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About Time

Australia's National Prison Newspaper

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Lanie paints from a prison in VIC.

Why Needle Programs in Prisons Are Important

By Denham Sadler

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

Needle and syringe programs provide free clean injecting gear.

In the Australian community, these have been around for several decades, and there are now more than 4,000 places where people can get clean needles.

But there are none in any prison in Australia.

This is despite prisons being high-risk places places for infectious diseases, due to the sharing of needles and unsafe injecting practices.

The use of needles or syringes which have already been used by someone else can make it much more likely that the user may get a serious infectious disease such as HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis. There are also serious risks of bacterial infections.

It was recently revealed that hundreds of people in prison in Queensland from January to June last year may have been exposed to HIV and Hepatitis C because they shared needles.

Those who may have used the shared needles and are still in prison should be followed up with by prisoner health services.

The serious event has led to renewed calls from experts and advocacy groups for needle and syringe programs to be run in Australian prisons.

Dr Wendell Rosevear, who worked as a prison doctor in Queensland for several decades, said that these programs should be allowed in prisons.

"Unless people can take action to achieve personal safety then the risks are quite real," Rosevear told *About Time*.

"It's not just HIV and Hep C, it's also about bacteria. When you've got many people sharing needles then that's predictable and the risk is high."

Not being able to get clean needles and syringes means that more dangerous ways are often used.

A recent study in Queensland interviewed 30 people who had been in prison and overdosed in the last three years.

Continued on page 6.

Writing Challenge Winner!

My Happy Place



By David

David writes from a prison in NSW.

There is a place not far from Flinders Street Station, along the bank of the Yarra River, that's at the centre of everything I love about Melbourne.

I've partied in the gardens just across the river during Midsumma, dancing with friends as the sun set. I've joined the procession of footy fans cross it countless times on the way to the MCG, and it's where I met Warin, who would become my closest confidant.

Warin has listened to my drunken rants, tolerated me climbing on his back as we chat and, most importantly, has been with me when I felt down and needed someone to listen without judgement.

Birrarung Marr is my happy place, and I thank Warin the Wombat for welcoming me there.

For a while, I had to visit Warin from a distance, separated by the wire fence put up during upgrades to the riverbank.

While our visits weren't exactly the same, and despite the distance, I knew he was still there for me.

At first I was sad when the fence came down and Warin had gone, but then I learnt he had found a new home and I felt better knowing that he would make his new home a happy place for someone else.

Birrarung Marr will always be my happy place, and for that gift I thank Warin.

I look forward to returning soon, but for now I'm on the other side of the fence.

Read other finalists from page 14!

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Letters

Jail is Home to Me Now

By Kane

Kane writes from a prison in QLD.

To About Time,

My name's Kane. I like your paper. I look forward to it when it comes. They deliver it under my door. It's interesting to read what others have to say and their experiences. I like the paintings some of the other prisoners do. They have a gift. It's sad how some people waste a talent like that by doing silly shit and wasting their life behind bars. Though I know what it's like to feel you don't always have a choice and you gotta do what you gotta do. Some blame others and try to give reasons why they're stuck here. Like, no mate, you're here because you alone put you here. So it's my 8th time in. I don't receive mail. No one comes to visit me. I have nobody. I used to think I had friends. I've learnt not to get close to people. I have people I hang out with.

You can meet 100 people in here. Out of the 100 you'd be lucky if one of them are as they say on the outside. There's a lot of good people too in here – good-hearted people.

In prison, I have a TV, a bed, shower, 3 meals a day and buy-up every week. The jail taxes me half my pay, so now I get $8.50 a week – got 20 more pays to go.

It spun me out my first time in jail. You get paid to be in jail. And we get lollies, chocolate, coffee etc. I'm homeless on the outside. To me, now, it's home. I've had more good times in jail than I had on the outside. When they gave me bail over 6 months ago I cried. I didn't want to leave. I'm not in a hurry to get out back to the streets, sleeping in parks again. It's funny, some people claim they have no one, yet they do. I haven't got anyone I can trust. Who can you trust when you can't trust nobody? You trust yourself.

'The Best End is a Brand New Beginning'

By Emma-Lee

Emma-Lee writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear About Time,

After being trapped in a DV relationship and now gaining a record and PTSD from it, it has taken me quite a bit of time, and for him to be deported, for me to be able to look myself in the mirror and recognise myself again.

I've found that writing and drawing helps me to strengthen my mindset, allowing me to be able to rebuild my self-worth and my confidence once again.

I can say that this time inside has given me the chance to evaluate the things that are important to me, and now I am looking forward to my release back into the community so I can be granted the chance to install the positive changes in my life.

I wish all those out there in similar situations and/or mindsets all the positive vibes to allow them the chance for happiness within in themselves and within their lives.



My Mind's Own Insanity
Stuck up here in my own mind,
Overthinking everything all the time,
A negative thought so easy to find,
But a positive thought would be so sublime,
To keep myself from being trapped in my mind's own insanity.
I need to continually remind myself,
To start thinking more positively,
And feed the positivity,
Instead of the negativity,
You see it only breeds more negativity,
I'd rather find a friend within me,
Instead of being my very own worst enemy,
Keeping me trapped up in the chains of my mind's own insanity.

By Emma-Lee

'Just Stop and Think About Who You Might Hurt'

By DJ

DJ writes from a prison in VIC.

Hi everyone,

Next time you think about doing a crime whatever that may be, just stop and think about your partner or your children or any of your loved ones, even pets, because it may affect us doing time, but I can guarantee it affects them a lot more.

I promised my daughter that I wouldn't come back here and here I am again. I am really regretting it, as the mother of my kids and my daughter are not replying to my letters and I've heard nothing about them, and it is just added stress to me thinking they're done with me and my mental health dramas and alcohol use.

I feel empty without them and I can't imagine how my dad feels about me being here again.

Choose your actions wisely and always think about the ones who care about you, and if you are noticing you're going downhill or not feeling right then seek help – it could save you.





Write for Fun! Get Published!

Thank you all who submitted to the 'My Happy Place' Writing Challenge.

Next prompt:
Food for Thought: Write a story that includes food!

- 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 Challenge' up the top.

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

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Note:
Not available for readers in South Australia.

Even More Unjust Justice

By Adrian

Adrian writes from a prison in NSW.

Prison is supposed to be about a punishment for a crime that was committed. It is foreseen that there is no reasonable way that the perpetrator could effectively be reformed in the community. The perpetrator, allegedly, poses an extreme risk to the community, that should they not be removed from society the likelihood of another crime, or the danger to the public, outweighs the risk of them staying in the community.

How is it then that we have inmates who are serving 6–9 months or more without a brief of evidence or, in some cases, a charge certificate which in effect means the DPP (and not the courts) are sentencing a person to prison?

An unnecessary amount of time elapses causing undue stress not only on the offender but also the system.

This, I believe, is a total violation of the Westminster System of Jurisprudence, the entire justice system of Australia and is bordering close to making a mockery of the Australian Constitution.

The problem is no one is willing to challenge this, and we have become a system society which is completely complacent about our rights and a belief that the government is always acting in the best interest of the overall general public.

The introduction of prohibition orders and post-sentence supervision orders feels like a mandated form of control to overly monitor a person for a previously committed offence and continue to send them back to prison – forcing them into a continual cycle. This also feels against human rights, which states once a person has served their complete prison sentence they are then considered a free citizen again.

We have a system of punitive justice in NSW – the fact that there is a great percentage of returning inmates for breaches of these orders and very little in any type of rehabilitation.

Yes, it does take an exorbitant amount to keep a person in prison. Yes, dangerous criminals should be punished for breaking the law – but should it be so hard to get on with their lives after prison?

Our system is flawed and needs a deep review. We have one psychologist per 168 inmates, many with mental illness that are patched up and sent back to the community only to return in and out because nothing is being addressed.

Same Boys, Same Noise

By Anonymous

The author was imprisoned in Australia.

It was another day in the yard.
Same boys, same noise.

I was comfortable, as much as I could be considering the circumstances.

I had been in better yards – but not many, probably one to be honest.

And it was the same yard, same location. Just different people. You learn who's doing the long stints really quick.

Testosterone grew amongst the younger boys, always something to prove, much more willing than most. Naturally they ganged together.

"They didn't scare me, we were friends, and I'd still probably shake the little bastard's hands" – Vishus Emcee 2026

That last sentence sums up jail. For anyone, anywhere. Jail is just society amplified.

"Freedom is the choice to say no" – Shantaram

I slept peacefully that night. But I will never forget the smell in my room. Like iron ... almost metallic.

The room was clean, spotless. I made that point clear to the boys.

It took me a week to spot a drop of blood.

I felt sorry for the man, and I gave him a hug.

To this day, I admire his strength.

He never said a word. The guards found out a few days later after finally requesting he remove his beanie and glasses.

Life is unfair, people get dealt shit cards.

How much do you really care about your fellow man?

Would you step in if they were facing death?

Thank you for letting me share <3





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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 twenty-first 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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We Love Queensland

By Mont Blanc

Mont Blanc writes from a prison in QLD.

I had lived in Sydney all my life, but, due to some regrettable circumstances, a few years ago I was required to attend a Brisbane court for a 3-week-long trial, and since that time I have been residing in a Queensland gaol.

Over that time, I have observed Queenslanders in their natural habitat, not only individuals but more particularly their media, or at least a sampling of it – TV, radio, occasional newspapers. I have concluded that Queenslanders are the most parochial creatures I have ever encountered. It's not just barracking for their Maroons in the State of Origin. It is the intensity of their provincialism. Sydney folk have no need to compare ourselves to other Australians. Queenslanders seem to harbour a resentment towards the rest of the country.

A few examples will suffice to make my point. I have noticed that, when a national sporting team such as the Wallabies is named, Queenslanders are highlighted. Should any individual of Queensland provenance achieve some small success on the world stage, they are invariably identified as a Queenslander and, almost as an afterthought, an Australian. In NSW we never hear this; we wouldn't have a clue where a high-achieving Australian emerged from.

There is currently an advertisement on TV featuring a testimonial by Tim Horan, helpfully captioned as "Queensland legend and Wallaby". In NSW, a similar production might feature Brad Fittler or Mark Taylor, and they would be appropriately captioned with their noteworthy achievements but without a NSW tag.

A classic parochial cringe emerged at the most recent Olympic Games, where it seemed that a number of Australia's best swimmers were of Queensland origin. Each night for the first week of the Games, enervated TV commentators highlighted this quirk of geography and took it to a ludicrous level. They displayed the traditional medal count, then constructed a supplementary medal table showing that, should Queensland be a sovereign state rather than being tethered to the rest of Australia, it would be 4th on the medal table! (This ranking plummeted after swimming events concluded.)

I was dumbfounded when I saw this display, but I shouldn't have been surprised. No matter what is regarded as newsworthy to the wider world, if Ash Barty, Wally Lewis or an Irwin have a birthday or a sore throat, we know what will be the lead item on the evening news. If I were able to find a copy of the *Courier Mail* front page dated April 16, 1912, I would not be surprised if the headline read "No Queenslanders Drowned", with the subheading being "1,500 lives lost as Titanic sinks".

Do you think I am exaggerating? When the new Pope was ordained earlier this year, those of us unfortunate enough to view the Queensland TV news were informed that the new Pontiff had once played tennis (and lost) to a Queensland priest while studying in Italy.

Presently, the Queensland media is all agog with the prospect of hosting an Olympic Games. When the Games were held in Sydney, we efficiently constructed the required facilities, got on with it and unsurprisingly conducted the Best Games Ever. No hullabaloo required. And the rowing events were entirely crocodile-free.

Mont Blanc

'We Have the Tools and We Have the Talent': Why Prisoner Services Should Work Together

By TJ

TJ writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear *About Time*,

Thank you for the gift of your newspaper. A simple idea to spread a good word or thought via written media to the Australian prison population – and beyond – makes more of a difference to us, than anyone who hasn't done prison time could ever know – especially in the modern era of ever-increasing custodial restrictions and ever-reducing services & many aspects of proactive engagement, compared to, say, 20 years ago when the word "rehabilitation" met the kind of services that were on offer.

In many ways, some prison advances, particularly in Queensland, are going backwards. Meanwhile, thanks to trailblazers and persistent innovators on both sides of the muster line – inside and out – their tenacity is deeply admired and appreciated by us, whom they fight for.

That was a long run-up to the theme I wanted to touch on and that is: Connection – services working together instead of hoping for government to act to provide one large service.

In my previous life at the height of politics and government, I learned many things about not only the mechanics of government, but the various methodology, practices, systems and theoretical applications of department and agency actions.

More than that, it taught me how, right here today, that even if a 100% nationwide government-funded, legislated and embedded prisoner administrative and support service came to pass addressing our every concern, issue and service gap, its merits and pluses would not even come close to a well-collated, committed and engaged network of various legal, prisoner aid services, not-for-profit, violence prevention, men's rehabilitation, end-to-end, women and men inside and transitional support programs, etc – but with the difference of meeting holistically with co-operatively provided throughput – and these orgs already exist.

For e.g. "I can't get help for bail application because I can't get funding".

This is common. So let's break this down. There are quite a few former practitioners in the system, myself included. Even so, many centres nationally have a Bail and Parole Prisoner Peer Support program in centre operation. They can help you prepare a detailed bail application and supplementary support packet for court. On top of that, Legal Aid can, at the very least, provide telephone or videolink advice (even if they won't represent you on bail hearing due to a failure of the assets or merits test).

There is Law Right for prepared document production. They are a great legal clearing house in Queensland with a history of service they can be rightly proud of. Next, there is Prisoners Legal Service (PLS) who, like Legal Aid cannot support by way of representation for resource-limited reasons, but are a wealth of resource and support in terms of providing written advice, tips and strategic goal-setting to best prepare and litigate your application. Each alone – limited. Working cohesively – a powerhouse.

So yes, certainly in Queensland we are indeed short on end-to-end wholesale prisoner support services. However, what we are not short of are compassionate, intelligent and diligent not-for-profit (and even commercial organisations uplifting their social and community credentials). Tip: More QLD lawyers should advertise.

What would turn what we have to make "best" is enough organisation and collaboration between all of these services to work together formally as part of a national prisoner services network. From those services spoken about, to out-of-centre allied and specialist health, accommodation, transition to post prison life, end-of-life care, transgender – in fact all LGBTIQ+ services – many organisations, one table working as one to solve and provide prisoner services.

It is cheap, if not free to "get together", it is a charitable and fundraising power-move, governments would respect the greater collective negotiating and grant power through the collaborative effort and each organisation maintains their unique independence and mission identity.

Quoting Ernie Hudson from the original "Ghostbusters" and "Ghostbusters: Afterlife", "we have the tools and we have the talent".

It's time to work smarter and not harder.

I appreciate everyone's thoughts and convey my respect to all fellow prisoners across the country and the world, and all orgs who help us. Salus populi suprema lex esto – "The welfare of the people is to be the highest law".

Regards,
TJ in Brisbane

Autism and Mental Illness: Prison Isn't the Right Place

By Garry

Garry writes from a prison in TAS.

To *About Time*,

Hey guys, great newspaper. Absolutely love it.

I would just like to mention a few things I've noticed around prison regarding inmates with both autistic and mental illness traits. Who says these inmates are right to go to prison and not a hospital?

It seems to me prison staff also need training regarding mental health and inmates with autism like myself. Just seems a little unfair to lock someone up who doesn't see the world same as a "normal" person would.

Furthermore, it isn't fair to prison staff who have to deal with these unusual behaviours. Autistic, Aspergers – anyone who is on the "spectrum" should undergo some sort of different situation rather than mainstream prison.

Regards,
Garry



'I Continue to Laugh in the Face of Adversity': Newtown's 'Dreamer' Muralist on PTSD and Prison

By Andrew

Andrew writes from a prison in QLD.

Dear 'Bout Time Crew!!!

'Nuff Respect, Kudos, and Vast Appreciation on your Magnificent, Pertinent and Poignant Periodical that just keeps getting better. WORD UP!!!

My name is Andrew. Home and away on steroids story, but I continue to laugh in the face of adversity and am only getting stronger and more determined to continue in my life of service to others... Your paper certainly helps a lot!!! I especially wish to thank Carollyne Youssef for the 'Finding Yourself Again' article. So powerful!

Interestingly, I had one call-up for psych services who agreed with my self diagnosis as a counsellor of many years as a PTSD case. I shop fronted to see them again over 6 weeks ago but they must be too busy. I have not seen a counsellor apart from in reception, over 14 weeks ago. I am not the only mental health casualty here, but at least we have each other in the camaraderie you described recently.

I don't have to preach to the choir to you about lacks in the system in these regards. I did 8 years in the U.K. and I'd rather be here if I had to do time I think... Love your work! KEEP IT UP!

P.S. I have been studying Aboriginal traditional law – some concepts admirably summed up in Tyson Yunkaporta's magnificent 'Sand Talk: 'How Indigenous Thinking Can Change the World'. Highly recommended.

PEACE – Andrew



Calligraphy scanned from Andrew's letter.

A Charity Fund From Inside: Even $1 Each Would Make a Difference

By Jonathon

Jonathon writes from a prison in NSW.

Hey everyone reading this, my name is Jonathon.

I am currently in jail in NSW.

This letter isn't about myself or my time in prison, but I have spent a fair few years here, and this why I wanted to propose potentially a system where once a week or once a month it is an option, for those who want to or are able to, to donate to a charity from money from our inmate accounts.

Even $1 each would make a difference, contribute something positive to the community and boost morale.

The charity could be for kids with disability, could be for children hospitals, could be for cancer research, could be for homelessness.

There are so many more I can't name them all, but I think it's important as there are so many people in our communities that need all the help they can get.

Staying Strong

By Mel

Mel writes from a prison in NSW.

My name is Mel. In July, my partner overdosed while I was locked up in Tasmania. The staff there were amazing.

However, a month later I was extradited back to Sydney and my sister died of covid. I was devastated and to make matters worse, I was my partner's next of kin, and I couldn't get anything done from prison. It took me five months to get him cremated.

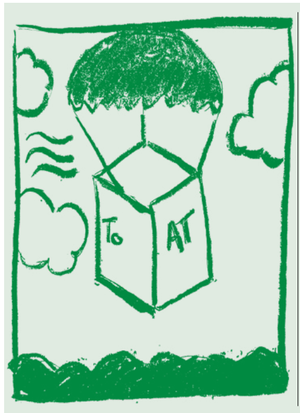
If I was not so strong willed, I swear I would not be here today. I believe there should be more training of the staff to deal with these kind of tragedies for inmates, as I had very, very, very little help in all aspects of this situation.

I believe this contributed to me getting out and reoffending as I had no idea how to deal with the grief or being out all alone.

I remember asking for help but feeling like no-one was listening.

We may be criminals, but we also cry at night.





• Thank You for Your Letters

As of a few weeks prior to publication, we received letters from Joshua, Muhammed, Steven, Abdul, Anthony, James, Simon, Luke, Jackson, Dane, Phillip, Jeff, Manish, T, Garry, Ian, Deanno, Shea, T, N, David, Jonathon, Christopher, Sam, Garreth, Stephanie, Brian, P, Marco, B, Ebony, Charles, Hamish, Bronwen, Charlie, Colleen, Anthony, Mark, Elizabeth, Sino, M, David, Peter, B, Naomi, Adrian, Scott, Simon, Melanie, R, Matthew, Elijah, Mackenzie and all 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. It's FREE!

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Letters From the Outside:

In response to *Breaking the Cycle; How I Gave Myself Another Chance* by Gary Griffiths
I hope your story can help others to become better versions of themselves – Shane

Oooh powerful. That's how I did it. Small steps, I focused on being free 30 minutes at a time, because thinking 1 day was too overwhelming. I'm 16 years of freedom – Diana

It gives me hope for my sister, and such a true message about only you can change yourself no one else can – Camilla

In response to *Shedding More Light: Phone Call Costs in Prison* by Damien Linnane
Thank you for highlighting the cost of prison phone calls. Something that often gets overlooked is that the financial burden doesn't just fall on the person in prison – it also affects their loved ones on the outside who are trying to stay connected.

In many cases families end up paying as well. For example, I had to get an Engine number so calls from prison to my mobile would be cheaper. While this reduces the cost for the person inside, it still requires me as a loved one to top up the Engine balance for the number to work. So families are still paying in order to maintain contact.

The $70 phone credit that prisoners receive each month disappears very quickly if they are calling a mobile phone. Staying connected becomes expensive very fast, especially for families already under financial pressure.

It's interesting to compare this with New Zealand prisons, where national calls are free and prisoners are allocated 30 minutes for international calls. That approach recognises how important it is for people in prison to stay connected with their whānau and loved ones.

Maintaining family contact is proven to support wellbeing and rehabilitation, yet for many families the cost of phone calls remains a real barrier – Montess

In response to *Three of My Friends are Alive Because of Naloxone* by Marianna Jans
Thanks. Naloxone, then known as Narcan, saved my life on at least 6 occasions, that I recall, decades back. A wonderful drug – Patrick

News and Investigations

Why Needle Programs in Prisons Are Important

By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

Nearly everyone said they had seen injecting equipment being shared in prison.

One man said that he had been in a cell with someone who got an infection on his spine and was put in an induced coma and nearly died after sharing a syringe.

While no prison in Australia offers them, needle and syringe programs have been successfully run in prisons in other countries.

Spain has provided clean needles and syringes in some prisons since the 1990s, with positive results and no reported increase in drug use.

Switzerland has also virtually stopped the sharing of needles in the prisons where it has run programs.

Emily Cooper is the support and advocacy lead at QuIVVA, which provides advocacy, support and harm reduction education to people who have used substances, including in prison.

"Get educated around the risks of using," Cooper told *About Time*.

"When you're in prison you don't get educated about the risks of bacterial infections that are so common. I know it's really scary seeking healthcare when using in prison, but it's better to do that then end up with permanent spinal injury or a pacemaker in your heart.

"Try to reach those supports, stay strong and get knowledge."

Rosevear encouraged people in prison to make safe choices when they can.

"You are valuable – enjoy your value and make choices that are safe," he said.

Cooper said it's important for incarcerated people to know there are people who have been in prison who are now campaigning in the community for their rights.

"We're not hiding away in shame anymore, we're calling this out publicly and drawing attention to human rights abuses," she said.

Peer Qnect is run by QuIVVA and is based in Queensland but can be reached around the country and can also refer you to other harm reduction groups.

PEER QNECT

Peer Qnect can be contacted via the below details:

Phone:
1800 175 889

Email:
peerqnect@quivaa.org.au

Letters:
1 Hamilton Place
Bowen Hills QLD 4006

Court Chaos as Hearings Missed Due to Overcrowding



By Denham Sadler

The cells below Melbourne Magistrates' Court are full, meaning that often people cannot be transported there from prisons or police cells for important hearings.

This means people are missing these hearings completely and they are rescheduled to a later date, through no fault of their own, or they have to appear via video, which comes with a number of issues.

This is happening because changes made by the Victorian government has meant more people are being denied bail and held on remand, filling cells such as those at the city courts.

A number of Victorian defence lawyers have said their clients are often not being taken to the courts from police cells, prisons or remand centres, and they are missing important hearings.

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) has filed specific requests for in-person hearings for their most vulnerable clients, but were regularly told on the day of the hearing that this would not be possible.

Its clients have also been unable to communicate with lawyers before bail hearings.

Defence lawyer and Doogue + George director Bill Doogue said what is happening in Victoria is "appalling".

"It's just so bad," Doogue told *About Time.*

"It's a systematic failure that has ripple effects, and it's the sort of thing you just have to avoid because why waste everyone's time and money?"

Galbally Parker principal lawyer and director Ruth Parker said many clients of her firm are not being brought to the courts for bail hearings.

"It's very frustrating when a client has a court matter where they are supposed to attend in person, particularly if their matters are listed for a bail application, and they aren't being brought in because the logistics and planning is atrocious," Parker told *About Time*.

"In circumstances where accused people are presumed innocent, this failure by the system to facilitate access to justice is really concerning."

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice and Community Safety said that hearings can usually be done via videolink.

"The option to appear via video link has been available for about 10 years and was significantly expanded during the pandemic after proving to be an effective way to ensure matters are heard quicker and from anywhere in the state," the spokesperson told *About Time.*

"Corrections Victoria works closely with courts and prisoner transport services to ensure that offenders can attend court in person when required."

But the video court appearances can have tech issues and be glitchy, and can make it more difficult to understand what is happening in court.

Having a court hearing delayed can mean that someone spends more time in prison than they should, with potentially large impacts on the individual and their families.

Parker has called for an investigation into the issue and how the system "can be supported so that it works to promote access to justice, not impede it".

Ending Strip Searching in Australian Prisons Report

A new report from lawyers and advocates calls for the abolition of strip searches, naming it sexual assault.

By Kelly Flanagan

Kelly Flanagan is a First Nations artist and writer with lived experience of the Victorian prison system. She is an advocate for women and social justice, drawing on her experience to challenge systemic inequity. Kelly is currently writing her first book and is a proud member of Flat Out and the FIGJAM Collective.



Members of FIGJAM, Flat Out and HRLC at the launch of the report, photographed by Tash Khan

FIGJAM (Formerly Incarcerated Girls Justice Advocates Melbourne), HRLC (Human Rights Law Centre) and Flat Out hosted the launch of the Ending Strip Searches Report at The QVWC (Queen Victoria Women's Centre) on Thursday 5 March 2026.

Being part of the event as a panellist and having the honour of speaking about Aunty Vicki Roach's foreword made me incredibly emotional. I had not cried like this since childhood, and I had not realised the extent of the harm inflicted upon me by Corrections Victoria while I was in prison.

In my speech, I emphasised that strip searching is sexual assault disguised as prison safety. Strip searching is not about safety – and the data proves it. For example, the report found that, of 221 strip searches in April 2022 in DPFC Victoria, no contraband was found. The report states that the current laws are outdated. Reviews need to take place as a matter of urgency and changes must be implemented.

Most prisons have body scanners in their facilities. These scanners are the same high-tech full-body x-ray scanners you see at the airports. If our governments are using them to keep our country safe, there is no reason that prisons cannot rely on them.

The report emphasised that strip searching is sexual assault. It showed that it is used as an intimidation tactic to degrade and make people feel less than human. For women who have been sexually assaulted, raped or coerced by partners, this has devastating long term affects. It re-traumatises us and causes significant ongoing harm. Testimony in the report told how it is a form of torture and control, how it made people fell that they no longer owned their body. "The practice of strip searching grooms us to accept the violation of our bodies as normal and standard procedure, putting us at further risk of being sexually assaulted" – Nina, FIGJAM

I have lived it and I am still trying to work through the trauma of it. I didn't realise that it impacted me as sexual assault until I started talking about it after my release.

After experiencing sexual assault, you begin to believe this behaviour is normal. Your mind tries to keep you safe and will block it out. When I started to heal and work through the trauma, I realised that police, prisons and watch houses are using this sexual assault tactic to make people submit to them. In these places, they are the owners of your body.

This also happens to children in custody, children as young as 10 years old. These children are strip searched by two adults in a private room with no cameras. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse documented instances where sexual abuse occurred under the cover of strip searching.

So I ask why prisons are still allowing this invasive ineffective method to be used.

As Cathy from FIGJAM wrote in the report: "Nobody can give an answer as to why strip searching needs to be done. In this day and age, there are less invasive scanners that do the job. There isn't any empathy for what it feels like when you're strip searched. If there was, everyone would know and accept that there is no reason to put anyone through a strip search."

Ask your friends and family to sign the petition on our website so we can make some change.

The website is:

https://www.endstripsearching.com/

If you want to write to us to find out more:

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WA

Smoking Ban No Longer Going Ahead

Smoking will no longer be banned in all Western Australian prisons this year after the state government changed its mind on the plan.

It was announced late last year that all prisons would ban smoking by the end of this year.

But these plans have now been delayed until at least 2027 over concerns about the impact this move would have on safety in the facilities.

A review into the planned change will now be undertaken and finished by early next year.

Death in Custody at Casuarina

A 65-year-old man held at Casuarina Prison has died after suffering from a terminal illness.

The man died at Fiona Stanley Hospital in February.

A report is now being prepared for the state coroner, which is required for any death in prison.

Inmates Help to Fight Fires

Incarcerated people at a number of prisons in Western Australia have helped to fight bushfires around the state.

As part of a partnership between the Department of Justice and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, a crew of people in prison are trained and supervised to reduce bushfire risks.

This crew has now completed more than 25,000 hours of fire mitigation work, reducing the risk of fires across 900,000 hectares.

People in prison are also helping aerial firefighting operations through the refuelling of water bombers.

The inmates involved are from Karnet, Wooroloo and Pardelup prison farms, Bunbury and Greenough Regional Prison and Dowerin Work Camp.

All of those involved are also earning National Unit of Competency qualifications from the fire mitigation training.



NT

Findings Delivered on Death of Martin Leach

An NT coroner has delivered findings on the death of Martin Leach, who died in custody in 2024 from congestive heart failure.

Leach died at age 65 at Royal Darwin Hospital after refusing the medical treatment needed to keep him alive.

The coroner found that this choice led to a "dilemma" for prison and hospital staff.

Leach refused his heart medication and said he did not want to be resuscitated, the coroner found.

Man Wrongly Released From Prison Returned to Custody After 2 Days

A man who was mistakenly released from custody has been returned to the Darwin Correctional Centre after two days.

The 52-year-old man was mistakenly released by authorities despite having two months still left on his sentence.

He was found by police in the CBD of Darwin 2 days later.

The NT Department of Corrections said the mistaken release was due to an "administration error made by Corrections staff".

Mandatory Sentencing for DV Murders

Individuals found guilty of murdering their current or former partner must receive a 25-year no parole prison sentence under new laws in the Territory.

The NT Government passed the mandatory sentencing laws in March.

This means that those found guilty of a domestic violence related murder will receive a longer mandatory sentence than other murders, which have a 20-year minimum.

Prison Officers to Strike in Alice Springs

People incarcerated in Alice Springs were fully locked down for a total day due to a staff strike over disagreements about how much they should be paid.

Prison officers in Alice Springs went on strike for 12 hours in mid-March.

This meant that those incarcerated in the region were in total lockdown from the previous night until the morning of the following day.



SA

Changes to Home Detention Scheme

The South Australian Government has made some changes to the home detention scheme in order to ensure the voices of victims are "central to decision-making".

According to media reporting, in the last eight years more than 1,000 people were released from prison on home detention by an internal Corrections Department committee, before completing their non-parole periods.

Under this process, any victims were notified of the person's release via email if they had asked to be and were told they were not allowed to disclose any of this information publicly.

Under the changes, the state government will be removing references to this secrecy in the letters.

Opposition Pushes for Mandatory Sentences for Police Assaults

The South Australian Opposition has committed to introduce mandatory prison sentences for those found guilty of assaulting a police officer.

Anyone found guilty of causing harm to a police officer while they are on duty will be sentenced to a minimum of six months in prison, under the changes.

The Liberal Opposition said it would introduce legislation to make these reforms within its first 100 days in government, if it wins the upcoming election.

It will also scrap the ability for the courts to suspend a sentence for someone found guilty of this crime and introduce a presumption against granting bail.



NSW

Lower Standard of Proof for Prison Discipline a 'New Injustice'

The NSW Government's move to lower the standard of proof required to find someone guilty of a prison offence is a "new injustice", the NSW Ombudsman has said.

The ombudsman released a report in early March on the progress made in reforming the inmate discipline system following a 2024 investigation.

This investigation found "systemic failures" in the inmate discipline process in NSW, including times when people were charged with multiple offences for the same conduct, had charges laid for inapplicable offences and had recordings of guilty pleas when someone had indicated they wanted to contest.

The ombudsman said that the state government's implementation of recommendations from this inquiry has "significantly stalled", and it has received no updates since the introduction of legislation lowering the standard of proof for all prison offences.

This was something the ombudsman said "we had explicitly recommended should not be done" and was a "new injustice".

"Findings of guilt for serious offences with serious punishments on anything other than the standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt' is, in our view, unjust and unreasonable and inconsistent with the principles of a fair trial and the presumption of innocence," NSW Ombudsman Paul Miller said.

The NSW Corrections Minister is now required to make a statement to state parliament replying to these concerns within 2 weeks.

Kairos Expands its Services

Kairos Prison Ministry Australia will expand its programs to the South Coast Correctional Facility this year.

Kairos is a Christian ministry providing programs in prisons around the country, primarily in regional New South Wales.

The organisation is planning to run two programs at the Nowra prison this year and four next year.

It is also looking to expand its programs to Bathurst and Wellington and to run more in prisons it already operates in.



QLD

Hiring Spree at Lockyer

The Queensland Government is looking to hire an extra 100 prison officers to work at the new Lockyer Prison.

It is looking to hire security guards, correctional officers, case managers and visitor officials to work at the newly opened 1,536-bed prison.

The new officers will receive paid training and five weeks of annual leave, with salaries of between $76,000 and $118,000 annually.

New Drug Laws Introduced

The Queensland Government has announced plans to limit people found guilty of drug offences to access diversion programs.

Under changes introduced to the state parliament, diversion will only be available to eligible first-time offenders.

The state government said that current individuals can receive a warning and then multiple diversion opportunities, with a total of five chances before they face "meaningful consequences".

The changes also introduce on-the-spot fines or criminal charges for repeat drug offenders and stronger powers for police.

Current health-based diversion pathways aimed at addressing addiction will be maintained.

Government Enacts Hate Speech and Guns Crackdown

Pro-Palestinian slogans and chants have been banned in Queensland under reforms aimed at targeting antisemitism.

Under the reforms, a two-year jail term will be imposed for hate speech, with reports this will include slogans such as "from the river to the sea" and "globalise the intifada".

The state government is also moving to restrict gun ownership and introduce tougher penalties for drive-by shootings.

Under the changes, stealing a gun will come with a punishment of up to 14 years in prison, and trafficking in unlawful weapons and guns will potentially attract a life sentence.

It will also be an offence for someone to have a blueprint for a 3D-printed gun or to actually create one.



VIC

Sports Program Expanded to Marngoneet

A program for young people combining sports and life skills has expanded to the Ripley Unit at Marngoneet Correctional Centre.

The Twinning Project, which already runs at Metropolitan Remand Centre, Western Plains Correctional Centre and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, uses football to build resilience, improve physical health and teach life skills.

It is for young people aged 18 to 25 and is a partnership between Corrections Victoria, Melbourne City Football Club and the FIFA Foundation.

More than 100 people have already completed the eight-week course, which involves professional coaching staff, mentors and guest speakers.

Death in Custody at Barwon

A 43-year-old man died at Barwon Prison in mid-February.

The death of the man is not being treated as suspicious.

The coroner will investigate the matter as it was a death in custody.

Malmsbury Youth Prison to Be Expanded

A further 45 beds will be added to the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre, on top of the 30 beds at the re-opened centre announced by the Victorian Government last year.

The additional capacity to incarcerate children is needed due to recent bail reforms, which have led to a 40 per cent increase in the number of youth being held on remand.

The move has been criticised by Jesuit Social Services.

"This is a direct outcome of recent changes to bail laws which we highlighted at the time would drive up prisoner numbers while doing nothing to address the underlying drivers of crime," Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards said.

"Expanding the state's prison capacity is not something to be celebrated, it is evidence of systemic policy failures and of misplaced priorities."

Inmates Help to Rebuild After Fires

Inmates at the Langi Kal Kal Prison have helped local communities rebuild after recent bushfires.

Incarcerated people working at the prison have helped to supply livestock feed and on-the-ground assistance to the Stoneleigh community, where local farmers were impacted.

The workers have delivered more than 60 hay bales to the community and helped to grow, cut, rake and bale the hay on site.

A further 110 hay bales have been delivered to communities impacted by fires in Longwood.

Inmates at Loddon Prison have helped the local council with recovery efforts following the Harcourt fires, including by building new fencing and clearing timber.



ACT

Digital Communication Services to Be Introduced

New digital communication services allowing those at the Alexander Manonochie Centre to make voice and video calls on a tablet are set to be launched.

ACT Corrective Services is planning to purchase a new digital services solution to help improve access to communications and education for those incarcerated in the territory.

The department will ask private companies to apply to supply the service in the coming months and is hoping to have signed a contract in the second half of this year.



TAS

Prison Lockdowns Hampering Court Cases

A man appealing a murder conviction has told a court that he has been unable to find a lawyer because of repeated lockdowns at Risdon Prison.

The man told the court that he hasn't found an instructing solicitor because he has spent too much time in lockdown.

"We have no access to phones," the man told the judge. "We can't do anything. But I'm doing everything I possibly can."

In 2024–25 people in prison in Tasmania received an average of seven hours outside of their cells per day, lower than the national average of 8.9 hours, according to the Productivity Commission.

The large majority of these lockdowns were listed as being because of staff shortages.

Plan to operate new youth prison

The Tasmanian Government has begun consulting on an operating model for the state's new youth detention centre.

The government said it would adopt a "child first, offender second" approach, with small, "home-like" accommodation.

What the government has said will be a new "therapeutically-focused youth justice facility" will be constructed north of Hobart and will replace the existing Ashley Youth Detention Centre.



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Prison Calls Cost Millions



The true cost of phone calls in prison has been revealed for the first time

By Denham Sadler

People in Victorian prisons spent more than $12 million on phone calls in a three-year period, new data has revealed.

Information released by the state government under a Freedom of Information request showed that $4.7 million was spent on prison phone calls in Victoria in 2021-22, $3.7 million the following year and another $3.7 million in 2023-24.

During this time period, phone calls from prison in Victoria cost 57c per minute, or $6.84 for the maximum 12-minute call. People in prison who work are paid between $7.15 and $9.80 per day.

Those who are unable to work due to illness or their age are paid about $6.50 per week day.

The new figures show the true cost of staying connected with loved ones in the community, and the difficulties in maintaining these relationships from prison.

It also puts a figure on the amount the state government would need to contribute to fully cover the cost of these phone calls.

The $3.5 million per year on prison phone calls is about 0.2 per cent of the Victorian Government's overall $1.6 billion spend on prisons.

Private company Comsec TR was paid $26 million to deliver prison telephone services, contracted from 2019 until mid-2025. This has now been extended until August 2029.

There have been long-running campaigns for prison phone calls to be the same price as calls in the community, or completely free.

Yung Prodigy, a youth-led organisation mobilising young people impacted by parental and kinship incarceration, has strongly campaigned for cheaper or free prison phone calls.

"Phone call fees turn basic human connection into a revenue stream," Yung Prodigy founding director Maia Ihemeje told *About Time*.

"We know strong family ties reduce harm and support better outcomes, yet the system continues to place financial barriers on the very relationships that help reintegration processes.

"When communication is priced out of reach, the justice system isn't just punishing the person inside, it is actively destabilising families on the outside, particularly children who rely on that contact for emotional support and connection."

VACRO, a Victorian organisation providing reintegration services, has been campaigning for free prison phone calls for several years.

VACRO CEO Marius Smith said the cost of prison phone calls is "really prohibitive" for those inside and their friends and family on the outside.

"[It] makes family connection something of a luxury when it should be a foundational principle of supporting anyone," Smith told *About Time*.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission in Victoria recommended the state government ensure phone calls are free or at "no greater cost than the general community".

Since this data was recorded, the Victorian Government has reduced the cost of prison phone calls. Currently it costs 25c per minute to make an outgoing call from prison, or $3 for a 12-minute call.

Under the new prices, someone on the lowest pay would have to work nearly 3 hours to afford one 12-minute phone call.

A spokesperson for the Victorian Department of Justice and Corrective Services said that the cost of phone calls in prison is due to a "range of security requirements", such as the recording and monitoring of calls, and to "support the safety and security of correctional centres and the community".



'Good Character' References: Good to Go?

On the proposed laws to exclude good character references from sentencing

By Benjamin Aitken

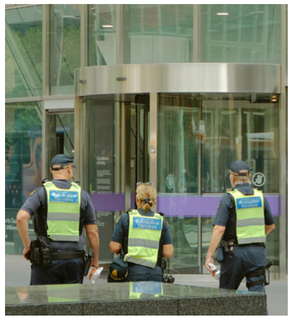
Benjamin Aitken is a multidisciplinary artist whose work is deeply influenced by personal experience in prison and a commitment to social change.

Inside court rooms, life-altering decisions are made. A judge may determine how much liberty will be lost, a decision that must be careful and principled, grounded in law rather than emotion.

In NSW, a proposed amendment to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 would restrict what judges may consider when imposing a sentence. The bill seeks to exclude "good character" as a mitigating factor, meaning an offender's prior reputation and community standing could no longer influence the penalty.

The Victorian government in late February also announced plans to remove the use of 'good character' references at sentencing.

Supporters see this as an overdue correction. "As a survivor of child sexual abuse, I pursued this reform for the child who was told to be silent," said Harrison James, co-founder of the "Your Reference Ain't Relevant" campaign. His argument is clear: lived trauma should outweigh social reputation. Accountability, he says, must not be softened by status.



Willy Pleasance

James's advocacy, grounded in lived experience, deserves respect. However, the reform itself rests on a simplified view of how sentencing operates. It risks treating contextual evidence as endorsement and implies that reputation too often outweighs seriousness. In reality, courts are already required to prioritise the objective gravity of the offence.

While the original advocacy campaign was directed at sexual assault and rape, existing law already limits reliance on good character in certain child sexual offence cases, particularly where an offender's reputation was used to facilitate the crime. The NSW Government has gone further, introducing legislation that would apply across all criminal offences, from drink driving to drug possession, with other states being urged to follow.

The proposal has attracted formal opposition from key legal bodies. The NSW Bar Association argues that abolishing good character will not address unequal access to justice, which would be better remedied through proper funding of services such as Legal Aid. The NSW Aboriginal Legal Service has likewise opposed the broader reform. Its chief executive, Nadine Miles, has instead called for greater public education about how sentencing works.

Under current law, the seriousness of the offence remains central. Harm and culpability anchor the sentencing decision. Good character is only one factor among many, and, in serious cases, it carries limited weight. It does not excuse the conduct or minimise harm. Instead, it helps a court assess prospects of rehabilitation, risk of reoffending and whether the offence was out of character. As Callum Parker of Hugo Law Group notes, a character reference does not dispute the crime; it provides context about the person before the court. Judges sentence people, not abstractions. Discretion is not a flaw in the system; it is part of its design.

The reform is framed as a response to privilege in the courtroom. But Australia's criminal courts are not dominated by elites. They are disproportionately filled by the poor, the marginalised and the over-policed. Aboriginal people make up about 3.8 per cent of the population, yet account for more than 30 per cent of the adult prison population and around 60 per cent of youth detention. In that context, removing one way of presenting a person's background is difficult to describe as a step toward greater fairness.

For first-time offenders, character evidence can show that the conduct was genuinely out of character. Without it, mitigation may rely more heavily on psychological reports or formal rehabilitation programs, resources not equally available to everyone. The risk is that paperwork becomes more valuable than community testimony or a stable work history.

Justice requires accountability. But it also recognises that a person is more than their worst act. Narrowing what judges can consider may make the law simpler, but it also makes it less precise. And imprecision in criminal justice rarely falls first on the powerful.

Harm matters. The question is whether justice is improved by limiting the information available to judges. A better focus may be on strengthening support for victims like Harrison without reducing the discretion that sentencing depends on.

Private Prison Fail

The company running Ravenhall prison is paid to reduce reoffending, but is failing to do this.

By About Time

Ravenhall Correctional Centre is paid more money if the rate of people released from Ravenhall returning to prison is lower than other prisons in Victoria.

This is part of the contract between American company The GEO Group and the Victorian Government.

But the Victorian Auditor-General has found that the rate of people returning to prison after being held at Ravenhall is actually similar to prisons run by the Victorian Government.

More than one in three people released from Ravenhall return to custody within two years.

This may be because many of the programs offered at Ravenhall have long wait times and are hard to get into.

In the first half of 2025, the wait time for starting a rehabilitation program was 111 days, and for a TAFE program the wait time was two years.



Experiences

The Things That Caught Me Off Guard Going to Prison for the First Time

Three surprises: settling in, the phone system, and 'the people'

By Gary Griffiths

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



'Hope' by Jenny, $550, 6235, 75cm x 60cm, acrylic on canvas, available to purchase at Boom Gate Gallery

The trip to the jail was loud and the noise wasn't coming from outside my head, it was coming from within: "how long am I gonna do this time", "but theres not enough drugs in here", "whats gonna happen next".

My addiction had led me to the point of a complete life breakdown. This time it was different. It wasn't just a short stay on remand at Hakea for two or three months. This time I was gonna get a sentence for sure.

And I did, I got two years. I had spent the last 12 months going in and out, stuck in the revolving door, but this time they sent me straight to Casuarina, the maximum security jail.

The biggest thing that caught me off guard when I got out to the sentenced jails was how comfortable people were just doing four or five years like it was nothing.

One of the guys I was on the transfer bus with had been in and out a few times. I could tell by how many people he knew. I heard another guy say, "how long this time brother", and he goes, "nah just five this time", and I was shocked.

Five years is 1825 days. The revolving door that is the prison system had got him and he had lost his whole 20s to a prison cell.

Soon enough my parole had been denied and I was laughing and joking with people about how I still had "a few years left in me". The mind shift happens quickly. It's a survival tactic, almost a trick your brain plays on you.

Once you settle in and get a routine, jail becomes almost easy. There's no pressure. You don't have to work. Food's given to you daily.

But as human beings, we aren't designed to be locked in a cage and told when to eat, shit and sleep. It defeats the purpose of why we are here.

If you're reading this and you're in jail, you deserve better in your life. You are better than a number. Prison system, and only you can change that via the way you think. Your life isn't a joke. Don't waste it.

The second big thing that got me was the phone systems. Life moves quickly on the outside, especially if you're young. I just expected for people to say yes to being on my call list, and the ones that did barely answered.

Sometimes you wait ages for the phone and if they don't answer, you just assume they're busy until you call again and again and no one answers except your mum.

It's a hard moment, because you're forced to sit with the consequences of your choices in a different way.

People have their own lives, their own problems, and sometimes they're angry and hurt, or just tired of the situation that put you in prison in the first place. They might have other family, friends, or a partner doing the same shit you were on the outside, and they just don't wanna know about it.

Over time, you learn not to take it personally. You learn that relationships need to be rebuilt, not expected.

And when someone does answer, you appreciate that call a lot more than you ever did on the outside.

The third and biggest thing that got me was "the people". I got to meet some good hearted people, like genuinely good human beings that had made some bad decisions in their lives and paid some big consequences for it.

Not all of them were monsters. Actually, only a small amount were.

But one thing I realised in jail was meeting good people in prison doesn't mean you should stay the same when you leave. If anything, it should be the opposite.

Getting out means changing who you are. Evolving into a better version of who you were before. Taking the experience and using it in your life to be better, so I suppose its like you evolve into a new you.

Not just for your friends, family or society, but for you and your life. We only get one shot at it.

There are so many opportunities out there in the world to enjoy. Travelling, spending time with your kids. I know it sounds crazy, but even starting a business and failing is a huge growth lesson. That next time you try you could become the biggest success in that field, with the experience that you learnt inside of jail.

I have started writing these article to hopefully help people reach there full potential and if you're reading this I hope you get out and reach yours too.



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In Six Months, Richard Will Be Free. He Has No Idea Where He'll Go.

A portrait of an 80-year-old inmate and the birds who depend on him

By Sam Harris

Sam Harris is, in his own words, a retired inmate.

I don't know what time Richard wakes up. But each morning, there he is in the common room, sitting quietly on one of the brightly-coloured torn and tattered cheap yellow sofa seats, red melamine mug of tea in his hand.

He politely bids me good morning as I take my own equally-worn sofa seat next to him. We briefly discuss the predicted temperature for the day, whether it rained last night, and what will be on today's food menu.

Everything goes silent for a few moments until Richard gets up reluctantly from his sofa seat and trudges to the kitchenette.

There, he prepares bread and jam for the colourful rosellas, the honey-eaters and the large black currawongs who are perched on imperceptible branches, hidden within nearby trees, awaiting their breakfast.

Richard smears sticky-sweet apricot jam upon small, soft fragments of white bread which have been left over from last evening's bread ration.

Carefully, he then wedges the broken sweet fragments into the diamond-shaped fenestrations of the metallic security grill which is fixed firmly just beyond our open window. If there is enough jam, Richard will position an entire small plastic jam holder, crumpled with its thin plastic covering peeled back, in a few adjacent fenestrations.

The watchful birds will then swoop deftly, as if from nowhere, onto the security grill. The rosellas are always the first to arrive, and they scoop up the bread, or the jam, in the narrow sharp end of their stout ivory-coloured beaks. Repeatedly, and nervously, they devour these early morning delights, ever-aware of the presence of nearby competitors and green-clad humans. Every so often, the jostling for bread or jam becomes intense, and some birds will attempt to defend their territory on the security grill, or simply detach themselves from the grill and fly swiftly to a nearby tree branch. We call old Richard "The Birdman", and most of us regard the birds who come each morning as Richard's hungry, chirping children.

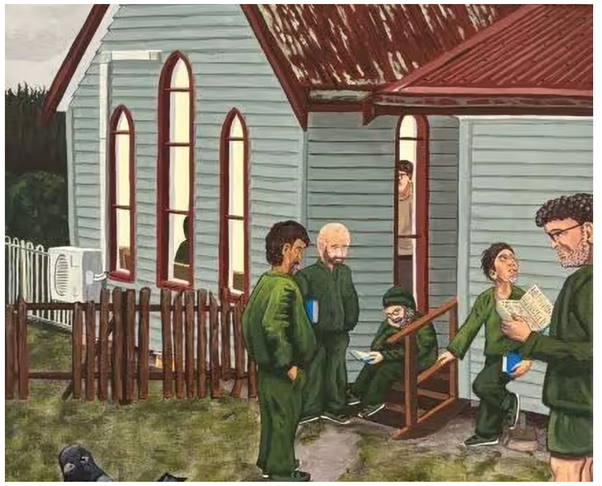
Richard is one of two sweepers (cleaners) for our hut. His younger companion is Rex. Both have a number of daily, mundane tasks to carry out, and they provide a source of cheap prison labour for jobs that the guards regard as being below them. Sweepers are paid about $30 per week, and both Richard and young Rex need the money, mostly to supplement their meagre prison rations with a few simple buy-up items once weekly. One of Richard's early morning jobs is to mop the faded and torn blue-grey linoleum floor in our common room and kitchenette. He also cleans the rusting silver toaster, and scrubs the hot plates with warm soapy water while the rest of us are banished to the exercise yard for 40 minutes each morning. For his part, Rex cleans the communal bathroom, showers and toilets.

Most of the inmates question whether Richard, at 80 years of age, is up to the job. He often leaves the mopped linoleum floor wet, and overlooks cleaning the corners of the common room floor. As he scrubs the hot plates, he stops momentarily to tell me what a thankless job it is to be a sweeper.

He then resumes his scrubbing. All I can do is to let him know that he is doing a good job.

Just before lunch and dinner times, Richard and Rex will be summoned over the loudspeaker to come to collect the meal rations for the inmates in our hut.

Both sweepers will walk purposefully across the expanse of grey concrete yard, out beyond the tall wire perimeter fence, then up a dozen brightly-painted yellow steps to the Compound gate.



'Glen Innes Church' by Tony, available to purchase at Boom Gate Gallery

There, in pairs, each team of sweepers will collect individual food parcels in shiny, thin aluminium trays from the guards, and carry them back to the hut upon coloured, wide, firm plastic pallets.

The weight of the pallets is a daily challenge for Richard who will often need other inmates to help him to negotiate the dozen steps that he needs to descend, as well as the final entry through the narrow blue entrance door into the hut.

Once inside, Richard and Rex distribute the shiny food rations to each inmate. But, many of the men will curse the rations that they receive, and complain to the sweepers to stop handing them food unfit even for dogs. Another thankless job.

Richard is a lonely man whose daily existence brims with regret and boredom. He has been in gaol now for about 18 months. I have never heard Richard being called over the yard loudspeakers for a visit on the weekends; nor have I ever seen him receive a letter in the mail when letters are handed out by the sullen guards at the 7am muster. He rarely goes out into the exercise yard, except for the compulsory musters six times each day. Richard tells me that he has a brother-in-law who sometimes puts money into his prison account so that he can buy a few simple buy-up items, or make an occasional telephone call.

But Richard rarely talks about a family, and he keeps to himself, as all inmates are instructed to do. If he has a family somewhere, I think that they have disowned him. His one interest seems to be horse racing, and we often meet in front of the library door at 10.20am with a few others so that we will have the best chance of reading the latest newspapers when the library door is unlocked at 10.30am by one of the guards. But, this is his life.

Richard will be released in October – six months from now. But, he has no idea where he will go; the chaplain and the welfare officer are looking for suitable accommodation for him. Richard thinks that he may be relocated to a half-way house run by Correctional Services for a month or two – then to a boarding house in some sordid suburban location if he can find a room to rent cheaply. But, in six months time, Richard will need to confront his freedom: the freedom from his feeding the birds, his freedom from the daily cleaning and meal routines, his freedom from the enforced early morning camaraderie and the silence which sustains us.

Richard will have gained his freedom from the daily visits to the library, and wondering when the guard will ever open the entry door to let us in. It makes me wonder whether Richard's new-found "freedom" will be just another word, or perhaps, a new-found sentence.

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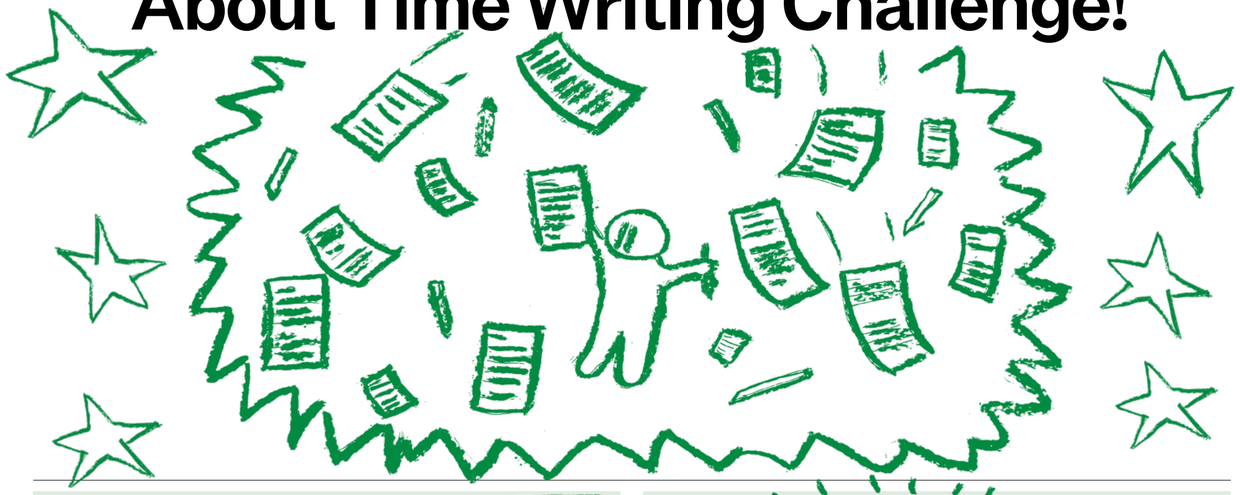
About Time Writing Challenge!



Feedback from our guest judge, Bri Lee:

Reading these entries was a powerful and joyous reminder of how every single person has a unique and rich inner life. Incarceration involves stripping people of that individuality, but each story showed how we all have hopes, fears, and desires special to us. The people whose work struck me most were the ones who painted something very specific – they evoked images and feelings that transported me through time and space. It was a gift to see so many of your happy places. Thank you to everyone who entered, and don't stop writing!



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



• Write for Fun! Get Published!

Thank you all who submitted to the 'My Happy Place' Writing Challenge.

Next prompt:
Food for Thought: Write a story that includes food!

- 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 Challenge' up the top.

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

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

Note:
Not available for readers in South Australia.

Runner-Up!

My Happy Place: Rusty, My Soulmate

By Pip

Pip writes from a prison in VIC.

Everyone needs their own happy place. Especially in here. Somewhere to escape the drama and politics of the yard.

For some, their happy place is a physical location. A bench under the tree in the yard. The gym or library on the rare days that they are open.

Then there are the happy places that aren't physical. The ones that people visit in their minds and hearts. Memories of better days, both gone and to come. That joke their partner told them during yesterday's visit. The phone call to wish their child goodnight.

For many years, my happy place was wherever I was with my soulmate.

Rusty and I met on the anniversary of one of the darkest days of my life. It became the anniversary of one of the best.

Rusty became my constant companion. The chocolate Labrador mix gave me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. To drag myself to appointments with my parole officer. Suddenly having to deal with the world again after 7 years was scary. Rusty got me through.

When I was on the verge of giving up on life, it was knowing that at least Rusty had faith in me that kept me going. Rusty got me through everything. From years of people trying to sabotage my freedom, to multiple major health scares.

Rusty saved my life.

For 13 years, Rusty was my world. When I lost him, I was devastated. I put his bow-tie collar on his favourite teddy bear, and sat it next to Rusty's ashes.

When I came back to prison, my landlady was human enough to not throw out the photos of my soulmate and his shrine, with the rest of my belongings.

My mother now has Rusty's ashes and teddy. His photos are on the wall in my cell.

Whatever this place throws at me, I will always have Rusty with me. I will always have my happy place.



Finalists!

Not Dad Anymore

By Russell

Russell writes from a prison in WA.

"Hey Mark."

Two words, one name. I was stunned. Gathering my thoughts, I started the mental checklist. Had I pressed the wrong button? No. Was it a stranger answering? No. It was definitely my son, a changed son.

"Hey Brad," I replied, my voice catching slightly.

In that small phone booth, grimy from eons of conversations, cocooned from the everyday, my world changed. Twenty-five years of cuddles, nappies, injuries, laughter, growth, ushering a son into a possibility of anything dreamed, all forgotten, because one word had been replaced.

After my betrayal, my descent into darkness, the greatest pain, deep within that space beyond fibres, skin and cells, was my certainty that there would be no more conversations, no more connection, no more father and son.

Then, after 12 months, a rebirth, a letter, a new hope. At first fragile, tentative, sometimes difficult. Gradually, with repressed longing, the patchwork quilt of a new relationship was formed in the solitude of that communication cubicle. I had no manual or experience, so the connections were haphazard, random and sometimes unnatural. I let those fingers of what-once-had solidify, clinging onto each square that filled in a gap. Now I had to understand what Mark meant to that quilt.

Laying on my bed that night, listening to the gentle song from the bunk above, I gazed out of the slit of a clear night sky, stars spilt thin in the glow of a rising moon. Most nights I would be now filled with that inner voice, examining, replaying, rebuking, remodelling, the day's events, searching for confirmation that I still had control, a place in this world. Tonight, the voice was silent. It was helpless.

Like most revelations the one I then had came from nowhere. The random firing of neurons, triggering memories, knowledge and intuition led to an unexpected insight. My eldest son had taken a single, profound step, a step out of the shadow on his life, a step propelled by tears, resilience and, still, of love. He had moved beyond my shadow of 25 years, enveloping his past. Brad had stepped out into the sunlight of his own future. I was still there but no longer eclipsing his journey through life.

I thought back to the abandonment and loneliness that he must have felt. So sudden, like an earthquake ripping apart his foundations, the struggle to accept what I had done and who I had become. He had survived, rebuilt himself without me, growing into an independent voyager.

I felt something unexpected. Pride. I was not "Dad" anymore, I was Mark. I drifted off to sleep, the faint moonlight echoing across my face, a face of a prisoner at peace.

'Just Listen, See, Breathe': My Happy Place

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in VIC.

The straps of his back-pack chaffed and pulled against his shoulders, the weight of each uneven step threatening to topple him back down the slope. His boots crunched the tiny pebbles that slided and slid, plumes of dust flicking into the still air. His rugged breath matched the cicadas, and the only moisture was the unwelcome crawl of sticky sweat down his nose and cheeks. He licked the salt from his lips and spat with a growl. "Bloody hell" he muttered before tossing the bag off his back and scrambling to wipe his stinging eyes. This was stupid. He cried as he kicked a log, the pain shot up his toe and the echo of his swearing came back at him from the surrounding rocky hills. The only indication he'd heard was the subtle halt of insect chatter before it started up again. He slumped down onto the log he'd just abused. "Why am I even in this ridiculous place?!" he said into his hands before pulling the sweat-dampened pamphlet from his pocket. "Find your Happy Place!" it said, the ink now running. He was going to kill that idiot hippy at work who suggested he take this nature retreat. "I think some time in nature could give you a little more reason to be happy," he'd said. Shows what he knew. This whole exercise had been pure hell, and he'd be glad to get back to his flat in the city, have a feed and put the game on. "That's it," he said. "I'm done." He stood to retrieve his bag, now back to the car and left this whole business behind.

He stopped at a shrill that startled him, a sound from beneath his bag, and began laughing. "Jesus, almost gave me a heart attack, mate!" The lizard regarded him with boredom. "I've lost it." Talking to the wildlife. "Maybe I should just shut up." As he said this a breeze flowed causing him to take a long breath. It was then his eyes landed on a white flower. It was tiny, smaller than his fingernail. He crouched to see it closer and smiled. Happy. The cicadas seemed to take on a soothing tone where before they were harsh. Or was it just him being hushed this time. It felt fresh as he stood up again. The birds, the trees, the land, had they always looked so bright? Has the sky danced like that before? Had his lungs felt so full before? Some scent filled the air, or it was sweet, the same warmth that stifled him before now held him safely. He felt different ... new ... happy. Something. That lizard, that flower, that log had spoken to him all without words. In this strange but safe silence he picked up his bag and continued on to learn more about his happy place. He walked on, thinking that maybe he didn't need to "find", just listen, see, breathe, to be happy.

Performance Poet

By Jonathan

Jonathan writes from a prison in VIC.

Within that club of egos, I had found a friend. He talked to me of glory and made me want to join. So I sent a few gold coins and received a nonsense letter. I must be a member! In a group of names, I am the unclean one, the token unpublished poet; there always must be one.

From humble beginnings and through many glasses of wine, my friend the painter encouraged me to lie. He encouraged my decadence and made me feel alive. But a club needs money and a space is not forthcoming, so my friend the painter arranged a picnic within the shadow of Mt. Macedon. Over telephone lines and written word, he told me of his plan, to have me as a wandering poet in this entourage performance. I was chuffed to be asked and glad to help out.

On a sunny day, I packed up a few rhymes with my favourite soggy sangers and headed out to greenery. Through mystical mountain scenery on hard bitumen road, I found the banner blazing and joined a happy throng.

But what do I see? A poster at the gate making people take notice. Offering all the delights on show: wine, food, music, a nude model, sculpture, and me – performance poet! In those 15 seconds of stunned glory, I nearly wanted to be born again and I straightened my "hippy" waistcoat and looked inside my hat. I am not even famous, but that day I felt like I was. The painter had made a little stage for me to stand upon and I mounted it with trepidation, fortified with wine.

I looked out upon the faces of artists and hangers-on and launched into my poetry getting better as I went on. I did the one about welcome and one about sorry love and finished with "Garden of Treasure", that will keep them sane. After each was some applause, gaining momentum with each new rhyme, and I finished the first "act" wrapped in kind comments and lively congratulations.

Now I don't want to explain the madness or ruin a good prose and I don't want to pump myself up for all to see, but each time I mounted the stage, people stopped and listened and looked. If performance is a holy tragedy, I was a martyr that day.

As the sun was sinking and everyone was moving on, I rested with my friend and nodded at knowing looks and good-byes.

What a day of discovery and warmth from my peers. It gave me new strength to write more and new avenues to follow. Breathing in that clear air, I opened up my soul and had an appreciative audience to watch the bare bones. That vague feeling of poetry classes and clutching for right words ceased in the rapture of riving recognition.

Now I know sway ...



Finding Freedom in Nature

By James

James writes from a prison in VIC.

The last sentence I can recall was:

“Have you ever tried GBH?”

“No I haven’t,” I retorted.

Colourful people doing colourful things. In other words, characters being characters. I somehow justified to myself.

My experience of entering gaol was hazy and blurry. A brick, as they say, is a 10 year term of imprisonment, and getting outta my mind was on my list of things to do, not realising that I would find my true happy place in nature.

Pushing the boundaries and pushing my luck as I wrestled control of my life from within my self.

I needed to find a place in a hurry that could take my mind, body and soul to a higher plane of existence and heal.

I won’t go into an immense detail as to how, when and why it all evolved. But it seemed to grow out of my need to escape the harsh realities of prison. Surrounded by the mad, bad and the sad, I would often just go out into the yard and watch all the birds around us just doing what birds do.

The ravens would stare from great heights at me, giving me the evil eye as they crowed stubbornly, fixated on their agenda for the day. The magpies quietly entering and exiting my unit, before making their way to a cell following a routine as old as the gaol itself.

Blackbirds, the clowns of all the birds I watched, were always either just having a quickie or clowning and grooming each other, close by to the waterfall or pond. Tiny little quail like birds would carpet the green grass camouflaged due to their small size and beautiful colours which would betray their location. Bright blues and striking reds, the only thing I could see separating their species.

My favourites were the kites that majestically hunted in slipstreams and a breeze that they would manipulate to enhance their ability to hunt their prey.

The sparrows! Due to the seemingly never ending dance in the sky, they encircled and entwined, always capturing my attention as they pretended not to be interested before hovering silently above. Then, like a missile shot down directly at their target, they’d head back to their base.

Spring had sprung.

My place of contentment and joy was all around me.

Going out to water the rose garden one day, I heard a croaky voice from within the thicket that seemed to be laughing at me.

On closer inspection, I saw two fully grown cockatoos pecking and kissing and grooming one another, looking at me as if to say, “Suffer, you have to work all day while we live the life!” I couldn’t even begin to explain how beautiful their eyes were. I’ve seen some cockys before. But I’m telling you, their eyes were painted the most beautiful sky blue I’ve ever seen.

Nature truly is wild.

How blessed I was to find my happy place.

Long Bay Became My Happy Place

By Neale

Neale writes from a prison in NSW.

I have just been released from Long Bay as I began to write this. When I first saw this writing competition I was still inside. It got me thinking and reflecting. When I first wondered where I consider to be a happy place, I thought of a beach. I am a bit of a water baby, a lot of happy times spent at the beach. However, I know for some people the beach is not such a great place. Especially if you haven’t learnt to swim well for example. When I think about it more, a beach can be very dangerous. People do lose their lives there. There can be sharks and they need lifeguards because your life can be in danger going to the beach.

After reflecting for a while I came to a startling conclusion. Long Bay has been a happy place for me, at least some of the time. Yes, there are aspects that are not happy, like at the beach. For me it isn’t so much the place itself as the people I have encountered there. While not everyone contributes to that happiness, there are quite a few people there though who brought joy and happiness to my time in what can be quite a dark and not so inviting place.

I think it helps if you approach the place with the correct attitude. If you start with the view, for example, that everyone is against you and the place is completely terrible then you are destined to be unhappy no matter where you are. I have found, in general, that if you aim to get along with people even when they may have some very different opinions to yourself, then the other person is probably more likely to get along with you. If they don’t then probably it’s best to avoid them as much as possible as they are just going to drag you down with them.

The happiest times while I was at Long Bay were when I was with others who also sought to be respectful, considerate and supportive of each other. I personally believe that we would all be better off if we seek to get along with each other and respect each other regardless of where we happen to be. We need to resist the trend of “cancelling” those who are “different”. I think it is OK for people to have different views from mine. However, is it possible to disagree but still be respectful of each other? If not, we go back to what I would consider a less developed society where it is the one with the most power, strength or money that dominates and seeks to exploit others. For me that just leads to unhappiness for all.

Maybe the title for this competition should be OUR Happy Place rather than MY Happy Place. As I think it is more about how we approach a place together that determines if we are going to be happy or not.

My Happy Place is the Quiet of Monday

By Trieste

Trieste writes from a prison in QLD.

“Ding Dong, it’s time to wake up ladies,” I hear the sound of someone’s voice over the speaker. Before I know it I’ve brushed my teeth and the feeling starts to kick in, I’m ready for work. My happy place. I start bible study, I finish the chapter, I forget to pray, I then start writing to God about all that I need help with, with hope in my heart that I am not writing to God in vain about things I want. I open the door, I stand there silent, it’s quiet, no one makes eye contact, nor do they start an argument. We walk towards the eating quarter, it’s Monday. My happy place.

It’s 10am, I am at work deciding if I need coffee to get the jitters, a piece of fruit for some sugary glucose or a peanut butter and jam sandwich.

I think to myself, do I need the extra calories? I drink cordial then go back to my work area, restocking shelves, finishing any work that needs completing. I set the standard yesterday, about to beat my score. My happy place. I’ve decided to take my studies to work to practise active learning strategies in my extra time. My happy place.

I am in the medication line, I remember taking the first bite of dinner at 1pm … My happy place.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and now Friday, I check my balance – I’ve saved money. I’m in secure buy-up fortnightly, I do not have access to food 24/7.

I only have to see one other person unless it’s meal time. My happy place.

It’s Sunday, I am at church. My happy place.

It’s Monday again, except there’s a change, the date.

I am nearly home, Mum.

My Happy Place

By Nicholas

Nicholas writes from a prison in QLD.

He yelled the words, “You don’t need a sports car, you need a job, son!” I laughed as I yelled back, “Rich coming from you! You’ve had a legit job for maybe six months of your life, dad!” I had already years under my belt working. I was in between jobs and had a heroin addiction, new born son, partner and fresh out of jail – and arguing with my dad as I slid my new, ill-gained Skyline up his street at 6.30am. Yes, it was ill-gained yet legit at the same time. Me and my father were not overly close – it’s how we adults were. We could not speak for extended periods, then catch up and hang out as if nothing or no time had just separated us for years on end. We could talk intensely, passionately heated or calmly, even silently sit for hours by a fire, not speaking a word – content, comfortable, time standing still for us. When we’d hug, we’d always comment, “Damn, you’re as big as a horse!” The one good thing about spending all those years in jail I guess!

I was nowhere near as close to my old boy as I’d have loved to be, and even still, I’d always learn that we were so similar. I never had to hide who I was, because we were one and the same, a slightly different shell with a trait or two different. Around him, I felt my most confident, strong, focused and happy. The memory I shared of a time I lived with my father for a fortnight, with my partner, my young son and also a younger brother he had with that partner – this is my Happy Place. When times are hard, this memory pulls me through.

I hope you all have a place that you can feel your strength from. I wish I had more of these than I do, now he’s gone. Make most of your time people, inside or out – our lives are too short to waste. Find your Happy Place.

Even though we disagreed about it, every time I get in that sports car, I hear his voice, see his face and feel his hug embrace me. It’s all about perspective.

Music is My Happy Place

By Shea

Shea writes from a prison in VIC.

What a joy it can be, to wrench open your mind and find yourself inhabiting a song. To live out a thousand lives, to know the intimacy of a stranger, and experience nostalgia in such a visceral way for times and places you’ve never been to.

It’s hard to consider happiness in practical terms when freedom is a mere memory, and the closest you’ve come to romance in years is simply holding someone’s hand for an hour. When your physical reality and circumstances are so violently oppressive to the soul, one must find alternative avenues of enjoyment and expression. To detach from the mundane parade of your waking hours and securely climb into the embrace of a musical artist, interloping with sonic expressions of abstract identity and emotion; riding your way through melodies and bass lines, as we have as humans for so many thousands of years, and take solace in lyrics conveying truths about ourselves long hidden or obscured.

Music soothes and saves. It is both journey and destination, rolled up into a strange realm of infinite space and possibilities. It offers a chance for reflection, to analyse and explore ourselves and the world at large. Foreign perspectives and takes so far away from our own provide much needed contrast, while common feelings unify us in kind.

Untethered dives into the depths of passion, subtle stitches to mend a lifetime of loss and forlorn mistakes. Peer to peer connections through glimpses of captured beauty. Submerged so long that you can forget the pain, however temporary. Other excursions offer catharsis, a session of metaphorical bloodletting where pain can be extracted and processed properly, released and left to the wayside. An antidote to apathy and other blockages caused by unconscious processes of self-protection, a breaking down of walls and barriers constructed historically to remain functional and stoic.

Most of my life was spent living near the coast, watching swarms of people flock towards the golden sands each summer like birds in an unshakable pattern of daily migration. Bronzed bodies, seagulls, towels, fish & chips. The sizzling heat washing over the masses, packing the foreshore like tinned sardines. Not my cup of tea.

My visits to the beach were usually solo pursuits, well past sunset, to be alone with the sounds of the waves crashing up into the shore. To gaze blankly into the distant horizon, with the cool textured sand under my skin, and the chill of the calm sea breeze through my hair.

There is no longer anywhere to go. No midnight drives through the forest, no casual people-watching on a slow train ride home after a gig. No more first dates, no more popping in to visit an old friend, while you’re passing through their area. Just these seemingly endless walls.

Music is my happy place now, my passport to living in a song again, an escape however brief; I shall cherish it always.

‘Release the Devil’s Beast!’: A Childhood Battle for the Treehouse

By Oliver

Oliver writes from a prison in VIC.

“Oliver! Oliver!”

The miserable wretch ran towards my throne where I was seated. I seethed at his insolence.

“Your Highness, peasant!” I roared, correcting the impudent urchin grovelling at my feet.

"… Your Highness. The kingdom is being attacked from the south.”

“WHAT?!” I jumped to my feet, aghast at the audacity of the invaders. “The south? My nemesis, the Smiths' clan. Well, if it’s war they want, it’s war they’ll get.”

“Go to the lookout. Ring the bells when they’re near the castle. I’ll prepare for battle.”

The scout obediently ascended to the battlements while I raged to my general. “Those scoundrels think they can attack my castle?” I fumed, donning my armour and sheathing my sword. “They will pay.”

Bells sounded. “Already?” I ran to the closest window. A tingle of dread traversed my spine as I appraised the mass of invaders. “So many?” I lamented.

“What’re my orders, your Highness?” my general asked, looking over my shoulder.

“My castle is impregnable. Let’s show that rabble what fear is. ARCHERS! Fire at will.”

Arrows flew from overhead, the sight a death knell upon any enemy. I grinned in vengeful satisfaction as I watched many of the influx fall. My grin faded when I saw it barely made a dent in the hordes’ numbers.

“Reload! Fire again!” I barked. The sky darkened as another volley of arrows flew accurately, but insignificantly, at my foes.

“We’re nearly out of arrows, Highness. Perhaps it’s time to consider surrendering?”

I grabbed the general by the front of his uniform and pulled him threateningly close. “Never, you cowardly wretch! Release the Devil’s Beast.”

Gasps of dread echoed off the wall. “But Highness …”

“DO IT!” I shouted. “Before I gut you myself.”

The general paled, but saluted before descending to the castle’s dungeon. A blood-curdling scream reverberated from the depths. I became bereft of a general as the savage beast claimed its first victim. “A justified price after he questioned me. 'Surrender, indeed!'” I scoffed, his only deserved valediction.

The battlefield redirected my attention as the monster charged into the throng. Screams became the dead’s dirge as teeth and claw professed their demise.

Those who escaped the deadly affray continued the assault, leaders brandishing ladders to escalade the castle. They were soon erected against the walls.

“Defend the castle with your lives, men!” I inspired as I drew my sword, dispatching the first assailant.

But inevitably, the castle was infiltrated by the weight of their numbers.

“Retreat to me!” I ordered.

As valiantly as we fought, we were soon surrounded. It was time.

I lay down my sword …

… only to grab one of the many pre-prepared buckets. “Now, men!”

Acid drenched our foes, splashing eyes, depriving sight, and burning skin. Horror halted their advance, allowing a catalysing, frenzied retribution.

Exhausted, I heroically dispatched the last enemy and collapsed.

Just in time as Mum announced: “Kids, dinner time. And tie the dog back up.”

The illusion was shattered, but at least my treehouse, my happy place, was safe once more.



My Happy Place: Not Being Defeated by Prison

By Stephanie

Stephanie writes from a prison in WA.

I know a long time ago, I never imagined my life to be like this. I have three beautiful children ages from 4 years old to 16 years old. I’ve always been a good mum doing everything I could to provide for them, then one day I met up with a friend that I knew from years ago. It was during Covid and I unexpectedly fell in love.

I started to see this man more often. Before you know it, I was clouded by the warning signs. I couldn’t take my children with me as their father, my ex, wouldn’t allow it. Months had passed and this man was out on bail and deported from Thailand. He decided to skip court and we went on the run up north for three and a half years. I would come back for Perth to see my kids every three weeks. I’ve done so many things which I regret. But one day his luck ran out and the police found us, and he was sent to jail.

Three months later, I was arrested and now I face the harsh reality of my poor choices. But I struggled for a long time, I still do. I have done many courses and I’m determined to right my wrongs. The biggest victims are my children. They never asked for this, they are the ones impacted by my wrong doings – and for that I’m so broken. I had a community that I loved and most of all the three most amazing children – to hurt you in such a way by my absence is shameful – but I am comforted knowing that I will not only better my life, I can better it for them by promising to do better, to help my community.

Seeking help inside and outside when I feel down, I remember that I’m strong, because I have got this far. I’m worth it, my children are worth it. I went through things I could never wish on others. But it has taught me that I can see through the forest. Trees no longer block my clarity. I am a changed woman. Prison will not defeat me. I can come out of this with so much knowledge, courage and power to trail blaze my future path. I do believe I will never come back – my mind is strong.

My happy place is knowing inside my heart that I will do better for me. I’ll see the world in a different way.



Legal Corner

Self-Advocacy from Prison: Procedural Fairness

What 'natural justice' means, and how prisoners can engage with parole, transfers and breaches

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 criminalised and imprisoned people as well as writing for *About Time* and producing podcasts.

This is legal information and not legal advice.

Prisoners are subject to a significant number of decisions during imprisonment, such as decisions on parole, home detention, prison transfers, and alleged conduct breaches. These decisions often require prison authorities to provide procedural fairness to the person subject to a decision.

Procedural fairness, often called "natural justice", is a collection of rights, established under common law in Australia around the 1980s. It assists people to achieve fairness when governments make decisions against them and is said to consist of two main rules: the hearing rule, which is discussed below, and the rule against bias.

The Hearing Rule

The hearing rule consists of three elements designed, essentially, to facilitate engagement in the decision-making process by the person subject to the relevant decision. These parts are:

1. Prior Notice
The requirement by the decision-maker to tell the person subject to the decision that a decision will be made.

2. Disclosure
The requirement by the decision-maker to disclose any material they intend on considering in making of the decision, especially material that goes against the outcome sought by the person subject to the decision.

3. Opportunity to Respond
The requirement to allow a person subject to a decision to make submissions to be considered in the making of the decision, including to provide a response to any material intended to be considered in making the relevant decision.

These elements may be discharged differently depending on the type of decision being made. For example, the time frame in which prior notice is given about a pending decision may vary from different types of decisions. This time frame may or may not be determined by the legislation under which the relevant decision is made.

It is also important to understand that procedural fairness is not required in all government decisions. The right of procedural fairness can be overridden, but only if the relevant legislation clearly states that procedural fairness is not required. For example, section 501(3) and 501(3A) allows the government to cancel a person's visa for failing a character test without providing procedural fairness.

What This Means For Prisoners

Participation in decisions is important. It is our opportunity to engage and be heard in decision making processes and to be sure the decision maker has all the relevant information when making decisions.

A failure to provide any of the elements of the hearing rule may render a decision unlawful or invalid. Decisions believed to be made without procedural fairness can often be challenged through an ombudsman, tribunals, or by judicial review in a Supreme Court. Procedural fairness, like all legal doctrines, can be complex in its application.

Any person who feels they have been denied procedural fairness should seek legal advice.

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Law and Healthcare: Why Can't I Get My Usual Prescriptions From Prison?





How the law can change the medications available inside

By Prisoners' Legal Service Queensland

Disclaimer:
This article is general information only and is not legal advice.

There is a lot of talk about human rights in prison – with things like "the Mandela Rules", 'the principle of equivalence', and access to health care without discrimination.

But even though these things are spoken about, often the medicine you get on the inside is different from the medicine you get on the outside – even though your diagnosis hasn't changed.

So, it is reasonable to ask: why is my medicine different just because I am living in a prison?

One reason is the *Health Insurance Act 1973 (Cth)*.

The Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) and the Health Insurance Act 1973

The *Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme* (PBS) is Australia's system for making prescription medications affordable and accessible. The PBS is the product of a piece of legislation called the *Health Insurance Act 1973*.

In the community, if a doctor prescribes medication, there is a good chance that the Australian government has subsidised it.

Since its subsidised under the PBS, you pay relatively cheap price for it at the pharmacy.

Take asthma medication, for example.

Asthma is a very common chronic illness, and it is often treated with a salbutamol inhaler (the "puffer").

On the outside, the PBS limits the costs of puffers. Usually, the price for a puffer is around 20-30 dollars.

Without the PBS, the cost of a puffer would be much higher.

In fact, in the USA, where the government does not universally subsidise asthma puffers, the cost of one inhaler can exceed 100 US dollars.

Due to the way the *Health Insurance Act 1973* operates, medicines supplied to people in prison are not subsidised by the PBS. This means, medications prescribed to people in prison may be different from those prescribed to people in the community with the same health needs.

If the PBS was available to people in prison, prison health centres would have a better ability to give you the same medication you receive in the community.

If you are concerned about your access to medication, you might consider:

- Writing or calling your state Health Ombudsman
- Writing to The Australian Human Rights Commission (GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001)
- Sharing your experience with the Australian Medical Association (PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604)
- Or petitioning your federal member of parliament.

If you are incarcerated in Queensland, Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory, you might consider contacting the Human Rights Commission that operates in your State or Territory:

Queensland Human Rights Commission
PO Box 15565
City East QLD 4002

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
PO Box 18011
Melbourne VIC 3000

ACT Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

Health Ombudsman and Human Rights Commissions may require that you try to resolve any concerns you have with the relevant government agency before making a complaint. There may also be timeframes that apply to making a complaint to these agencies. If you wish to make a complaint, you should seek advice from a legal practitioner in the State or Territory where you are incarcerated.

GAMARADA

Gadigal country

wiimpatja

The Rainbow Lodge Program

"Healing through Culture"
First Nations men's Program

(John Morony Correctional Centre)

Program outline:
The "Healing through Culture" program is a culturally focused trauma-based program for First Nations male inmates on remand in NSW Correctional Centres. The goal being that you are introduced through a therapeutic environment to ways of identifying your trauma, its resulting behavioural responses, and the impact those behaviours have on you, your family, and the community. Through this process, we hope to support the men to start the healing process, which will enable them to take responsibility for their lives, leading to more positive life choices and starting the process of disengagement from the criminal justice system. The program consists of two parts:

Wiimpatja - Healing the Warrior:
The workshops will support First Nations men on remand to attain an appreciation of trauma at a personal, family and community level. It will assist the men on remand to attain awareness of personal experiences of trauma and how that trauma has affected their attitude, behaviour, and lifestyle choices.

Gamarada - "Healing Circle" life Training Program:

The Gamarada "Healing Circle" life training Program is a peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching program specialising in trauma sensitive mindfulness practice, drawing on Wiradjuri Elder and Professor Judy Atkinson's work on healing trauma through culture.

Program referrals:
The program will run at John Morony Correctional Centre NSW from 1st July 2024-30th June 2026. New programs start each month between February and November each year.

Contact your parole officer, legal representative, or corrections staff to seek entry to the program by contacting MOSP at John Morony.

Health

WHAT IS AN ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI)?

An ABI is damage to the brain that occurs at any point after birth that affects people in different ways.

HOW DO YOU GET AN ABI?

Some causes of brain injury:

- Hitting your head during a fight / physical violence
- Hitting your head from a car or motorcycle crash
- Drug or alcohol overdose causing loss of oxygen to brain
- Brain tumor, infection or brain disease



THE EFFECTS OF AN ABI

The long-term effects of acquired brain injury are different for everyone. Brain injuries are often called the 'hidden disability' because it is not always obvious to see that someone has an ABI. The effects might not be physical. An ABI can affect someone's thinking, their emotions, or their memory. Because the affects are not always physical, it can take a long time before someone realises, they might have an ABI.

Possible effect on the brain:
- Short-term memory affected
- Hard to find answers to problems
- Hard to concentrate or pay attention
- Hard to plan and organize
- Hard to find inspiration or motivation to do things
- Not able to see the future consequences of your actions (eg. don't think about it, worry about it later)

Possible effect on behavior:
- Easily angry or annoyed (raising voice, overly expressive)
- Difficulty socialising with others (can be very direct but not mean to sound rude)
- Slower to respond to things
- Hard to control emotions (eg. Can be in a great mood and then something small happens and you are suddenly in the worst mood - 'an emotional rollercoaster')

Possible effect on the body:
- Dizziness and balance problems
- Ongoing constant pain
- Headaches or migraine
- Taste and smell changes
- Problems with sleep

Possible effect on mental health:
- Stress
- Depression
- Anxiety (panic attacks that lead to dizziness and black-out)

WHAT DO I DO IF I THINK I HAVE AN ABI AND I AM CURRENTLY IN PRISON?

Ask your lawyer:
1. If you still have a matter in the court, you can ask your lawyer if it is possible to get an ABI diagnosis if it may support you in your case.
2. If your lawyer thinks that it might help, your lawyer can try to get the diagnosis paid for by Victorian Legal Aid.
3. It is not very common for lawyers to be successful in getting their clients an ABI diagnosis, but you should always ask if you think you might have an indicator of an ABI.

If you think you got your brain injury BEFORE you were 18 years old:
- ask your nurse or doctor to be assessed for an Intellectual Disability instead of an ABI.

Everyone deserves to receive proper care and support within prison. If you are unsure of your healthcare rights, in December 2025 you will be able to access the Prison Law Handbook on the Offender Services Network. This will give you information about your legal rights in prison.

Right now, there is not enough support given to people in prison to check for ('screen') or to diagnose a possible brain injury. Voices for Change are trying to find ways to make easier for people to be screened for ABI in prison.

SOME FINAL WORDS FROM YOUR PEERS AT VOICES FOR CHANGE:

Don't be ashamed or afraid, we have been there before. You're not the first person and you're not going to be the last.
All these feelings that you're feeling are normal, they're real feelings!
Things shouldn't get any worse, things should get better. We wish you luck for your future!



VOICES-FOR-CHANGE.ORG.AU

voices for change

voicesforchangeaustralia@gmail.com
MAIL: PO Box 297, Fitzroy VIC 3065.

Feeling Good After the Gym

Reprinted with permission from *Inside Time*.

Going to the gym and doing other hard physical work are great things to do for your body, but they can leave you feeling tight and sore. Put yourself back in balance with this yoga sequence – it will loosen muscles and ease aches. Do this either straight after your gym session or a period of hard work to stop you feeling sore later, or the day after when your cool down wasn't quite enough.

Breathe slowly and deeply, and be careful of yourself while you work. You will know how hard to push yourself, and when to back off, or change a pose to suit your body if you stay tuned in to your breathing. Treat yourself with kindness and you can't go far wrong.



1. Moving mountain
Breathe in.



2. Moving Mountain 2
Breathe out. Flow slowly between these poses for 10 breaths.



3. Eagle
Five breaths each side.



4. Cow Face
Five breaths each side.If your hands can clasp each other, great! If not, use a sock.



5. Forward Bend with Shoulder Stretch
Five Breaths. Nod your head to make sure your neck is relaxed.



6. Quad Stretch With Hand Reaching Forward
Five breaths.



7. Quad Stretch With Hand Reaching Up
Five breaths. Hold onto a wall if you find it hard to balance.



8. Seated Twist
Five breaths each side. Sit up as straight as you can as you twist.



9. Relaxation
Lie like this, knees up and propped together if that is more comfortable. Notice whether your body feels different. Do this for five minutes, or more if you want to.

Kairos Outside

For women impacted by having a family member or friend in prison.

Kairos Prison Ministry Australia

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

No judgement.
No expectations.
No financial cost.

Tell Your Family and Friends about Kairos Outside
www.kairos.org.au/kairos-outside
or search **"Kairos Outside Australia"**

• Reintegration

Ask Stacey: Help! Everyone Can See My Ankle Monitor!

Stacey answers your questions, on concealing ankle monitors and staying out of trouble on parole.



By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender girl who had a 10 and a half year sentence in a men's prison. She is now an advocate, published writer and advice giver!

These answers are from my life (and are supposed to make you smile a bit!). This is NOT legal advice – ALWAYS ask a lawyer and/or your parole officer if you have any questions at the time! On all things, ask your parole officer prior to doing anything, consult your lawyer if you are still unclear. Do this via email and texts to show in writing that you raised it. And if they don't answer you, don't do it!!!

You may be following in an age-old tradition of this county by languishing in one of his Majesty's prisons, but you are not forgotten!

You had questions, and we listened!

Question 1: Any suggestions for how to deal with looks/comments from people noticing your ankle monitor and ideas on how to disguise it?

So, as I'm transgender I feel like people are staring at me and not my ankle bracelets. So, you could just be trans? Failing that, I wear boots, high socks, or trousers. I also highly recommend a scrunchy (the big puffy hair ties) to put at the bottom of your GPS on your ankle to stop it banging and rubbing on your malleolus bones, the lumpy bones at the bottom of your ankle.

When it comes to the alcohol monitor it's a bit trickier. It needs an unobstructed contact with your skin. So, boots were the best for me. If your trousers get in between the alcohol monitor and your skin, you risk a tamper alarm. If you get one of those, you will get a 'please explain' from parole. If that's a common conversation, they ask questions like can you fulfil your conditions. You don't need that headache.

Comment: Just so you know, no one has ever commented on my GPS. The only people who ever see it are at the beach, and they are not looking at my ankles.

Question 2: Are there restrictions on parole prohibiting you from changing your appearance (e.g. hair dye, cosmetic surgery) and your name?

Appearance: I dye my hair a very dark red and that's no real issue. It isn't really a forever thing so no big deal if you get a haircut or grow a moustache. Plus, they can see you each reporting day, you don't need permission. It's not a parole condition not to dye your hair, shave your head or get lip filler.

Plastic surgery is different though. I had plastic surgery, and, by the way, getting my face cut off was not as cool as the movie Face Off led me to believe. It took ages to heal!

In reality, a lot of parole is asking for permission – and if you don't ask but do it anyway, then you can get into trouble. If you explain you got hit by a car and didn't plan to be hit by a car, then it's not your fault. But if something was being planned for a while, like plastic surgery, then they will not be chuffed.

After the surgery, they will need a new photo. But that's ok, because you will look amazing!

Name change: There IS legislation all over the place about name changes and it being subject to strict laws in prison, parole and all the different registers and orders. So, check. Ask everyone you are beholden to. It is complicated and each state has its own laws around it. But it will very, very likely be a breach of parole to change your name without written permission from EVERYONE who you has oversight over you, like the Adult Parole Board and registers. For example, in Victoria you will need written permission from the Adult Parole Board before you can apply through Births Deaths and Marriages to change your name – if you don't, it's an offence.

Question 3: What are the rules regarding interstate or overseas travel whilst on parole?

This ties into your amazing new photos of your new face! If you travel without letting parole know, all the country could get to see it on the afternoon news. A 'please explain' will be the least of your worries then.

I've travelled a fair bit while on parole for work. To Alice Springs, Sydney a few times, Adelaide and the Blue Mountains. Basically, I let parole know that I intended to travel. When, where, why. I provided them with all the supporting documents like letters from my employer, tickets, who I will be going etc. Everything was laid out in the open and then they assess it. They then give you a letter saying you have permission to leave the state to go to wherever you said you're going to, and returning when you said you would. Or, they say no.

If you're traveling for work or a deeply personal reason, they will be more likely to be amenable to it. If you're driving from Melbourne to Sydney in your car to see your old cellie, then maybe not.

That's all for this edition!

Send through more questions for me – I love to answer them. And it's FREE!

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Mob

Letters From the Outside:

In the February edition of *About Time*, the Teelack Brothers wrote about a guest lecture they received from Tya Lovett, a member of the Victorian Heritage Council and one of the traditional owners of Tjap Wurrung County. This is Tya's response to that article.

Ngata (hello) Teelack Brothers, fellow inmates across the country and prison staff,

It was an honour to have been invited to share some Aboriginal cultural knowledge and wisdom with the Teelack Brothers.

I'm aware that many of the Teelack Brothers, Aboriginal and other inmates found themselves lost, following a path that lead down another and another which resulted in their current situation being long or short term.

Nevertheless, life must go on (in and outside of the fence), which was a core focus of our recent knowledge sharing gathering, which I echoed we need more people identifying, protecting and managing our significant landscapes, places and sites, which is not only for us now, but future generations to ensure we all walk in the footsteps of our ancestors.

Some seeds of knowledge were shared, now its up to the Teelack Brothers to continue leaning and sharing knowledge with others (in and outside of the fence).

Keep up the deadly work Teelack Brothers and staff, may your knowledge sharing journey continue into the future, take care and stay safe.

Wurruk (good-bye)

Tya Lovett

In response to *Walking on History Sharing Culture and Country* by Teelack Brothers

Knowing the history of our surroundings gives us, as Indigenous peoples, guidance and strength from those who came before us.

I look forward to the day my daughter's father is released so he can take our boorai back to his mission at Cummeragunja. I've had the privilege of staying on the riverbank there with my tāne from Yorta Yorta mob, and it's a place that holds deep meaning for our family.

I'm also very wary of visiting the Victorian Markets, knowing it was built on an urupā (burial site) where people now sell and eat kai. In Māori culture our sacred grounds are tapu, and we don't mix tapu (that which carries restriction and sacredness) with noa (the everyday or common). That balance is important in keeping us spiritually connected to our ancestors. – Montess



As with the 2019 and 2023 Elections, the First Peoples' Assembly is working with Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) and Corrections Victoria, to gain access to correctional facilities. It is critically important in the Treaty process that no one gets left behind. Given the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men who are in prison, we are again seeking to visit every prison and juvenile detention facility in the State.



The Blue Walk
By Hayley S
Gunaikurnai people
2025

This is a story of Mob that walked from one end of this river to the other end, only stopping for food and water. The hands represent no hitting and violence, and for food and dancing only. The seven water holes represent where we got our water and the seven sisters.



Feathers Of My Family
By Sweeney
Gunditjmara people
2025

This artwork represents my totem. Coming to jail has taught me more about my culture and the spiritual ways that we follow. When I paint, it takes me away from jail and that's why I paint. My totem is my background, and I love who I am, Koori. Always Was Always Will Be.

Culture

Sports Round Up!



By Goal Mouth

Goal Mouth is About Time's resident sports reporter.



AFL Grand Final 2010 on the Melbourne Cricket Ground by Alexander Sheko

Football codes: War of words heats up

Rugby League chief Peter V'landys is renowned for his digs at the AFL, saying that league leads AFL "like a horse".

V'landys had a crack over the return of AFL State of Origin in February, saying most of the games are played in Victoria; criticised the AFL's Opening Round as a poor imitation of rugby league's Las Vegas event; and said the AFL's Gather Round in Adelaide copied rugby's Magic Round.

V'landys is a strong advocate for rugby league but is renowned for baffling people with bulldust, according to veteran sports administrator Malcolm Speed.

Speed compared last year's performances of AFL and NRL, finding that on almost all measures, the AFL is well ahead. The only exception was grand final viewers.

F1: Piastri's world crashes down in Melbourne

Major rule changes in Formula One this year were guaranteed to create uncertainty, but nobody foresaw Australia's world championship hopeful Oscar Piastri failing to make the start of his home race.

Piastri's crash only a few hundred metres after leaving the pits disappointed the large crowd that turned out at Melbourne's Albert Park, hoping to see him break the curse of Aussie drivers in the home Grand Prix.

F1 cars now rely equally on internal combustion engines and electric batteries for their power – and recharging the batteries while running at speed is proving tricky. The power can surge without notice and drivers find their car uncontrollable.

It caught out four-time world champion Max Verstappen in qualifying and Piastri at an even more crucial time.

Mercedes emerged as the pacesetter of the new era, with English driver George Russell and teenage Italian teammate Kimi Antonelli qualifying on the front row and taking the chequered flag first and second in what proved an exciting race.

AFL v NRL by the Numbers

2025* Figures	AFL	NRL
Revenue	$1.2 billion	$846 million
Broadcast Rights	$643 million	$460 million
Total Crowds	8.77 million	4.37 million
Average Crowds	38,000	21,000
Grand Final TV Viewers	4.08 million	4.5 million
Average Player Salary	$506,000	$400,000
Most Club Members	112,000 (Collingwood)	61,000 (Brisbane)
Least Club Members	30,000 (Gold Coast)	9,000 (Wests Tigers)



Sam Kerr by Dana K. O.

Japan breaks Tillies' hearts again

For the third time, Japan has grasped the Asian Cup from Australia's hands, winning the final by a single goal in Sydney. It was the same 1-0 scoreline between the same teams in the 2014 and 2018 finals.

Japan produced a moment of magic in the 17th minute with a long-distance strike from Maika Hamano that seemed to catch Matildas' goalkeeper Mackenzie Arnold offguard. The Tillies had numerous chances to equalise but the visitors held on. Japan scored 29 times and conceded only one goal in the entire tournament.

In the semi-final, a brilliant goal by superstar Sam Kerr took the Matildas to a 2-1 win against China in Perth. It was the first time Australia had beaten China in the Asian Cup.



Alyssa Healy playing for the Sydney Sixers by Joeyjackets

Cricket: Healy's farewell to remember

Alyssa Healy farewelled cricket in March as a pioneer of women's sport. She played a major role in transforming her sport and believed that it had to cop criticism if it was to be taken seriously and become popular.

Women's cricket has grown spectacularly in Australia, with participation increasing by 61 per cent over four years as TV coverage has brought the game into living rooms.

Healy, a wicketkeeper-batter, is the niece of Ian Healy, another famous Australian keeper. She debuted in 2010, and finished her international career with 269 dismissals. She holds the record for the most T20 international dismissals (126) for men and women, and captained Australia from December 2023.

Her final one-day international innings of 158 off only 98 balls was a triumph, and led her team to a huge victory. The one-off test in Perth was Healy's 299th and final match for Australia and completed a big win in the multi-format series against India.



Ian Dooley via Unsplash

You Can Make Ice Cream in Prison. Here's How.

All you need is eggs, cream, condensed milk and 24 hours

By Geoff

Geoff writes from a prison in VIC.

Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- 600 ml cream
- 2 x cans condensed milk
- Strawberry topping

Instructions:

1. Separate the egg yolks from the egg whites.
2. Pour the cream into a bowl and gently whisk until firm but not set.
3. Pour 2 cans of condensed milk into a bowl.
4. Mix 3 egg yolks with the condensed milk and gently whisk.
5. Mix 6 egg whites together to make a meringue-like texture, but not fully set.
6. Mix the condensed milk with the cream by gently folding it through.
7. Fold through all the ingredients together and mix well.
8. Grab a 2-litre ice cream container (or another type of container) and pour the mixture in a little at a time while mixing the strawberry topping in.
9. When the container is filled, add more topping and freeze for 24 hours.

Final step: Enjoy.

Learn

Nine Things I Picked Up From Reading



Jeff shares facts and odd bits he learnt in the past month

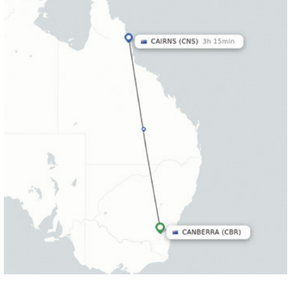
By Jeff Jeff writes from a prison in QLD.



Don Quixote cover 2 by Eric.Parker

1. **"Hunger is the best sauce." From Cervantes' Don Quixote.**

You could do a whole book of quotes from Don Quixote but I suppose then it would be Don Quixote.

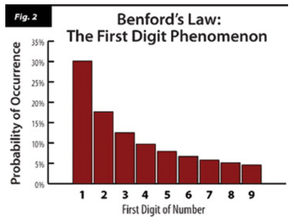


2. **Canberra is further east than Cairns. Counter-intuitive because one is inland and one coastal.**



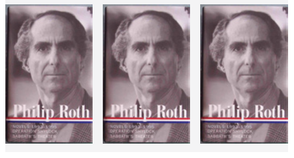
The Shakespeare, High Street, Lincoln by Lincolnian Brian

3. **The word 'bible' never appears in Shakespeare's writings.**



The Cleverest

4. **The digit '1' is more likely than any other digit to occur in a random selection of numbers, in fact by 30%. This is called Benford's law and has successfully been used in a fraud trial.**



Philip Roth: Novels 1993-1995 by cdrummbks

5. **"The imagination of the novelist is powerless against what he knows he is going to read in tomorrow's morning newspaper" – Philip Roth.**



Snail in danger near Zadar, Croatia by Robert Thomson

6. **A snail travels at 55 metres per hour.**



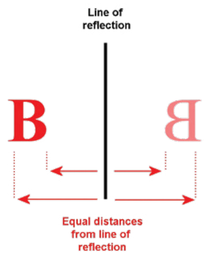
Envelopes by Kevin Steinhardt

7. **"More than kisses, letters mingle souls" – John Donne.**



Rescued Mouse by CJ Isherwood

8. **A mouse eats a quarter of its own weight in food every day, mainly to keep it warm. This is why there are no small animals in the arctic or antarctic and no reptiles or amphibians.**



Oikefuge

9. **Why are images in a mirror left-right reversed but not upside down. That is, on a horizontal but not vertical plane?**

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!

Write to us via 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

Creative

Apocalypse of the Mind

By Emma-lee

Emma-lee writes from a prison in QLD.

I sit here watching the second-hand ticking by
as it slowly keeps passing my time...
And just as I thought the world can't be changed it an apocalypse of the mind,
Like a spark causes a flame, then a light will ignite,
Then suddenly I'm pulling a ton of stress with me,
Seems these days all I'm trying to do is get people to help me to forgive myself,
Now I should have seen the signs it's an apocalypse of the mind,
And don't have me mistaken I would have pressed rewind if I could,
But it seemed fast forward was just as good.
And don't have me misunderstood I would've pressed stop if I could,
I'm so sick of being sick,
So sick of doing shit wrong,
Seems like the best end is a brand-new beginning,
The opposite to a life full of loss, is a brand-new life full of winning,
Cognition destroyed and re-designed it's an Apocalypse of the mind,
Every breath a blessing,
Every step a gift,
Seems these day's people forgetting how precious life really is,
Now I could sit back and say I've had it rough,

But really it's 2 in 3 that have it tough,
You can sit there and deny,
But I'll walk through life with my head held high,
Time to stand up and identify,
I was always too nice,
Didn't think I could suffice,
No more listening to bad advice,
Gotta step up in life,
Become a mother and a wife,
Put a footprint on this reality,
Make for a better society,
Because seeing that smile embraced on his face,
Is all I need to rid my mind of the world's disgrace,
No point in me sitting back and having a cry,
About all the things in life I cannot rectify,
So sick of being sick,
So sick of doing shit wrong,
Sometimes the best end is a brand-new beginning,
The opposite to a world full of loss,
Is a world full of winning,
Cognition destroyed and re-designed,
It's an apocalypse of the mind,
So no matter what I might know,
No matter what I might say,
I'm just a matter of words,
In a matter of thoughts,
So prepare to have your mind blown.

'Love Is Blind And It Can Make You See'

By Caleb

Caleb writes from a prison in QLD.

Love's definition cannot be just one
Not one, two or more but a tonne
Love is the greatest quality of them all
A verse written by the poet Paul.

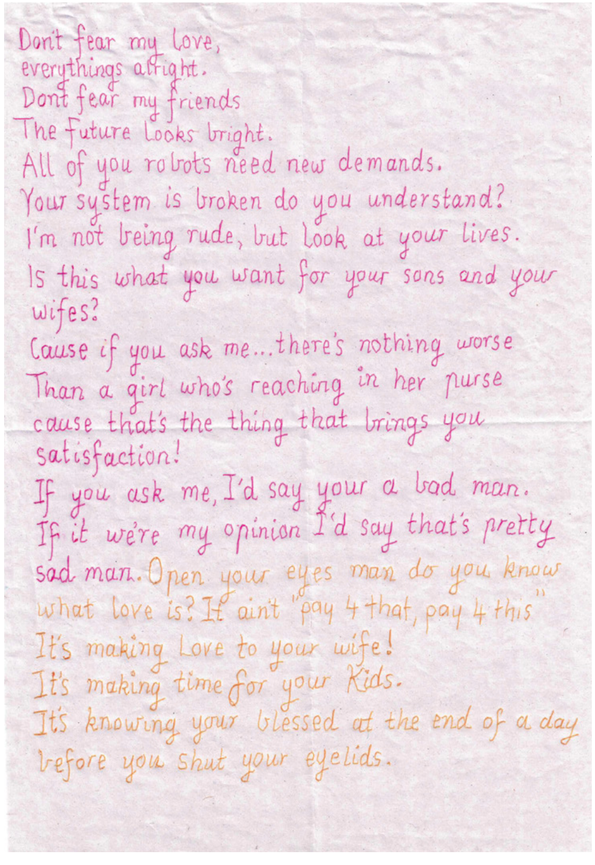
Love is saying yes when it's time
It's saying no, this ain't no crime
Love is having great affection for
A virtue to be shown evermore.

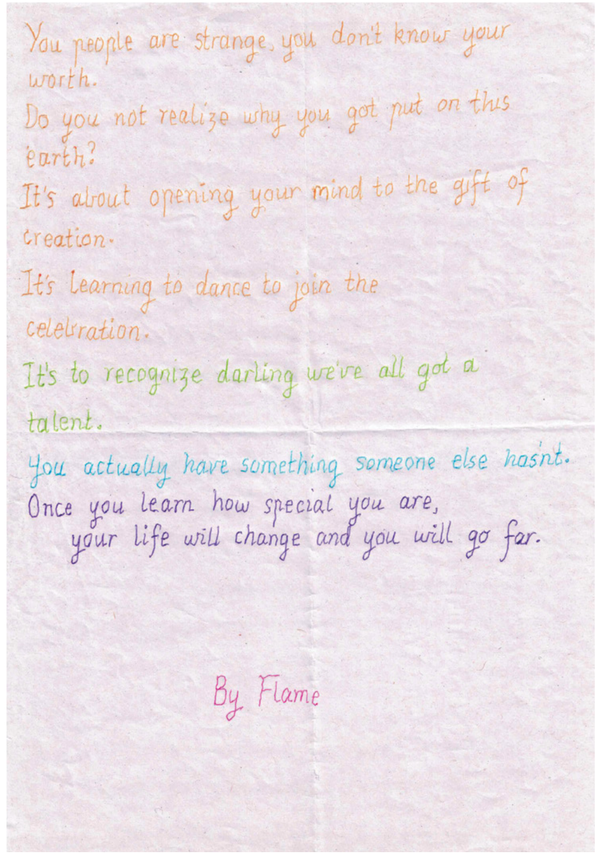
Putting others first before us is just
Remembering ourselves before all
a must
Kindness, Mildness, Devotion, all love
Does not boast or brag, it's all the above

Love is blind and it can make you see
Patience, forgiveness, romance and empathy
Is not envious or keep record of the wrong
Is not arrogant, puffed up with pride strong

Love endures all things, it hopes all things
It believes, trusts, and conquers everything
Love is vulnerable, giving it your best
Expressing love to all, you will be blessed

Love is choosing your life's mate
And not needing recompense so great
A precious gift to show ourselves, everyone
Love the greatest quality bar none.





Play

Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What is the capital city of Australia?
2. How many days are there in a leap year?
3. What planet is known as the “Red Planet”?
4. What is the name of the ocean on Australia’s east coast?
5. Who wrote the books that *Game of Thrones* is based on?
6. Which animal is known as the “king of the jungle”?
7. What is the largest animal on Earth?
8. In sport, how many players are on the field for one soccer team at a time?
9. What is the chemical symbol for water?
10. What colour do you get when you mix blue and yellow?



Sudoku

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

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

Crossword Answers

Across:
2. Chess
3. Cat
5. Star
6. Mute
8. Jingle
12. Actor
13. Glad
14. Relaxed

Down:
1. Theatre
3. Chair
4. Mime
7. Thunder
9. Laugh
10. Scene
11. Go



Meme of the Month

By Meicho

Meicho writes from a prison in QLD.

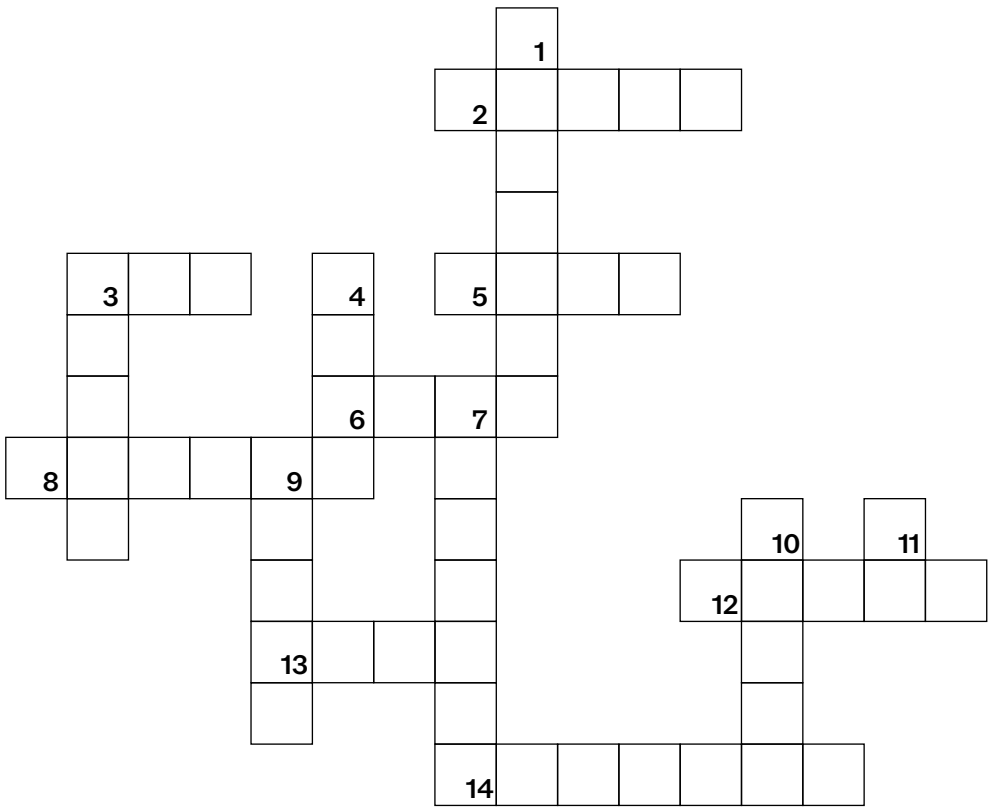
Send us your memes!
Have you seen a meme recently that made you laugh? Have you made one yourself? Feel free to send it to us – we’d love to see.

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

Colouring In



Crossword



ACROSS
2. Game with bishops and knights (5)
3. Pet that purrs (3)
5. Light in the nighttime sky (4)
6. What you might put the TV on if it’s too loud (4)
8. A short song in an ad (6)
12. Person in a play (5)
13. Happy (4)
14. At ease (7)

DOWN
1. Where a play is performed (7)
3. You sit in this (5)
4. A silent performer (4)
7. What comes after lightning (7)
9. What you do at a (good) joke (5)
10. A single part of a movie (5)
11. Opposite of stop (2)

Bad Jokes

I only know 25 letters of the alphabet. I don’t know y.

What do you call a fish wearing a bowtie? Sofishticated.

Quiz Answers

1. Canberra
2. 366
3. Mars
4. The Pacific Ocean
5. George R. R. Martin
6. Lion
7. The blue whale
8. 11
9. H_2O
10. Green