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About Time

ISSUE NO. 23 JUNE 2026 ABOUTTIME.ORG.AU

Australia's National Prison Newspaper

Write to Us:
Share your story, your thoughts, your hopes or your dreams. Tell us what's going on inside. Ask us any question.

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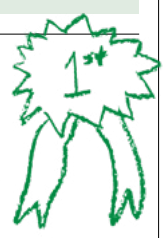
Writing Challenge Winner!

A Memorable Dinner



A chance encounter at Vincent turns a meal into an unexpected reminder of home.

By Jeff

Jeff writes from a prison in QLD.

It was at Vincent. A small restaurant off the north-east corner of Hyde Park, Sydney. Vincent, named after the artist, not the character from Pulp Fiction, is a well-regarded establishment, casual rather than formal. The limited menu changed daily with the exception of one entree: the nudies: a vegetarian dumpling in a garlicky broth, more flavoursome than that description would suggest.

My friend Nicole had visited Vincent the previous week and knowing that we had very similar tastes suggested we try it. Once seated in the cosy, almost familial venue, as usual we ordered the same dishes. The nudies on Nicole's recommendation, a main of whiting and Brussel sprouts, and a cheese selection. Nicole, being French and therefore assuming it is her genetic entitlement, chose the wine.

Continued on page 14.

Read all the finalists – and the next prompt! – on Page 14!



Ike Curtis

'It Feels Like Part of the Punishment': The Dental Crisis Behind Bars

By Denham Sadler

Denham is the Chief Reporter at *About Time*.

Emily Cooper never had dental problems before she went to prison.

When she left prison, she was missing four teeth.

During her time at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre she had to wait in "agonising" pain for a year at a time in order to get dental care.

Due to these waits, abscesses developed, and when she could finally see a dentist, all they could do was remove the teeth.

"I had four teeth removed because that's all they'd offer – my teeth could have been saved," Cooper told *About Time*.

Cooper said this was a common situation in her prison, with people forced to wait months in pain until they could see a dentist, and then the only option being to remove the tooth.

This is what a number of prison inspectors and health advocacy groups have also found, with dental care in prison identified as a key missed opportunity.

Misty Carey worked as a nurse in Western Australian prisons, and saw the lack of proper dental care on offer. "It's just a removal service," Carey told *About Time*. "Not only that, but it takes months to get in.

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Letters

Keeping My Head Out of Trouble

By Stellios

Stellios writes from a prison in NSW.

Hey there,

My name is Stellios. I'm in jail for a very long time.

I just keep my head out of trouble and out of politics, lol. I find the time goes very quickly when I keep a great routine going for myself. For example: drawing and crafts for my mental health, training whenever I get a good chance and having faith and hope in God. I think God has chosen this path for me for this small amount of time in my life, maybe to make me stronger.

Thanks heaps,
Stellios

P.S. I love the poems and the pictures people draw. There are so many talented people out there.

Sending Love to My Son

By Anonymous

The author writes from Australia.

As a devoted mother having to accept the fact that my son was going to prison was soul destroying.
Nothing changed my love for him, but the fear and worry for him was all consuming.
Visiting him helped a lot, and I gradually noted real positive changes to his attitude toward life. His rock bottom was being sent to prison, and he's learnt so much since he's been incarcerated.
He has formed a strong bond with a priest who runs a Narcotics Anonymous group, and I have this priest to thank for my son's positive attitude and for not playing the victim but taking responsibility for his crime.
I had to learn to take care of myself because I'm no use to anyone if I'm running on empty.
I'm so grateful to those who have helped my son during his prison sentence.

Don't Let This Place Dim Your Energy

By Kane

Kane writes from a prison in NSW.

To About Time,

First of all I would like to do a shout out to my fellow brothers and sisters doing time and may be struggling. Just remember that this place can't dim your energy, it's only temporary.

My first time in jail was a shock to the system. I have learned quickly that routine is key. Getting your exercise, diet, mental health, maintaining social encounters; it truly helps.

At the end of day we are all humans that bleed and feel things. Don't let this experience define you. We are all on different journeys, but we all want things after this. Don't let your dreams drift away, go chase them and never give up just because you made mistakes.

Peace out, Kane

Access to Newspapers

By Luke

Luke writes from a prison in TAS.

To About Time,

Luke writing from Tasmania in relation to a matter I'd like brought to the attention of all prisoners.

I recently have been put in the medium precinct, and I had put a request form asking what the costs were to order the Examiner newspaper. I re-call many years ago people were paying to purchase the newspapers and having them posted to them.

I received a response to my request form today and it said I cannot be supplied the Examiner newspaper. I do not know why and I clearly don't understand why the newsagency does not supply us with the Examiner - is everything consecutively taken off us at this jail?

What is the process (etc) within other prisons across Australia? Please explain.

Thanks for your time and effort it's appreciated. Take care!

Studying While Incarcerated

By Gabrielle

Gabrielle writes from a prison in TAS.

Dear About Time,

We have limited options regarding studying whilst incarcerated. I am midway through an arts degree, however, once I am released, I am re-routing towards politics/law. I'm new to university and how it all works, but I'd also like to formally educate myself towards advocacy. Being a Uni student (there are two of us), we get access to the internet on the odd occasion to download academic research. I spoke with the education manager and was able to secure me permission to download articles to assist in my own personal research towards reintegration, re-socialisation and the effects of institutionalisation, all of which I have grown incredibly passionate and concerned about. I'm also super passionate about advocacy for fellow female inmates, who in my opinion, are oftentimes victims to the people running the show.

I am now overdue for parole, and am paying rent for my bedsit, hoping that within the next two months I can sit for parole.

Until next time and with kindness,
Gabrielle

On Repeat: Routine is Good, Not Bad

A response to "Trapped by Rituals: How to Avoid the Monotony of Prison", published in the February edition of *About Time*.

By Dane

Dane writes from a prison in QLD.

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in prison can relate to the concept of prison rituals and routines. This was discussed by the anonymous author of "Trapped by Rituals: How to Avoid the Monotony of Prison", published in the February edition of *About Time*. I would like to present an alternative to the negative perspective he/she has of this phenomenon.

The article states that being incarcerated means having to adjust to a "host of rules, regulations and formalised processes" and that this requires inmates knowing "what is expected of them". This is accurate, and, while I am most certainly on team green and don't agree with much regarding how the Australian system of incarceration operates, the prison system is designed this way for a couple of reasons. Firstly, order and control is required in prisons to ensure the safe housing of large numbers of people (many of them volatile and violent) in confined space. Secondly, it resembles the structure of society, which, whether we like it or not, is based on rules, regulations and formalised processes. The logic being that prisoners following rules and formalised processes and knowing what is expected of them provides them with direction and purpose and instils structure and order in them, things that (if employed) help them not to transgress not only prison's but society's rules and regulations once released – the very thing that lands people in prison to begin with.

The author argues that life outside prison is chaotic and random and that those released from prison often can't function properly due to having become institutionalised. The suggestion that some forms of prison ritualisation cause institutionalisation is fair. However, I would argue that institutionalisation does not always have to be viewed negatively and that rituals or structure don't necessarily have to be seen as "surrendering to the system". In fact, I suggest they be harnessed to benefit the individual – not to the point that one becomes an automaton or slave but to the point that (as the author acknowledges) they provide order, comfort and a sense of control. While we can't control everything around us, we can control how we respond to things – that is, how we act and what we say – and this is what allows us to retain a sense of control regardless of the situation. This sense of comfort, including control, can be transferred to the outside world through the employment of routine in everyday life. Surely this is the best way to combat randomness and chaos.

I accept that not everyone is suited to routine. Some people work better just winging it or taking things as they come. However, for many, especially many of us incarcerated, routine provides a sense of order in our lives. I thoroughly enjoy my prison routine for that very reason.

It gives me a sense of control in an otherwise largely powerless situation. As the author of the article suggests, I can control when I eat, wash and sleep, when and what I read and write, and when and how I train. I incorporate those things into my daily routine, just as I would in the outside world if I had a job to attend, a family to look after or various other responsibilities. I agree that if routine is disrupted it can be frustrating and discombobulating. However, this is where our response to things comes into play. If things don't go as planned, we can spit the dummy, play up and let everything go to shit (which is a form of victimhood and achieves nothing) or we can retain control by employing patience, flexibility and mastery of our emotions – there is nothing more empowering. As the enigmatic Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "the highest form of mastery on earth is self-control." And this ability is equally applicable and beneficial to the incarcerated and those in the outside world.

I say: Don't view routine as "surrendering to the system". Instead, embrace the rituals/routines that work for you and use them to benefit you and to create order in your life. And then take that ethos with you into the outside world.



Help Name a School and Create a Vision for the Future

Our friends who work in justice and education are setting up a school for young adults who have been justice involved and are ready to reconnect with their education.

This will be the first independent school in Australia dedicated to offering a pathway to university for young adults who have disengaged from school because of their experience with the criminal justice system.

And we need your help to choose a name!

What would you call the college? What would appeal to you? Share your ideas and be a part of this new and important vision for what comes next.

If your name is chosen for the college, you will become part of its story and be recognised.

Please send your suggestion to About Time as soon as possible after reading this. Feel free to share your ideas on why the name is the right one.

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Melbourne VIC 3001

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-third 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
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

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About Time is published 12 times a year by the not-for-profit company, About Time Media Ltd
ISSN #2982-0758

If It's Broken, Then Fix It

By Andrew

Andrew writes from a prison in TAS.

I've spent most of my adult life behind bars, and I'm not proud to say it. It's been such a bloody waste.

I've missed out on so many important moments, and I'm sure most people reading this would be able to relate to it. It's no different to any other man or woman who is in my position. I'm sure everyone has sat there on many lonely nights, looked out the window, and thought, "why am I here? I'm worth so much more than this place."

Then I guess the answer to that question is: "what's broken, and how can I fix it?"

Well, that can only be answered by you, the individual. Everyone is different, and just because someone was able to fix their life a certain way doesn't mean it will work for you. My life has got to the point where, if I don't try to fix what's broken inside of me, then I may as well just accept that this is my life and continue down this dark and lonely path to nothing. Scary, but that just isn't my style.

I know I'm a good man who still loves and cares for my family, my children and my grandchildren. I know that I'm worth a lot more to them, and to myself as well. So I found what was broken inside of me, and I asked for help.

Now you have all heard the old saying, "if it ain't broke, then don't change it or fix it." There are so many people who get used to routine and then follow that routine day after day. Then it becomes your life. That's how life works inside these walls and outside as well.

In jail, the routine goes: 7am muster, collect ya milk, put ya washing out, then we wait to be unlocked. Then, depending on where you're housed, you're either locked down or you get let out of ya cell for 2.5 hours. Then it's lockdown for lunch. Then ya day is over; you're in your cell for the rest of the day.

So trying to work out, within yourself, what's broken and how to fix it is hard for most people. But the area that was broken for me was my violent outbursts. I was always flipping my shit and taking it out on anyone and everyone.

I'm in prison for violent offences, and it got me nowhere except prison. So I had to suck up my pride and ask for help. The only course/program I was able to do was something called VPP: Violent Intervention Program.

It's not a course that takes 6 to 12 weeks to complete. This is a 9 to 12 month program that covers all areas of rehabilitation you can think of.

Now, at first I was like, "yeah, sweet, let's do this and hurry up." But I needed to go into this open-minded, and actually wanting to get the best out of the course so I could fix my issues.

So I made a deal with myself: do this properly, and if you can't get anything from it, then be honest, tell my teacher the truth, and walk away. I went into this program with an open mindset, and once I came to trust my teacher, I was able to let my walls down. Once those walls came down, I felt very vulnerable, but that's what needed to happen so the course could work for me.

So I have just about completed the program, and I can honestly sit here and say that I've fixed what was broken. Now I'm nearly due for parole. I'm able to put together a plan so I can get out and use the things I've learnt out there in the community.

I believe that I'm rehabilitated, and I guess only time will tell. But I'm 41 years old, and I've just proven that no matter what age you are, if you believe in yourself and open your mind and heart to learning new ways of thinking, then big things can happen.

I was broken, and I have fixed the problem. Now getting released is my next challenge, and I believe that what I've done to change has been for the best for me. I just hope that others can do the unknown and work towards becoming the best versions of themselves, not only for themselves, but for the loved ones who support us through our journeys as well.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to write to you guys. Once I've got my course completed, I will write again about what we need out there in the community to stay out of this place. A lot needs to change, but that's another story.

Loyalty and respect,
Andrew

Strip Searches

By Nikita

Nikita writes from Victoria.

Strip searching strips our dignity.

It's daunting enough when you get arrested by police, then placed into custody and thrown into a cell. Then you have to go through a degrading strip search. You have to strip naked, turn around, and "bend and part" in front of complete strangers.

This process is so demoralising and, for many, it triggers a trauma response from past child abuse or sexual abuse. It's not only humiliating, but it can also lead to mental health issues like depression, body dysmorphia and PTSD, to name a few.

In a lot of cases, incarcerated people are moved between cells and subjected to multiple strip searches before even reaching prison. Then there's the prison system which, upon arrival, makes people repeat this process in front of multiple strangers, repeating the traumatisation. When attending court proceedings, you are dehumanised even further as the process repeats when you are placed in holding cells at court, and again when you are returned to the prison site.

Strip searches are also conducted if you are placed in management cells within the prison, which can affect normal sexual experiences with yourself and others. This can continue for many years post-incarceration and can develop into serious relational problems.

There are X-ray machines in all prisons now and they can be used as an alternative to these invasive searches.

Please petition against this abuse here:

www.endstripsearching.com

Thank you,
Nikita.



Artwork by Nikita

About Time Needs Your Help!

We're running a survey to learn more about our readers' thoughts and feelings about the newspaper. This will help us make the paper better, and it will also help us with fundraising so we can continue to publish *About Time*.

We would be so grateful if you can please answer the questions to the right. If you're reading this on a physical paper, you can cut/rip the survey out, fill it in with a pen or pencil and send it back in an envelope with free postage via our reply paid post (see across).

If you're reading this on a tablet, you can copy the questions onto a piece of paper and fill it out there and then send it back the same way.

You can answer as many or as few questions as you wish.

Please share this around with as many people as possible. The more insights, the better.

Thank you so much, from the entire About Time team.

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1. I read *About Time* to (choose as many options as you like):

- ☐ Be entertained
- ☐ Distract myself
- ☐ Connect with people who have experienced incarceration
- ☐ Seek reliable news / information about the criminal legal system
- ☐ Other:

2. When I read *About Time*, I feel more connected to other people.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Can you tell us why you answered this way?

3. When I read *About Time*, I feel less isolated.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Can you tell us why you answered this way?

4. I think *About Time* provides an accurate reflection of the experience of being incarcerated.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Can you tell us why you answered this way?

5. Have you ever sent a letter or submitted some writing to *About Time*?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Why did you choose to contribute to *About Time*?

Submitting writing to *About Time* made me feel valued.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Can you tell us why you answered this way?

Submitting writing to *About Time* made me feel more confident about my writing skills.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Can you tell us why you answered this way?

7. In your own words, what impact (if any) has *About Time* had on your life?

8. Have you submitted your writing anywhere else since submitting to *About Time*?

9. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

Sistas, Support Each Other!

By Anonymous

The author was incarcerated in QLD, but now writes from the outside.

Dear Inside Sistas,

I am an Outside Sista who, not long ago, was doin' time at SQCC. I walked through Clusters 1 and 2 and rested my head at night on a concrete pillow too.

Supporting other women and making some difference to the circumstances that led not only me but all past, present and future women to the front gates of Gatton can only be done while I am wearing colours other than teal each day. Actually, it's ironic: teal was once one of my favourite colours. I wore it as a high school student, and I taught in two public schools where the uniform colour was teal. It is my least favourite colour now.

This letter is to remind you all that, as Sistas, we need to be there for one another to raise women up. We need to work together, walk together and wield together, especially when we are "inside" together... in a unit of seven others with diverse stories, personalities and backgrounds, with a cellie who remembers pain as she sleeps and talks out loud, as we stand in one line waiting for our morning pills and potions, and as we pass one another on the footpaths.

Be kind to one another. Show kindness through a smile or raise a hand to acknowledge someone as you pass them by. Say "hi". Reverse your own frown while doing you during your jail time, but do not forget others who wear a frown and need a friendly smile from time to time, to fill their heart and soul with warmth.

We all come from different walks of life. We have different reasons for offending, function differently and do jail time differently. But we are all women. We are women who carry the weight of the world and, perhaps, have been dealt cards that were unfair or unjust. Maybe the deck was missing the winning ace or a decent king or instead held a queen's broken heart. Women who made mistakes, loved the wrong man, grew up in a tangled mess. However, as a woman, I know how strong we are and can be, but I also know I simply cannot do it all alone. None of us can.

We need to support one another: to heal that queen's broken heart, to ensure that king (or any) never again uses his club to control, and to rise up to our own personal sparkling ace to beat our demons down. In the end, we are merely humans who seek the same thing: to be loved, to be happy and to be free from suffering.

So time is of the essence to spread more love, compassion and kindness. Remember: "never does kindness not help" and "no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever truly wasted."

In the true jail phrase, I end with: "love ya!"

Kind regards, always in my heart and on my mind.

The High Court Just Rewrote the Rules.

Your Claim May Be Worth Far More Than You Were Told.

A 2026 decision has overturned 20 years of law and reopened the door for thousands of survivors of institutional abuse across Australia. Here is everything you need to know.

If you were abused as a child by someone connected to a church, school, sporting club, youth group or any other institution — and you were told your claim was weak, unlikely to succeed, or was put on hold — the law has just changed significantly in your favour.

Not slightly changed. Completely changed. The High Court of Australia — our nation's highest court — has overturned a rule that had been protecting institutions from accountability for over 20 years.

THE STORY BEHIND THE CASE

The case is called AA v Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, decided in February 2026. AA (his name is protected by the court) was sexually abused by a Catholic priest when there were just 13 years old in 1969. The priest met AA through scripture classes and then abused AA in private.

Decades later, AA took the Diocese – the Catholic organisation responsible for the Catholic priest – to court. The Diocese argued it should not be held responsible for a crime committed by an individual. The High Court rejected that argument completely.

HOW THE LAW GOT HERE — A SHORT HISTORY

To understand why this decision is so significant, you need to know what came before it.

2003 — State of NSW v Lepore
The High Court rules institutions cannot be held liable for deliberate criminal acts under a non-delegable duty. Institutions exploit this for 20+ years to defend abuse claims.

2024 — Bird v DP
Vicarious liability is limited to true employment relationships. Priests and volunteers aren't employees — institutions walk free, and settlement offers crater.

2026 — AA v Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
The High Court overturns Lepore. Institutions now owe a non-delegable duty to protect children — full stop. Employment status is irrelevant. The game has changed.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A "NON-DELEGABLE DUTY OF CARE"?

In plain language: it is a legal responsibility you cannot hand off to someone else.

When a church, school, or scout troop places someone in authority over children, the organisation takes on a duty to protect those children — full stop. It cannot outsource that responsibility.

Crucially, intentional or criminal abuse by that person automatically constitutes a breach of that duty. The institution is liable, no matter what.

WHY THE 2024 BIRD V DP DECISION HURT SURVIVORS

A 2024 High Court ruling held that institutions could only be liable if the abuser was a paid employee. Since priests, coaches, and volunteers rarely are, institutions used this to escape accountability — mediations stalled, offers collapsed.

The 2026 AA decision doesn't reverse Bird v DP, but it opens a separate, powerful path to justice that bypasses the employment question entirely.

WHAT KINDS OF INSTITUTIONS DOES THIS NOW COVER?

Any institution that placed a person in authority over you as a child — including:

- **Catholic and Other Religious Organisations** (Churches, Dioceses, Orders)
- **Schools** (Government or Private)
- **Sporting Clubs and Associations**
- **Scouts, Youth Groups, Community Centres**
- **Foster Care and Out-of-Home Care Providers**
- **Government Bodies and Detention Facilities**
- **Other Institutions** (That placed a person in a position of authority over you as a child)

CRITICAL WARNING — NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME
If you have been offered or are considering a payment from the National Redress Scheme, do NOT sign or accept anything before getting legal advice. Once you accept a Redress award, you are permanently banned from taking further legal action against the institution. A court claim is typically worth many times what Redress pays. This is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Ensure you contact our team at Wyatts Lawyers to ensure you are aware of all your best options.

COULD THIS AFFECT YOUR CASE?

Speak to us if any of these apply to you:

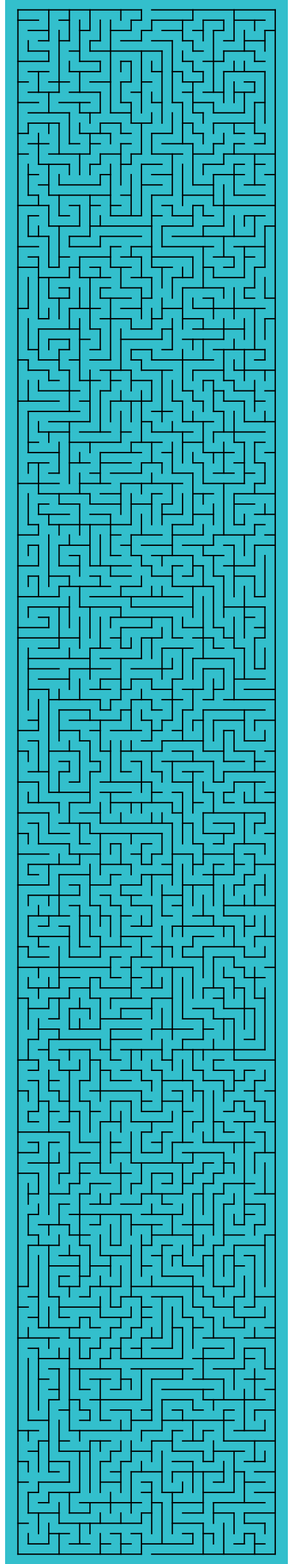
- You were abused as a child by someone connected to an institution
- You made an inquiry or started a claim that was put on hold or went cold
- You were told your claim was weak because the abuser was not technically an employee
- You received a low offer or had mediation stall after the 2024 Bird v DP decision
- You are currently considering or have been offered a Redress Scheme payment
- You have not yet taken any steps to enquire about making a claim, but have been thinking about it

HOW TO GET ADVICE FROM INSIDE

You do not need to navigate this alone, and you do not need money upfront. Our lawyers work on a no win, no fee* basis for institutional abuse claims. Everything you tell us is completely confidential. You can have a trusted person on the outside contact us on your behalf, or write to us directly. We will listen to what happened, explain clearly whether this decision opens up new possibilities for your situation, and tell you honestly what we think your options are. There is no pressure and no obligation.

*Conditions Apply.
This article is general legal information only and is not legal advice. Every person's circumstances are different. Time limits may apply to your claim – seek advice as soon as possible before accepting any offer or signing any agreement. Wyatts Lawyers is a specialist Australian compensation firm.

START



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News and Investigations

‘It Feels Like Part of the Punishment’: The Dental Crisis Behind Bars

By Denham Sadler

Continued from page 1.

“So prisoners are waiting in such extreme pain and having to take heaps of antibiotics and pain relief.”

It is possible to get dentures – fake teeth – while in prison, but there are a range of restrictions across the country.

Carey worked at the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison, and saw the benefits of a new dental clinic that opened in 2021 and provides dentures. “It’s beautiful – there are women who have lived with awful teeth for their whole life who get a beautiful set of teeth, and they’re so excited,” she said.

“They then get to leave prison with good teeth.”

In NSW prisons, you can get dentures if you apply and are found to need them. In South Australia, dentures are only available to those with at least 12 months left on their sentence, while in Tasmania denture services are run fortnightly, and anyone is eligible.

Many people in prison have not been able to see a dentist before, and providing proper dental care could be very helpful when they return to the community.

“It’s an opportunity to reach people who might not always access it on the outside,” Cooper said. “Dental care is so linked to our self esteem and our ability to feel like we’re part of society.”

“It could make such a difference to have proper dental care.”

According to a study looking at the health of people in prison, more than one in three people leaving prison have dental issues. More than 20 per cent were diagnosed with a dental problem for the first time while they were incarcerated.

Preventable care – providing services and treatment before serious problems start – is especially important for dental care, because if found early enough, most problems can be fixed.

But the dental care provided in most prisons around the country is mainly pulling out teeth and basic care.

The Western Australian Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services in 2021 found that dental care in prisons was poor, and that people were often resorting to pulling out their own teeth due to long waitlists.

It also found that there would need to be 10 times more dentists working in prisons in the state to properly meet the demand.

Prison inspectors around the country have also raised alarm bells with the levels of dental care being provided to people in prison.

Health experts have called for better dental services in prisons, and support for people leaving prison to see a dentist, to help with rehabilitation and reintegration.

A spokesperson for the Victorian Department of Justice said that all people in prison have access to emergency dental care, and all women have access to non-urgent care, while only men who are in prison for 12 months or longer have access to non-urgent care.

In NSW, tele-dentistry appointments have been introduced with an aim of giving preventative treatment. A spokesperson for NSW Justice Health said it was continuing to work to improve access to dental services.

In South Australia, a team of one dentist and one dental assistant are placed in the Port Augusta, Mobilong, Yatala and Adelaide Women’s prisons.

In Tasmania, oral health services are provided in prisons once a week.

Dental problems have been found to impact the chances of getting a job and the chances of someone returning to prison.

Cooper said she found it hard returning to the community when she was missing several teeth.

“I always had really good teeth until I went to jail,” she said. “It impacts your self-esteem – you’re constantly hiding your smile and making excuses for yourself.

“It’s like another marker on you, a stigma against you. It’s horrible – it almost feels like it’s part of the punishment.”

There are schemes in place around the country to help people get dental care for free.

In all states and territories you can receive a Health Care Card if you are getting welfare payments. This card gets you cheaper medicine and healthcare, including access to public dental clinics.

Depending on which state or territory you are in, you will be able to get free or cheaper dental care using this card.

This includes dental check-ups and dentures.

“Remember that when you do get out, you can fix it eventually,” Cooper said. “There are different programs out there – it is possible.”

In Victoria, free dental care is provided to First Nations people, people at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, people registered with mental health or disability services and people experiencing financial hardship.

While it is difficult having to wait a long time to see a dentist, there are some things people in prison can do to help.

Dr Marwa Mostafa worked as a dentist in Victorian prisons for several years. She said that looking after your teeth should be seen as part of your general health. “It’s a major part – it affects your self-esteem, your whole life,” Mostafa told *About Time*.

“You really need to put this as a priority for your general health.”

And when you get out of prison, try to access free or cheap services before you are in pain, she said. “Look for your closest community clinic, and if you’re Aboriginal, look for the closest Aboriginal clinic, and see where you can actually get an ongoing assessment and treatment,” she said.

“Don’t wait until it’s painful, get ongoing care.”

Cooper said it’s important to keep going with brushing and flossing while on the inside, and to drink a lot of water, especially if you are on an opioid replacement program.

“Put your name down – keep advocating and try to access whatever you can,” she said.

“Don’t let it define your worth. It’s a cosmetic thing and there are hundreds of other people missing their teeth.”

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NT

Funding For More Prisons

The Northern Territory government has set aside $525 million for prisons in this year's budget.

This includes $250 million for the Corrections master plan, which involves an increase of 1535 beds in prison across the territory.

A new 198-bed prison work camp in Katherine will be built with $238 million in funding, and a 192-bed work camp at Holtze in Darwin.

The budget will also include $1.2 million for ready to work programs, and $4.9 million for alternative to custody programs in Alice Springs and Groote Eylandt.

A location for a new men's and women's prison will be found, with $15 million set aside for the procurement process.



VIC

Worksafe Charges Justice Department

Worksafe has charged the Victorian Justice Department over an alleged failure to provide a safe working environment.

The charges are about an assault of a prison officer that happened at Barwon Prison in February 2022.

Worksafe has alleged that the Department failed to maintain a "safe system of work" with how information about people in prison was shared with prison officers.

New Prison Beds Coming in Victoria

The Victorian budget, which outlines how the state government will spend money over the coming years, was released in early May. It included $229 million for new prison beds in adult and youth facilities.

In comparison, $43 million was set aside for programs aiming to reduce reoffending and keep people out of prison. The number of people in prison in Victoria increased by more than 15 per cent in the last year. This was mainly because the state government made it harder to get bail.

According to the budget, bail refusals are at "record highs", and decisions to remand someone in custody have increased by nearly 70 per cent since the changes were made.



TAS

Families Protest Outside Risdon

A protest has been held outside Risdon Prison over the regular lockdowns at the centre.

Families of people in prison held the protest outside the gates of the prison in May.

They also raised concerns about overcrowding at the prison and a lack of access to healthcare.

Contract With Education Provider Ends

A contract between TasTAFE and the Tasmanian Prison Service to provide vocational training at Risdon prison will not be renewed.

The contract will come expire at the end of June and a new one won't be signed.

Instead, the state government said an "annual activity plan" will be developed using a fee-for-service model, with TasTAFE to still be the preferred provider.



SA

Conferences in Adelaide

Two conferences about prisons and reintegration will be held in Adelaide in June.

The Justice Reform Initiative conference, now in its 19th year, brings together experts on the 'puzzle' of reintegration, including community-based responses to life after prison, from housing to health care and First Nations justice. *About Time* will be reporting at the conference, with articles to be published in future editions.

An alternative conference, Crim Con, will also be held in Adelaide, run entirely by formerly incarcerated folk.

People who have been to prison are strongly encouraged to attend.



WA

Funding For New Prison Beds

The Western Australian government will spend nearly $90 million on new prison beds around the state.

The state budget allocated $87.7 million for prison expansions and upgrades.

A new 160-bed unit will be built at Acacia Prison, while more money has been set aside for the 512-bed expansion of Casuarina Prison.

The state government will provide $41 million for First Nations-led programs for young people, and $10.8 million to the Youth Justice Model of Care, which will include increasing the number of days per week the individual support transition team service operates at Banksia Hill from five to seven.

Quarantine Centre Could Become a Prison

A COVID quarantine centre may be turned into a prison as Western Australia deals with a significantly increasing prison population.

The Western Australian government has confirmed it is discussing bringing the Bullsbrook quarantine facility under its control.

The 500-bed centre, which is 40km north-east of Perth, was built in 2022 but has not been used.



NSW

Man Returned to Prison After Being Mistakenly Released

A man who was mistakenly released from prison has been returned to custody.

The man was wrongly released from Clarence Correctional Centre on the same day he had been sentenced to a year in prison due to an "administrative error".

He travelled five hours after he was released, before he was arrested and returned to prison.

Calls For Changes to Prison Offences to Be Reversed

A group of human rights and legal groups have called on the NSW government to reverse changes to the prison offence process.

Late last year the burden of proof required to find someone guilty of a prison offence was lowered from "beyond reasonable doubt" to "on the balance probabilities".

Organisations including the Australian Lawyers Alliance, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW / ACT and the Human Rights Law Centre have written an open letter to the NSW Minister for Corrections.



QLD

Visits At Brisbane Correctional Centre to Increase

People incarcerated at Brisbane Correctional Centre are now allowed to have two one-hour visits each week.

Under new rules that came into effect from 6 May, the number of visits allowed has been doubled.

These visits must be either two in-person visits, or one in-person visit and one virtual visit.

Bookings can be requested by visitors via email or through a booking form at the prison's reception.

Provided by Prisoner Legal Service, Queensland. Legal information and not advice:

Police Given Power To Search Without a Warrant

Jack's Law is the name given to a new piece of legislation in force in Queensland which allows police to search people without a warrant in certain places.

This is a step away from the traditional common law approach of restraining police from interfering with civil liberty without the check and balance of judicial permission (i.e: a warrant).

Under Part 3A of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000* (Qld), a police officer can require a person to 'stop and submit to the use of a handheld scanner' if they are in a 'relevant place', like a bar, bus station, or shopping centre, to name a few.

The handheld scanner detects metal. The stated aim of the law is to identify whether a person is carrying a weapon such as a knife.



ACT

Push For Different Justice Spending

The ACT government in 2024-25 spent more than twice as much on keeping First Nations people in prison than on Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

The new data, obtained by independent member of the ACT Parliament Thomas Emerson, revealed that $15.4 million was spent on ACCOs, compared with $36.2 million on detaining First Nations adults and children in the ACT.

According to Productivity Commission data, it costs $573.76 to keep one person in prison in the ACT per day, or about $27.2 million per year.

"Imagine the level of service provision that could be provided with the almost $600 per day it costs to incarcerate someone at Alexander Maconochie Centre, or the more than $4000 per day it costs to detain a young person at Bimberi," Emerson said.

"These are huge costs and they're indicative of the mistake we continue to make in failing to invest sufficiently in prevention and early intervention."

Sick of being sick? Have you been forced to wait months or even years to see a doctor?

We know that many prisoners are suffering because of long wait times to see a doctor, a nurse or a dentist, while others have been diagnosed with serious conditions – including Hep C, Cancer, and HIV – for which they have received no treatment.

Were you held in Youth Detention as a minor?

As bad as things are in adult prison, we know that for many, youth detention was much worse.

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Though Levitt Robinson Solicitors is located in Sydney it advocates for the rights of both juvenile detainees, and adult prisoners nationwide.

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Homelessness Isn't a Crime and Shouldn't Stop You Getting Bail

A new court ruling reaffirms that people shouldn't be treated differently if they are experiencing homelessness.

By Denham Sadler

A judge in Victoria has ruled that a lack of stable housing in the community shouldn't be used as a reason to deny someone bail, particularly when it involves a First Nations person.

A 25-year-old First Nations man was denied bail in mid-July last year after it was found that he posed an unacceptable risk of offending in the community.

At an appeal at the Supreme Court, Justice Rita Incerti heard that the man had experienced homelessness and unstable housing for most of his adult life.

While a lack of housing is one of the most common reasons that someone is denied bail, the judge said that decision-makers must be "incredibly careful" not to treat people "punitively" because they are experiencing homelessness.

"It would be setting the applicant up to fail...if bail was refused, and thus his access to these protective factors was denied, simply because of the shortage of accommodation available to him," Justice Incerti found.

"That comes dangerously close to punishing the applicant simply for being homeless."

The judge ruled that the man did not pose an unacceptable risk of offending and that he should be released on bail.

The same case also highlighted the importance of considering someone's Aboriginality when making a bail decision.

This should be more than just a "box-ticking exercise", Justice Incerti found.

"It requires a decision-maker to look beyond the personal circumstances of the applicant and to the entrenched disadvantages of a class of people of which the applicant in this case is a part."

The case affirms that homelessness should not be a factor on its own leading to someone being denied bail, and that if they are a First Nations person, this must be given proper consideration in this process too.

Alternatives to Police as First Responders

By Zoe Edema

Zoe is a member of the National Justice Project, an Alternative First Responders Campaign.

In April 2025, The Alternative First Responder campaign officially launched in Australia, calling for alternative first responses to police that centre care and dignity. Following a year of community consultation and the release of the Alternative First Responder position paper, the campaign was ready to rattle the cage on the public stage.

"100% agreed that, instead of police, first responders must be experienced and skilled in communicating and engaging with individuals in a way that minimises harm and recognises the importance of individual agency." – Alternative First Responder position paper p2.

Why Do We Need Alternative First Responders?

The position paper outlines the problem. Currently in Australia, there is an over-reliance on police-led responses to community, health and social needs. Research shows us that when police respond to situations requiring care and de-escalation, they cause greater harm to individuals, families and whole communities. Trained to control, contain and use force, the police are not the right people to respond to calls for support:

"This [police] mindset creates the blueprint for the framework of power and control, whilst also creating the need for a 'victim' and 'offender' – there is little room for nuance. These characteristics are not fit for purpose to respond to social and health needs and do not foster practices such as de-escalation and harm minimisation." – Alternative First Responder position paper p8.

What Works?

The solution is clear; community organisations, people with lived experience and advocates have been holding the answers and are doing the work. True safety does not come from criminalising mental health, punishing poverty or over-policing. True safety comes from community-led ecosystems of care. Community expertise embedded in models of care, not force, ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and compassion in the first response.

"First Nations models often reject Western frameworks of criminality and punishment, instead embracing culturally grounded approaches that prioritise self-determination and contextualise issues like mental health, homelessness, substance use, violence, and conflict within intergenerational trauma and ongoing colonial violence. These peer-to peer models emphasise cultural safety, First Nations solidarity and resilience." – Alternative First Responders position paper p12.

The position paper calls on government to boldly invest in alternatives to police and identifies short-term pilot funding as one of the primary failures of government in ensuring communities have access to the right people, the right response, at the right time. The campaign urges governments to move away from systems of over-policing and surveillance, and instead centre community knowledge and expertise in shaping responses grounded in care and cultural safety.

"They [policymakers and government] need to trust that First Nations Peoples know what their community needs and know how to deliver services that address... over policing and prevent unnecessary police intervention," Murri Watch's Kristy Lee Costello said.

Who Is Standing With Us For 2026

In one year, the Alternative First Responders campaign has grown to a coalition of 33 national peak bodies, community organisations, researchers and advocates, standing in solidarity against default police-first responses. The campaign has received hundreds of pledges of support from the public and hosted a national symposium with international speakers, community leaders and over 200 in attendance.

With this momentum, the Alternative First Responders campaign drives forward, advocating for community-led solutions and long-overdue policy change in governments across Australia. It moves us towards a future where all people feel safe and supported; where community-led services are sustainably funded; and where governments invest in first responses rooted in dignity, care, and love.

"When we choose to love, we choose to move against fear, against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect, to find ourselves in the other." – Bell Hooks, 2014.

Want To Share Your Story Or Show Your Support?

If you would like to add your voice to the campaign for alternative first responders, you can pledge your support and share your story

www.alternativefirstresponders.com.au

You can also access the Alternative First Responders Position Paper online:

www.alternativefirstresponders.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/NJP_AFR_Position-Paper2025.pdf

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About Time Writing Challenge!

Food for Thought



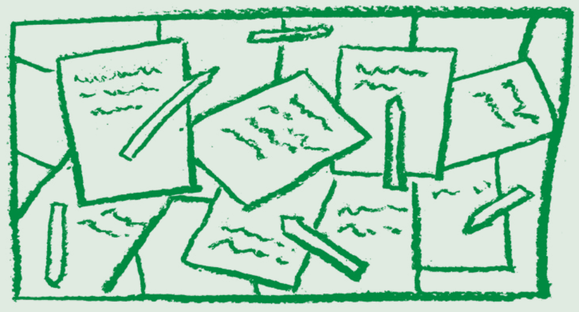


Comments from our Guest Judge!

Isabelle:
These entries came in many styles and took me to many places; the pieces that stayed with me most were rich in specific details: characters, vivid memories, daily rituals, or food described so clearly you could almost taste it. Keep writing! It is a delight to read!



Isabelle Knight is a Melbourne-based screenwriter and stand-up comedian. She has performed at the *Melbourne International Comedy Festival* and on the *Second City Stage*, and has worked across a range of shows including for ABC, NBC and Netflix. She also runs a writing group in Melbourne.



Have a Go at Writing!

The next prompt is: Time Travel

What does time travel mean to you? Is it a historical story, set in medieval times or 1960s? Is it a sci-fi about a brave new world? Maybe you have five minutes to save humanity! Or perhaps it's about reflecting on the past, or looking hopefully to the future? Share your story - fiction or non-fiction - and be in the running to get it published on the front page!

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Winner!

A Memorable Dinner



By Jeff

Jeff writes from a prison in QLD.

Continued from page 1.

It was after the nudies (every bit as delicious as I had been told), when Nicole returned from the ladies' room, that the truly memorable part of the dinner began to unfold. Before the whiting was served, she said "they have this lovely cologne in the women's bathroom. Do you like it?" and offered me the inside of her wrist. "Yeah. Nice" I reflexively replied. Then three seconds later, a little more thoughtfully, "let me smell that again." Wrist across the table, my response after a second sampling "that smell is familiar".

The whiting arrived. A whole fish each in a delicate sauce with side dishes of potato gratin and beans. After the first bite I requested another sniff. And shortly after, another, then a fifth, my response grew in enthusiasm after every venture.

"I recognise that", "that's someone I know", "I can't place who, but that is someone's smell".

Then just after turning the whiting over to start on its port side, it hit me. "It's my mother" I triumphantly declared. Nicole is about 30 years younger than my recently deceased mother and is a most attractive woman (she could be mistaken for Gal Gadot the actress who plays Wonder Woman), so I was not claiming she in any way resembled my mum (think Maggie Smith), that would have been creepy under the circumstances. It was just that the inside of her right wrist smelt identical to my late mother.

I asked the puzzled Nicole if she knew the name of the cologne. "Nothing but soap and water in the gents". "The bottle had a blue and gold label and four seven one one on it" she replied.

"Four seven eleven" I corrected. And now it all became clear. I explained to Nicole that 4711 was a cheap and popular cologne and that as a child I would buy this brand as my default Christmas/ birthday/Mothers' Day gift for my mum. She continued to use 4711 for the rest of her life.

Postscript: Thoughtfully, I received a postcard from Nicole shortly after starting my term in prison. She had doused the card in 4711 after writing on it.

Finalists

Baking in Boronia

By Chelsea

Chelsea writes from a prison in WA.

I cant cook, well not very good and when I got sentenced and found myself in Roebourne I watched the ladies make "Johnny Cake" and we would go to the kitchen every Sunday to help with the prison meals. I then went to Wandoo and worked in the kitchen and I thought to myself "I'm happy just washing the dishes" as everyone else knew their way around a kitchen, but the Mr Spooner asked me to take over from Natalia when she leaves in preparing all the meals for the Vegetarians – It stressed me out so much but Mr Spooner made learning cooking fun and colourful and not stressful, so I learnt a thing or to, but then I transferred to Boronia and lived in a shared house with 6 other women. Learning from so many different womens recipes and tips in baking made me get through weekends and take my mind of things.

The amount of times ive made carrot cake and each one always turned out different – Dense and flat but full of flavor, Fat and fluffy, many times I would try, then I moved onto Cheesecake, trying to master perfect muffin cheesecakes, Pumpkin Scones and then Pumpkin Soup – I would be in the kitchen all day baking and time would fly by and when the girls walk in the house and comment how lovely it smells the cooking, feeling so homely, especially when its raining outside, it made me think I just want to keep cooking and baking on the outside and making people happy. I cant wait to get out and cook things Ive learnt from being in prison for my son and family.

I hated the kitchen on the outside but have learnt from being inside that it makes me feel wholesome and happy.

The Hunger

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in QLD.

He was all nervous energy. Agitated. Unable to stop himself wearing a rut in the floor from the endless pacing. The hunger gnawed at him with an intensity previously unknown, frightening in its persistence. He'd never been like this outside. Something about the confinement of incarceration, the crushing dullness of groundhog-day and, had awoken this need in him.

Was it really only a week since he'd smugly crowed to all in earshot about the size of his stash? He'd been so sure it would hold out until his deal came through. Instead, he'd burned through it all in record time. And now, he thought, he was being punished for his hubris.

As much as he'd tried to fill the void with coffee, it was too fleeting a pleasure to keep the wolf from door. Training helped a little, it only because counting reps occupied some part of his brain that kept the base bits in line. He'd had enough of the endless repeats on the DVD channel. Mindfulness exercises were, sadly, completely out of the question.

All that remained to him was the oblivion of sleep. Ah, sleep – devourer of dead time, final refuge for all behind bars. Assuming, of course, that they can tune out the cacophany of too many crims (crammed into not enough jail), or the incessant blaring of the PA system. Fortunately, he could. Sleep came swiftly.

He awoke, annoyed, just able to make out his cellie in the blacked-out gloom. He began to protest, but his spirit soared when he heard the word: "Your library books are here!"

Food for Thought...

By Triste

Triste writes from a prison in QLD.

It was November 2025. I had zero dollars in my jail account. Mum sent me some Christmas dollars. I'd just started working and was earning $47.00 per week, plus $9.95 hygiene allowance.

Buy-up in secure just went to $60.00 per fortnight, instead of $80.00 per week. All secure units were furious. Blue letters were written. Personal hygiene was the argument.

The list goes on. Meanwhile, I thought, sweet as: I took the opportunity to save my money, ultimately to pay my mum back. Now I know to see if minimum wage could sustain a single parent upon release, besides 30% of my wages for rent and $60 per week for food. I saved $300 over six months. It's my mum's birthday the day after I get out. I bought her magazines and a card, etc, to pay the debt back. It's important to me not to be in debt to anybody. It's Christmas and we decide to create something that is tradition: green vanilla cake, Old Gold dark chocolate, apples, Biscoff and cream. Glorious CREAM. So I cook up the apples in two trays and leave them to sweat in plastic bags, mix up the cake mix with chocolate, cream and Biscoff, pour it over the apples, seven mins in the microwave. Make the frosting the same as the cake mix, add milk and butter, tender. I'm divine. Russian Fudge. Melt-in-the-mouth decadence. I will never forget the taste on my tongue. Thank you.

Food for Thought

By Grant

Grant writes from a prison in NSW.

Buy-Ups feed my belly,
but what about my mind?
with nothing on the telly,
I might as well be blind.

idle chat with my cell,
is OK to help unwind,
but my brain will be jelly,
if some books I cannot find!

Experiences

Loving Someone In Prison

Frozen roses and relationships through the razor wire

By Gabrielle

Gabrielle is a second generation Aussie, crafter, fur-mum, introvert and hope bearer - not necessarily in that order! She is also a former prison partner, now sharing her journey for others.



'Cafe Flowers' by Brendan, available to purchase at Boom Gate Gallery

My partner gave me 24 frozen roses the Valentine's Day he went to prison.

They weren't meant to be frozen, of course. Knowing he'd be inside by Valentine's, he bought the boxed arrangement some days earlier and hid it in the back of the downstairs refrigerator to keep fresh. By the time I opened the golden box on the day, the fridge had done it's touchy fridge thing and frozen the flowers solid.

But I doggedly plucked away the frostbitten leaves and mushy petals, and propped up the remaining wrinkled blooms in my favourite vase. And when they too wilted, I nestled the dried petals back into the box. Because by then, they seemed like the only tangible connection to our relationship before prison.

My partner and I knew prison was coming for over a year. But even with all those months to prepare, our relationship still wasn't ready for it. The loss. The distance. The exhausting day after day. Relationships are hard work. Relationships through the razor wire are harder work.

If you're struggling with how to maintain your relationship, here are some simple ways that made navigating this time a little easier for us – and some I wish we'd known sooner.

FOR PARTNERS INSIDE

Listen to Your Partner
Even though you can't be there physically, you can still support your partner by listening to what's important to them. Ask them what happened this week. Pay attention to how they're feeling. If you have trouble keeping track of everything going on, write notes down after you talk. Then next time, check in with them on how that appointment went. Follow up on how they're going with their annoying family member. Encourage them to keep trying that hobby.

Keep Track of Important Dates
Remember birthdays, anniversaries, holidays or other dates that matter to your partner. Also be aware that your partner – and you too – may be more sensitive around these times, so be kind to yourselves. Find what ways you have available to celebrate these days. Write your partner a thinking of you letter. Call to wish them happy birthday. Ask a friend to deliver a gift for you. Buy them something from the vending machine. It doesn't need to be flashy. It's the thought that counts – even frozen roses!

Communicate Honestly
It might be tempting to hide how you feel and instead to talk about the mundane, but your relationship will grow so much stronger if you're both willing to communicate honestly. You might find, like we did, it's actually easier to do this in prison than at home surrounded by distractions. Talk about the things that matter to you. Tell or write to your partner about what's making you happy, sad, hopeful, stressed, calm, angry, thankful. Don't worry about your spelling, grammar, handwriting or pronunciation. Heartfelt is more valuable than perfect.

FOR PARTNERS OUTSIDE

Look After Yourself
I wish I'd known this one sooner. It's easy to become bogged down in all you need to do for your partner, family, and everyone else. But you're in your best shape to care for others if you've first cared for yourself. Make sure you make time for healthy eating, drinking enough water, sleeping enough, mental health, downtime, hobbies that make you smile. If you prioritise these things, you'll find you're more energised, patient and balanced for the people who lean on you.

Affirm Your Partner
Even if they haven't expressed it, your partner is probably feeling pretty low right now. This isn't the time to run them down or remind them of how they've disappointed you. Instead, point out the positive things they're doing. Ask about their hobbies. Laugh together. Cheer them on if they want to participate in programs, fitness, industries or activities that are helpful to them. My partner taught himself solitaire inside, so I bought a book of card rules and sent him a new game with each letter. Let your partner know what you appreciate about them. Why you love them. You don't need to agree with them all the time. But believe the best for them.

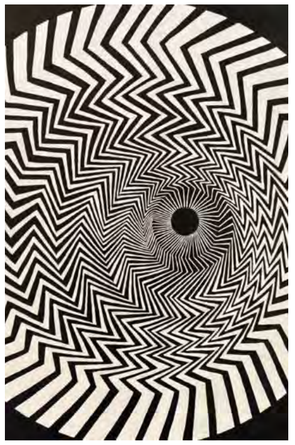
Be Deliberate About Your Time Together
Make the most of your time by planning how you want to interact. Think about how you'd like your relationship to feel at different times, and run through the steps you'll take to create that feeling. For instance, I wanted my visits to be cheerful, so I'd dress brightly, save up funny stories to tell my partner, and keep talking even when it pushed me out of my comfort zone. You might want your time together to be more serious, to focus on engaging with children, or perhaps to talk about aspects of your relationship. You might decide with your partner how you want to use your shared time. If they are approaching release also, plan together how you want your relationship to look when they're home and what you'll both do to capture this feeling.

Calling All Inmates!

On relentless prison announcements

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in VIC.



'Zebra Line' by Panda, available to purchase at Boom Gate Gallery

'Attention [insert prison name]. Unlock count, in ten minutes.' And our day begins.

Who would have thought prison would be so noisy. No, not the inmates (although they can be a tad rambunctious at times) – I'm talking about all the bloody announcements!

Calls to the officers post, the Operations Centre, Education, Health, Programs, Recreation, and religious services – it never stops. Everything from 'Buddhist Meditation', 'Seniors Stretching' and 'Saturday Board Games' to 'OSTP Group whatever', 'Fitness Classes' and 'Over 50s Trivia'. Three times a day for medications and six times a day for counts (due to the ten minute and five minute warnings).

Some days prison feels like living at an airport or train station – announcements blasting out of the ubiquitous speakers on the outside of every building, and inside almost every room, including the bathroom: 'For crying out loud, can I not go to the toilet in peace!'

Our daily lives are directed by anonymous voices and automatic recordings; some with cheery, good humour; many in a brusque business-like timbre; and the rest in a grumpy, begrudging tone.

Some are polite: 'John Smith, please go to the OSC', many are not: 'Smith. Officers post. Now!'

The worst of them are mumbled, muttered, garbled, or cut short – met with looks of confusion: 'What the f* was that about?'

At work they are drowned out by power tools and blaring radios.

Invariably if you're working or training there aren't very many – but as soon as you try to take an afternoon nap – an endless stream of dialogue blasts out of the speaker, jarring you awake every few minutes.

Class discussions and project presentations are interrupted adnausea – shattering your train of thought: "What was I just saying?" Inevitably followed by a stream of complaints from both teachers and students. Have you ever tried to sustain the emotional intensity of a deeply personal poem with announcements for 'Positive Parenting Program' or 'Christian Church Services' blaring through the room? Trust me – you have no hope!

The tiresome repetition when staff are after the same person again, and again; to front the officers post or return their card.

Sometimes the list of names for mail call is so long it might be quicker to say: 'Everyone except [insert names], come to the post for mail.' Although of late they areonly announcing the presence of a new list – come check for yourself.

I swear sometimes they sound like their call-ups to deliberately annoy us – waiting until just after I've gone back to my cell, "Couldn't you see me walking past the post and call me then?Or just as we step under the shower, 'We've been calling you. Why didn't you come sooner?' 'Well Sir, turning up to the post naked would likely get me additional charges'.

Even the weekly movie is not immune. 'OSTP group three to Health', 'Did he just say she was a double agent?'

The newest part of announcements are for Codes (one to initiate and one to stand-down) – probably because everyone used to complain they didn't know there was a 'Code' when they got yelled at for being in the wrong area. Of course they don't tell us the location, or the code – so you can expectively see a line of inmates running out to the yard to get away from whatever it is.

Some announcements can be completely randomly timed: 'Attention [insert Prison name]. Lock-up in five minutes, cease all movement.' And another day draws to a close.



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What I Learned After Losing Everything to Addiction

By Jeremy

Jeremy writes from a prison in NSW.



Boom Gate Gallery: 'Lonely Tree' by York, $250, #5699, 60cm x 100, acrylic on canvas

I'm currently 45 years old and I have spent 19 years of my life in NSW jails, albeit in instalments (not all in one go), because I kept falling for the traps of evil. The first time I can remember breaking the law was in Year 5, when I broke into the primary school I went to. I was stupid, but I got away with it, and stealing the petty cash tin only reinforced the idea that crime can pay, but for how long?

I started high school not too long afterwards and, still blinded by the devil, I did something I really regret. Still getting away with my crimes, I started to smoke, drink alcohol and hang around kids who were two and three years older than me, I was fooled into thinking I was "all that", when really I was just stupid.

My schooling and drug use took a turn for the worse when I started going to rave parties in Sydney's warehouses in Years 8 and 9. I wasn't getting any work done and I soon found myself dropping out all together. The drugs got worse, and so did the people I was around. I started using heroin and travelling to Cabramatta, where heroin was cheap and abundant. It was pure evil.

I started getting locked up once I turned 18, mainly for property offences. My life really spiralled out of control when I started using IV drugs. I committed armed robberies and other acts of violence, and things soon escalated. I'm lucky to be alive, to be honest.

After nearly completing a drug rehabilitation program at Parklea CC, I planned to stay out of jail and found employment.

While learning how to paint at Long Bay, I was given an opportunity to participate in a three-part documentary series called "Life on the Outside". From the outside, it looked like I was doing well. I started my own small painting business with the help of new-found friends from doing the show. But I was still blinded by the devil and lying to myself: I kept using drugs and hanging around other users in trap houses in the city after work.

Somehow, I managed to keep working and started trying to secure my own place. But after a friend of mine passed away, I started taking pills again, which never ends well. I did stupid things, broke the law and got kicked out. That part didn't go to air, but I did get something positive out of a bad situation: I completed priority housing application paperwork, which I see as the major hurdle for many applicants.

My advice to anyone getting out of jail and not having anywhere to live is: go to housing, ask for a priority housing application, and get it done ASAP.

I really hope people can learn from my mistakes, because what happened next was horrible, with the same pattern repeating.

I ended up serving time again after breaching parole, but after five months I was paroled into temporary accommodation, which was much better than living in a cell.

I managed to get by and was soon offered my own place: a one-bedroom unit. I thought I had won the housing jackpot. It had a walk-in wardrobe and an underground parking space. I was on the top floor and had fantastic views of Sydney. How could I possibly fail again?

Well, you guessed it: I did. I continued my hideous behaviour, using drugs. By then, my only friends seemed to be people who had all done large amounts of jail, which wasn't helpful, to say the least. I had somewhat overcome my addiction to heroin and was using ice more regularly. It was becoming a problem. I thought I could manage it compared to a heroin habit, but I found out the hard way.

I was still criminally active, letting evil run my life. I was sleeping less and I even had hospital admissions due to drug-induced psychosis. I wasn't functioning properly. As an addict, you can't. It's only a matter of time and evil will get you.

So here I am, back in jail for the final time. I no longer use any drug whatsoever, including coffee. I reduced myself off the bupe injection, as it is meant to be used like methadone: not forever, but as a stepping stone so you can get healthy again.

I believe that, if you're fair dinkum, jail is the perfect place to give it a go. You just need to remain focused, challenge yourself, and stay healthy, strong and, most importantly, drug-free. It's like the stray cat theory: if you feed your addiction at all, it won't go away. The only way to overcome drugs properly is zero tolerance, just like the rehabs preach.

Is there such a thing as a functioning addict? Only a foolish person would say so. I'm 45 years old now and I have truly had enough problems in my life from addiction, so I have implemented major changes. I've tried every other way and they just don't work. You cannot maintain a healthy lifestyle when using drugs.

I've seen and been through it all. I even lost my little sister to a heroin overdose. That was a major tragedy that affected my family and me severely. She meant a lot to me.

I find the most helpful tool in getting off drugs is to repeat, and truly mean, what you say: "I hate drugs." Words are powerful. The more I have repeated that saying, the stronger I feel. Humans are capable of anything, especially change. With hard work and perseverance, you can make positive changes in your life. It all starts with the power of belief.

The community really needs good role models, especially people who have overcome addiction. It's never too late, or too early, to change.

And remember:

God still loves you.

Culture

King 810: Music for Hard Times

A band born in Flint, Michigan, and why their lyrics resonate with those who have been inside

By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender girl who had a 10 and a half year sentence in a men's prison. She has an undergraduate in creative writing and has been published extensively.

King 810, a nu metal band from the USA, toured Australia in March. I went, and a lot of other criminals went too. There was even a few reintegration officers spotted in the crowd. Simply because, they strike a chord... with those who have lived hardship.

King 810 (pronounced King eight one oh) is named after Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Why? Dr King organised the 1968 poor people's campaign that many claim led to his death. The campaign demanded economic and human rights for poor Americans of diverse backgrounds. The 810 is the area code of Flint, Michigan, the poor suburb the band is from.

Flint, Michigan is often called 'Murdertown, USA' due to its high crime rate. Ranked number one for violent crimes per capita from 2010 to 2012, it's also the sight of the economic collapse of America's motor industry, and a water crisis, where over a hundred thousands residents were exposed to serious lead and other chemical poisoning. A gutted police force and lack of services lead to rising, uncontrollable crime rates. Gunn, the lead singer has been shot, stabbed and arrested multiple times. The life of hardship is the basis for a lot of the lyrics.

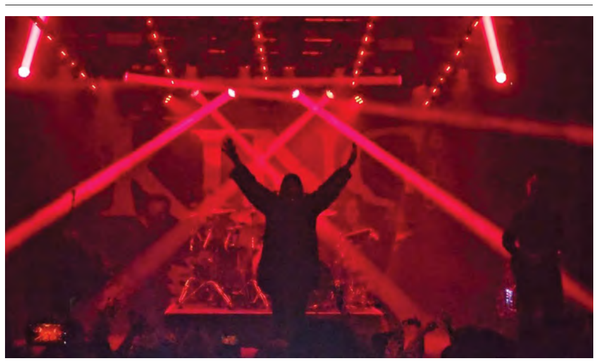
The band resonates with people in the system. Stew, currently on parole in Victoria said, "they come from a similar place and speak their truth. When I was in solitary, it helped me feel like I wasn't alone, and there were other people who understood."

People who end up in jail often come from poverty and trauma. I am no exception. I was raised by a single mother. I still remember my mother saying, "I wish I could afford to buy us nice things". It makes me wince to remember her saying it now. We lived in a town with no future for its residents. You either went to jail or left for the army. I've seen and done a lot of terrible things, things I regret so much. And so, I always related to the lyrics, these ones especially...

"And I see things when I sleep at night, no author could describe with words, and I've went to bed hungry and I've fought for my life, and when the chips are down there's no backing down, when I try to explain it just drives me insane, because I become so overwhelmed."







Jail was long. Years and years. People died inside, family died outside. Some inmates lost their minds. Some ended in the cemetery. And it left a mark on my psyche and on my soul. Even in jail, every full moon I would look out my cell window and say a prayer for them. Now that I'm out, I listen to this song, and hear the lyrics, and I cry.

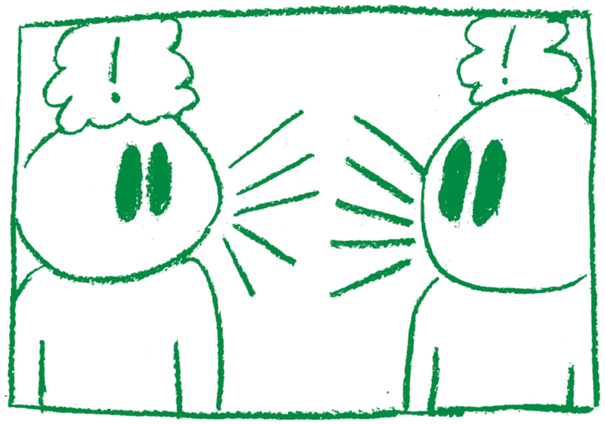
"If you ever make it out write down what you've seen, So we all live forever and we're finally free" – Write About Us, King 810

Now I am free. I'm so thankful I have been given the chance to write down what I've seen. I hope you all feel a little less alone. And when you feel alone, you can feel free in the stories you read and the music you hear, like we did.

• Reintegration

How To Talk About Prison When You Get Out

It's your story to tell, when you want to tell it



By ACSO

ACSO is the Australian Community Support Organisation. ACSO is an Australian not-for-profit that has over 40 years' experience working in prisons and community reintegration.

Talking about prison once you're out in the community can be challenging. It's difficult to know the right thing to say, or how people might react. What if people judge, or don't understand? Is it better to be honest with an employer, or keep your history to yourself? What about telling old friends or new friends or potential romantic partners?

There are many difficult questions and no easy answers.

In this article, we would like to share some experiences and advice from four people who have been through the criminal justice system and now work with ACSO. We hope these experiences might help you process your own feelings and strategies for talking about prison on the outside.

Keep in mind, the way you choose to disclose your history of contact with the criminal justice system is ultimately up to you.



Pattie – Peer Support Worker, ACSO

Being open about your history at work is a personal decision, and you have the right to choose when, how, and with whom you share it. You do not owe everyone your full story. Focus on what is relevant, what feels safe, and what supports your goals. If the conversation comes up with a potential employer, be honest without getting lost in details. Acknowledge the past, take responsibility where needed, and then shift the focus to who you are now, your growth, skills, values, and what you can bring to the workplace. Employers are often looking for reliability, attitude and willingness to learn just as much as experience.

I used to go to work every day, stop at a red light, and think, is today the day they are going to find out? That feeling stayed with me for two years, and I don't want to see others carrying that same weight. If I could go back, I wouldn't do it that way. I'd want to work with employers who accept me for who I am today, not judge me by my past. But I also understand it's not always that simple, sometimes you don't feel like you have the option, or you don't know how to navigate the conversation. It can be tricky. That's why trust, timing, and support matter. Your past is one chapter of your story, not the whole book, and the person you are now deserves to be seen too.



Renee – Lived Experience Advisory Panel, ACSO

Telling someone you've been incarcerated is not an easy conversation to have.

There is no guidebook for it. No script. Just a moment where you either choose to speak your truth or stay silent out of fear of being judged.

When I reconnected with my long-lost best friend at a friend's birthday party a few months ago, I knew I didn't want to rebuild our friendship on half-truths. So, I told her. I didn't dramatise it. I didn't over explain it. I didn't beg for understanding. I simply told her my reality and trusted that if our friendship was real, it would hold.

And the reason I could tell her so openly was because I felt safe. Safe enough to know I wouldn't be reduced to the worst chapter of my life. Safe enough to know I wouldn't be spoken down to or looked at differently. Safe enough to know I would still be seen as me.

This time when I told my story it was different. There was no shame in the space between us. No interrogation. No change in tone. Just understanding. And that reminded me how powerful it is to feel emotionally safe. When you feel safe, you do not have to shrink. You do not have to over justify yourself. You can simply stand in your truth and be met with respect.

From my own personal experience, telling people you have been to prison can be incredibly daunting. The judgement can be loud. The assumptions can be heavy. People can treat you as if your past defines your entire character.

But here is what I know for sure: going to prison does not make you a bad person. Making bad choices does not make you a bad person. It makes you human. Human beings make mistakes. Human beings go through seasons of poor decisions, pain, survival and growth. Our past is part of our story, but it does not get to define who we are forever.

For anyone else in the same position, my advice is this: it is your story to tell. You never have to hide it, and you never have to rush it. Share it when you feel comfortable. Share it when you feel strong enough. Share it because you are choosing honesty and freedom, not because you f eel forced to defend your past.

The right people will not define you by one chapter. They will see your growth. They will see your accountability. They will see your resilience. And most importantly, they will see you. I am grateful I had that moment with my long-lost friend and grateful I felt safe enough to speak. And grateful to be reminded by her that our past may shape us, but it does not own us.



Steph – Assertive Outreach Worker, ACSO

I decided to be honest about my journey. Not all employers will respect you for this, but the right ones will. I didn't want to live with a secret hanging over my head. My past doesn't define me, but it has shaped who I am and how I more forward in life.

I am an Assertive Outreach Worker at ACSO, I am not employed in a lived experience role, ACSO employed me for my skills, qualities, and qualifications. ACSO value my lived experience and view it as a great asset to our AOS team.

If you have survived incarceration, you can adapt and endure a lot! These are transferable skills. People who haven't experienced incarceration can never learn these. I know first-hand how important the support I give is in my participants lives and ultimately how life changing it can be. I can connect and communicate with, and advocate for people on a different level, because I have lived it!

A criminal record in the community isn't the big black mark it once was. There are people who have been through prison going on the study law, work in community services, and achieve amazing things.

Also, keep in mind, most of the education and programs you complete in custody can be listed on your CV.



Brendan – Lived Experience Advisory Panel

My experience is you weigh up the other person. Most people and professionals are fine. It's your choice to disclose.

Me, I went for jobs that did not require a police report. And the adage "it's not what you know but who you know" does apply to some extent. That's how I got my job. Well, persistence, patience and a positive attitude has to be there to.

I also found, as I work two job sites, that the boss just wants the job done competently. If you're reliable and honest and you show your work ethic to a very high standard, the reward will come.

I got out after 12. There were whole new looking for work, Centrelink systems and ways to communicate I had to adapt to. I just had to be patient and persistent. After 12 years in, I knew how to be patient.

I was with a job network provider that basically didn't do too much for people. My advice is to have an open mind. They reacted to how the person acted, so I had to be proactive in pushing and bustling to get things done like my license and forklift ticket white card. I found that the system can work for you and when people see your drive they will assist.

I reckon it is how you participate. Don't get me wrong it's bloody hard, but you gotta be motivated. My motivation is I hate prison. For me motivation and connection are two things I have focused on.

My 2 cents.

The way you choose to disclose your history of contact with the criminal justice system is ultimately up to you. You can always choose to keep your history private if you prefer. We hope that sharing these insights and perspectives can help you process your own thoughts and feelings about sharing your own history of contact with the criminal justice system.

ACSO welcomes people who have been through the criminal justice system. From our Board, through to our frontline staff, and our Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP), ACSO creates opportunities for people to use their lived experience as a strength and to support others who have come into contact with the justice system to make meaningful change in their lives.

You can learn more about us and the work we do online at:

acso.org.au

or by calling:

1800 524 200.

• Unsure About Leaving Prison?

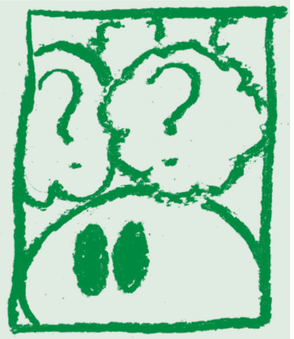
We want to help prepare you for the outside. What questions do you have about leaving prison? Write to us and we'll try get them answered!

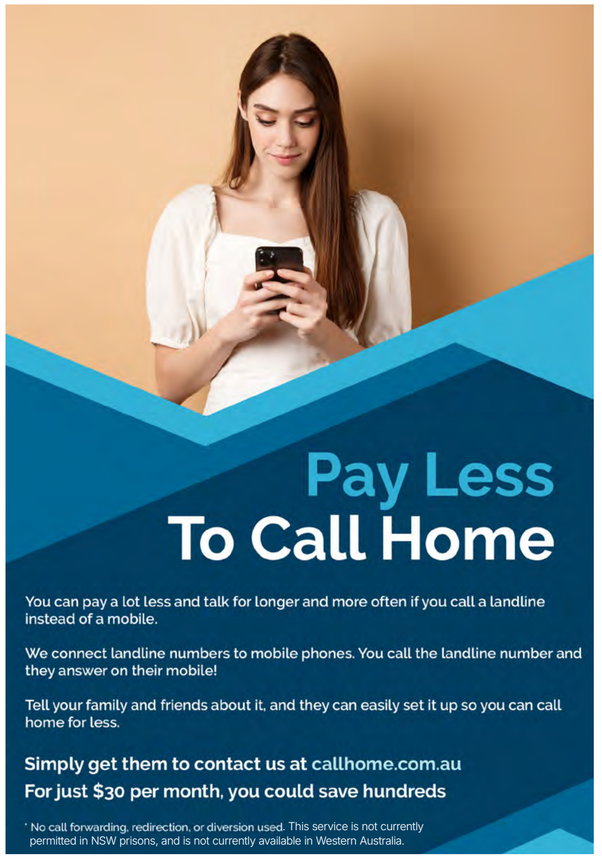
Please send your letters to the below postal address:

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au





Legal Corner

The Parole Patchwork: An Overview of Australia's Parole Laws



What makes you eligible for parole in each state and territory

By Human Rights Law Centre lawyer Monique Hurley, with assistance from Connor Shaw

Human Rights Law Centre

The Human Rights Law Centre is a community legal centre focused on driving systemic change, including ensuring that people in prison are treated in dignity.

Warning:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that the following article contains the names of deceased persons.

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

Parole allows a person to serve part of their prison sentence in the community. The idea is that parole provides people with a structured, supported and supervised transition from prison back into the community. In recent years, regressive reform of parole laws in many places has made it increasingly difficult for people in prison to access parole.

Each state and territory has an independent parole authority that makes decisions about whether to grant, deny, defer or cancel a person's parole pursuant to the relevant governing law. Some jurisdictions have automatic parole where a person does not need to apply for their first parole hearing. In contrast, others do not have automatic parole and people in prison must make an application to be considered for release on parole.

Parole laws in each jurisdiction differ, are not always straightforward and can be challenging to navigate. A high-level summary of parole eligibility can be viewed across the green boxes on the following page.

In most jurisdictions, "no body no parole laws" exist and generally provide that the parole authority must not release a person sentenced to life on parole unless they are satisfied that the person has satisfactorily cooperated in the investigation of the offence. Other exclusions and restrictions exist, including some in relation to specific people in prison.

At the federal level, the Albanese government is in the process of establishing the Commonwealth Parole Board that will replace the Attorney-General as the decision-maker on parole matters for people serving federal sentences. This is likely to commence operations in late 2026, subject to the relevant laws being passed.

In making their decisions, parole authorities are sometimes mandated to consider certain matters, but can generally consider all relevant information, with a significant focus on 'safety and protection of the community'.

Parole authorities will generally consider:

- the nature of the offending and any sentencing remarks made by the Judge;
- any pre-release risk assessments or reports;
- reports from psychologists or psychiatrists;
- submissions from the victims/s or family;
- submissions from the person in prison;
- the ability for the person in prison to access suitable and stable accommodation post-release;
- whether the person has undertaken any treatment or programs in prison; and
- any other considerations they deem relevant.

The mismanagement of parole applications is not uncommon and can have fatal consequences. In 2021, proud Yamatji, Noongar, Wongi and Pitjantjatjara woman Heather Calgaret died in custody at the Dame Phyllis Frost women's prison in Victoria. This followed significant delays in Ms Calgaret being able to access the treatment programs she was required to complete for her parole application, which was ultimately refused because her proposed accommodation was deemed "unsuitable".

In Victoria, two of the most frequently used reasons for parole being denied in 2024-25 reported by the Adult Parole Board were the absence of suitable accommodation (69 per cent) and the failure to complete assessment/programs (34 per cent).

Review rights differ between jurisdictions. While on parole, a person is subject to parole conditions and is under supervision. Common conditions include abstaining from alcohol, drug testing, curfews, residential restrictions and electronic monitoring. Parole can be cancelled at any time by the parole authority if a person does not comply with their parole conditions or if they are convicted of a new criminal offence.

Have a Question About the Law?

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

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

Please send your letters to the below postal address:

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Jurisdiction NSW **Parole Authority** NSW State Parole Authority **Governing Law** *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* (NSW)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** If a person is serving less than 3 years, they should automatically be granted parole at the end of their non-parole period. If a person is serving longer than 3 years, at the end of their non-parole period they must be considered for parole by the NSW Parole Authority. The NSW Parole Authority will then decide whether or not to grant parole. If a person is not granted parole, they must make an application for parole if and when they become eligible again.
Jurisdiction QLD **Parole Authority** Parole Board Queensland **Governing Law** *Corrective Services Act 2006* (QLD)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** If a person is sentenced to 3 years or less in prison (excluding sexual offences or serious violent offences) the sentencing court should set a parole release date. If a person is sentenced to 3 years or more in prison (or convicted of a sexual offence or serious violent offence) the sentencing court can set a date that the person becomes eligible to apply for parole. If no date is set, and so long as it is not counter to any non-parole period, a person will become eligible to apply for parole once they have served half their sentence. In both scenarios, once an application is made, the Parole Board Queensland will then decide whether or not to grant parole.
Jurisdiction NT **Parole Authority** Parole Board of the Northern Territory **Governing Law** *Parole Act 1971* (NT)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** The sentencing court is responsible for setting a non-parole period, but all people in prison must serve at least 50 per cent of their sentence before being eligible for parole. People in prison should have their application considered two months prior to their eligibility.
Jurisdiction TAS **Parole Authority** Parole Board of Tasmania **Governing Law** *Corrections Act 1997* (Tas)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** A person (other than those designated a 'life prisoner' or 'dangerous criminal') can be eligible for parole after they have served one half, or at least 6 months, of their sentence (whichever is greater) unless in the opinion of the Parole Board there are exceptional circumstances. The 'Application for Parole' should automatically be sent 6 months prior to a person's parole eligibility date. The sentencing court can also set a non-parole period, although this is not done often.
Jurisdiction SA **Parole Authority** SA Parole Board **Governing Law** *Correctional Services Act 1982* (SA)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** If a person is serving 12 months or more, but less than five years, they should automatically be paroled at the end of their non-parole period. Some people are excluded from automatic parole and must apply to the Parole Board for release, including people sentenced for sexual offences, violent offences, offences involving firearms or arson, terrorism related offences and serious drug offences.
Jurisdiction WA **Parole Authority** Prisoners Review Board of Western Australia **Governing Law** *Sentence Administration Act 2003* (WA)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** The sentencing court should determine whether a person can be considered for parole. For sentences of four years or less, people typically serve half of their sentence before being eligible for parole. For sentences over four years, people may become eligible for parole when they have two years or less remaining on their sentence. Once eligible, the Prisoners Review Board has an obligation to consider a person for parole.
Jurisdiction ACT **Parole Authority** Sentence Administration Board **Governing Law** *Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005* (ACT)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** If a person is sentenced to a period over 12 months, the sentencing court will generally set a fixed non-parole period which must be served in prison. A person must apply to the Sentence Administration Board for parole, and may do so 6 months before the end of their non-parole period.
Jurisdiction VIC **Parole Authority** Adult Parole Board **Governing Law** *Corrections Act 1986* (VIC)	**Parole Eligibility (Generally)** If a person is sentenced to more than 24 months, the sentencing court should fix a non-parole period (unless the nature of the offence or the person's history make parole inappropriate). If a person is sentenced to between 12 and 24 months, the sentencing court may choose to fix a non-parole period (but is not required to). If a person is sentenced to less than 12 months, a non-parole period cannot be fixed. A person who has completed a non-parole period is eligible to make an application for parole to the Adult Parole Board. Generally, a person is able to make an application for parole 12 months prior to completing their non-parole period.



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Inspectors' Report!



What the groups overseeing prisons have been up to this month

By About Time

Inspectors and ombudsmen regularly go to prisons and publish reports on what they find and what they think needs to be improved. They also complete reports on issues such as access to healthcare or the use of segregation.

Western Australia

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) in WA oversees how people in prison are treated. Its reports are provided to the state parliament and published publicly on its website.

The independent government agency is currently looking into the reasons for the increase in the prison population in the state, and the impacts of it, including around remand, rehabilitation and parole.

It is also reviewing whether prisons are complying with section 46A of Prisons Act 1981, which outlines what happens after it is suspected that someone in prison has transferred bodily fluids to a prison officer, such as through spitting.

If this is suspected to have happened, someone's medical records may be accessed and a sample may be taken from them, if the prison officer "reasonably suspects" they have been exposed to infectious bodily fluids.

The OICS is looking at how these powers are being used and if health information is properly being protected. It will release its report by the end of the year.

The body also recently inspected Eastern Goldfields Prison in May, and Melaleuca Women's Prison in March.

New South Wales

The Inspector of Custodial Services in NSW inspects each adult prison in NSW at least once every five years, and every youth justice centre every three years.

It recently released reports based on inspections of Clarence Correctional Centre, segregation rules and six youth justice centres around the state.

The agency inspected Clarence prison in late 2024, and released its report in April this year.

It found that the healthcare services on offer at the prison were a "major concern", mainly due to understaffing. The inspector was especially concerned about understaffing in mental health care services, and recommended that people with acute needs not be taken to the prison.

The review found that people in psychosis were waiting three days at the prison to see a mental health worker, and someone who was acutely psychotic was waiting more than 50 days to be admitted to hospital.

The prison infrastructure is modern, well-designed and well-maintained, the report said, and was the first prison in the state to introduce electronic tablets.

It also recently released a report on the use of segregation and other ways to separate and confine people in prison in NSW.

The agency pointed to examples where the procedures and record keeping required when using these methods was "wholly inadequate" and often "little more than a 'tick and flick' exercise".

Segregation is being used more regularly in NSW, and this has led to staff being "completely overwhelmed", the review found. It has also meant that people are being held in cells that are not fit-for-purpose.

When the inspector looked at the protective custody area of the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre, there were more than 100 people in protective custody held in regular units, and they got just 30 minutes every third day to shower, exercise and make phone calls.

The NSW inspector also released a report based on its unannounced inspections of six youth justice centres in the state. It found that the use of restrictive practices had reduced, but was still concerned about a lack of time out of rooms, the number of assaults and the ability to make proper complaints.

South Australia

The main body responsible for overseeing prisons in the state is the SA Ombudsman.

In a report released in April, the Ombudsman said that a woman in a prison in the state had been denied medication to terminate a pregnancy because there were not overnight medical staff.

The Ombudsman found this was an "administrative error", and that the lack of 24-7 medical staff put women in prison at a disadvantage.

Queensland

The Queensland Ombudsman recently completed inspections of Capricornia, Numinbah, Lotus Glen and Princess Alexandra Hospital Secure Unit.

Consultation recently closed on its review of Woodford Correctional Centre.

The Ombudsman is also consulting now on the Maximum Security Unit at Arthur Gorrie, Brisbane and Woodford prisons.

The Ombudsman also recently released a report into its inspections of the Brisbane Correctional Centre.

It included 55 recommendations for improvements, mainly around overcrowding and the limited infrastructure at the prison.

The inspections found that people at the prison were often locked in cells with other people for around 20 hours each day.

The Ombudsman recommended a review into bullying and violence reduction policies due to the overcrowding, and better access to activities.

Victoria

Oversight of prisons in Victoria is mainly done by the Victorian Ombudsman. Its most recent prison report was in November last year and looked into alleged misconduct at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

Tasmania

The Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania oversees prisons in the state, with a focus on the wellbeing of people incarcerated and the systems used in these places of detention. Its most recent report was from last year and looked at how young people in custody were being transported.

Northern Territory

The NT Ombudsman and the Office of the Children's Commissioner are the main bodies responsible for overseeing adult and youth prisons in the Territory.

ACT

The ACT Inspector of Custodial Services is responsible for looking into prisons in the ACT.

The inspector's most recent report was on the rising number of assaults at Alexander Maconochie Centre.

The report raised concerns with the rising level of violence at the prison, and recommended more of a focus on work, activities, programs and recreation outside of cells.

• Health

Neck, Shoulder and Back Relax

By The Prison Phoenix Trust

If you're feeling tense or stressed, your neck and shoulders may start to hurt, because they're tense too. Use these simple stretches any time you feel tight and uncomfortable, or like you could do with an unwind. Breathe slowly and deeply as you practise these movements. Focus on your breathing and the sensations in your body rather than the things that have been bothering you. You may find your worries have quietened down afterwards.



1. Head Tilts

Stay in each position for three slow, deep breaths, mindful of how your neck feels.



2. Eagle

Press your elbows together in front of you and work on lifting them to shoulder height. Do this for five slow breaths then change sides. Your arms might look like either of the pictures below – both are good if you can feel the stretch across the upper back.



3. Cow Face

Five breaths each side. If your hands can reach each other, that's great. If not, use a sock to connect them.



4. Back Stretch

Find a ledge to rest your hands on and fold over. Keep your neck in line with the rest of your spine. Take five deep breaths.



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



5. Shoulder Stretch

Clasp your hands behind your back, let your head hang loose and pull your hands far away from your bum. Stay for five slow breaths.



6. Child

Relax like this for five slow breaths. Put your head on a pillow or rest it on your hands (one fist on top of another) if it doesn't reach the floor.



7. Floor Twist

Open up slowly into this twist. You may not have room to stretch your arms out – just do your best. Stay like this for five slow breaths and then twist out again on the other side.



8. Rest

Lie like this and focus on your breathing, and the feeling the breath makes as it flows in and out of you. You can count your breaths if you want – up to ten and then start again – or just enjoy the quiet. If your attention wanders away from the breath, just guide it gently back. Stay like this for five minutes, or longer if you want. Let the work you've done help yourself sink in.

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Mob

‘Keep Your Spirit Strong and Healthy’: Q&A With Hannah McGlade



Human rights lawyer and advocate Dr Hannah McGlade on deaths in custody, mass incarceration, and keeping Mob’s spirit strong inside

Interviewed by About Time

Important Note:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this article contains names of people who have died.

Dr Hannah McGlade is a Kurin Minang Noongar woman of the Bibulman nation, whose traditional lands are located on the south-western coast of Western Australia. She is a human rights lawyer, advocate and legal academic, focusing on First Nations human rights and the conditions for people in prison. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Curtin Law School at Curtin University in Western Australia.

In this interview with *About Time*, Hannah discusses what motivates her and her message to Mob in prison around the country.

AT: You’re a human rights lawyer. How did you become interested in human rights and prisons?

I was a young person in the 1980s when the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody was being highlighted, especially with the case of young John Pat, who died in Roebourne after a brutal bashing by off-duty police who were charged but acquitted by an all-white jury. He was only 16 years old when I was in high school and learnt of his death.

As Noongar people we took part in marches and called for a royal commission to stop Black deaths in custody.

Helen Corbett is a Noongar Yamatji woman who was a leader in this movement as well as Pat Dodson and local Noongar people who have passed away.

What are key human rights issues in prisons?

The mass incarceration and failure to implement the royal commission recommendations, especially that incarceration be a matter of last resort.

Indefinite detention, bail and remand issues, solitary confinement and children being criminalised are all serious human rights issues that contribute to this national crisis which is only getting worse.

The Australian Law Reform Commission also highlighted the issues facing Aboriginal women, who have long been recognised as the fastest growing prison population in Australia. Aboriginal women are being racially profiled as perpetrators when they are using self-defence or retaliatory violence. They can also be charged and imprisoned for breach of restraining orders issued by police. Women are being separated from their children who are left endangered as a result. This has to stop.

What are the main things that you think need to change in WA?

The low age of criminal responsibility and mandatory detention laws mean we are incarcerating too many children and harming them as a result.

We need to invest into community responses instead. They are few and far between due to lack of government support.

What kind of government would prefer to incarcerate Aboriginal children than support alternatives in the community to keep them on the right path?

The children are vulnerable, with special needs, and have often been exposed to family violence, which is harmful.

Mandatory detention laws, especially for property offences, underline the very high rate of Aboriginal incarceration in WA. The High Risk Serious Offenders Act 2020 allows for indefinite detention and is largely used for Aboriginal prisoners.

The conditions in prisons, especially solitary confinement, are dangerous to peoples’ health and too often leading to suicides and deaths in custody. This is cruel and inhumane and breaching UN law.

There is a lack of re-integration support, and prisoners can be released with no supports in place, leading to re-offending and incarceration. This too often becomes a vicious cycle and is evidence of government neglect.

What is your message to First Nations people currently in prison?

Aboriginal people have been strong in the face of colonisation, and we know that incarceration was one of the main tools of colonisation. This has never ended.

I believe that we need Aboriginal people who are in prison to lead a movement from the outside to fight against mass incarceration and human rights abuse.

Keep your spirit strong and healthy. If arts or music make you happy, do that. If education is in your reach, I encourage it. Always have a yarn with friends or family when you’re down.



NAIDOC Week!

NAIDOC Week celebrations will be held from 5 – 12 July 2026. The theme is 50 years deadly. If you have any thoughts on this theme, please send them to us to publish in the July edition:

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Family
By David B
Gunaikurnai people
2025

This painting represents me and my family, although we all have taken different paths, I’ll still be there for them, and hopefully, we will be back together once this journey is over.



Helping Hands
By Daniel DM
Dja Dja Wurrung people
2025

This painting came to mind while I was going through a hard time in life and needed a hand.

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Learn

Astrology Explained!

We have received many requests for horoscopes. So we thought we'd start with an explainer of the Western Zodiac! Even if you're a 'non-believer', it's fascinating how it continues to grip us!

By Shae Wiedermann

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

HISTORY

Astrology and the interpretation of the stars and planets have been around for millennia. First originating in ancient Mesopotamia, astrology began by using the stars to decipher messages from the gods. Here, 12 astrological signs were developed, which the ancient Greeks later connected to constellations and dates and named accordingly.

Both the ancient Greeks and Mesopotamians used astrology to connect with the gods and interpret how celestial positions affected events on earth. The 12 signs we know today were not used to describe individuals until the Egyptian astrologer, Claudius Ptolemy, linked them to personal attributes and events.

This is where Western astrology emerged, and it grew popular in the Middle Ages, when even doctors used it to diagnose. Most commonly, astrologers were found in royal courts, where they provided horoscopes to monarchs. During the witch trials of the 15th century, astrology became associated with sorcery and paganism, and the attitude towards it shifted.

There was an astrological resurgence during the Renaissance, but its popularity faded again with the Age of Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. The modern (20th-century) resurgence began with a newspaper column in *The Sunday Express*, and more newspapers began running horoscope columns. By the 1980s, these were common in media outlets, and people indulged in star readings to predict their personality traits and future life events.

STAR SIGNS AND THEIR QUALITIES

The zodiac we know today has 12 signs, and can be grouped according to the four elements they correspond to: Fire, Water, Earth and Air.

Of course, not everyone born within the dates have these strict personality traits. They say that everyone has a 'chart' mapping the placement of the planets at their time of birth. This results in an intersection of meanings that go beyond the 'main' sign, changing our personalities into different shapes. But that is too much for our introductory explainer. So let's stick with the main signs. (You also don't have to 'believe' in astrology to get some enjoyment from it!)

The following traits and personalities are based on the astrology app, Co-Star.

Fire Signs

Fire signs are passionate, energetic, bold and motivated. Equally, they can be stubborn and impulsive. The fire signs are Aries, Leo and Sagittarius.



Adler Aries by Atelier Teee

Aries
Symbol: The ram
Dates (2026): March 20 to April 19
Characteristics: Aries often speak without thinking, have a short temper and sometimes lose track of their emotions. They are competitive, will take on any challenge and get bored easily.



Zodiac sign of LEO in a 15th century manuscript by VMLS

Leo
Symbol: The lion
Dates (2026): July 22 to August 22
Characteristics: Leos radiate warmth and creativity, and often have larger-than-life personalities. They love being in the spotlight, are drawn to the finer things in life, and often at times come across as vain.



Sagittarius Astrological Sign at the Wisconsin State Capitol by George Browne Post

Sagittarius
Symbol: The archer
Characteristics: Sagittariuses tend to form opinions based on their feelings, are committed to personal growth, speak loudly and unapologetically, and are often the most outgoing and entertaining people in the room.

Water Signs

Water signs have strong emotions, intuition, imagination and are nurturing. They can also be insecure, easily overwhelmed and escapist. The water signs are Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio.



Zodiac sign of PISCES in a 15th century manuscript by VMLS

Pisces
Symbol: The fishes
Dates (2026): February 18 to March 20
Characteristics: Pisces are very romantic and creatively inclined, with a dreamy quality that draws them towards fantasy. They tend to overlook boundaries and interpret everything as a sign. They seem both childlike and wise at the same time.



Cancer Crab Grand Central by David Shankbone

Cancer
Symbol: The crab
Dates (2026): June 21 to July 22
Characteristics: Cancers are sensitive and often look for reassurance and comfort. They are strict about the very few boundaries they set for themselves and tend to take on other people's problems as their own.



Zodiac sign of SCORPIO in a 15th century manuscript by VMLS

Scorpio
Symbol: The scorpion
Dates (2026): October 23 to November 22
Characteristics: Scorpios are sensitive to betrayal and are protective of the people they love. They are comfortable with silence and can be misleading at times, however they are a sharp judge of character.

Earth Signs

Earth signs are grounded, practical, hard-working, stable and loyal. They can also be stubborn and stuck in their routines. The earth signs are Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn.



'Toro' by Biblioteca Rector Machado y Nuñez

Taurus
Symbol: The bull
Dates (2026): April 19 to May 20
Characteristics: Tauruses adore physical affection and are homebodies. They're creatures of habit, often wearing the same outfit every day, and aren't fond of sudden change. They know how to work hard but also how to relax hard.



Zodiac sign of VIRGO in a 14th century manuscript by VMLS

Virgo
Symbol: The virgin
Dates (2026): August 22 to September 22
Characteristics: Virgos thrive on feeling helpful and tend to have quick fixes for everything. They have strong attention to detail and spatial awareness, but are often critical and have a need to be correct.



Art Deco Capricorn by Atelier Teee

Capricorn
Symbol: The sea goat
Dates (2026): December 21 to January 20
Characteristics: Capricorns show maturity from a young age. They are responsible and have a strong sense of duty. They can take a while to open up to people and will quickly set aside their feelings to focus on their goals.

Air Signs

Air signs are intellectual, communicative, analytical and confident. They lead with their brains but can also be inconsistent, emotionally detached and prone to overthinking. The air signs are Aquarius, Gemini and Libra.



Aquarius Astrological Sign at the Wisconsin State Capitol

Aquarius
Symbol: The water bearer
Dates (2026): January 19 to February 18
Characteristics: Aquarians are unconventional and idea-driven, valuing ideas over emotions. They can be drawn to conspiracy theories and frequently feel like outsiders, even though they crave independence.



Zodiac sign of LIBRA in a 15th century manuscript by VMLS

Libra
Symbol: The scales
Dates (2026): September 22 to October 23
Characteristics: Libras dislike solitude and have an eye for style. They avoid conflict and are dedicated to keeping the peace, often seeing multiple perspectives and embracing nuance. They are dreamy and often struggle to make decisions.



Gemini
Symbol: The twins
Dates (2026): May 20 to June 21
Characteristics: Geminis are charismatic and sociable, able to strike up a conversation with anyone. They enjoy playful debates and use humour to navigate tricky situations. They often show different sides of their personality depending on the moment.

Let us know if you'd like horoscopes!

Curious to Learn More?

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

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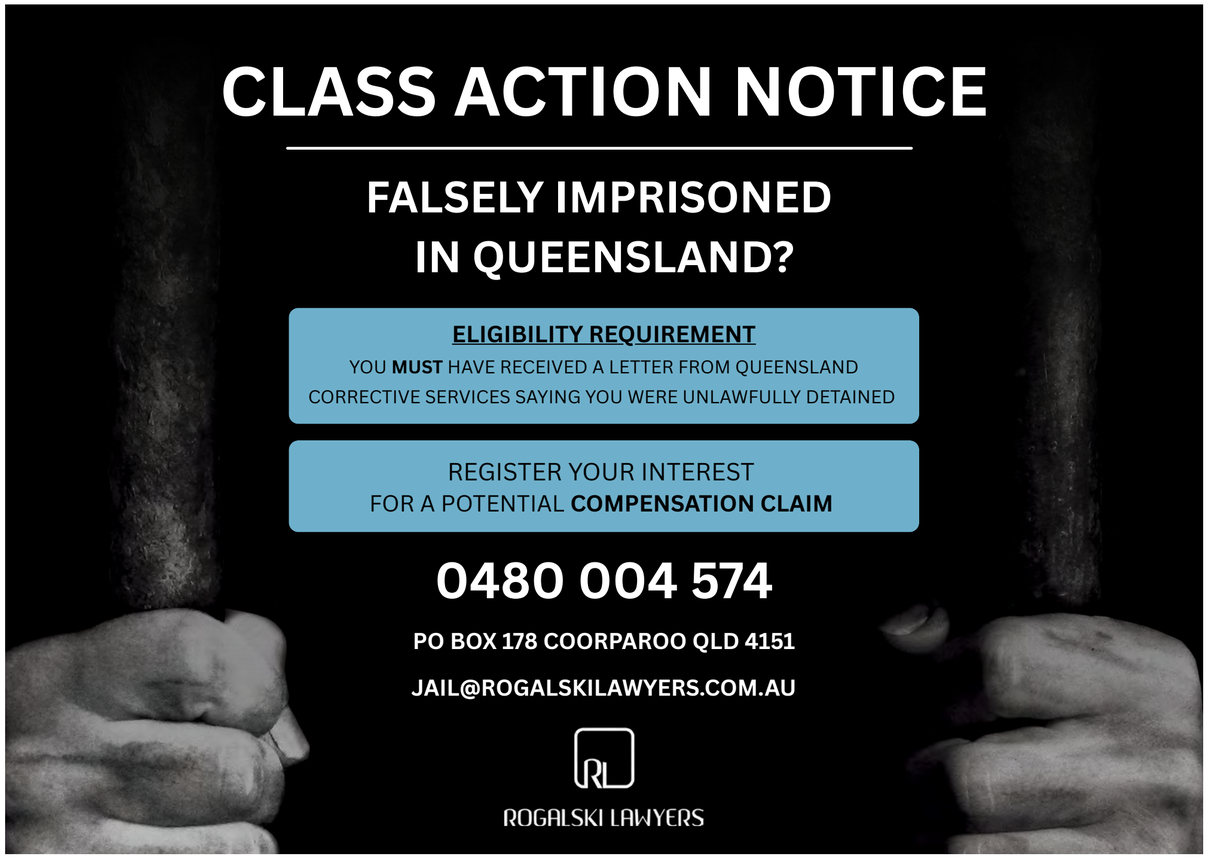
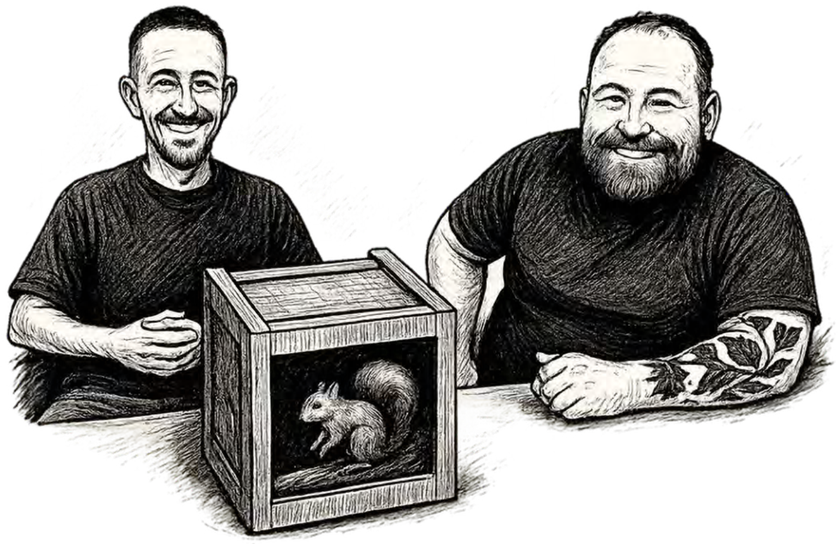


Creative

‘Tingers’ and the Squirrel Box

A tale of resourcefulness and friendship from Risdon Prison, Tasmania.

By Sara



In Creative Learning we get to see some amazing stuff made by talented people. The best part is hearing the stories behind how creative projects have come to life.

Meet Heath, who visited us with an intricately crafted varnished matchstick box embellished with a picture of a cheeky squirrel. Heath was accompanied by his mate Keith who helped make this masterpiece. Read on to find out more about “Tingers and the Squirrel Box”.

Heath:
When I was 11 I lost three fingers from my right hand in an accident. At 15 I had a hand reconstruction where the second biggest toe off both feet were removed and put onto my hand.

My kid came up with the nickname “Tingers” as I technically have toes for fingers.

Even though it’s years later, I am dealing with a lot of phantom pain, especially with the cold weather. This where you feel strong pain where a limb once was. On the outside I am prescribed medical cannabis to deal with these sensations but in here it’s not possible. I work full time running a business on the outside and keep my hand moving, but in here, due to the pain I can not work. I have been looking for something to pass the time constructively, so I decided to make my missus a special box for keepsakes.

Keith:
Heath and I know each other on the outside so it was crazy to find out we were in the same division, only a few cells away! When I realised we knew each other I was like “hey brother!”.

Heath:
It’s good when you know someone in here and before you knew it Keith was helping me out with the fiddly bits and details on my project.

Keith:
The box is made from 3000 matches. Matches are about $10 a bag. It was Heath’s idea to coffee stain the matches.

Heath:
This has been the first time I have tried making this type of thing. Keith helps me with the really small stuff, otherwise it would be in a million pieces. Making this box has made me think of my nan who I used to help restore old furniture. I loved helping her and the coffee stain idea came from her.

Heath and Keith are making another piece together which should be ready in time for Artists with Conviction in September / October 2026.

Both artists will be out soon.

‘God, I Am Deeply Sorry’: A Poem for the Prisoners We’ve Lost

By Triste

Triste writes from a prison in QLD.

To all the prisoners
who have ever spent time away
from the ones they love.
To all the prisoners we have lost
to a system, past,
present and future.
To all
the angry and unheard
whom it broke,
and spat out.
To all the ailments that have
waged unchecked,
while we forgot to eat.
To the person who
has no idea what it’s like to live
as an alleged offender,
to God,
I am deeply sorry.

As This Time Comes to an End

By Punkin

Punkin writes from a prison in VIC.

As this time comes to an end
I wonder which way the next will bend
The earth and moon will do their thing
I’ll embrace everything

Sit in the sun to relax and renew
Never in a church on a pew
Have a beer by the river
And look after my liver

Swing in the wind to hear my calling
I love it when it’s roaring
Listen to the leaves blowing around
You know, that rustling sound

Dance in the rain
To wash my pain
Frolic in the sun
Like no one’s watching

Watch the plants come back alive
And see the animals thrive
Once more we go round the sun
C’mon let’s have some fun

Falling Like Angels

By Daniel

Daniel writes from a prison in QLD.

Artist:
DJ

Genre:
Rap / Metal / Screamo / Emo / Hardcore

LYRICS

Verse 1
Don’t like this, ok , here we go again ...
the pain that I feel, this place that I’m in, these four walls closing in...
So helpless, ok, take my best of me...
things that you say, of my dismay, I’m not your property.
feels hopeless, ok, lots do it all again.
now I don’t feel, or care, of this hell I’m in,
Won’t fall down in you can’t ever stop me!
you can try, your fuckin best, & mess, & fuck with me! w

Chorus
vocals – Mild / screamo / Metal / Emo / Hardcore
you see us crawling, like Monsters,
we’re just falling, like Angels,
from the Skies!!!
who will save us, will be there & help us now in
to save us all now!! yea

Verse 2
vocals – Rap / Metal / Emo / Hardcore
Don’t like it, ok, you’re doing it again
the things that I see, the place that I be, my whole world designing.
feels helpless, ok, try my best of me,
things that I feel, feels surreal, I’m not your enemy...
So hopeless, ok, try do this all again....
I’ve learnt to fuckin live, in pain, now I can stand!!
can’t fall down, you won’t ever stop me!!!
you can try & fuckin mess, your best, to get to me!!!

Chorus (Heavy)
vocals – Mild / screamo / Metal / Emo / Hardcore
you see us crawling, like Monsters,
we’re just falling, like Angels,
from the Skies!!!
who will save us, will be there & help us now in
to save us all now!! yea

Bridge / Breakdown
Heavy Guitar Breakdown ×8

Chorus (Repeat – Heavy)
vocals – Mild / screamo / Metal / Emo / Hardcore
you see us crawling, like Monsters,
we’re just falling, like Angels,
from the Skies!!!
who will save us, will be there & help us now in
to save us all now!! yea

Outro
vocals – Mild / screamo / Metal / Emo / Hardcore
we’re, just falling, like Angels!!!
we’re, just falling, like Angels!!!
we’re, just falling, like Angels!!!
we’re, just falling, like Angels!!!

Send Us Your Creative Pursuits!

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

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

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Past guest Rachel says, *“I was fortunate enough to be invited with my mum as a guest to a Kairos Outside weekend.*

It was there that I heard the stories of other women just like me; women whose husbands, fathers, sons, daughters, and 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...who actually knew what I was living through. I found the ‘hope to carry on’ through the Kairos Outside family.”

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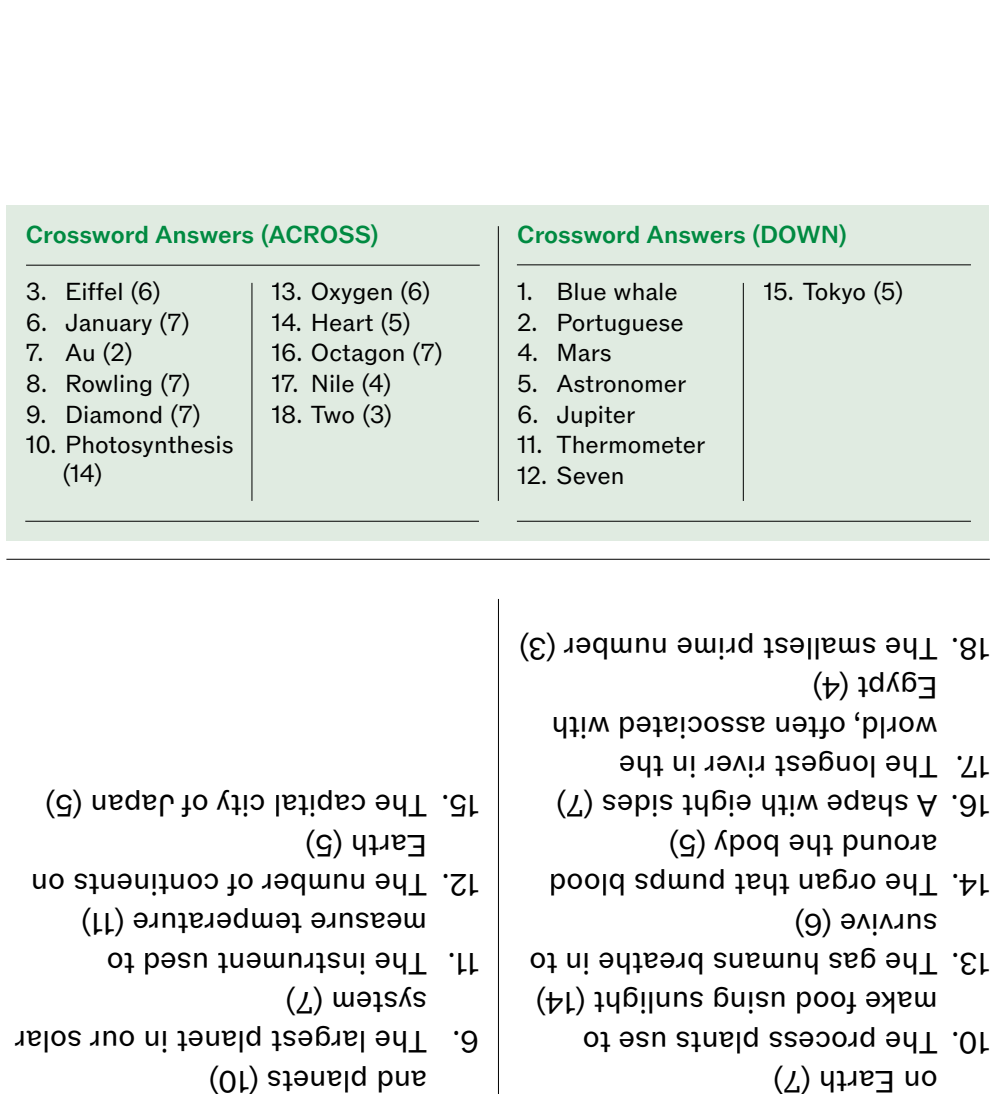
Play

Crossword



Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

3. Eiffel (6)
6. January (7)
7. Au (2)
8. Rowling (7)
9. Diamond (7)
10. Photosynthesis (14)
13. Oxygen (6)
14. Heart (5)
16. Octagon (7)
17. Nile (4)
18. Two (3)

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Blue whale
2. Portuguese
4. Mars
5. Astronomer
6. Jupiter
11. Thermometer
12. Seven
15. Tokyo (5)

ACROSS

3. A famous tower in Paris (6)
6. The first month of the year (7)
7. The chemical symbol for gold (2)
8. The author of the Harry Potter books (7)
9. The hardest natural substance on Earth (7)
10. The process plants use to make food using sunlight (14)
13. The gas humans breathe in to survive (6)
14. The organ that pumps blood around the body (5)
16. A shape with eight sides (7)
17. The longest river in the world, often associated with Egypt (4)
18. The smallest prime number (3)

DOWN

1. The largest mammal in the world (4,5)
2. The main language spoken in Brazil (10)
4. The red planet in our solar system (4)
5. A scientist who studies stars and planets (10)
6. The largest planet in our solar system (7)
11. The instrument used to measure temperature (11)
12. The number of continents on Earth (5)
15. The capital city of Japan (5)

Meme of the Month

“When you’re in res and see your mates from the blocks”

By Meicho

Meicho writes from a prison in QLD.





Quiz

Test your general knowledge on our monthly quiz!

1. What is the main ingredient in hummus?
2. What restaurant chain has the most stores in Australia?
3. What term describes perfect eye-sight and a form of cricket?
4. Who sings the song ‘You’re the Voice’?
5. How many sides does a dodecagon have?
6. What colours are on the flag of Italy?
7. Which continent gets the least amount of rain?
8. What is the capital of Portugal?
9. In what city was Australia’s first parliament?
10. What is the nickname of the Greater Western Sydney AFL team?

Nine Letter Word

How many words can you make using these nine letters? You have to use the middle letter. See if you can find the nine letter word!

T	S	U
T	E	A
D	R	A

Quiz Answers

1. Chickpeas
2. Subway
3. 20/20
4. John Farnham
5. 12
6. Green, white and red
7. Antarctica
8. Lisbon
9. Melbourne
10. The Giants

Sudoku

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

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

Bad Jokes

Q: How can you tell when a clock is hungry?
A: It goes back four seconds.

Q: What do you call a line of people waiting to get a haircut?
A: A barberque.

Q: What did the police officer say to the belly button?
A: You’re under a vest!