but are not impaired, won't be penalised.

The petition says that "medicinal cannabis prescribed by a doctor should be treated consistently with other prescription medicines".

The petitioners claim it is unfair to penalise medicinal cannabis users when other medications, which also lead to impairment, are not subject to similar testing and social stigma.

Interestingly, 12.6 million opioid prescriptions were dispensed in 2025.

Opioids are not tested during roadside saliva tests.

The petition can be signed electronically on the QLD parliament website.

If you don't have access to a computer, you can nominate someone to sign the petition for you.

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



WA

Death in Custody at Acacia

A 52-year-old man in custody at Acacia Prison has died in late January.
The man was found unwell during a welfare check and was taken to the medical centre at the prison, but his condition deteriorated, authorities said. St John WA paramedics were called and attended but the man died at the prison. There have not been any reported suspicious circumstances and the Coroner will now investigate.

Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison a 'Success Story'

The state's prison inspector has hailed Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison, Western Australia's only dedicated alcohol and other drug rehabilitation prison, as a "success story".

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) tabled an inspection report on the facility in late January, finding that it is one of Western Australia's "best examples of therapeutic and trauma-informed rehabilitation in custody".

"Wandoo is an example of what can be achieved through therapeutic and trauma-informed rehabilitation services and care," OICS Deputy Inspector Jane Higgins said.

"Residents feel safe and supported in the therapeutic and trauma-informed rehabilitation services and care. Residents feel safe and supported in the therapeutic partnership to heal previous trauma and break the cycle of substance use and offending."

Wandoo was repurposed as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation prison in mid-2018, and is run in partnership by the Department of Justice and Cyrenian House.



NSW

'Good Character' Removed From Sentencing Considerations

"An individual's "good character" will no longer be considered by a judge as part of sentencing under Australian-first proposed reforms from the NSW government."

In response to recommendations from a NSW Sentencing Council review in early February, the state government said it would remove "good character" from being considered at sentencing hearings as a mitigating factor, for all crimes.

Judges will still be able to consider an individual's rehabilitation prospects, likelihood of reoffending and lack of previous convictions.

The Sentencing Council review said that "good character" was "based on a vague and uncertain concept, lacks evidence in support of its value in predicting a risk of reoffending or prospects of rehabilitation, and engages an unjustified form of moral and social accounting".

Two of the Council's members disagreed with this opinion.

Under character law in NSW, those convicted of child sex offences cannot rely on good character in sentencing if the courts finds that this was a factor in them committing the offence.

Remand Numbers Skyrocket

People on remand will make up half of the overall NSW prison population if current trends continue.

Data released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) showed that the NSW prison population has increased by more than 8% in the last two years, driven mainly by a sharp increase in remand numbers.

More than 45% of the 13,000 people in prison in the state were on remand as of December 2025, the highest proportion ever recorded.

The number of people on remand in NSW has increased by more than 20% in the last two years.

The data also shows that First Nations people now make up more than a third of the overall prison population, also the highest proportion recorded by BOCSAR.

The incarceration rate for First Nations adults in NSW is now 15 times higher than non-First Nations people.

"These record numbers show that we are still not seeing the reductions needed to address Aboriginal overrepresentation in custody or to meet Closing the Gap targets," BOCSAR executive director Jackie Fitzgerald said.

"This remains one of the most persistent and pressing challenges facing the criminal justice system."

The number of people in youth detention in NSW has increased by nearly 30% in the last two years, and three-quarters of these children are on remand.



VIC

'Cool' Education Resources Now Available

Educational resources provided by cool.org are now available in a number of Victorian prisons.

Corrections Victoria has partnered with cool.org, a charity aiming to provide new ways to make education more accessible.

The resources became available at Tarrengower Prison, Kareenga, Western Plains Correctional Centre and the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre at the end of last year.

Victoria Spends the Most on Youth Detention

The Victorian government is spending more than $7000 per day to keep a young person in prison, by far the most of any state or territory in the country.

According to figures released by the Productivity Commission, Victoria spent $7304 per day in 2024-25 to keep a young person in youth detention, more than double the national average of $3635.

There was an average of 74 children in detention in Victoria in the last year, up from 54 in the year before.

Across Australia there was an average of 734 young people in detention each day, up from 711 the previous year.

Australian states and territories spent a total of $1.1 billion in 2024-25 on youth justice.

Spending more than $7000 to hold a young person in prison per day – by far the most of any state.



ACT

Court Questions Body Scanning at AMC

Body scans are being increasingly relied upon to prevent contraband being taken into Canberra's only prison, but prison officers may not have the expertise required to use these devices, a court has heard.

A coronial inquest is underway into the death of 34-year-old Aubrey Agostino at Alexander Maconchie Centre in the ACT in August 2024, just days after he entered the prison.

The inquest heard that Agostino may have concealed contraband upon entry to the prison that was missed on a body scan.

An expert witness told the court that there were "suspect appearances" in the scans that may have not been detected by the officers.

The court heard that prison officers may be ill-equipped to properly read the X-ray scans and detect contraband.

X-ray body scans were responsible for 60 percent of the 281 contraband seizures recorded in 2024-25.



NT

New Bail Facility Opens in Alice Springs

A new facility specifically for women on bail has opened in Alice Springs.
Run by the Salvation Army, the centre is part of the Open House Program and will offer wrap-around support services for women on remand or leaving prison on bail.

The 10-bed accommodation facility has $7.5 million in funding over five years from the territory government.

It was expected to be more than half full in its first week of opening in late January.

As of the start of December there were 60 women held on remand at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Extended Sentences For Domestic Violence-Related Murders

Those found guilty of domestic violence-related murder will automatically receive a non-parole period of 25 years under reforms announced by the Northern Territory government.

The legislation, which was introduced to Parliament in early February, would increase the automatic life sentence for those convicted of murder, which is currently 20 years in prison.

Northern Territory Attorney-General Marie-Clare Boothby said this would be the "strongest sentencing for DV murder in the country".



TAS

UN Takes Aim at Youth Detention Centre

A United Nations review of Australia's compliance with human rights has criticised Tasmania's Ashley Youth Detention Centre and raised concerns with the use of solitary confinement on children.

The five-yearly Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights Record raised the Tasmanian centre as an especially serious example of the failure of youth detention, along with Banksia Hill in Western Australia and Don Dale in the Northern Territory.

The review raised concerns about the "almost constant increase" in the number of young people being held on remand, the "very low age of criminal responsibility" around the country and about the use of solitary confinement.

Staff at Ashley Youth Detention Centre participated in a strike on early February over what their union said were safety risks and severe understaffing.



SA

Prison Officers to Vote on New Pay Deal

South Australian prison officers have reached an in-principle agreement with the state government for a 10.8 percent pay increase and a "tailored package" following a 72-hour strike in December.

The Public Service Association of South Australia members voted in mid-February over the proposed pay increases, which also include bonuses for the lowest paid.

The state government said there would be a "tailored package" for prison officers following the industrial action late last year, that placed prisons across the state in extended lockdowns.

Mother returns prison escapee

In mid-February, a man escaped from Adelaide Pre-Release Centre only to be returned soon after by his mother. The man scaled the facility's razor wire fence around 2am, after deceiving staff into thinking he was asleep by covering his bed with clothing under his blanket into the shape of a body.

After successfully getting out, he went to his parents home where the family called the prison to notify them of his escape. About an hour later, the mother returned him via staff at the prison reception. He has since been charged with escaping lawful custody and was transferred to a high security prison.





Broome Prison Under the Spotlight

The prison watchdog has found the prison is “overcrowded, degraded and infested with cockroaches”.

By Denham Sadler

In Western Australia, a prison inspector went into Broome prison and saw poor conditions.

They saw people sleeping on the floor, cockroaches, overcrowding, and men in the women-only unit. They found “dark and stale-smelling” cells in the Maximum-Security section, food scraps, unclean toilets and basins.

There was very little health and mental health services at the prison – only four GP hours available each week, and some telehealth (online) mental health support. People on remand were also in the same conditions, even though they hadn’t been convicted of a crime.

They found the prison didn’t have many programs or things to do. A human rights advocate named Gerry Georgatos said Broome prison “is an asylum of neglect”.

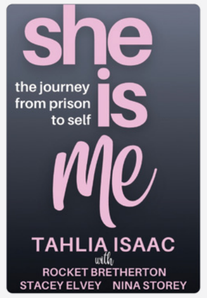
He said people were “warehoused” there, and that the prison became a place for “people society has decided not to see." He said that the conditions are “politically tolerated”, meaning that politicians aren’t and don’t really want to do anything to change it.

Most of the people at Broome prison are First Nations Australians. Sometimes, independent inspectors go into prisons to check if people are being treated right. Look out for when prison inspectors are coming to your prison.

‘She Is Me’: Stories By Us, For Us

Stacey Stokes sits down with Tahlia Isaac, a criminologist, social justice advocate and woman with lived experience of prison. They chat about Tahlia’s organisation, project: herself.

By Stacey Stokes and Tahlia Isaac



Stacey:
Could you tell me a bit about project: herself?

Tahlia:
Project: herself is an organisation I set up to advocate and support women to have self-determined lives. We do that through a couple of things – including storytelling advocacy and frontline service delivery.

Stacey:
Could you tell me a bit about the book being launched, and how it came to be?

Tahlia:
We’re publishing a collection of memoirs written by women who have lived prison experience. The book is titled, ‘She is me’ and it shines a light on stories and voices that often don’t get to be heard.

We have over 20 women who are formerly incarcerated contributing to this book. So, it may be the largest collection of stories that have ever been published by us, for us.

Stacey:
I have had the privilege of reading the book and I really resonate with it. In the introduction you say, “we are women who need opportunity, compassion and understanding”. How do you think people in the community can help the reintegration of women after prison?

Tahlia:
I’m so glad that you liked it. People in the community need to see us as women –we need opportunity and compassion. We just need people to see us for who we are, and not what we’ve done. And it just starts by listening to each other’s stories and understanding that we’re all connected through shared experience, whatever those experiences may be.

Stacey:
This resonates with me as I’ve often told people myself that it’s not just up to us. To reintegrate, society must let us reintegrate.

Tahlia:
That’s right. We hope to do this through the book – and include people in prison in the storytelling. We want to reach people on the outside and the inside. For every copy sold in the community, we will provide a copy to a woman in prison. We are providing books not only to the community so that they can hear our stories, but women who really need to hear what’s possible for their own lives.

Stacey:
That sounds like a great thing to do. And what message do you want those reading the book to walk away with?

Tahlia:
I want everyone to walk away with an understanding that we are all connected through our experiences. Our experiences shape us and how we show up in this world. However different our experiences may be, what connects us is our humanity and being able to see each other. Stories can show us that we are all connected.

Stacey:
I’d hate to forget those who are most important here – is there anything you’d like to say to the women who are currently incarcerated?

Tahlia:
Just hold on. Hold on, it won’t last forever. There will be a day when you come back out into a community. And just know that there is a whole lot of us who have survived prison, who’ve gone on to never go back to prison. Reach out to us and we’ll help you up.

Stacey:
Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Tahlia:
I want to thank Nina, Stacey and Rocket for being vulnerable and sharing so much of their lives with us for the book. I also want to thank all the women who trusted me to share their stories and trusted us to present them in a way that is respectful, and I hope I’ve done everybody proud.

Stacey:
I know I’m proud of you!

She Is Me is available from 4 March. Head to **projectherself.org.au** for a copy, or ask a family member or case worker to email **admin@projectherself.org.au** to get one sent to you.

Experiences

The Pain of Leaving Family Behind

By Anonymous

Anonymous writes from a prison in VIC.

Continued from page 1.

My wife still has to accomplish the mundane chores of life, even though every movement hurts. No-one’s going to cook her meals, or wash her clothes. I desperately want to be at home to look after her. To let her to rest and heal.

Even a hug would make a difference, but she’s 400km away. I haven’t seen her in four months, but I don’t ask about contact visits anymore.

She’s not in any condition to travel all the way out here; and I don’t want to make her feel guilty. We have an agreement between us: no guilt. Easy to say, hard to achieve.

It’s not just the actual challenges your loved ones face – it’s the “what ifs”? You worry about what might happen while you’re sitting ineffectually in prison.

I don’t feel angry at the legal system, or the prison system. I committed a crime, and I deserved to be here. What I feel is anger at myself; and overwhelming guilt that I’ve left my wife alone to fend for herself.

Would it be better if I were alone? Sometimes I envy the prisoners who have no one. Not having to care would be easier. I could content myself with prison life, filling my days with trivial tasks, worrying only about myself. But I can’t. These ‘significant others’ truly are significant to me. I love them. And I worry about them.

It would be easier not to care. There’s a great temptation to block off your emotions, to succumb to the numbness prison offers. But caring helps us retain our humanity. In prison you should hold tight to your humanity; or you may lose it.

Dealing with emotion can be difficult, but I owe it to myself, and my significant others, to forge through. The biggest disappointment to those left outside would be for me to finish my sentence, and leave the best part of myself behind. To get out and not be able to care.

Life in prison is simple. Watching loved ones go through life’s trials is hard.



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The Impact of No Internet

How prisoners become technological castaways, and why the internet can be overwhelming after release

By Daz Scott

Daz Scott is a former inmate, having served time in Victorian prisons. He is an advocate for positive change in prisons and removing society's stigma associated with current and former inmates.

One of the most frustrating parts of my time in prison was the lack of access to computers and the internet.

While government-run prisons in some states, including New South Wales and Victoria, are now rolling out in-cell computers, the ACT has been ahead of the curve for some time.

Specifically, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) provides in-cell computers (as do Kareenga and Hopkins in Victoria). AMC and Karreenga also offer restricted internet access.

These systems are tightly controlled and are designed for education, communication and rehabilitation rather than open browsing. Access is strictly filtered and monitored.

Prisoners cannot freely surf the web, but are limited to whitelisted sites and applications relevant to study, counselling or legal matters. In most states, prisoners are allowed monitored internet access alongside a staff member to facilitate university courses offered by distance education.

One of the great benefits of this initiative is the opportunity for prisoners to have approved people added to their email list, enabling them to send and receive direct messages.

I'm not saying inmates should be granted unfettered access to computers and the internet. But it's the lack of online and computer opportunities that turns prisoners who were once tech-savvy into technological castaways marooned on Groundhog Day Island – rebooting the same day over and over while society downloads tomorrow at lightning speed.

For me, I went from a computer-savvy, internet-knowledgeable Generation Jones cohort to someone who, after almost eight years, could barely set up a new iPad. Without my wife's digital obsessions, I'd still be staring blankly at my iPad, pushing buttons that don't exist instead of trying to coax a smirk out of Siri – who, let's be honest, is about as witty as a toaster.

Walking out of prison without keeping up with digital advancements is like emerging from a cave clutching a Nintendo 64 while everyone else is coding in quantum and you're still trying to pay with Monopoly money in a now cashless society.

Even more serious than that, however, is the danger of addiction. Not vices – devices. I'm talking about digital addictions: endless swipes on dating apps, doom-scrolling through disasters you can't fix, stalking old friends on Facebook and Instagram who've moved on from you but you haven't from them, and of course Netflix, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter.

Inside it's digital starvation; outside it's digital overload. And the algorithmic hooks of these platforms are designed to trap you, which can be overwhelming for someone trying to reintegrate after years in the social and digital wilderness.

Social apps can be both a lifeline and a trap. In my case, they kept me close to family overseas. To see their faces, albeit on a screen, was balm for my aching soul.

I swore I wouldn't return to social media. Yet after coming home, I was struck by how much time my wife spent online — scrolling Insta feeds, shopping on Amazon, playing online games. I could hardly blame her. She was isolated almost as much as I was, collateral damage from my offending. Her devices became her connection to family back home and friends across the world. And yet, here I am months later, checking YouTube daily, playing games, and considering Instagram to reconnect with old friends who haven't deserted me.

The social and digital isolation finally wore away at me, making me once again like a kid introduced to a strange new world – chasing dopamine hits while remaining anonymous, watching funny dogs and heart-warming videos of people doing good.

I'd forgotten what a time-killer the internet and social apps are. Working from home, with much to do around our property, I've disciplined myself to a strict morning time limit online.

The digital age is moving faster than we can keep up. Coming out of prison after years is like being a caveman dropped into Silicon Valley, handed a microchip and given a Centrelink appointment. 'Ugh... fire,' while surrounded by blinking LEDs and login screens demanding passwords longer than his entire vocabulary.

And the best advice I can offer from my experience is this: go gently. Ease into it. Don't let it overcome or overwhelm you. And be kind to yourself.



• Have You Been Thinking of Writing to Us? It's Free!

Are you thinking of writing for *About Time*, but don't know where to start?

We get it – writing can be scary.

A blank page, your pen in hand, doubting what you have to say is good enough... but don't fear! This is very normal. Everyone experiences this – even famous writers and artists.

All you can do is START. Just write. It doesn't matter what comes out – whatever will come will be something. To create is to MAKE. To create does not mean to MAKE something GOOD. It's just making SOMETHING!

Sometimes, prompts are helpful to get your hand moving and break free from the doubt that stops us from getting started. Here are some to get you thinking:

- What helps you get through hard times that you'd like to share with others?
- What's your favourite TV show right now, and why do you like it?
- What book has made a big impact on you?
- What song or music artist always lifts your mood? Why?
- What's been happening at your prison at the moment? For example, is there a new program, new schedule, new food options?
- If you could start a program inside prison, what would it be and why?
- What is something people on the outside don't understand about prison life?
- What trends or news stories do you hear people talking about most inside?
- If you could interview a famous person, who would it be, why them, and what would you ask?
- If you could give advice to your younger self, what would it be?

Tell us about a day in your life that you'll never forget.

About Time editors are here to help you with your pieces if you'd like – you can send them to us (for free!) and if you have any doubts or questions about the publication process, we can answer your questions. We've had many, many letters from people inside saying how great it feels to get something published in the paper – we want as many people as possible to have that opportunity! Have a go!

It's FREE to send us a letter at the moment – simply send your pieces to:

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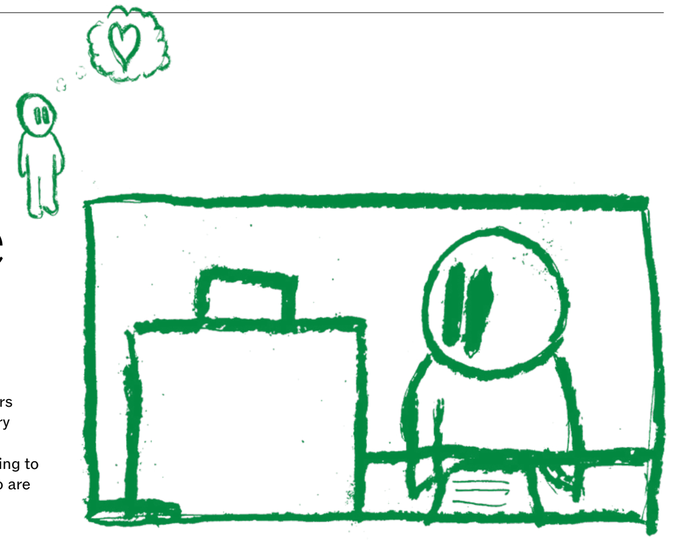
Employment After Prison: Give Us a Chance



By Ashleigh Chapman

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

After getting out of prison in May 2025, I have been looking for employment. I have multiple qualifications and a strong work history with references. I go into an interview, and they speak highly about my resume and my long educational history and how I would make a great fit to the team.

Then either someone comes in and whispers to the interviewer or the question comes up about a police check and working with children's check.

The atmosphere changes in an instant. All of a sudden, I am looked at differently – and then the words change. "Oh, I am sorry, but you need to pass these checks in order to work here." I think of the stereotypes of people getting out of prison. How they just get on Centrelink and won't get a job; that they are lazy and never took advantage of the rehabilitation programs etcetera etcetera.

I see job after job advertisement, looking for staff. I fit almost every category for multiple industries. I get excited and think, "finally, this is the one." I scroll down and there it is: Police Check and Working with Children's Check required.

One of the positions I applied for was sitting in an office ringing people and their businesses. Not being anywhere other than sitting down and calling people. There was no mention of Police Checks or Working with Children's Check in the job advertisement, so I applied. I have all the skills and experience. I received a letter of offer to attend an interview; I accepted and attended. Getting to this point was not easy – I required phone credit to contact them; Myki money to get there; clothes to wear and a printout of my resume and cover letter. I get $1200 a fortnight from Centrelink and after paying my rent, I have $400 left. So, I am not unnecessarily applying for jobs that I can clearly see won't be acceptable due to these checks.

I understand the need for these checks, for certain careers, certain jobs. But what I don't understand is why these checks are necessary for jobs like I mentioned above. I also don't understand – I did my time, did every program, every educational course the prison offered – the same educational courses I am being praised for in job applications. I worked hard, did high level jobs, sought counselling. I grew and developed. I am never breaking the law again as I now understand what I did and how I needed to change. And I have.

I am being shut out of a market desperate for hard working people. When are we going to say, "let's give them a chance to show us they can do it, that they can be great assets to our company?"

We are all human beings with pasts. We broke the law and are doing everything we can to be better people. Employers, can you please look at who we are now and see how we can help you? We are hard working mothers, sisters, aunties and human beings who deserve employment, to provide for ourselves and our families. Let us show you who we are and our character now.

I don't want to be on Centrelink – I want to work. I will cook, clean, waitress, pick up rubbish – anything. But I cannot because of a Police Check and Working with Children's Check.

Can you give me and others a chance?



Stolen Culture: How Victorian Prisons Are Losing Aboriginal Art and Getting Away With It

How the system treats culture like property, and fails to offer accountability

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.

Please Note:
This is my experience and does not represent legal advice nor does it reflect the current position of policies and procedures at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

The handling of Aboriginal art and the ignorance around cultural significance by prisons in Victoria is appalling. This was my experience. It happened to me more than once, and no one was ever held accountable.

During cell searches in prison, prison officers damaged my art works on more than one occasion, ripping them off the wall, touching or moving wet pieces, sometimes it was on purpose. It felt like they wanted to get a reaction out of me to justify their behaviour.

I was released March 2025 after being incarcerated for just over three years. Before leaving prison, I sent a series of paintings to my family. When I collected the paintings, there were two missing. I contacted the Ombudsman to report the missing paintings; they took my complaint and told me they would contact the prison. After the Ombudsman did not reply for several months, I contacted them again. They explained their office was waiting on the prison to do their own investigation, and that the prison will contact me directly when they have concluded their investigation. I did not receive a letter from either the ombudsman of the prison to explain what was going on, and I needed to follow up to get information.

The Assistant Commissioner of Custodial Operations contacted me via email to inform me that the prison couldn't locate the paintings, nor could they verify what happened to them. The Assistant Commissioner said: I can confirm that a thorough review has taken place, and I regret to advise that your paintings were not found. Unfortunately, despite all reasonable inquiries having been exhausted. The paintings have not been located and there is no further action available at this time. I appreciate you taking the time to write to the department and I apologise we have been unable to resolve this matter by locating the missing artwork.

There was no accountability for the fact they were lost. There was no mention of steps I could take or what I could do next. I was given no options and no explanation of any processes. The Ombudsman advised me there is nothing else they can do. So, they closed the file. I was left to figure it out for myself.

I was angered by the prison's failure, so I contacted the Arts Law Centre for advice. They told me I could get compensation for the lost artworks. I was given a Schedule 1.08.1 (7) *Dame Phyllis Frost Centre – Lost Or Damaged Personal Property – Application For Prisoner* from Dame Phyllis Frost Centre's Local Operating Procedures. It's the same form you would use in prison if you lost property. When I was released, I couldn't access the form anywhere. It seems prison specific forms cannot be accessed when you leave the prison. There is a generic form on the Corrections Victoria website for lost property – however, I'm not sure if they will accept this.

There needs to be some specific cultural policy rather than just lost property policy. The loss runs deeper than paint and canvas. For Aboriginal people in prison, art is not just a hobby. it is cultural practice, a continuation of tradition. Each piece carries knowledge: of family, of place, of stories that colonial systems have sought to suppress. When prison officers damage work or lose pieces, they don't just destroy property – they interrupt cultural connection. The missing paintings weren't merely paintings. They were intended for family, for future generations, for the record of our survival as first peoples. Corrections Victoria's inability to locate them, their casual framing of this as an administrative inconvenience rather than a cultural wound, reveals how little the system understands – or cares about – what it holds in its custody. This is why the absence of specific cultural policy matters. Without it, Aboriginal art in prisons is treated the same as a missing radio or a lost pair of shoes.

It was only in January 2026, 10 months after I was released, that Corrections Victoria reimbursed me for the lost paintings. They only paid me 70% of the amount they were valued at. I quoted them a very reasonable price for the compensation payment. The 70% reimbursement I eventually received was calculated as property compensation, not cultural restitution. No one had to account for the fact that these works were created under carceral conditions, that their very existence testified to cultural resilience, or that their disappearance continues a longer history of institutional theft of Aboriginal culture.

My tips: Send one artwork out at a time and name all of them. Take the officer's name who took it, the date and time and tell a family member/friend these details so they can record it on file. Take more than one picture of the artwork, if you can, and record the sizes. Protect yourself and your works while you are in prison.



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Reintegration

Finding Support After Release: Who Can Help and Where to Start

The first weeks outside can be tougher than time inside. Here's a guide to the services that can help you navigate money, relationships and mental health.

By Vacro

Vacro is an independent, non-profit organisation in Victoria that supports people in the criminal justice system and their families.

What you need to survive in prison is different to what you need on the outside. Many people have said that the first few weeks out were harder than their time inside. Coping with money problems, dealing with other people and feeling like you don't belong in society can take a toll. You may feel lonely, depressed or anxious. If you are feeling like this, it's time to seek support. Support can range from someone just listening to formal counselling. It also includes practical assistance to get what you need or help you with planning and budgeting.

Who Can Help

Family and friends can be a great form of support. But they may be part of the problem or unable to help. There are many services that you can go to for professional assistance.

Types of support that may be offered include:

- Social workers or support workers
- Counsellors, psychologists and relationship therapists
- Support groups
- Telephone/chat helplines

Sometimes just having someone to listen can make you feel better. It can help you feel less stressed and you will be able to make better decisions. Finding the right person to talk to is important. You may need to try a few services before you find what's right for you.

How can I find support?

To find a support service, ask your doctor, your community health service or other local services. Telephone Helplines provide counselling and advice. They are a good way to get information about services in your area. You can also look up services in AskIzzy app or on the internet. If have a support worker, you could as them. Otherwise, you can call support services. If people can't help you, they will usually be able to put you in touch with someone who can.

TYPES OF SUPPORT

Social workers and support workers

Some services will allocate a social worker ora support worker to assist you with practical, social or emotional needs. They will be abl eto help you to access the services you need. Some government agencies, such as Centrelink, have social workers that you can ask to speak to.

Counselling

Counselling is a chance for you to talk to someone in a safe space. It helps you identify your problems and find solutions. Counsellors are non-judgemental and keep the information you give them confidential. They will have experience talking to people with similar issues.

Support Groups

Support groups are for people who face the same issues to meet and help each other. There are support groups for many different issues, such as alcohol or drug use, depression and bereavement.

Mentoring

There are some mentoring programs for people leaving prison – where people meet one-on-one to support re-entry. These programs often pair soon to be released or recently released folk with volunteers, peer mentors with lived experience of prison, or professional case managers to provide practical, emotional, and social support. Some examples include Women and Mentoring, Prison Fellowship, The Power in You project and programs at the Community Restorative Centre (NSW). Ask a case worker to look into available programs for you.

Helplines

Helplines can provide counselling, advice or information over the phone or via chats. Some will also be able to refer you to local services. They can support you through a crisis or give advice about ongoing issues. They are usually free or cheap to call and don't charge for their services. You don't have to give your name or address.

Key Crisis & Counselling Helplines

DirectLine – 1800 888 236
24 hour alcohol and drug counselling, information and referrals

Family Relationships Advice Line – 1800 050 321
Information and advice to anyone affected by family relationship difficulties or separation.

Gamblers' Helpline – 1800 858 858
Help for people with gambling problems

Lifeline – 13 11 14
24-hour general counselling service. Anyone can call, it doesn't matter how big or small the problem might seem

Medicines Line – 1300 633 424
Information about prescribed, over-the-counter and alternative medicines

Men's Line – 1300 78 99 78
Information for men who are thinking about their anger, behaviour, relationships issues or parenting and need help or support.

Men's Referral Service – 1300 766 491
Support for men with anger issues. Also provides advice for families

SANE Helpline – 1800 187 263
Information and advice about mental illness.

Suicideline – 1300 651 251
24-hour support to people who are thinking about suicide, or people who have been affected by suicide. Can refer to other services.

WIRE – 1300 134 130
Support, advocacy and information for women.

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service – (03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188
24-hour crisis support and safe accommodation (refuges) for women and their children.

How Can We Help?

We want to help prepare you for the outside.

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

Please send your letters to the below postal address:

First Letter (No stamp)
About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Other Letters (Stamp required)
About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au



• Health

Why Do I Feel Lonely When I'm Surrounded by People?

Understanding the reasons for loneliness, with a bonus on how to journal effectively



By Annalise de Groot

The author is a forensic psychologist at PsychOrium Forensic and Clinical Psychology Services.

Loneliness is a pervasive, all-encompassing state comprised of many unpleasant and distressing feelings. It is distinct from being alone, or from being socially isolated. Loneliness is often linked with feelings of shame and depression, stemming from a deep sense of dissatisfaction with our current state of being.

The factors that underpin a state of loneliness are our values, interests and levels of felt connection. This is where loneliness differs from social isolation. Loneliness can be defined as a feeling of distress resulting from a lack of meaningful connection to others, coupled with a desire for more satisfying relationships.

The core point here is that loneliness is defined by both the absence of and desire for meaningful connections. This type of connection typically involves the ability to confide in others, to feel a sense of belonging and to feel supported by those we love. When we lack these connections in life, we can find ourselves feeling as though we don't matter, as though there is nothing worthwhile in our lives.

It is possible to feel loneliness even in a place as crowded as prison. If the people around you don't make you feel seen, it can lead to feelings of disconnection and isolation. A core feature of what makes us human is our desire to belong. We are inherently pack animals, meant to exist alongside others that "get" us. The sense of belonging that comes with feeling seen, warts and all, is a powerful sensation. It can pull us away from distressing thoughts and can protect us from feeling lost in this world.

When we are surrounded by other people that share our values, ideals and goals, we feel that we can connect with them. We feel supported and loved and most importantly, we feel like we belong. I often work with people that are desperate to find this sense of belonging. It can lead to risky connections with seemingly like-minded people, that ultimately develop into problematic relationships.

Sometimes, we sacrifice our values in order to feel like we belong. Maybe we don't stand up for something that we believe in, or we go along with what everyone else wants to do instead of speaking up about what we want. We might still have friends, but we are not likely to feel that those friends truly see us for who we are.

Imagine keeping a secret from someone – it makes you second guess everything you say to them, makes you hide away parts of yourself. This fundamentally limits your ability to connect with the other person. Now imagine that the secret you are keeping is something integral to who you are as a person. There is no way that you can fully be present and connected with another if this was the case. When this happens in our social networks, we are limited in the amount of satisfaction we can feel in a relationship, and this can lead to feelings of loneliness.

Loneliness is not necessarily an emotion in and of itself, rather, it is a collection of unpleasant emotional experiences that relate to the same core issue – a lack of belonging. Some of the emotions that underpin loneliness are sadness, shame, anxiety and frustration. In order to address feelings of loneliness, we must first understand the emotions that it triggers for us as individuals. You may not realise that loneliness is the core theme of these collective emotional states, it may seem that they are unrelated until you closely examine them.

Journalling

Journalling is a powerful tool in understanding what it is that is triggering unpleasant emotions. Try to use these while reflecting on the broader issues you are experiencing in your life, rather than focusing on a specific issue or relationship. You may start the journalling process thinking about a particular person that has upset you, or about a situation that has caused distress. Once you have outlined what the situation is and what it made you feel, try to reflect on the broader patterns that you can identify within that issue that are reflected in other areas of your life.

Here is an example of a journal entry that illustrates this process:

Prompt: What is the situation that has upset you and why?
My friend told me that they don't want to train with me anymore. They think that I am too easily frustrated when they don't understand what I am trying to do. They say that I need to chill out and that I'm taking my training too seriously. I don't understand why they are like this; don't they understand that this is important to me. There is not anything else that I have to do to work on myself, and it's important to me to work hard to improve myself before I get out. They just want to sit around and gossip all the time and I'm sick of it. **[Hint – label the emotions]** I feel frustrated at them and sad that they don't understand why this matters to me. I don't feel like they care about me.

Prompt: What are my values that relate to this issue?
I value my fitness and my time because I want to be successful in life and I think that working on myself is the only way to achieve that. I value the idea of having a goal to work towards, and to have that goal give me meaning and purpose.

Prompt: How does feeling this way link to broader issues in my life?
When I feel like my friends don't agree with me, or when I think that they are not taking something seriously, I feel like I am the odd one out. I feel like my ideas are wrong and that I am doing something wrong. This makes me feel ashamed of myself and I hate feeling that way.

Prompt: What does this link to in my history?
I used to feel like this when my family laughed at me for having big ideas when I was a kid. I feel like I am silly for thinking this way, it makes me feel like I am weird and that there must be something wrong with me.

Prompt: Why is this issue important to me?
I care about fitness because if I don't look after my body, I will feel bad about myself. There is nothing else to do in here so if this all I have I'm going to do what I can to be the best at it. **[Hint – try to get as deep as you can, think about why this is so important to you]** I need to feel like I'm doing something with my time otherwise there is no point in anything, and I may as well just give up.

Prompt: How can I move forward knowing this?
My friend's behaviour is causing me to feel this way, but only because I have these pre-existing ideas about myself and my role in the world. I don't align with my friend on this issue that is really important to me, maybe I need to talk to them about it. Maybe I shouldn't train with them anymore. I should look for people to train with that have similar ideas to me.

Once you have done this process of journalling, it is clear that you have a fundamental values misalignment that is probably making you feel loneliness because you don't feel seen by the people that matter to you. This doesn't mean that you should ditch that friend, but it does mean that you need to address the issue with them. It can also highlight the area of need in your life where it might be helpful to find new friends that align more with your values.

Ask the Doctor: Heart Attack

Understanding the big one – what happens when the heart's own blood supply gets blocked

By Harley

Harley is a doctor working in VIC.

Intro

Hello! I'm Harley, a doctor working in Victoria.

Today, we are talking about the big one, the dreaded Heart Attack.

So, What is a Heart Attack?

The heart is basically a big muscle. It has two jobs:

1. To pump blood into the lungs so that the blood can be loaded with oxygen, and
2. To pump this oxygenated blood to every millimetre of our body so that our organs have energy to keep us working properly.

In the process of pumping fresh blood to our whole body, the heart keeps some of this blood for itself. This is essential so that the heart has energy to continue pumping.

A heart attack occurs when there is blockage in the heart's own blood supply.

One of the heart's own arteries becomes blocked and this prevents fresh blood and energy getting to the muscle.

Now, heart muscle uses a lot of energy, and the heart can't just stop pumping to wait for more energy to arrive. So it just keeps going. And the heart muscle that isn't getting enough blood begins to starve and die.

When the heart muscle starts to starve and die, it releases inflammation chemicals which cause the chest pain we associate with heart attacks.

This pain represents the muscle of the heart dying, which is a heart attack.

Are There Warning Signs Before I Might Have a Heart Attack?

Often! Things to look out for and discuss with your doctor:

1. Chest pain/tightness/pressure with exercise/walking
2. Shortness of breath with exercise/walking
3. Increasing tiredness with exercise/walking

Things to get immediate medical attention for:

1. Chest pain/tightness at rest
2. Pain in the chest that may also move to your left arm and up to your left jaw

How Do I Prevent Myself From Having a Heart Attack?

I hope you're getting as sick as I am about hearing the same things each month!

Things to do:

1. Stop smoking
2. Get into a healthy weight range
3. Exercise
4. Intermittent fasting
5. Get 7-9hrs of sleep each night

With your doctor you can also check your blood pressure, and the cholesterol level in your blood. There are medications which can help to manage these.

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.



• Health Q&A

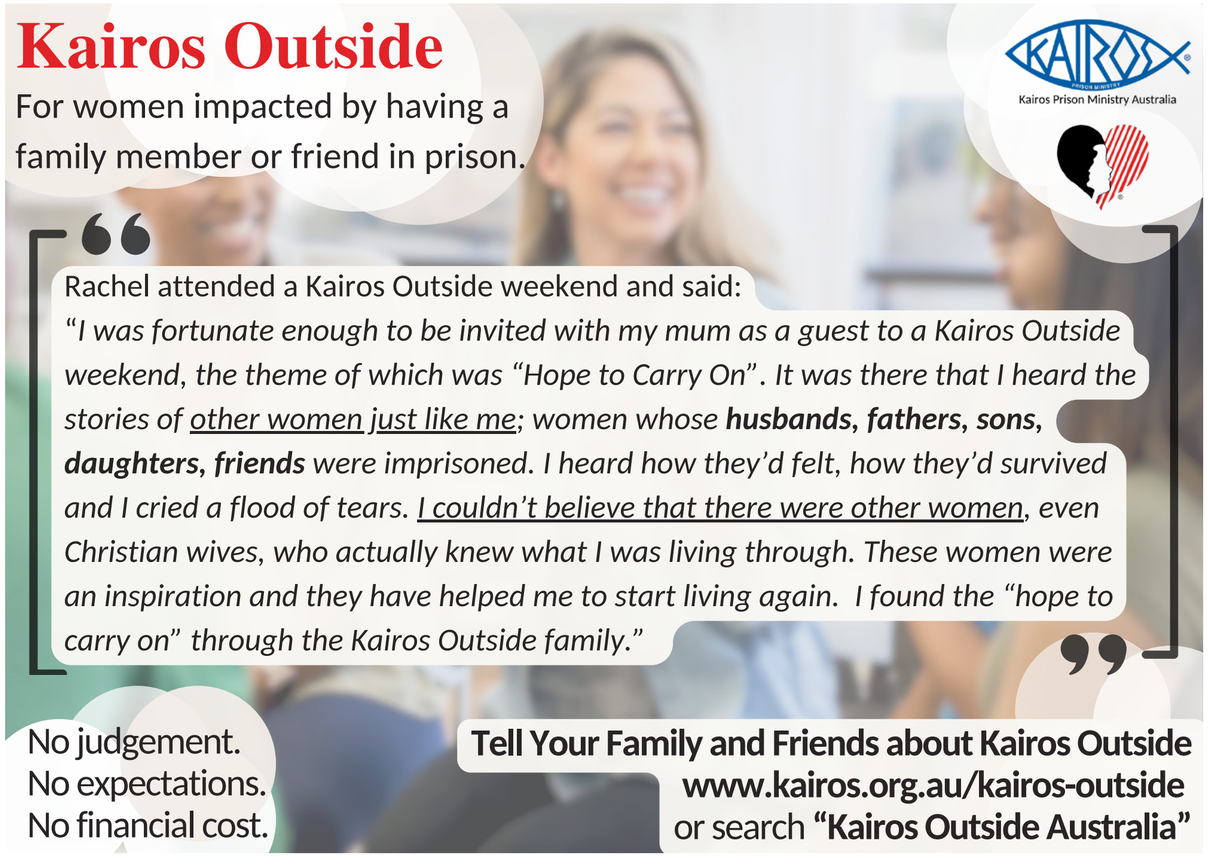
Do you have a question for a doctor or a psychiatrist? About Time has volunteer professionals who are ready to answer.

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

First Letter (No stamp)
About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Other Letters (Stamp required)
About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3001

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!



Legal Corner

Confusing Decision Made About You? Maybe FOI Can Help

Prisoners can use Freedom of Information requests to check if prison authority decisions about them are based on accurate records

By Dan 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 people subjected to the criminal legal system as well as writing for About Time and producing podcasts with formerly incarcerated.

Authorities make decisions about prisoners all the time. These decisions include prison transfers, access to courses, parole – you name it. These decisions are often made by considering a prisoner's records. If the records are incomplete or inaccurate, any decision made from those records will likely be faulty, or, as the law says, "invalid". Ensuring completeness and accuracy of your records is therefore crucial to ensuring any decisions made against you are valid decisions.

The concern for those who are subjected to government decisions is that they often do not get to see the integrity of the information which was considered by the decision-maker and don't get to check if it's correct.

In my experience, prison authorities usually do not proactively disclose the information considered in their decisions. So how can a prisoner know if that information is correct? With the help of my good friends Freedom of Information and Right to Information (FOI)!

Understanding the need for FOI is not always clear. A strong indicator that records may be faulty is when a decision made against you seems inconsistent with similar decisions made against others in similar circumstances. In that case, FOI can assist in checking the information considered to make the decision.

Sometimes, the decision seems okay. Nevertheless, the integrity of the records still may have been compromised and prevented an even better outcome.

If the decision has the potential to impact your life significantly, it may be wise to use FOI to be certain of the integrity of the records considered by the decision-maker.

Take this example. During a case review I underwent in prison, the case manager advised me that she was recommending my transfer from a medium to a low security prison. The outcome of the case review was decided by a committee. I had just completed a rehabilitation program and a post treatment report was purportedly provided to the committee for consideration. The committee's decision was that I was to remain in medium security for assessment for participation in a rehabilitation program.

This decision did not make sense to me so I sought a review of the decision. Through FOI, I obtained all documents considered by the committee in making their decision. Sure enough, I found that the committee did not consider the post-treatment report. I negotiated a new decision and made sure all future decisions considered this post-treatment report.

My message to you is this: the integrity of records in decisions matters. These decisions, such as case reviews, home detention and parole applications, and many others, can have significant impact on our lives.

FOI is reasonably accessible by all, either by making an application to the relevant FOI office in writing, or obtaining and submitting FOI application forms provided by prison authorities, or applying online if internet access is available. Your case manager should be able to provide forms and/or an address to write to.





Alice Pasquale via Unsplash

What Happens to Your Debts While You're Inside?

From credit cards to unpaid fines, understanding your rights and options while incarcerated

By Prisoner Legal Service Queensland

This is informational and not legal advice.

Generally, debts can be put into two categories.

First, there are private debts (e.g. from a bank, a landlord, a car dealer, or 'Afterpay').

Second, there are debts owed to the State (e.g. unpaid fines).

When it comes to private debts, it's important to know who you need to pay, and how much you owe.

You can ask for an account of your debts by contacting agencies such as 'Equifax' (PO Box 964, North Sydney NSW 2059).

In Queensland, debts are unable to be recovered after 6 years.

Importantly, the *National Credit Code* (NCC) is a useful tool.

Under the NCC, lenders can be charged if they do not do certain things once a borrower says they are in financial hardship.

If you tell a lender that you are in financial hardship, the lender must:

- respond to you,
- investigate your situation, and
- make a reasoned decision on whether to change the terms of your loan to accommodate the hardship.

If the lender doesn't respond, or is unfair, you can complain to the *Australian Finance Complaints Authority* (AFCA) at (Australian Financial Complaints Authority Limited, GPO Box 3, Melbourne, VIC 3001).

Or, you can go to the Federal Court and ask a judge to change the terms of the loan.

The *National Credit Code* applies everywhere in Australia and can be found in Schedule 1 of the *National Consumer Credit Protection Act*.

Debts from unpaid fines are different.

In some jurisdictions including Queensland, you can you apply for work or alternative activities to count as payment of a fine debt under a Work Development Order (WDO).

You can also apply for a fine to be waived.

Each state will take into account different circumstances when deciding whether to waive your fine.

While it is important to look at the law that applies where you live, fines might be waived because of:

- Domestic and family violence;
- Special circumstances and unusual hardship;
- Medical reasons; and
- When you have no reasonable prospect of repayment.

To get a fine waived, you will need to write to the issuing agency and explain the reasons why you can't pay.

Financial Counsellors can help you with debts. Ask if your prison offers financial counselling.

Mob

Impact of Jail Time on Aboriginal People

Need to Aboriginal Cultural Spaces

By Geoff

Geoff writes from a prison in VIC.

Being in a space that does not acknowledge, respond to, or understand you can be deeply challenging. It often feels as though culture and identity must be left at the cell door. This disruption in the transfer of knowledge can have effect s as damaging as the worst impacts of as similation.

The lack of access to Elders, community, and family, along with the breakdown of kinship systems, continues to affect a Black man's spirit.

An Aboriginal space provides a place to sit, talk, and reconnect with cultural identity. It allows us to listen for the things that truly matter in life and affirm our connections to family, community, and Country. Maintaining these obligations requires a culturally safe and supportive environment.

I'm Proud to Say I'm an Aboriginal Man

By Matthew

Matthew writes from a prison in NSW.

I'm sick of doing crime
I'm sick of doing jail
It's time to put pen to paper
And send this in the mail
As I currently sit in jail
Bathurst jail I am
I'm an Aboriginal man from Wellington
And Wiradjuri is my clan
I grew up on Nanima mission
What a perfect place to go fishing
Kicking back on country
On my home land
I'm proud to say
I'm an Aboriginal man

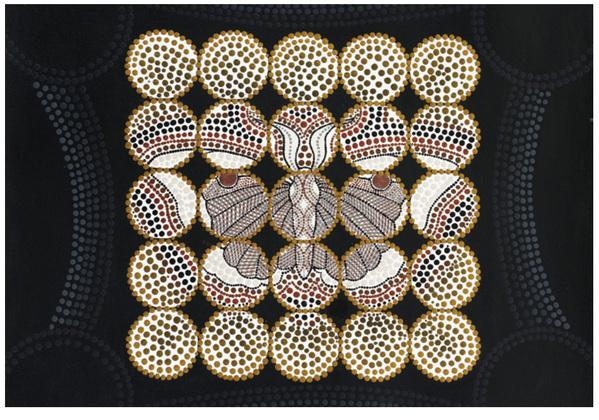
Palawa Songlines
By B.Charles
Palawa people
2025

This story represents the Songlines and stories of my people on the land of our Ancestors. While the men of my mob are protecting our sacred waterhole and waterways.



My Style
By Damien Angelo
Giraiwurung people
2025

I did this painting trying to explore my style, using different colours and designs to other paintings I have done. I used these colours as they were all I had available after moving prison locations.





Share Your Art

We'd love to see your work! If you have any sketches, poems, paintings or anything else creative – feel free to send them to us, via the below postal details.

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

First Letter (No stamp)
About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Other Letters (Stamp required)
About Time
PO BOX 24041
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Or, if you have access to email, you can email us at:

contribute@abouttime.org.au

• Culture

Parkrun Behind Bars: How a Weekly 5km Is Building Community in Australian Prisons





The free walk-run program is expanding again!

By Denham Sadler

Every Saturday morning in four prisons around the country, a 5km fun run takes place.

These events are not competitive, aren't races, and are open to runners, walkers and volunteers.

Parkruns are a staple in the community – with free weekly events taking place in 23 countries across five continents.

The first parkrun in a prison was held in England in 2018. The event made its way to Australian prisons in 2019, hosted at Dhurringile Prison in Victoria. Organised by parkrun, a UK-based organisation, these free community events now take place in 2000 locations in 23 countries across five continents.

It soon expanded to 13 prisons and had more than 100 weekly participants, but the pandemic led to the cancellation of many of them.

Parkruns are now held in three men's prisons in South Australia and at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre in Queensland.

There are plans to expand parkruns into more prisons around the country, and the organisation is encouraging those looking to bring the event to their prison to get in touch.

About Time spoke to parkrun Asia-Pacific Head of Health & Wellbeing Glen Turner about how it all works and what the benefits of it are.

About Time: How does it all work?

Glen Turner: Parkruns are free weekly 5km events designed to foster social connection that are open to walkers, runners and volunteers of all ages and abilities.

Prison parkruns are no different – they are designed to look and feel the same as parkruns outside the wire, so that when you leave custody you are familiar with the parkrun model and can use it as part of community reintegration.

Importantly, people in prison take ownership of parkrun and facilitate the event for fellow inmates and officers, which empowers them to take on all of the volunteer roles required to operate the event. This includes managing the overall event, coordinating the volunteers, public speaking, timekeeping, handing out finish tokens, processing results and marshalling on the course.

Some events have people who write a weekly event report which is published and printed out for others to read.

Parkrun is not competitive and focuses on motivating regular attendance rather than performance. After 25 weeks you join the '25' club and can purchase a purple parkrun 25 shirt. Further milestones are achieved after 50, 100, 250, 500 and 1000 parkruns and the motivation of these milestone clubs is a major incentive for people in prison.

Some prisons do allow people to purchase the shirts and wear them, as a way of recognising their achievements and motivating others to get involved. When you are released from prison you take the number of parkruns with you, and continue to rack them up on the outside.

What are some of the benefits of participating in the program?

Parkrun engages those who don't participate in other physical activity opportunities, such as the gym program, so it improves the overall physical and mental health of the group.

You don't have to run, or even walk. Volunteering is an option to anyone and has wide reaching benefits including mental health and skills development.

It gives a weekly walk, run or volunteer opportunity to look forward to and prepare for, and they often tell us it impacts how they behave during the week in terms of eating better, being more mindful of hydration and exercising so they can try to go faster.

The parkrun in Mobilong Prison in South Australia was started by the prison GP when they were preparing to ban smoking in the prison, and this event is still going strong.

It also assists with transition out of prison. Understanding how parkrun works and how they can get involved when they go to a new community is beneficial, and it also provides a ready-made circle of positive people to interact with upon release.

How have you seen the program benefit people in prison?

People who have volunteered with us in prison say it has really increased their confidence. One person who got involved as the event report writer is now preparing to graduate with a Journalism Diploma.

Many people also have family who do parkrun on the outside, so they can share their experiences and compare times. Some lower security prisons even allow families to come in for parkrun from time to time. We've also heard from people who did parkrun with their family at the first opportunity post-release.

Are you planning to hold more parkruns in prisons around the country?

Yes! Traditionally we have asked that prison parkruns take place on Saturdays. However, we have now changed this model and will be supporting prisons in Australia to hold parkrun at any time of the week, providing it is on the same day each week.

We know the success of parkrun is largely built on routine, so having the same day of the week as a weekly habit is really important for getting buy-in from the prison group and ensuring continuity and consistency.

We would love to hear from any prison that is interested in introducing parkrun, and it's our role to support you every step of the way, from launching the event and into the future.

What's your advice to someone who might be considering taking part in a parkun?

My best advice is that parkrun isn't about running, and you don't have to run! Parkrun is designed to be fun and social – it's a great place to have a chat whilst walking or running outside.

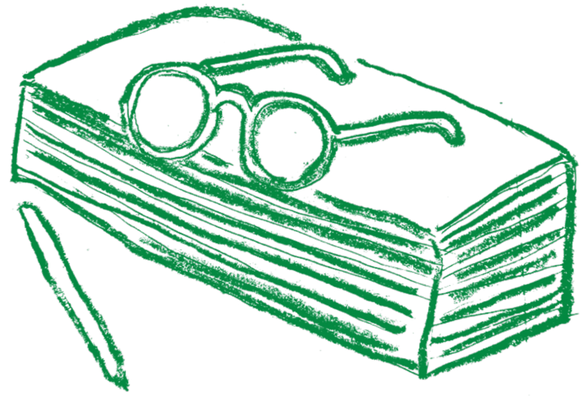
If volunteering is more your thing, the parkrun model allows a large number of volunteer opportunities to up skill yourself and develop your confidence.

Parkrun Australia can be contacted via email at:

support@parkrun.com

• Learn

Nine Things I Learned From Reading Last Month



Jeffrey shares the interesting facts he's come across!

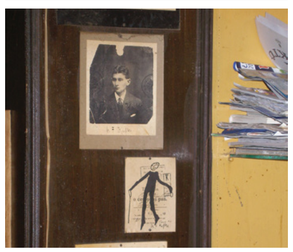
By Jeffrey

Jeffrey writes from a prison in QLD.



Andrew Lancaster via Unsplash

1. In 1896 in England the world's first motor vehicle fatality occurred. A middle aged woman was struck by a vehicle, travelling at 4mph (6.4km/h), and died from her injuries. At the inquest, the coroner said "I hope this will be the last time such a thing happens."



Franz Kafka Cafe Prague, Marion Joy

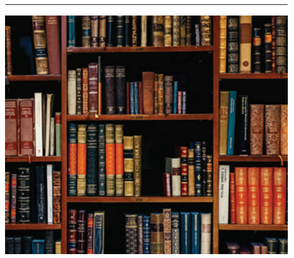
2. Franz Kafka, the famous Czech writer, never married but was engaged numerous times. He would write to his first fiancee, Felice, 2, 3 or 4 letters daily when he was working in Prague and she was living in Berlin. By Kafka's own reckoning, he wrote to her perhaps 500 letters.

3. "Marry your mistress and you create a job vacancy." I forget who wrote this.

4. Think of a number. Add 10. Double the result. Subtract 6. Divide by 2. Take away the number you first thought of. The answer is 7.

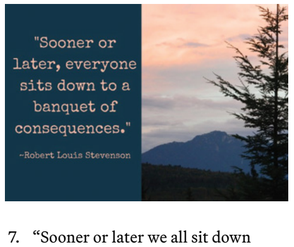
James Monrow, afagen

5. In 1820, in the USA, James Monroe won his second presidential term in the only uncontested election ever. The Democratic-Republican party was the only party (it split in 1824).



Iñaki del Olmo via Unsplash

6. In 1500 a person could literally know everything. A person could read every book in the world's biggest library if they read one book a week for 4 years.



7. "Sooner or later we all sit down to a banquet of consequences" – R. L. Stevenson



Heine Heinrich

8. Shortly before his death, German poet Heine Heinrich changed his will, leaving everything to his wife with the proviso that she re-marry. His explanation was that he knew that at least one person would regret his death.



Photoholgic via Unsplash

9. Early colonial governor Lachlan Macquarie introduced the law that all traffic in the colony (later to be named Australia) would move on the left side of the roadway. Up until then horses, carriages and carts were free to use any part of the road.

Thank you Jeffrey for your teachings! If you also have something you'd like to share – please send it through!

• Curious for More?

Want to learn more about a certain topic? The Learn section is for articles and practical how-to-dos on a variety of topics. If there's anything you want to learn about, please write to us!

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Creative

Prison Is Not Fun

By Matt

Matt writes from a prison in the NT.

Prison is not fun, prison is not jolly,
There's rarely any smiles and for the tears, bring your brolly.
Prison is dirty and prison is hard,
Lose focus for a minute and get done in the yard.

The guards are only here to lock you away,
do as your told, or you won't see the light of the next day.
Fathers and sons and uncles and brothers,
We're all in here together, for our crimes against others.

Whatever your grievance, your trouble or anger,
there's a better way to advance, succeed and prosper.
Than to hurt those who love you, with bad choices, lies and danger,
Don't blame others for your misery want and pain,
and don't be jealous of someone else's gain.

Only you have the power, to choose right from wrong,
and those choices determine, where you'll be at the final gong.
For no matter the crime or how long you serve,
only you have the power to be remembered how you deserve.

Behaviour is learned both bad and good,
Environment can influence from the hills to the hood.
Don't let where you come from determine where you go,
Only you have the power to forgive, and let go.

When you let go of hate, resentment and pain,
the sky is the limit for the happiness you can attain.
Mark my words you can find it no matter where you are,
Trust me I know this, because right now, I'm behind bars.

But by choosing to change and be kind to others,
We can put a smile on the hearts of our wives, kids and mothers.
For a life well lived is measured when your gone,
By whether people celebrate or if people mourn.

It's never too late to apologise for what you've done,
So make the most of your time, and put down the gun.
Be good to yourself and be a good brother,
So when you leave this world, you'll be missed by others.

'I Still Stand Tall Like A Tall Oak Tree'

Two poems from a first-time writer

By Little Savage

Little Savage writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear About Time.

My name is Little Savage and I am a first time writer.

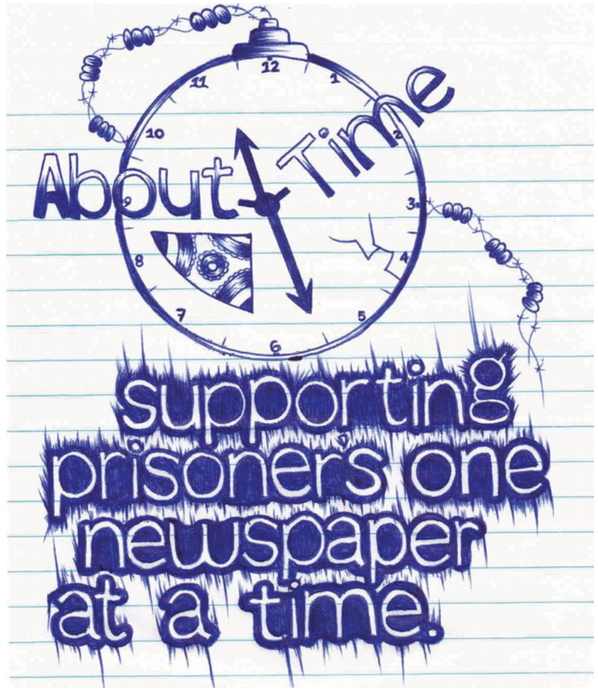
Forgotten in prison

Being in prison is lonely at night. It's waiting for letters that friends and family forget to write. It's sitting around with nothing to do just figuring out who is who. It's waiting for visits that never take place from so called friends and family that have forgotten your face. But the day will definitely come when I am free. Then it will be my turn to forget every goose that forgot about me.

Always Judged

Judged by a jury of so called peers.
Sentenced to prison to spend some years. Fighting so furious live a captured beast. Unfairly treated to say the least.
But I still stand tall like a tall oak tree with my head held high for all to see.
Well am I crazy or am I mad to be honest I just believe it's all just kinda sad. But us crims need to stick together so we can fight the fight to make our lives just that bit better.

From Little Savage
Queensland



Drawing also by Little Savage

Twelve Years Trying to Patch Up My Soul

By Abynei

Abynei writes from a prison in VIC.

My blue eyes look so drained,
But I'm strong, I'll make it through.
It's time to start it all again,
A different shade of blue,
Tear drops that fell one thousand times,
All conflicted from the start,
Worth less to me, than your brutal attempt,
To rip my world apart,
Violent waves of self destruction,
Come as quick as they leave,
Losing any chance to regret,
Who I choose to please,
Blue eyes burnt red, from the dope smoked
To forget,
I've spent twelve years trying to patch up my soul,
but its not fixed yet,
I had to build up brick walls,
to protect the broken girl of your design,
Self sabotage, self harm, self hate,
Key traits of the girl I'm trying to leave behind.

I Hate You, Crystal Meth

By Mackenzie

Mackenzie writes from a prison in WA.

Hate's a strong word,
But for you it's reserved.
I hate what you've taken from me,
My parents, my childhood and my glee.
Now all but a simply a distant memory.
The destruction you've caused,
Without even touching my lips,
Is so great, it's not fair.
You've taken everything and left me in despair.
I live in constant fear, that you'll take him too,
I just don't know what else I can do.
Your grip is so strong, but he's the love of my life,
Will it be you or I who becomes his wife?
I hate you, I do.
More than words can express,
For all the damage you've caused,
To those I know best.
I absolutely hate you, Crystal Meth.

I Am Tired

'I hope they will never be tired of me': A father's exhausted love from prison

By Anthony

Anthony writes from a prison in VIC.

I am tired, not because I am in gaol.
I am tired, not due to lack of sleep.
Tired from not being able to see my family,
Tired from being told what to do.
I am tired of love, tired of being deemed guilty, tired of my own remorse.
I am tired of my own self-doubt, my own shadows and especially tired of my own face.

I write to my son and daughter every week; I am a little tired from writing, but it's one of the few ways I could communicate with the little ones, as there are restrictions in accessing them, which I will not explain and tired of explaining.

My son asked me to write to him this week about being 'tired',
I told him, "Damn son, I could write the crap out of that topic,
'I am tired' is my first, middle and last name."

I am tired of being in lockup, tired of being paranoid, extremely tired of being crazy.

I am tired of the three slob of meals I eat a week,
I am tired of the other three tasteless chicken meals on the alternative days,
I am tired of talking to the same people about the same old war stories, life stories or proclamation of innocence,
I am tired of being told 'you are a crim'
I am tired of being labelled a 'convict'
I am tired of being in green.
I am tired of talking, the waiting, thinking, writing, walking laps, chasing,
I am tired of watching TV.

I am mentally spent; my head miles will not stop; I am tired of getting up in the mornings.

My son told me 'He is tired' today,
'nothing' is happening, he is doing 'nothing',
I know the feeling, I am hearing him, I am tired too.

BUT...

I am never too tired to hear his voice,
Never too tired to ask about his day,
even though he did 'nothing',
Never too tired to hear him say 'he is too tired',
Never too tired to line up at the phones to call him, Tuesday 4pm, Friday 4pm and Sunday 4pm as arranged,
Though I am tired of the calls not being answered, most of the time.

I am never too tired to go through or get through this day, tomorrow and the day after,
Just so I could one day see his or her tired face;
Outside of these four concrete jungle walls,
I am never too tired to hear my daughter read to me.

The fuel, the soul-food, the love from any contact, communication, seeing or hearing my children,
will energise me, even if it is in rage.
I am tired of not being there for them,
for my tired daughter and my tired son,
I am afraid and terribly tired of disappointing them,
But I am never tired of loving them, ever.

I am tired of my own reflection, yet my little me(s) will never be a corrupt reflection of me.
They are the best parts of me, they will breathe life into me.

My son said 'he is tired today', yet I tried to keep him on the phone for the full 12 minutes,
Surely, he is not too tired to speak to me, not too tired to tell me 'he is tired'?
I am tired along with him, I am spent and running on zero.

The phone in the wall is my charger, I need my little ones to refuel me,
Even their tired, weak, angry, crying, sad, argumentative, combative or dismissive voice resonates and motivates me.

I am less tired now, after hearing them just say to me "Daddy, I am tired",
just once a day, once a week, once a month or once a year(s) for some of my fellow tired prisoners,
makes my life, our lives; less cumbersome and inject meaning to my tired, our tired weary and mundane day.

I am tired from not hearing from them, hold them, be there for them,

But...

But...

But...

I hope they will never be tired of me.



Mr Challis draws from a prison in QLD.



Share Your Story

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to *About Time*, please send your letters to the below postal address:

First Letter (No stamp)
About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Other Letters (Stamp required)
About Time
PO BOX 24041
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au



Arbi Wiratama via Unsplash

How to Make Bannoffee Pie in a Secure Unit

A sweet treat using buy-up staples

By Garth

Garth writes from a prison in QLD.

Ingredients

- ½ bag Farmbake choc-chip cookies
- 1 pack of Oreos
- 1 bag of Werther's Originals
- 1–2 bananas (one large or two small)
- Margarine
- Milk
- 2 lunch trays

Method – Base

1. Separate Oreos into biscuits and cream.
2. Crush Oreos' biscuits and choc-chip cookies into a rough powder.
3. Combine a small amount of margarine with Oreos and cookies.
4. Press the base into the lunch trays and cook under the grill for roughly 5 minutes until it is set. Place into the fridge.

Method – Filling

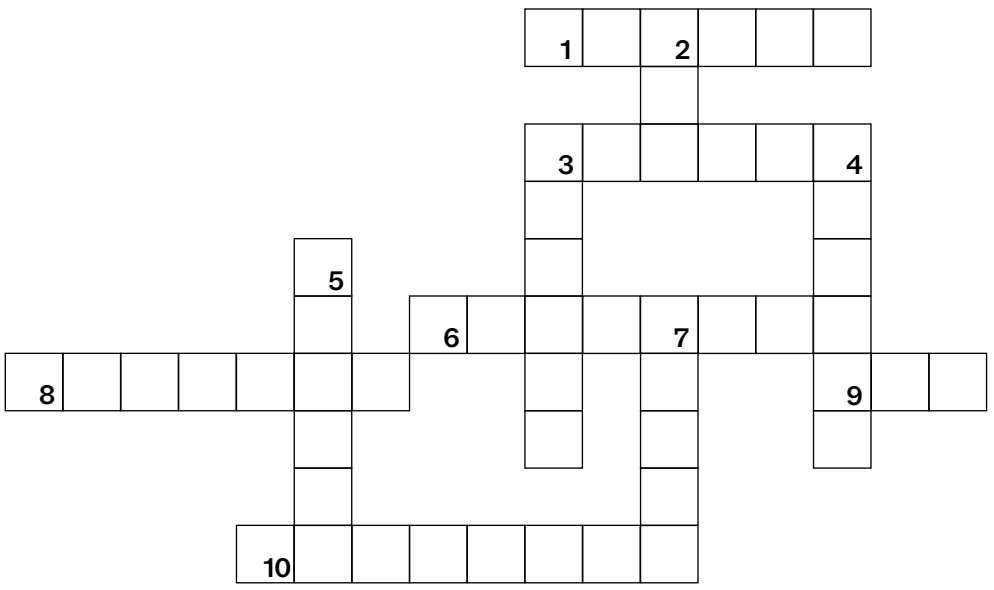
1. Crush Werther's as fine as possible.
2. Melt Werther's with 2 tablespoons of margarine and a dash of milk.
3. Cook bananas in their skins until black and leaking.
4. Carefully combine peeled bananas and melted Werther's with Oreo centres. Mix till smooth.
5. Add filling to base and let it set in the fridge.

Tips

- Open Werther's bag corner only, remove the wrappers, then add them back to the bag to crush.
- Be VERY careful with melted Werther's and hot bananas.

Play

Crossword



ACROSS
1. The ocean between Australia and Africa (6)
3. Month after July (6)
6. Number of days in two week (8)
8. The smallest planet in our galaxy (7)
9. Frozen water (3)
10. Australian animal that hops (8)

DOWN
2. Animal known as “man’s best friend” (3)
3. Season when leaves fall (6)
4. Sport played at Wimbledon (6)
5. Continent where Egypt is located (6)
7. Capital city of Japan (5)

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What is the capital of the United Kingdom?
2. How many minutes are there in one hour?
3. Which planet is known as the “Red Planet”?
4. Who wrote the play *Romeo and Juliet?*
5. What is the largest ocean on Earth?
6. In which sport are the words “love” and “deuce” used in scoring?
7. What do the letters “www” stand for at the start of a website address?
8. In what year did World War II end?
9. What is the chemical symbol for iron?
10. What country is regarded as having invented pizza?



Crossword Answers

Across:
1. Indian
3. August
6. Fourteen
8. Mercury
9. Ice
10. Kangaroo

Down:
2. Dog
3. Autumn
4. Tennis
5. Africa
7. Tokyo

Bad Jokes

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

Why did the golfer bring two pairs of trousers?
In case he got a hole-in-one.

I started reading a book about glue but I got stuck on the first page.

Sudoku

Fill the grid so every row, column and box contains the numbers 1-9 once.

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

Quiz Answers

1. London
2. 60
3. Mars
4. William Shakespeare
5. Pacific Ocean
6. Tennis
7. World Wide Web
8. 1945
9. Fe
10. Italy

waiting for a response to my medical request form:



Meme of the Month

By Meicho

Meicho writes from a prison in QLD.

Send us your memes!
Have you seen a meme recently that made you laugh? Have you made one yourself? Feel free to send it to us – we’d love to see.

You can find our postal details on the opening spread (pages 2-3), or within the inserts throughout the paper.

Colouring In

