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About Time

ISSUE NO. 25 AUGUST 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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About Time Turns Two

And is Now in Every State and Territory!



Ike Curtis

We're so excited to celebrate our second birthday by now being available Australia-wide, with the newspaper going out to the Northern Territory from this edition. It's been two years since we published our first edition – thank you so much for reading across this time, and for the hundreds of letters, poems and pieces of art.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Welcome NT Readers!

We're so excited to now be available to people in prisons in the Northern Territory.

By Rocket Bretherton

Rocket is a proud Noongar woman and is the NT Coordinator at the Justice Reform Initiative.

I am so proud that I get to welcome our NT people in prison to your very first issue of *About Time*! This is your newspaper, so please write in and send pictures, stories, poems and whatever else fits.

Continued on page 2.

EXPERIENCES

Ten Minutes of Hope: Why Prison Phone Calls Matter

By Amos

Amos writes from a prison in NSW.

It's hope, it's connection, it's the one moment in a day when the walls don't feel quite so high. Inside prison, days can feel endless and sometimes the only thing that keeps you going is the thought you might get to hear the voice of someone you love.

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Welcome NT Readers!

By Rocket Bretherton



Continued from page 1.

I know Darwin prison because I was released from there last time back in 2019. It wasn't my first sentence but I wanted to make sure it was my last!

I was so over that revolving door of prison. I thought I had heaps of friends but they were nowhere to be seen during my prison time. I wanted more, my life was just a revolving door of prison and addiction and I felt an emptiness that I'm sure many of you can relate to.

Once I was released I got an opportunity to speak about what I thought needed to change to stop women from going back to jail at the Reintegration Puzzle Conference. I was the keynote speaker so I spoke in front of hundreds of people about the failures of the system and what I thought was the reason people kept going back to prison.

Stuff like how we get released with no support and get out to nothing. Next minute all the reporters wanted to speak to me and hear from me.

I haven't really looked back from there. I took any job I could get, which was processing fish at first – it was a crappy job but I had an income. Then a year later I applied for the job I have now and it's my dream job.

I work for the Justice Reform Initiative. We want to make systemic change and reduce incarceration – creating a world where disadvantage is no longer met with a default criminal justice system response.

The stuff I have managed to do since my last release still blows my mind. I've been part of a few things that have won the human rights award for justice three different years. I have just co-written a book which we hope to have in every women's jail – it's called *She Is Me*.

I was recently invited into the women's jail in Victoria called Tarrengower to speak to the women for International Women's Day and to deliver some of the books to the women.

It felt like such a long way away from 2019 when I walked out of Holtz unsure of my future. I spoke to the women at Tarrengower about the ability to be absolutely anything you can imagine once you are released.

I once thought that I would be stuck in the cycle of jail and drugs forever and how wrong I was. I hope that people can read my story and be inspired by my journey and also see that they too can break that cycle of jail and drugs and become anything that you can put your mind to.

There is a big community of people who have been to prison and are now doing amazing stuff and it's a very, very supportive community where we all try and lift each other up.

Believe it or not, lots of people want to hear what you have to say, I mean we are experts on what works and what doesn't when it comes to jail, release and programs that do and don't work.

Everybody has a story to tell and I look forward to hearing from more people from the NT. I had been stuck in the cycle of prison and addiction from the time I was 18 and I am now 45, so it's never too late to want a different life and to work towards that life that will set you free.

If I can do it I know that you can too. The conditions in prison at the moment would drive me crazy with all the lockdowns and the overcrowding, so if you want a different life please remember it's never too late, nobody is too far gone.

I look forward to hearing from people in the NT writing into *About Time* and making the newspaper your own.



Letters

First Time in Prison

By Adam

Adam writes from a prison in QLD.

If you feel like you've lost everything and have nothing to look forward to, it is very important that you don't lose hope for your life.

It is not over and your time in prison can be used as an opportunity to not only improve your prospects for a better future, but to also help you become a better person.

Prison is not some magic cure, but it is an opportunity to reflect upon your life and the decisions you have made and how you can make better decisions moving forward. It is an opportunity to trust your thinking and apply a new positive way of thinking that will result in better outcomes for you.

Throughout your time in prison you will experience hardships and things you believe are wrong. But, in order for you to navigate the system successfully, you'll have to put them aside and focus on progressing through the system.

It leads to not only easier prison time but to more opportunities to do programs and courses that will help you on the outside, and most importantly, progression means going home to your love ones as soon as possible.

I can't tell you how to do your prison time, but, if you want to progress through the system, keep your head down, mind your own business, be respectful and focus on improving all aspects of your life through training, learning and applying what you have learnt in a positive way.

Don't forget: there will be one or two friends that you meet in prison who took you under their wing. These will be new friends who will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Your family and others you were close to before will still be there, right by your side. Don't push them away in fear of rejection because of your own mistakes.

Failure is all a part of being human and you are allowed to fail, what is more important is that if you fall down, you pick yourself back up and learn from it, and move forward in a positive way.

Everything will be alright.

Embracing the Next Chapter

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in NSW.

To *About Time*,

I'm writing to you from NSW.

I've now been in for over a year – it's my first (and last) time in. I still haven't been sentenced but my lawyer has told me I'll be doing a "substantial" sentence. I'm not writing to you as a guilty man, a number or statistic, but as a human who has made mistakes.

But one day this will be in my past and I will have moved on. Will I have healed? Probably not. Moving on and healing are two very different things. In the past year I've lost all my friends, my house and my job, and the person I love no longer speaks to me. I don't think I'll ever heal.

People create their own versions of you, they believe what they want to believe. Just remember that you're in control of what people see, not what they believe. Be the person who you were born to be. Be in control of your destiny. Be the best version of yourself. Never allow another person to tell you who you are.

I don't need other people to tell me who I am.

Once this chapter of our lives closes, then perhaps we can start to heal. We can embrace a fresh start, not let fear control us, find a life full of love and trust. It's up to all of us to open the door and let it inside. I know I will.

I hope when you read this, no matter who you are or what you've done, you embrace the next chapter.

'I Know I Can Change'

By Maude

Maude writes from a prison in WA.

Dear *About Time*,

My name is Maude. I am a young Jabbir Jabbir woman – I was born in Broome, Western Australia. I am 29. I was raised by my mother. I knew about my father but he was never there for me and I don't blame him because he had other kids to raise.

I went to school at Broome Primary School, then went to school in Perth at Belmont City College and then Clontarf Aboriginal College. After school I got on meth, that's when my life turned upside down I started to get in trouble with the law.

In 2019 I committed a crime of escape lawful custody and criminal damage by fire. I was sentenced to 5 years.

While I was incarcerated I did a lot of education and programs to better my life. But having a criminal record makes it hard to get help and to change.

I am currently back in prison on a charge I did not commit, but I have applied for rehab. All I want to do is to be a mother, stop using meth and stop committing crime. I know I can change I just need support to help point me in the right direction.

I thank the prison staff from Bandyup, West Kimberley and Broome Regional Prison on my journey to change, their support got me through my tough times.

We Will All Have Our Freedom One Day

By Kyra

Kyra writes from a prison in NSW.

Keep Going.

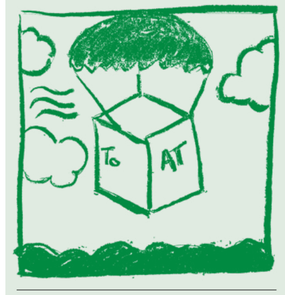
Hi my name is Kyra and I'm 27.

It's my first time in jail, currently serving a sentence of three and a half years. The hardest part was being on remand, not knowing and not having a release date to tell loved ones.

So to everyone on remand, I know it's hard but hang in there. This broken system can't keep us forward and even though I'm now sentenced, and I think it's a long time, I think about others doing even longer.

We will all have our freedom one day, so until then keep your head up, you got this and take it one day at a time.

Thank you for giving us a good read every month.



Write to Us

Your contributions are the centerpiece of the paper. If you would like to contribute to *About Time*, please send your letters to the below postal address (it's free!):

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Prison is Failing People With Mental Health Issues

By Greg

Greg writes from a prison in NSW.

Dear *About Time*,

My name is Greg, I am 60 years old and I have spent almost 48 years in various institutions and prisons.

I am writing concerning the constant neglect of inmates with mental health issues, and the neglect of services in prison to accomodate these issues. Sadly, and like so many, I was abused physically and mentally as a child, in various institutions, which resulted in me having chronic PTSD and other mental health issues.

Sadly it was not picked up as a child – my behaviour was noted as me being a delinquent and an attention seeker.

I was finally diagnosed in late 2021, but still nothing has been done.

I was finally put on the OSP due to my mental health issues and I thought wow now someone has recognised my issue.

I was released in June last year after serving six and a half years. Life wasn't easy, I lost my father and I had entered into a new relationship, sadly those issues that were left to exist led to a relationship breakdown and my offending once again resurfaced and led me back to prison.

I got on a mental health plan prior to my arrest – when I was arrested I informed police of my mental health issues.

Instead of helping me and allowing me to get the help I need and getting a Section 14 they decided to elect under Section 58 to send my matters to the district court, in essence preventing me from addressing mental health issues, which they were aware I had.

Having come back into custody I requested to see a mental health nurse, but I was told there is one mental health nurse for 1,000 inmates. To date I have not been seen nor have I had a opportunity to address those issues that have once again led me back to custody.

Prison is confinement – you place any animal in a cage and it will either go mad or adapt to its environment, neither of which is healthy.

Something more needs to be done to those of us with chronic mental health issues.

Yours Respectfully

Greg

Watch Batteries Should Be Treated as Essential

By Anthony

Anthony writes from a prison in NSW.

Has anybody purchased a watch recently or in the past and wondered what happens when the battery dies?

How are we meant to get replacement batteries for our jail watches if we cannot get batteries on our weekly buy-up? I know that you can buy AA and AAA batteries on buy up from any vendor for wireless radios. But you cannot purchase watch batteries.

How bloody outrageous. Think about how many inmates need replacement batteries for their dead watches or whose watch is close to needing a replacement battery.

Another question I'd like to mention is, how are we meant to take the stainless steel back off to replace the battery if Corrections did approve putting battery for watches on the weekly grocery buy-up or monthly activity buy-up?

That's something Corrections need to work out. The gaol staff in your area should be able to have a screwdriver in the office so inmates are able to remove the back of their watches and replace the battery.

How many inmates need their watch batteries replaced? Well this shouldn't be many as everyone would have got their watches at different times. I don't see why they don't put it on trial.

In my opinion, I think watch batteries should be added to the weekly grocery buy-up or the monthly activity buy-up for inmates as it's an essential, especially when inmates use their watches for alarms or when working out.

How Do You Cope With Lockdowns?

By Darren

Darren writes from a prison in TAS.

Dear *About Time* readers,

First up, I really enjoy reading all your letters, so keep sending them in. I've been thinking about writing a letter myself about a wide variety of topics, but I'd like to ask in this letter, how do you deal with lockdowns?

I've been in prison for 14 years now, and lockdowns have always been a feature of prison life, but I have also noticed that over the years they have gotten worse and worse.

To be frank, I don't cope with them well at all. I just haven't gotten used to them. I write letters, read and use the PlayStation, but by day three of lockdowns, I'm usually badly depressed to the point of absolute despair and live out the remaining days of lockdown in abject hopelessness. It's pretty miserable.

When we do get out, we get to walk in an undercover area the size of a double carport, just thankful we are out of our damned cells.

So, how do you cope?

Staying Out of Politics and Working on Myself

By Dylan

Dylan writes from a prison in VIC.

Dear *About Time* readers,

I'm at Western Plains Correctional Centre in Melbourne and this sentence round is the first time I handed myself in, the first time that I felt like I have a real chance at not coming back, the first time that I've stayed out of politics and kept to myself.

I'm actually working on myself and trying to be selfish so that I can be generous, because how can you help someone if you can't help yourself? I've become a very respected prisoner in every unit I walk into, by both officers and prisoners probably because I am always myself unconditionally and I never try to fit in.

I'm only 23 years old but I feel like I'm 43. Being in prison definitely preserves your body but makes your mind and soul feel so much older if you know what I mean.

If we have ever met in our time in prison, I'm glad we met, if we never met then I hope we don't meet in prison but hope we meet outside when we're all doing good in life.

• Writing Challenge Reminder!

Reminder to please send in your contributions for our next writing challenge!

Prompt: Time Travel
What does time travel mean to you? Is it a historical story, set in medieval times or the 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 of an upcoming edition!

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Recognising Veterans on the Inside

By Colin

Colin writes from a prison in WA.

We have an active veterans' affairs type meeting here every month and an outside group called "Buddy Up" that sends two of their volunteers in.

Sometimes they bring in a guest speaker. One monthly get-together is for all veterans: regular, Reserves, Australians, New Zealanders, Poms and other foreigners. Lately we have had a German soldier, a Canadian and Croatian soldier and one Chinese soldier.

It's no different than a normal day in any RSL club Australia-wide. The prison management is all for it and support it as it doesn't hinder the outside visitors monthly attendance.

We have annual ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services at our very own war memorial built by the prison's work party, all under the supervision and design of prison officers who themselves are veterans. The opening of our memorial was in time for ANZAC Day 2025.

The PR people of Serco excelled themselves, inviting pollies, dignitaries and other prisons' Superintendents, along with RSL and Veteran Affairs big-wigs.

The prison had over 40 vets, officers and crims in attendance. After the opening we all trooped off to a indoor/outdoor meeting hall where one and all intermingled. A BBQ run by two fellas – one Navy cook and one Airforce catering officer – turned out bacon, eggs, sausages, hamburgers and heaps of fried onions, which supplemented the salad, sweets and small Cokes the prison kitchen put out. Our canteen supplied cool drinks, coffee and a cheese platter.

It was the best meal I'd had in prison ever.

Those visitors from outside have probably gone away with the idea prisoners are spoilt for choice of food after that.

That one year was the first and last BBQ get together with that quantity of food we are likely to see. But it was a good day and all the prisoner vets appreciated the gesture and feed.

Staying Out Is the Hard Part

By DJ

DJ writes from a prison in VIC.

To *About Time*,

There is a word called "recidivism" and if you don't know, it's the rate of return to prison.

Why would anybody want to come back to the system and add to that statistic?

I have been here at Ravenhall for nearly 2 years now and the rate of return back here of prisoners is crazy. One prisoner has been here 5 times since I got here, one other 3 times, a few others 3 times and a whole bunch twice. It's strange I reckon.

I've been here since 2024 and I never want to come back here, ever again. I am trying my hardest to rehabilitate and I'm making the most out of my time here by working, doing clinical programs, education and courses, AA, art, helping others, cleaning and approx. 2–3 weeks after ya's published my article I got a letter from my daughter and she is now on my phone list.

I have a pretty good understanding of some prisoner's reasons: drugs or alcohol, mental health, IVOs, not having the right support they need, housing issues and many other reasons. Some I don't agree with either.

Some prisoners just blame everybody else for them being here. There are pathways to take to try stay out, like do some education to be work ready when you're released, do clinical programs and courses to benefit yourself, try AA or NA – it's free and beneficial I reckon. Speak to housing people at your location and go on a housing registry/list, work to gain some skills and knowledge, stay away from negative inmates and jail politics and try to really understand what put you in here.

Corrections can only assist with trying to rehabilitate you so you don't come back, as it's up to the individual to stay out of prison. The message I am trying to get across and the point I'm making is don't be a part of the statistics for recidivism and don't waste your time you have on this great planet by being behind prison walls – it's not fun to be forever in a cell.



By Lanie, painting from a prison in VIC. Gouache on paper, 2025, Somebody's Daughter

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.

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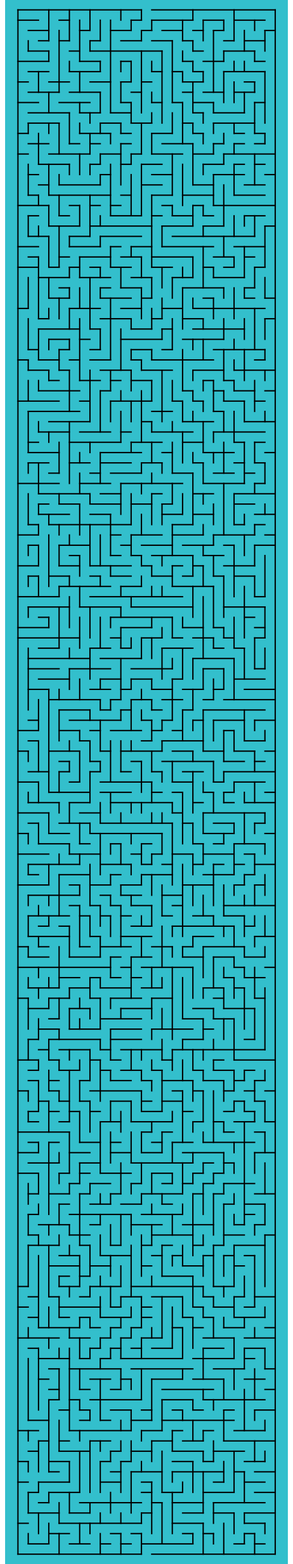

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• News and Investigations

How an Unpaid Fine Can Lead to Prison Time

And what is being done to stop it

By Denham Sadler

Denham is the Chief Reporter and Assistant Editor at *About Time*.

In nearly every Australian state and territory, there are thousands of people facing prison time due to unpaid fines.

This is despite a number of legal and human rights organisations pushing for this to be stopped completely, and several deaths in custody of people who were imprisoned because of not being able to pay a fine.

These are often parking fines or toll road costs that have increased over time.

In Victoria, there are more than 2,500 people subject to an imprisonment warrant due to unpaid fines that sometimes come from a decade ago.

The state government recently extended a pause on enforcing these warrants for another two months, but has stopped short of scrapping them completely.

The Fines Infringement Working Group, whose members including legal and human rights groups, has called on governments around the country to completely abolish the threat of imprisonment for unpaid fines.

In New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, you cannot be imprisoned for unpaid fines.

But if you are ordered to complete community service instead of paying a fine and then do not complete this order, you can still face incarceration in these jurisdictions.

In Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT, imprisonment is still an option if someone cannot or does not pay a fine, but it is meant to be a last resort.

"We don't think anyone should be imprisoned for not paying fines," Inner Melbourne Community Legal managing lawyer and member of the Fines Infringement Working Group Shifrah Blustein told *About Time*.

"We also think that just threatening to imprison people is enough to cause serious harm."

"We don't think prison functions as a deterrent – this is just punishing people for being poor."

NSW was the first state to ban the imprisonment of people for defaulting on a fine following the tragic case of Jamie Partlic.

Partlic was 18 years old when he was sent to prison for four days in 1987 for unpaid traffic and parking fines totaling just over $1,000. When in prison, he was assaulted in an attack that left him a quadriplegic.

The following year, the NSW government abolished the practice of imprisoning people for unpaid fines.

In Western Australia, the tragic death of First Nations woman Ms Dhu led to reforms around fines and prison time.

Ms Dhu died in police custody in 2014 following what the Coroner said was "inhumane treatment". She had been arrested two days earlier for unpaid fines of just over $3.500, and was ordered to serve four days in prison to repay the fines.

Following this case, the WA government moved to make imprisonment a last resort for unpaid fines, and to require a Magistrate to make this decision.

In Victoria, changes in 2017 provided help for the victims of family and domestic violence who have outstanding fines, and established Fines Victoria as the agency responsible for enforcement.

In Victoria, imprisonment for unpaid fines is also meant to be a last resort.

If an individual is receiving support from an approved community agency, counsellor or doctor, they can apply for a work and development permit. This allows the individual to complete work, counselling, training or education instead of repaying the fine.

But someone subject to a fine can also eventually be ordered to appear before a Magistrate, who has the pay to send them to prison over this issue.

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) has been pushing for the scrapping of imprisonment as a result of unpaid fines for decades.

"Fundamentally, imprisoning people for unpaid fines is unjust," VALS CEO Nerita Waight told *About Time*. "It punishes people experiencing poverty, not for any wrongdoing."

There are more than 3,000 imprisonment warrants for unpaid fines in Victoria, some from up to a decade ago. These relate to unpaid fines to a road toll operator.

The Victorian government has paused enforcing these warrant since early 2024, but there are growing fears that it will move to try to collect the funds soon.

Blustein said she had clients who have ended in prison because of unpaid fines.

"We started seeing some people end up in custody," she said. "We had somebody who had a sheriff show up at their home, and years later she had to go to court. She ended up putting it all on a credit card, and then had to go and get a payday loan to pay it back."

There are still thousands of people in Victoria facing jail time because of these unpaid fines.

"The reality is that the people who got to this position with their fines are the ones who couldn't afford to pay, whether due to homelessness, a mental health crisis or family violence," Blustein said.

"The clients we see still don't have any capacity to pay. They're already struggling in the cost of living crisis, they're under enormous stress."

A spokesperson for the Victorian government said it had paused the practice of imprisoning people for unpaid fines and there were "no plans" to resume this. They said imprisonment is a "last resort" and can only be ordered by a court.

If someone is struggling to pay a fine, they are encouraged to reach out to the agency that issued it or Fines Victoria. There are also schemes in place to help people experiencing hardship, such as the Family Violence Scheme and the Work and Development Permit Scheme.

In Queensland, imprisonment for a fine is also a last resort that can only be enforced if a judge or the state's State Penalties Enforcement Registry is sure that the debt cannot be resolved through a different way.

Fine options are available in Queensland, which allow someone to do community service if they are unable to pay a fine.

Do Longer Prison Sentences Make Prisons Safer?

Victoria recently widened the number of offences for which extra prison time must be served in additional to an existing sentence.

By Benjamin Aitken

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



In prison, time is both punishment and currency. It is counted in courtrooms, crossed off calendars and measured against the possibility of release.

In August last year, the Victorian government quietly widened the category of offences for which additional prison time must ordinarily be served cumulatively.

This means that the extra prison time is added to an existing sentence, rather than being served at the same time.

If a sentence is ordered to be served concurrently, this means that it is served at the same time as an existing sentence and is not added on top.

The *Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2025* served to include the intentional or reckless infliction of injury or serious injury against custodial workers on duty and others working inside a prison as a "prison offence".

If a court orders a prison sentence for one of these offences, it usually must be served on top of any uncompleted custodial sentence.

A judge can only order otherwise if there are exceptional circumstances to do so.

The new rule in Victoria is nearly identical to existing laws in New South Wales, which orders sentences for assaults committed by people in prison against staff to be served cumulatively, unless there is a special circumstance.

In most other states and territories, it remains up to the ruling judge or magistrate whether the sentence should be served alongside existing prison time or on top of it.

The purpose is understandable. Prison staff are entitled to go to work without being assaulted, and a sentence that adds no actual time may also be seen to carry no real consequence.

But appearance is not the same as prevention.

Deterrence depends, at least partly, on a person anticipating the likely consequences before acting, but prison violence does not always unfold that way. It can erupt in seconds, within an environment shaped by fear, frustration, confinement, mental illness and strained relationships.

In the moment, it is doubtful anyone is carefully distinguishing between a concurrent sentence and a cumulative one.

And the potential for extra prison time being a deterrent will also differ among different people. What weight does additional time carry for someone approaching release, and what weight does it carry for someone already serving decades?

The law does not entirely remove judicial discretion, but it confines it. Judges still consider the circumstances of the incident and the person before the court, but a concurrent sentence is now available only where exceptional circumstances exist.

Discretion is important, and a sentencing system must remain capable of recognising the difference between violence being deliberate and calculated, and being due to severe distress, illness, disability, drug withdrawal or another crisis.

Prison safety is influenced by more than punishment, and things like fair and consistently-applied rules, skilled staff, respectful relationships and meaningful activities all lead to lower levels of violence.

Harsher, more unstable and highly controlling environments may produce the opposite result.

Cumulative sentences can send a message on violence and recognise the harm suffered by prison staff, and these are legitimate purposes of punishment.

But it's uncertain whether they will prevent the next assault.

If violence grows inside a pressure cooker, adding more time may tighten the lid – it does not necessarily lower the heat.



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WA

Corrections Minister Steps Down
Western Australian Minister for Corrective Services Paul Papalia has stood down from the role and retired from politics.

Papalia said that an immediate family member had been diagnosed with a serious illness, and that he would be retiring to give his family "what they need".

He has served as the Minister responsible for prisons since mid-2021.

Bandyup Inmates Take to the Catwalk
A new program at Bandyup Women's Prison has seen a number of women take to the catwalk while also developing practical employment skills.

As part of a partnership with the Dress for Success organisation, 12 women at the prison took part in the one-week program, which involved them picking from donated professional clothing to find an outfit that suited their style.

The interview-ready outfits were paired with hair and make-up styling.

At the end of the program, women from the prison, custodial staff and guests gathered in the prison's gym to watch the women walk the catwalk.



ACT

Increased Use of Victims of Crime Registry
The number of people trying to access support services for victims of crime has increased in the ACT.

The adult offenders register supports people victimised by adult offenders serving a prison sentence or community supervision order.

It is now operated by Victim Support ACT, which sits within the Human Rights Commission.

There are now more than 500 people listed on the registry, an increase of more than 200 per cent since the end of 2022.

People on the victim register are kept informed about the management of an offender's sentence once the information is shared by ACT Corrective Services.



TAS

Mandatory Sentencing for Gun Theft
Anyone found guilty of stealing a firearm will face a mandatory three-month prison sentence under a Tasmanian government plan.

The state government is consulting on new gun laws.

Under the plan, anyone found to have stolen a firearm or was caught in possession of a stolen gun will automatically receive at least a three-month sentence.



QLD

Prison Term For Some Driving Offences Increased
Some driving offences will come with a potential 25-year prison sentence under a plan put forward by the Queensland government.

Under current law in the state, it must be proven that the presence of meth in a driver's system directly impaired their ability to operate a car at the exact moment of an incident.

But under the new laws, the detection of meth in driver involved in an incident leading to death or grievous bodily harm will be automatically classed as an aggravating factor.

The financial penalties and minimum license disqualification periods for other drink and drug driving offences will also be doubled under the plan.

This means that a first-time offender could receive a fine of more than $5,000.

Despite calls from advocates, the Queensland government has not moved to exempt legally prescribed medical cannabis from these zero-tolerance rules.

Person in Prison Denied Attempt to Freeze Eggs
By QLD Prisoners' Legal Service
A prisoner in Queensland has been unsuccessful in her appeal where she argued that she should be allowed to freeze her eggs while incarcerated.

Under Section 22 of the Queensland Corrective Services Act (the CSA), prisoners may apply to undergo private medical treatment.

But, also under Section 22 of the CSA, a prisoner cannot "participate in assisted reproductive technology".

The prisoner argued that "assisted reproductive technology" did not mean egg-freezing.

The court considered whether egg freezing could be defined as "assisted reproductive technology" and the extent to which Queensland's *Human Rights Act* effected the interpretation of the CSA.

Ultimately, the Court of Appeal said that the decision to refuse access to egg-freezing was lawful because it fell into the category of "assisted reproductive technology", which is prohibited for prisoners by Section 22 of the CSA.



NSW

Inmates Help Raise Orphaned Lambs
A program at Cooma Correctional Centre has now helped 300 orphaned lambs.

As part of the program, trained inmates at the minimum-medium-security prison hand raise an orphaned lamb 24-7.

This involves making draft-free areas for sleeping, providing small feeds five times a day and keeping the lambs warm.

Forty people have been trained through this program, which began in 2019.

Fifteen lambs were first cared for in 2019, and now there is an average of 40 lambs in the program at Cooma prison.



SA

Extra Beds for Mount Gambier Prison
Just under 60 new temporary beds will continue to be available at Mount Gambier prison.

The recent South Australian state budget included $16.5 million over four years, which will allow 59 new beds at Mount Gambier Prison to continue operating.

There are now more than 700 people at the Mount Gambier prison, which is privately operated.

There were 3574 people in prison in South Australia at the end of March, a 4 per cent increase from the previous year.



VIC

Increase in First Nations Incarceration
The number of First Nations people behind bars in Victoria has increased significantly in the last year.

The Victorian government's bail reforms have led to the number of incarcerated First Nations people increasing by nearly a quarter in the last year.

At the end of May this year, there were 1094 First Nations people in prison in Victoria, an increase of more than 200 since the same time last year.

The rate of imprisonment for First Nations women has increased by more than 85 per cent in the same time.

Nearly half of all the First Nations people in prison are on remand awaiting trial.

Fire at Barwon Prison
A fire broke out inside a cell at Barwon Prison in late June.

There were reports of smoke and flames inside the cell, with emergency services called.

Four people were treated for smoke inhalation due to the fire.

Marngoneet Inmates Provide Veggies For Those in Need
People incarcerated at Marngoneet Correctional Centre are providing food to those in need in the local community.

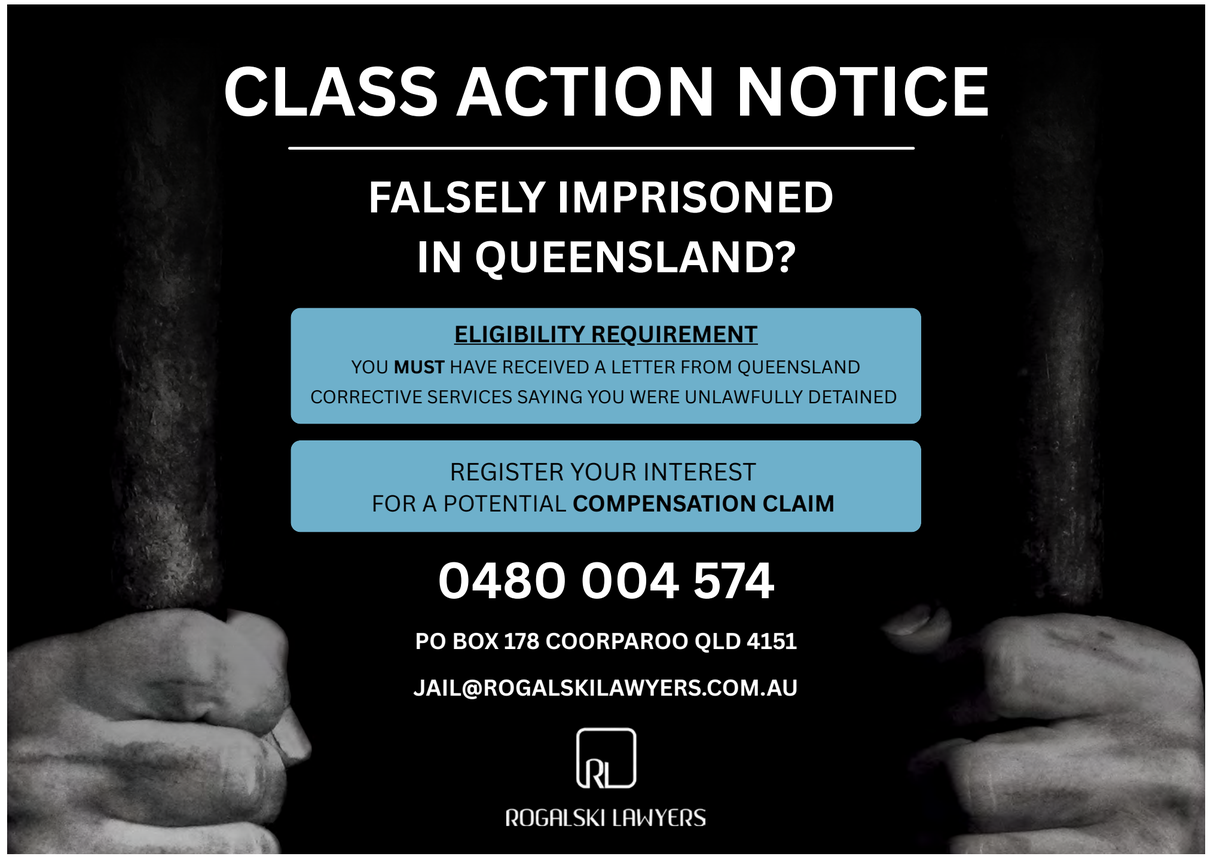
A number of inmates at the prison manage a vegetable plot that started with donated seedlings from a local commercial grower.

Some of the vegetables grown at the prison are provided to the Geelong Food Relief Centre, which provides food to people experiencing hardship in the Geelong region.

The Marngoneet veggie plot features corn, rockmelon, honeydew, capsicum, zucchini, bok choy, looks, broccoli and cauliflower, among others.

People at the prison handle planting, maintenance, harvesting and packing of the vegetables.

In just one week recently, six boxes of fresh produce were sent to the relief centre, and this is expected to increase as the veggie garden grows.



Successful Addiction Program in WA Prison Shut Down Due To Overcrowding



Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services

By Denham Sadler

A successful Australia-first drug and alcohol rehabilitation program in a WA prison will soon shut down due to overcrowding, in what is a "devastating blow" for men in the system dealing with addiction, the state's prison inspector said.

The Mallee Solid Steps program, run by Palmerston Association and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation at Casuarina Prison in WA, provides a therapeutic, community-based approach to substance use rehabilitation.

The nine-month program is based in a standalone unit within the prison and provides five days per week with trained health experts, counsellors and support staff.

More than 300 people have completed the rehabilitation program since it was launched in 2021.

But due to the rapidly increasing prison population in WA, the program at Casuarina will soon be shut down, with the unit instead to be used for general prison cells.

This is despite the WA Department of Justice itself saying that the program had been an "unqualified success".

The imminent end of the program was revealed in a report by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS), which raised the alarm on conditions within WA prisons driven by overcrowding and understaffing.

"This is a devastating blow to the many men who are struggling with addiction and hoped to be accepted into the program," the report said.

A spokesperson for the WA Department of Justice said that the closure of the program was necessary to "manage increased prisoner populations state-wide", and that a new alcohol and other drugs recovery and rehabilitation program would be starting at Bunbury Regional Prison later this year.

This new program will be run by the same providers as Solid Steps.

The Solid Steps program has contributed to "behavioural changes among participants, reduced self-harm, substance use and violent incidents", and that most participants have gotten parole and employment after being released.

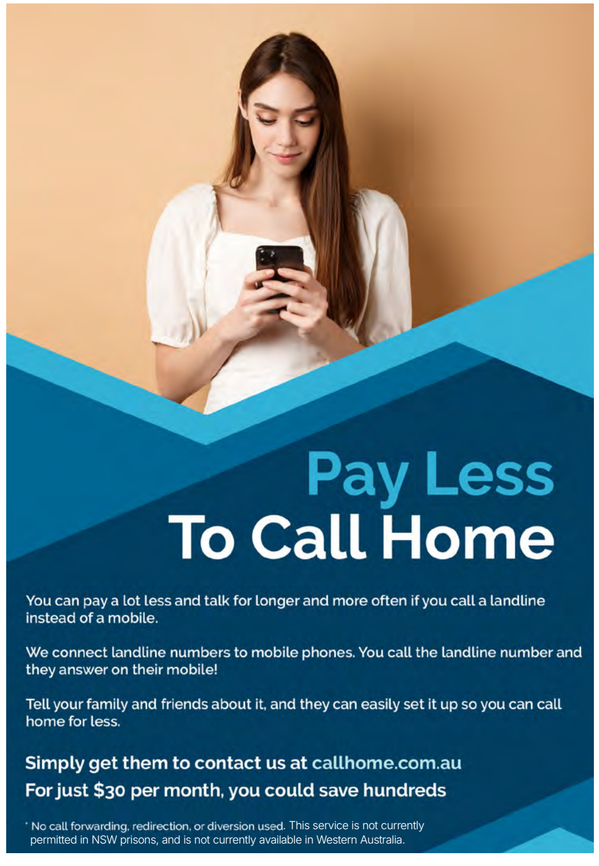
The program has been "life-changing" for many participants, the OICS said, and had helped to improve communication, life and relationship skills and hopes for the future.

The WA Department of Justice last year said the program was the first of its kind in the country, and was about treating the root cause of addiction and drug-related offending.

It was the first therapeutic community operating within a male maximum security prison in the country, allowing volunteer participants to undertake intensive counselling and education with a focus on their recovery and reintegration into the community.

The program was a finalist in the WA Alcohol and Other Drug Excellence Awards last year in the Improving Alcohol and Other Drug Outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples.

The Solid Steps program will cease running from August.



Lack of Pre-Release Support in QLD Prisons Leading to High Recidivism Rates: Report

By Denham Sadler

Long wait times to access rehabilitation and wellness programs and a lack of even basic pre-release support is contributing to high recidivism rates in Queensland, the state's Auditor-General has found.

According to the Auditor-General's new report on rehabilitation and reintegration services in prisons, fewer than half of the people approaching the end of their sentence are receiving basic pre-release help with things like setting up a bank account and accessing support services.

Almost 45 per cent of people released from a Queensland prison return to custody within two years. Fifty-five per cent of First Nations people return to prison within two years, compared with 36 per cent of non-First Nations people

The prison population in the state is also rapidly increasing, and more than half of Queensland prisons are operating above capacity.

According to the report, fewer than half of the people who left a Queensland prison in 2024–25 received pre-release support, which involves help with setting up a bank account, accessing services and getting legal advice.

While 1,600 people completed a rehabilitation program in prison from 2020–21 to 2024–25, there were more than 1,000 people on waitlists for such programs as of the end of March.

On average, these people have been waiting for well over one year.

Nearly half of all the people in prison in the state are waiting to access wellbeing programs, which include those focused on substance abuse, life skills and healthy relationships

In 11 of Queensland's 20 prisons, there is no case management framework in place, so individualised planning and support are not being provided.

"This means those prisoners who do receive case management do so more based on location and circumstances rather than risk or potential for successful outcomes," the report said.

"[The] limited use of case management has compromised its ability to assess and develop individual plans for most prisoners tailored to their risk behaviours and needs.

Queensland's low-security prisons, which are meant to act as a bridge for low-risk individuals to transition from custody to the community, are being underutilised, the report found.

"This not only presents a missed opportunity for rehabilitation and reintegration but also places additional pressure on over-capacity areas of the correctional system," the Auditor-General said.

Queensland Corrective Services agreed to all five of the Auditor-General's recommendations, which centred on improving the approach to rehabilitation and reintegration, enhancing oversight and implementing a case management delivery model.



Coronial Corner

Welcome to Coronial Corner, where we chat the coroners' courts and what they say about preventable deaths in custody and the broader system.







INTRODUCTION:

Coroner's Court:
The Coroner's Court investigates certain deaths, including deaths in custody.

It looks at who died, when they died, where they died, and how they died.

It is not a criminal trial and does not decide guilt or innocence.

Coronial Inquest:
An inquest is a formal public hearing in the Coroner's Court.

A coroner hears evidence from witnesses and experts.

The coroner makes findings about the death and what contributed to it.

The coroner can make recommendations to help prevent similar deaths happening again.

Deaths in Custody:
In practice every death in custody must be reported to the Coroner, and the Coroner must investigate it. But an inquest is not automatic in every case.

The coroner can sometimes finalise the investigation without holding an inquest if the facts are already clear and there's no need for a hearing. In other cases, the coroner will hold an inquest to hear evidence publicly and make recommendations.

Coroner Criticises Lack of Medical Treatment Before 'Preventable' Death at Clarence

The death of a 29-year-old man at Clarence Correctional Centre was preventable if he had been given proper medical treatment, a coroner has found.

The inquest into the death of Dictor Dongrin in mid-2022 found that his treatment by prison health staff was "wholly inadequate", and that he was unattended to for 21 hours.

Dongrin was suffering from alcohol withdrawal when he died in a medical unit at the prison, the day after he had been incarcerated.

The coroner found that "timely and adequate medical intervention could have prevented death".

They recommended that the medical staff in the prison who did not treat or monitor Dongrin should have their conduct reviewed by professional councils.

"There is evidence of systematic complacency and incompetence," Deputy State Coroner Rebecca Hosking said.

Lawyer Ian Fraser, who represented Dongrin's family, said the man's death happened in a "system of apathy which created a lack of responsibility".

"The cruel irony is Dictor Dongrin died in a clinical observation cell where no clinical observations were taken," Fraser said.

Inquest Into Death of Man at Maryborough Prison Concludes

A coronial inquest into the death of Glen Francis at Maryborough Correctional Centre in late 2021 has finished.

Francis died from a rare bacterial condition after he was bed-ridden for weeks.

The inquest looked into the level of medical care provided to him, and if there was a failure to see how unwell he was.

It heard that Francis had asked for medical help five times in the three weeks before his death.

His pain was dismissed as "drug-seeking behaviour", the inquest heard.

Coroner's findings are expected to be released later this year. *About Time* will provide an update.

Findings Handed Down on Death of Man on Remand in Victoria

A Victorian coroner has released findings on the death of Phi Long Dang at Fulham Correctional Centre in 2024.

The man was on remand at the prison for drug-related offences.

The coroner found that drugs were smuggled in to him across multiple visits, and that he had died of a drug overdose after ingesting a balloon containing methylamphetamine.

Coroner Finds Corella Place Failures Contributed to Preventable Death

This section is written by Alison Harding.

A Melbourne coroner has found that Corrections Victoria failed to support a man in his rehabilitation and failed to treat him with dignity and due respect, given his acquired brain injury and ADHD.

Coroner Audrey Jamieson said "a plethora of missed opportunities and failings" contributed to the man's death from mixed drug toxicity. She said the man did not intend to take his own life, and that his death in May 2020 was preventable.

The coroner described the man, who cannot be named, as a vulnerable and isolated person, who should have been better protected against the clear dangers caused by the stockpiling of a "staggering" quantity of methadone tablets, as well as the trade of prescription and non-prescription medication, at Corella Place in Ararat.

Managed by Corrections Victoria, Corella Place 228 is a gated post-sentence residential facility that houses people who have committed serious sex offences. The man was under an order that required him to live at the facility and subjected him to other restrictions.

At the time of the man's death, he was under COVID-19 quarantine, restricted to his unit and a small deck for 23 hours a day, with one hour allowed out for exercise.

The coroner said the man had a difficult childhood and adolescence. He was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and later removed from his family home due to his behaviours and cannabis use. He was diagnosed with an acquired brain injury after an assault in 2009.

A neuropsychological assessment in 2010 found that the man's intellectual functioning was in the upper end of the borderline range. In her finding, Ms Jamieson said that experts had recommended the man would benefit from residential drug rehabilitation.

Before the pandemic, Corella Place residents could go on regular community outings, usually with a monitored ankle bracelet and supervised by case workers. Community outings were suspended from 21 March 2020.

Independent expert, a clinical forensic medicine and addiction medicine consultant, Edward Ogden, said the boredom, isolation and hopelessness inside Corella Place was a "perfect storm" for drug use.

"In (Professor Ogden's) experience treating patients, particularly those on court orders or who had been incarcerated, drug use was often a way to pass the time, and to make life more tolerable," the coroner said.

She found that a significant factor contributing to the man's death was "his access to and ingestion of methadone".

"There is clear and cogent evidence that he had access to, or in some other way obtained methadone tablets at Corella Place 228," she said.

She found a direct link between the cause of the man's death and Corella Place's failure to properly monitor and control methadone entering the facility, its distribution, and undertake risk minimisation strategies.

The coroner said that the death "was not an intentional act of self-harm but the unintended consequence of his intentional use and abuse of illicit and prescription drugs, in circumstances where he felt trapped, hopeless and powerless".

She found that Corrections Victoria failed to support the man in his rehabilitation, failed to adhere to the recommendations of its own expert psychologist and failed to provide needed mental health supports.

The coroner made 18 recommendations, with 16 directed at the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Three recommendations were made regarding residents' ability to control their own prescribed medications.

The coroner also recommended allowing for more family visits, and mandatory training to assist residents with disabilities, and to recognise signs of drug misuse and overdose.

About Time asked the Department of Justice and Community Safety several questions about the findings.

A Department spokesperson responded: "We thank the Coroner for their findings and are continuing to carefully consider the recommendations before responding in due course."

Under the *Coroners Act 2008*, a public statutory authority or entity who receives a recommendation from a coroner has three months to respond in writing stating what action, if any, has or will be taken.

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.

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There Is Another Way: Doing Justice Differently

Lessons on youth justice from around the world.

By Denham Sadler



'Russell' by Tony. Acrylic on canvas, available for purchase via Boom Gate Gallery

On an average night, there are about 900 children in youth detention around the country.

The number of people aged 10 to 17 in youth detention has increased by 10 per cent in the last four years, and nearly half of all young people in prison are First Nations.

There have been a range of tough on crime policies introduced by state and territory governments in recent years, with a focus on incarceration and punishment.

There have been long-running calls for another approach to this issue, for the response to be one focusing on health and support rather than imprisonment.

The Reintegration Puzzle Conference, run by the Justice Reform Initiative in Adelaide in late June, featured a number of youth justice experts from around the world that have successfully led a different approach, with much success.

They showed that there is a different path forward when it comes to criminal justice, imparting a message of hope and opportunity.

Scotland

In late 2024, Scotland got all of its children out of prisons and youth detention centres.

Instead, children are placed in small, trauma-informed and child-appropriate secure accommodation.

Scotland has also moved from a system focusing on punishment to one centred on prevention and community-led responses, and has put the Convention on the Rights of the Child into its domestic law.

"The culture has fundamentally changed – people understand that we're talking about prevention and keeping kids out of the system," Scottish justice expert Karen McCluskey, who led the public health reforms, said in her keynote address.

"Prison is like an infection – once you get it, it becomes lifelong and life-limiting."

The change in approach in Scotland has seen a more than 90 per cent drop in the number of children and young people prosecuted in Scotland's courts, and a 97 per cent reduction in prison sentences for children aged 16 and 17.

"If you're building jails right now for 10 or 15 years in the future, that's like saying you're going to fail your kids who are in kindergarten today," McCluskey said.

"That is not an aspiration for a country. We believe in need and not deed. So we look at what children need and what young people need, not what they've done."

Hawai'i, USA

US state Hawai'i moved from a punitive model to a trauma-informed one, and has seen an 80 per cent reduction in youth incarceration since 2010.

The largest youth prison in the state was rebranded to the Kawailoa Youth and Family Wellness Center, providing education, mental health support and reintegration services.

In 2022, there were officially no girls in youth detention in Hawai'i, the first time in the last 60 years.

Matelina Aulava, the Youth Facility Administrator for the Office of Youth Services at Kawailo said the reforms started with a conversation around how children should be treated.

"When they are in a bright, safe, loving and caring environment, these kids can change so much, and be the leaders that are going to change the community," Aulava said.

"It's not 'how do we punish the kids?', it's 'how can we heal this child?'. We look at them as a whole person, not just a piece of the system."

New York, USA

Until recently, teenagers aged 16 to 18 years old charged with a crime were treated as adults in New York City.

Under the Raise the Age law, the age of criminal responsibility was increased from 16 to 18, as part of wider youth justice reforms.

Vincent Schiraldi, the former chief executive of corrections, probation and youth justice in New York City, said efforts have been made to provide better environments for youths and to keep them close to their family and communities.

This involved placing children ideally in their own home with wraparound services, instead of in youth justice facilities hours away. When this is not possible, children are put in small, home-like facilities around the city.

"If people are engaged in the process of the dehumanisation of young people in the system, part of the antidote has to be humanisation," Schiraldi said.

"We have to get these young people out of these terrible facilities and into the kinds of supports that we would want for any of our own children.

"If we could treat young people in this system the way we would want our own child to be treated, we would be fine."

Spain

Spain has driven a world-leading rehabilitative model for young people, focusing on individual development rather than punishment.

The Diagrama Foundation now runs 38 centres across Spain, providing support to children and young people at risk of social exclusion.

In these facilities, security guards were replaced by social educators.

Since then, recidivism rates for young offenders is now at 15 per cent, after hitting historic highs of about 85 per cent.

"We don't see the kids as risks coming to our centre," Diagrama Foundation chief executive Dr David McGuire said.

"We see them as kids that have needs, and we want to fulfil these needs. The first principle is respect, dignity and human rights. That is the base of our work.

"We are not there for punishment, we are there for rehabilitation and to move things forward."

McGuire said the Spanish government was desperate and had taken a risk on the new model for youth justice. "We proved to them we could do it," he said.

"And now we've got this amazing world-class model. "Our priority mission is empowering the people, because they are the leaders of tomorrow when you are far gone. So that change needs to happen now. We empower, we build resilience so that they can come out and make the changes in the community."

About Time was the media partner for the Reintegration Puzzle Conference. We will have more coverage of the conference in upcoming editions of the newspaper.

HANNAY
CRIMINAL DEFENCE

Third Trial Ends in Unanimous Acquittal After Nearly a Decade of Litigation before the Adelaide District Court

On 3 July 2026, after almost one month of evidence and submissions before the Adelaide District Court, a jury unanimously acquitted (pseudonym D.V – name suppressed) of a charge of maintaining an unlawful sexual relationship.

The acquittal marked the culmination of an extraordinarily lengthy and complex criminal proceeding that had been the subject of multiple trials and appeals over many years. Prior to the 2026 trial, D.V. had twice been convicted in the District Court of South Australia prior to our engagement.

One conviction followed a jury trial and the other followed a judge-alone trial. Both convictions were subsequently overturned by the South Australian Court of Appeal, which ordered retrials on each occasion.

Our firm was engaged only three months before the commencement of the third trial. The engagement followed our successful appearances in R v HTD [2024] QDCPR 30 and R v Featherstone [2025] QDC 147, matters which highlighted our experience in the conduct of serious and complex criminal litigation.

Given the history of the proceedings and the significance of the allegations, D.V. specifically sought a fresh defence team for what would become the third trial.

The prosecution case concerned allegations dating back more than two decades including a large number of witnesses. The trial involved extensive consideration of evidence spanning many years, including family relationships, community interactions, business dealings, and the circumstances said to be relevant to the alleged offending period.

The defence case challenged the reliability and accuracy of the allegations and focused on the inconsistencies, improbabilities and evidentiary difficulties inherent in a prosecution based upon events alleged to have occurred many years earlier.

Significant legal and forensic issues arose throughout the hearing requiring careful analysis of previous trial evidence, appellate decisions and the admissibility of various categories of evidence.

Regan Harms who heads up the Hannay Lawyers Sydney office instructed counsel Mr Lester Fernandez SC and Mr Tomislav Bicanic. Given the volume of material generated across the earlier trials and appeals, the preparation required a comprehensive review of thousands of pages of transcripts, exhibits, witness statements, defence material and appellate judgments within a compressed timeframe.

After hearing all of the evidence and receiving directions from the trial judge, the jury began deliberations at 4:23pm. At 8:42 pm on Friday, 3 July 2026, the jury returned a unanimous verdict of **not guilty.**

The acquittal brought to an end one of the most protracted criminal proceedings in recent South Australian history. For D.V., it concluded years of litigation that had included two convictions, two successful appeals and three separate trials. The unanimous verdict represents the final chapter in a case that tested the criminal justice system over many years.

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Experiences

Ten Minutes of Hope: Why Prison Phone Calls Matter

By Amos

Continued from page 1.

Most people think a prison phone call is just a phone call. For those living in it, it is much more.

A 10-minute phone call costs around $2.50, and many of the inmates skip buy-ups, snacks and small comforts just to afford those precious moments. Some aren't as fortunate – some have nobody to call, nobody to answer the call and nobody waiting on the outside.

For those who do, those 10-minute calls become priceless. You wait all day, replay conversations in your head and think about what they are thinking and what you will say.

Then finally the phone connects and for a brief moment, everything feels normal again. You ache to hear their voice, their laughter, and the words you have been waiting to hear.

For those 10 minutes you are not defined by your cell or a prison number, you are simply a partner, a son, a father, a brother, a friend – someone talking to the people who matter the most.

Then comes the waiting. The call ends and if you are lucky enough to call again, you must wait another 5 minutes before even trying. When every seconds counts, those 5 minutes can feel like forever.

The hardest days are when communication stops altogether and the loved one waits by their phone, worried and wondering while inmates sit helplessly, unable to explain the silence.

People often say prison is the punishment, but the reality is that families carry part of the sentence too. They wait, they worry, they miss us and they hold on hope just as tightly as we do.

That's why prison phone calls mean so much. They are not just conversations, they are reassurance, they are love, they are a lifeline.

They remind us that despite the fences, the distance and the years, someone is still there waiting. And sometimes 10 minutes of hearing a familiar voice is enough hope to carry you through another day.



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Our Sentence is the Punishment



Willy Pleasance

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in Australia.

It's 7:45 AM. That annoying intercom announces 10 minutes to unlock count.

If you weren't already awake from the sleep you just managed to get the night before – on a mattress that's like sleeping on the hard ground with a small pile of leaves between you – you're definitely awake now from that ear-piercing sound.

You get up, get dressed, make your bed, put on some deodorant, go to the kitchen, greet your fellow cottage residents or pod members, and make a coffee, while in the background all you hear is the morning news talking about all the things going wrong in the world today.

It's another start to a boring, grim day in the prison system.

You start to think: what will today bring? What is my motivation for my existence today? Will I be called up by that annoying intercom five times today, just because the officers couldn't do as I asked on the first visit to them? Will my problems even be addressed today?

Will today be the day that the many forms I put into medical to see a doctor or the psych nurse actually get answered? Could this actually be the day where I'm considered to be more than a number stuck in a broken system? Will today be the day I'm treated with some dignity and respect, even though I'm a prisoner?

Will my rights be accepted today? Will my complaints and grievances be addressed accordingly to fit in with the duty of care, human rights and even the local operating procedures today?

Probably not today, probably not tomorrow, probably not even this week. This would be the standard you come to expect while in jail, as most of us would know.

On the daily I'm left wondering why can't they just do the simple things to ensure everybody has equal opportunity and access to things they need?

Why can't the medical system that's in place actually provide adequate care, and when does it become fair that a HSM (Health Service Manager) can override what a doctor or podiatrist says, especially when it's demonstrated that you have ongoing medical issues?

Why can't we be provided proper dental care? People like myself have spent years waiting on a list to get teeth extracted at a dental hospital, because it can't be done by the prison dentist for numerous reasons. But it states in the Corrections Act: the right to have access to reasonable dental treatment necessary for the preservation of dental health.

Reasonable care and preservation – so if you have teeth that need pulling out, fair enough, the dentist in the prison can usually do this; however, it depends on the severity.

If you have rotting teeth causing pain, getting constant tooth infections, struggling to eat properly, and need dentures and more than three teeth pulled out, well then, you get nothing.

Sorry, you go on the list. Then, if you're lucky, you may get to an appointment at a dental hospital, providing the prison actually transports you to that appointment. And if they don't transport you, well, guess what – you miss out completely, because they cancel all referrals because you have missed your appointment. Not any fault of your own, but due to the incompetence of the prison system getting you the care you need, you miss out.

They then tell you that now you have to find a private dentist. So how do you do that? What if you don't have someone outside that can find this for you? What if you can't afford a private dentist? Why does the duty of care disappear? The prison won't refer you to a private dentist at all.

So where is this care? When is it shown to us prisoners that we are more than just a number clogging up the prison system?

Then you get to mental health – well, this is where you're screwed. If you have mental health issues in jail, you're doomed from the start. For example, if you have OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and you need to have routine and access to coping mechanisms in case routine breaks and you can't do the things you're compelled to do, this is where you suffer most.

Because the minute you engage in any self-punishment or self-harm, it's: here, have a smock and a cold room.

It's not a matter of, 'let's address the issues causing this and try to prevent it from happening, and provide help to maintain your routines'. It's a cold cell and being monitored 24 hours on camera, which in most cases makes people worse.

How about, instead of punishing the person for having mental health problems, actively do something to help them? Don't just write in all the policies and procedures and brochures that we are here to help, we will do this and do that to help, just so it looks good on paper and to the public.

We are human beings, we have rights, we are more than numbers, we deserve to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of our crimes. We have already been punished. Having mental health or medical concerns, or any concerns, should be addressed accordingly and equally for every prisoner.

No one prisoner is the same – obviously we all have different issues – but it should all be dealt with equally. No one should get less than the other. We are not meant to be punished again while we are incarcerated. Our sentence is our punishment.

‘My Worst Day Sober is Better Than Any Day in Addiction’

On choosing kindness and going sober.

By Kelly Flanagan

Kelly Flanagan is a female First Nations artist with lived experience in the Victorian prison system. She is an advocate for women inside, and is also using her lived experience to write her first book.



’Nullarbor Dreaming’ by Koko. Acrylic on canvas, available for purchase via Boom Gate Gallery.

Being kind is something I find really challenging at times.

For some people it comes naturally. For me, it does not.

I am not cruel on purpose anymore, but that does not mean I am incapable of it. It simply means I try not to be. And I do try, very hard.

I wanted to write this as a clear reminder that no matter how much you turn your life around and try to be honest, decent, loving and kind, you will still have moments where you think the only way to deal with someone is with violence.

It is okay to think it. It is not okay to act on it.

I am working through the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and I attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings every week. The program asks me to look closely at myself and take responsibility for my own behaviour, regardless of what anyone else has done.

I can only control how I act and react. I am not particularly fond of this.

No one enjoys being told they are part of the problem. As it turns out, I often am. That realisation is humbling when I can put my ego aside and not let pride take over my thoughts and actions.

With or without drugs and alcohol, I still need reminders from my sponsor, friends and family that violence is not acceptable.

Sometimes I say to my sponsor, “Yes, but this person did...”. She simply looks at me and says nothing, just holds my gaze. In those moments I might even think, “Now I want to punch you in the throat as well”.

Then I stop, breathe and recognise what is happening. That is the old Kelly talking. That is not how the sober Kelly wants to show up in the world today.

My sponsor loves me, and I know that. I am still human, though, and humans make mistakes.

I make them often. But showing up as a sober woman and taking ownership of those mistakes is progress. I can accept that I am not perfect. I allow myself to sit with uncomfortable feelings, whether that is anger, sadness or genuine hurt.

The feelings pass, and in time they no longer feel so overwhelming. That is life in sobriety. I can honestly say my worst day sober is better than any day I lived in active addiction.

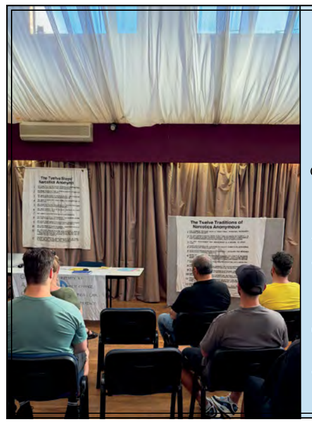
Do not be mistaken, though. I still walk past the pub on a hot summer’s day and feel the pull of going in, ordering a pint and lining up a shot at the pool table.

I do not know if that feeling will ever completely disappear. What I do know is that it no longer controls my life. And today, I am proud to be a sober woman.

I speak about this often. For those of you who have just entered prison, or who have not heard me share my story before, go to an AA or NA meeting while you are inside.

You have nothing to lose. Find a sponsor and start working the steps. It could save your life. It saved mine.

One of the sayings in the program is that you can only keep what you have by giving it away to the addict who is still suffering. That is why I write this.



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For a confidential chat

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For more information

Culture

Apple Crumble for Under $2 a Serve



By Edward

Edward writes from a prison in NSW.

Ingredients:
- 1 can of ginger beer – $1.35
- 4 apples/diced – $0
- 100g dates – $0
- ½ pack Scotch Fingers – $1.85
- 2 tbsp butter – $0

Total: $3.15
Makes 4: $0.78

Equipment:
- 4 rice cups
- 2 large containers

Tip:
Place Scotch Fingers into a large container and use a peanut butter jar (lid part) to crush the biscuits.

Add plum jam for a richer flavour.

Method:
1. Peel and core four apples/dice.
2. In a large container put diced apples and the ginger beer into a microwave for 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add dates and cook for another 5 minutes.
4. In another container, place half a pack of Scotch Fingers in and crush them.
5. Add butter, microwave it for 10 seconds and then mix and combine.
6. Place mix onto a hot flat Breville and cook till golden brown. Remove and cool down.
7. Spread apple and dates, mix evenly into the four rice cups and evenly spread the biscuit crumbs on top.
8. Enjoy!

Banoffee

By Edward

Edward writes from a prison in NSW.

Ingredients:
- 600 mL milk
- 1 Up & Go (banana) – $1.02
- 1 Instant pudding – $1.91
- 1 Lunch yoghurt – $0.00
- ½ pack Scotch Fingers – $1.85
- 2 tbsp butter – $0.00
- 1 Caramello single (or 2) – $1.67
- Bananas – $0.00

Total: $7.22
Makes 4: $0.78

Equipment:
- 4 rice cups
- 2 large containers

Tip:
Place Scotch Fingers into a large container and use a peanut butter jar (lid part) to crush the biscuits.

Method:
1. In a large container, pour the instant pudding and slowly add the cold Up & Go and milk until fully combined. Place into the fridge.
2. Crush ½ pack of Scotch fingers, add butter and microwave for 10 seconds. Mix well and place into four clear rice containers.
3. Squeeze the Caramello single evenly over the biscuit mixture and microwave for another 10 seconds, until the Caramello has melted. Let it cool.
4. Slice bananas on top of the Caramello and biscuit mix.
5. Pour the set pudding mixture on top.
6. Optional: Add caramel sauce as garnish.
7. Enjoy!



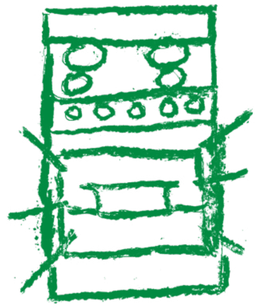
Bread Pudding With a Difference

By Mark

Mark writes from a prison in VIC.

Ingredients:
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ⅓ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 8–10 slices of bread, crust removed
- 2 eggs, beaten

Method:
1. Heat oven to 200C.
2. In a small saucepan, add milk, butter, vanilla, sugar and salt. Heat till butter melts, then allow to cool.
3. Butter a baking dish.
4. Line with bread slices.
   Tip: you can add jam or Nutella to the slices, or stewed fruit in between the layers of bread. Just finish with bread on top.
5. After milk mix has been cooled, add eggs and whisk.
6. Pour the mixture over the bread.
7. Bake for 30–45 mins until the custard is set and a little wobbly and the edges of bread have browned slightly.
8. Serve warm.



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Health

How to Face Your Past But Not Let It Define You

A psychologist on facing your past, not running from it.

By Dr Carollyne Youssef

Carollyne is a clinical and forensic psychologist at PsychOrium.

There comes a moment in every person's life when they are forced to face themselves. Not the version they show to others, but the deeper, more honest truth underneath. In prison, that moment often arrives with intensity. Stripped of distractions and roles, you are left with your own thoughts, your own past, and a question that cannot be avoided: Who am I, really?

Psychologist Carl Jung believed that each of us carries two sides, the part we show the world – "the persona", and the part we hide – "the shadow". The shadow is everything we have pushed away, denied, or refused to understand about ourselves. Anger, fear, pain, insecurity, and even parts of our potential can all live there.

For many people, the actions that lead them to prison are not random. They are often expressions of this shadow, unexamined emotions, unhealed wounds, or patterns that were never fully understood. This is not an excuse for what has happened, but it is an explanation. And more importantly, it is the starting point for change. Jung believed that real transformation begins when a person stops running from their shadow and start facing it.

This is not easy work. It means being honest in ways that can feel uncomfortable or even painful. It means asking yourself: What was I really feeling when I made those choices? What was I trying to prove, protect, or escape? What part of myself was in control at that time?

But here is the key idea: the shadow is not something to destroy. It is something to understand. This is often a concept I discuss at length with my clients in therapy, most of whom have been in custody either for lengthy periods of time, or recurrently.

When you begin to understand your shadow, you begin to take back control over it. Instead of your anger controlling you, you learn where it comes from. Instead of your fear driving your actions, you begin to see it clearly. Awareness creates choice. And choice is where freedom begins, even in a place where physical freedom is limited.

Jung called this process "individuation". It is a big word, but the idea is simple – it means becoming a whole person, integrated. Not perfect, not without flaws, but aware, balanced, and responsible for who you are.

Individuation means bringing your shadow into the light. It means accepting that you are capable of both harm and growth and choosing growth anyway. It also means learning to integrate the darker parts of yourself and channelling those parts into productive manifestations and actions.

This is where deeper meaning comes in. Your life does not lose its meaning because of your past. In fact, your past can become the very thing that gives your life direction. Jung believed that people often find purpose through their struggles. The parts of your life that feel broken can become the parts that guide you toward something better if you are willing to learn from them.

So instead of asking, "why did this happen to me?" try asking, "what can I become because of this?".

That shift in thinking is powerful. It turns your past from a weight into a tool. Hope, in this sense, is not about wishing things were different. It is about believing that change is possible because you are willing to do the inner work. It is about understanding that your identity is not fixed. You are not just the worst thing you have done. You are a person in the middle of a process. And that process matters.

Even in prison, you have opportunities to move forward. Every time you choose to reflect instead of reacting, you are changing. Every time you take responsibility instead of making excuses, you are growing. Every time you support someone else instead of pulling them down, you are becoming someone new.

These changes may seem small, but they are not. Jung believed that real transformation happens gradually, through consistent inner effort. It is not about one big moment. It is about many small decisions that slowly reshape who you are.

You cannot change what has already been done. But you can change what it means. You can let it define you, or you can let it teach you. You can stay the same, or you can use this time to become someone more aware, more grounded, and more in control of your own life. Jung said that "the privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are". That opportunity has not been taken from you. If anything, you are in a place where that work can begin more honestly than ever before.

So, take the time to look within. Face what you have avoided. Learn what you have not yet understood. And most importantly, choose who you want to become next. Because even here, even now, your life still holds meaning, and your transformation is still possible.



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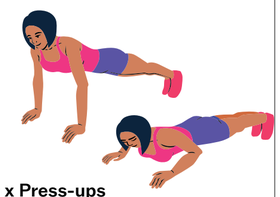
Cell Workout

The 900 Rep Challenge

Republished with permission from *Inside Time* in the UK.

Target:
Complete twice.

Benchmark Time:
55 minutes is a great effort.

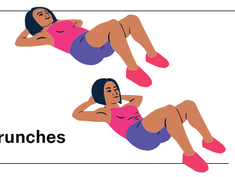


15 x Press-ups

15 x Squat jumps

15 x Walkout press-ups

15 x Burpees



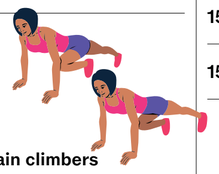
15 x Crunches

15 x Walkout press-ups

15 x Squat jumps

15 x Thrusters

15 x High plank / low plank



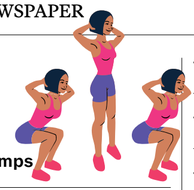
15 x Mountain climbers

15 x Squat jumps

15 x Press-up claps

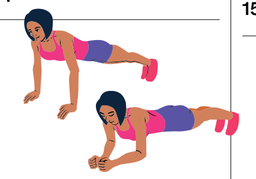
15 x Burpees

15 x Sit-ups



15 x Squat jumps

15 x Burpees



15 x High plank / low plank

15 x Leg raises



15 x Diamond press-ups

15 x Dorsal raises

15 x Burpees

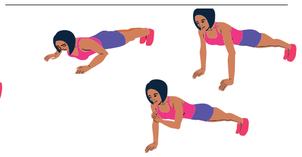
15 x In-and-out press-ups

15 x Walkout press-ups

15 x Crunches

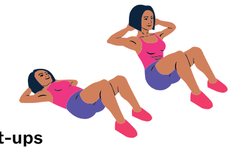
15 x Squat jumps

15 x Burpees



15 x Press-up shoulder taps

15 x Mountain climbers



15 x Sit-ups

15 x Burpees

Note:
Complete the entire circuit above, then repeat it a second time to hit the full rep count. Good luck!

Connect your loved one with support while you're inside

While you're inside, the people who care about you are carrying a weight most people will never understand.

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A no-judgment space for her to rest, be cared for, and spend time with other women who truly get it.

It costs her nothing, but it could mean everything.

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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• Reintegration

Ask Stacey! How It Feels to Finish Parole

Stacey answers your questions on how to get through the various restrictions as part of a parole period.



By Stacey Stokes

Stacey Stokes is a transgender girl who had a 10 and a half year sentence in a men's prison. She has an undergraduate in creative writing and has recently been published extensively, most notably, "Nothing to hide, tales of trans and gender diverse Australia", which was published and distributed internationally by Allen & Unwin.

As always, these answers are from my life (and are supposed to make you laugh a bit!). This is NOT legal advice – on all things, ask your parole officer and consult your lawyer.

This is a very special Ask Stacey, as I finished parole! And the questions came from all sorts of different people in the justice system.

So, let's get right into it!

Question 1: What did you find hardest about being on parole?

The thing I found hardest about being on parole was definitely the stupid bracelets! They were the ultimate test of patience and resolve.

As an example, I was supporting someone at court and was entered into the court record as being present. I then got a phone call as I left court demanding I explain why I was in an exclusion zone that was 20km away. I said 'I sure can, it's an error, I am at the Magistrate's Court and was entered into record, you're welcome to check that'.

Other times I'd get calls asking "are you on a train?" (as I was only allowed to travel via train initially). I'd say yes and then they would say "ok, have a nice day" and they'd hang up.

It can seem super stupid, it can be tempting to be a smart ass, to be frustrated and annoyed. But just smile, keep calm and carry on.

Question 2: What helped get you through parole successfully with no issues?

I managed to get paroled to my nan's house. I was told I needed to understand that people change while you're away.

I felt like it was an obvious thing to be saying after almost a decade. But shortly after, my nan passed away. I was lucky to be able to see her in hospital just before she passed away. She had smiled and told me she was in so much pain, that she didn't think she'd make it.

But she was so determined to see me. She had held on so I could get out and spend time with her before she passed on. I mattered that much to someone. And she kept it together for so long for me. So, I have kept it together for her. I hope she sees that I have kept it together and is proud of me.

I just really needed the answer to the question I'd ask myself every time it got hard: Why bother... why tolerate this stupidity? Why?

Because nan endured more for me. I can endure this.

So I'd say: find a reason why. Even spite is a great reason. Why endure all the crap and frustrations? Because we won't let it beat us.

Question 3: What made it harder?

The parole system made it harder. So, so much harder. This is just my opinion, as that's the whole point of this column. And my opinion is that parole is not an exercise in reintegration, but an exercise in making sure the parole board and by extension the government don't look bad.

I had exclusion zones, drug tests, GPS and alcohol bracelets, weekly reporting and counselling. This is after I was not required to do programs, low risk and never an identified drug user.

I had so many exclusion zones I would describe traveling as plotting a course like an ancient explorer with a map and compasses and was basically under house arrest at one point. And when I had had enough and asked to talk to the parole board, to ask them to explain why my parole was being made so hard, they refused to see me. I never once saw them.

I always say: I reintegrated despite parole, not because of it. And I truly believe that. There was a time that parole was to monitor those deemed a risk.

Now those deemed a risk get no parole, just a straight release. And the low risk people get parole, so the statistics say how no one has committed a serious offence on parole this year, but how many crimes have been committed by those of us on straight release?

Question 4: What did you do to celebrate?

I went out on the town with my friends and definitely did not get white-girl wasted. We in fact had tea and scones and saw a play... yup... 100 per cent.

And then I went to the Reintegration Puzzle Conference! So, stay tuned for articles about that coming up.

See you next month my loves!

• Do You Have a Question for Stacey?

If you would like to ask Stacey a question, please send your letters to our postal address on the right (it's free!).

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Getting Ready for Release: What Your Transitional Worker Should Be Doing

There are a lot of things that can be done before you're released to get you ready for the outside world.

By Carolyn Kruger

Carolyn is using her lived experience of prison in Victoria to advocate for change and educate the outside world on prisons.

For any person in prison and coming up for release within the next year, have you ever thought about what your transitional worker should be doing?

Workers who help you with sentence management, reintegration and parole are called different things in different states and territories.

In Victoria, they're called Assessment and Transition Coordinators (ATCs). In your prison, they might be called Offender Services and Programs Officers, Case Managers, Throughcare Staff or Reintegration Officers.

Whatever their titles, these staff members should help you get ready for your release back into the community, including with Centrelink, housing and other support services.

My experience from my ATC prior to my release in February 2026 left so many steps either not done, or done too late, that I will be at a disadvantage for years.

So, what should your transitional worker actually be helping you with?

Centrelink

Make contact with Centrelink at least three months before your release. Depending on how long you've been incarcerated, any issues with Centrelink payments will take at least three months to sort out. It is critical to have any payments from Centrelink ready to go as soon as you're released.

If you don't have work or any other means of income, you don't want to be waiting months for Centrelink to sort it out. If you have over $750 in your withheld, you **will not** get a crisis payment. If you have some superannuation, you **will not** get a crisis payment.

The cheque you will receive from Corrections for your withheld on your release cannot be cashed or deposited with many banks. Make sure your name and all details are up to date with your bank before your release. Also make sure that your bank will still allow you to deposit a cheque.

If you had a bank account prior to your incarceration, and it hasn't been used for some time, the bank will probably cancel your account. Some banks will not open a bank account again for you once you have a CRN.

Housing

If you don't have housing on the outside or, at the very least, somewhere to sleep, your worker must help you to register with the Victorian Housing Register or VHR, or the equivalent in your state or territory. Generally, three years prior to your release, or at the very least, 12 months prior to your release.

Any police matters – IVO or DV issues – should be finalised with police at least three months prior to your release.

Change of Address

Change of address for all your correspondence. The prison will not forward any mail that comes to you after your release. They throw it out.

If you have been incarcerated for a number of years, trying to reactivate old usernames and passwords can be problematic. Ask your support worker to make sure you can still access anything you need to.

Your transitional worker is there to help you transition. That's their only job. If they have a lot of inmates they need to look after, that's not your fault or your problem. Try to make sure they are doing a job for you. That's what they get paid for.



Willy Pleasance



Legal Corner

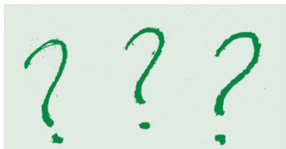
An Overview of the New Commonwealth Parole Laws

What you need to know about the upcoming changes



Prisoners' Legal Service QLD

The Prisoners' Legal Service is an independent, not-for-profit community legal centre dedicated to helping people in prison.



Definitions

Here are what some of the key words and phrases in this section mean.

Commonwealth Offence
These are crimes that are against federal laws, rather than state or territory ones. They include fraud and financial crimes, terrorism, espionage, drug importation and cybercrime, among others.

Attorney-General
The member of government responsible for legal matters and who oversees the justice system and courts. There is a federal Attorney-General and each state and territory also has one. The current federal Attorney-General is Michelle Rowland.

Commonwealth Parole and Independent Body
The new independent organisation that will decide whether to release people found guilty of a federal crime on parole. It includes a chair, deputy chair and other members, and can make, change, or take away parole and conditions.

On 1 April 2026, the Australian Parliament passed new laws which will change the way Commonwealth parole works.

The new laws are not in effect yet, but they will be by 9 April 2027 at the latest. The laws may take effect sooner if the Government sets an earlier date.

New Independent Body

The main change under these laws is that the Commonwealth Parole Board will replace the Attorney-General of Australia as the parole decision-maker for prisoners serving federal sentences.

The Commonwealth Parole Board will be an independent body and must consist of at least five members:

- The Chair;
- The Deputy Chair; and
- At least three other members, known as "sessional members".

The Board will be made up of experts from a range of professions and experience including:

- legal professionals
- law enforcement
- corrective services staff
- victims of crime advocates
- psychologists
- other community safety experts.

This change means the Commonwealth will have an independent parole authority rather than an elected official making decisions.

New Deferral Power

As a general rule, the Commonwealth Parole Board must make a parole decision before the end of a prisoner's "non parole period".

However, the Commonwealth Parole Board can "defer" their decision for up to three months after the end of the "non-parole period".

If the Commonwealth Parole Board defer a parole decision, they must give the prisoner notice of the deferral within 14 days explaining the reasons for the deferral and the date by which they must make a decision.

New Power to Rescind Parole (Take Back) Before Release

The Commonwealth Parole Board can rescind (take back) a grant of parole during the period between a parole order being granted, and a person's release date.

This means they have the power to change their mind, after making the decision but before releasing someone on parole. This is different to "revoking" a parole order, which happens after someone is released on parole.

The Commonwealth Parole Board can rescind parole prior to release where they are satisfied that:

- the person would pose a serious identifiable risk to the community if released, where such a risk cannot be sufficiently mitigated; or
- the person would pose a serious and immediate risk to their own safety if released, where such a risk cannot be sufficiently mitigated; or
- the prisoner has requested the rescinding of their own parole order; or
- there has been a substantial change in a matter that was considered when making the parole order.

If the Commonwealth Parole Board rescind parole prior to release, they must give the prisoner notice of the rescission as soon as practicable explaining:

- why the decision was made; and
- inviting them to make submissions within 14 days about why the decision should not have been made.

What Has Not Changed

Prisoners serving federal sentences will not need to apply for federal parole. Parole decisions will happen automatically.

The Commonwealth Parole Board can consider the same factors about whether to grant or refusal parole.

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PERSONAL INJURY LAW ACCREDITED SPECIALIST

Mob

How NAAJA is Walking With Mob Through the Justice System



NAAJA

By NAAJA

NAAJA is the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency.

NAAJA has a 50-year history of serving Aboriginal Territorians as they navigate the justice system.

At this year's Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Tarndanya (Adelaide), the NAAJA Mental Health team presented on the way they walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are navigating the justice system.

They told people what they already knew: that the system as it exists is broken.

But they gave practical examples of how they work within it to help strive for change.

Made up of Mental Health Social Worker Danica and Aboriginal Health Worker Rob, the team make up the tiny, but mighty, mental health team at NAAJA.

"Our work is deeply committed to addressing the high rates of reincarceration and supporting Aboriginal people in a system that often seeks to silence them," Danica said.

"We both hold a belief in the power of small changes to make lasting impacts and argue for more empathy, and more courage in frontline workers to advocate fiercely for those navigating complex and unjust systems."

"When a person leaves prison, they are left to navigate the silos and individual systems alone with no supports bridging the gaps."

Danica and Rob provide the link between alcohol and other drug services, housing, corrections, community mental health, Centrelink and community programs.

These programs often have limited soft referral pathways and leave no room for people to build trusting relationships.

"We acknowledge this is particularly challenging for Aboriginal Mob who have been mistreated by services and systems all of their life and need connections to be able to engage in a meaningful way," Rob said.

Danica said that here in the NT, there is no co-ordination or accountability built between these services, which leads to people falling between the gaps.

"The repercussions of this when there is a legal system involved, are incredibly high and all the responsibility is placed onto the people navigating this," she said.

The pair work collaboratively to provide this support to Aboriginal people navigating these gaps.

"We aim to walk alongside the person and advocate, challenge and care as they move through these systems," Danica and Rob said in the presentation.

"We aim to meet people where they are at and work to centre the person and link the services.

"We do this by focusing on building rapport as the first step. We try to understand what is going on for them outside of the legal system. When you meet someone in the cells, it is often at one of their lowest points – we want to show people they are not defined by this. We provide different levels of support – understanding that sometimes getting someone a feed and a smoke is just as important as anything else."

"Our model is based on relationship-based practice – meaning we focus on trust, empathy, respect, collaboration and genuine human connection.

"Where we have found the most change over our work across two years has been with the people we walk alongside through multiple systems across a period of time. By focusing on the quality of the relationship, we try to change the narrative that is too often embedded in the system – that people are 'too difficult', 'too complex', and don't fit the mold.

"We aim to challenge these narratives and show the people we work with that it is not them that is broken, it is the system. We have demonstrated that with relationships, people want to engage in their legal proceedings, they want to engage in their treatment but want to feel safe and supported to do so."

To do this, you need to be flexible and you need to be creative. Too often, services in the Northern Territory stick to their silos, which doesn't allow for people that don't fit neatly into the "one problem box".

Feedback from the people the team works with shows that this kind of support is what makes a difference.

"If we want better outcomes for people, we must break down these silos through shared information and coordinated care. We need services that flow and invest in people," they said.

They also shared some feedback from clients:

"You mob kept coming back for me."

"Over time I realised, these guys got my back."

"The biggest difference was that I felt respected."

"It does not take much to give people the dignity they deserve. While we do not claim to have all the answers, we hope to demonstrate the urgent need for change (and care) in both system failures and professional attitudes," they said.

"We know this is the way forward."

Learn

Learn How to Speak First Nations Languages!

By The Research Unit for Indigenous Language at the University of Melbourne

If you drive from Melbourne to Sydney, you will travel through 10 different First Nations language groups. And there's the same number between Melbourne and Adelaide.

Before European colonisation in 1788, the First Peoples of Australia spoke as many as 800 Indigenous languages, depending on how you divide languages and dialects.

The languages of Indigenous Australia belong to a number of language 'families': groups of languages that are historically related and share certain features.

The languages spoken in the rest of Australia (northern WA, northern QLD and the NT) belong to perhaps as many as 24 other distinct language families, which are known collectively as 'Non-Pama-Nyungan'.

People from around Australia have shared some words from their language with us. The 50 Words Map is a resource that allows people to see and hear some words from the languages of the land where they live, work and go to school.

It shows the diversity of Indigenous languages spoken around Australia. It's not complete yet, but there's lots you can learn already!

Think how easily many of us can recall simple greetings in these European languages. Now the same could be true for the languages of our own country, the languages of the First Nation.

Learning more about the languages of Indigenous Australia provides significant insights into culture, as many important aspects of local culture are coded into languages.

Creating a resource for people to learn and appreciate the diversity of our Indigenous languages is important for both speakers of these languages and for the general public.

Seven years after launch, we have received and published 50 words in 100 languages.

How to say 'galah' in First Nations languages around the country:



How to say 'what is your name?' in First Nations languages around Victoria and NSW:



How to say 'what is your name?' in First Nations languages around the Northern Territory:



Word Search

Can you find the following words in the Bangerang language? The Bangerang (or Pangerang) people are the Traditional Owners of the Murray-Goulburn region in north-eastern Victoria and the southern Riverina of New South Wales.

1. Ngowe (yes)
2. Dhonga (smoke)
3. Datjidja (hot)
4. Gorrkarra (rain)
5. Yurratha (sky)
6. Ngunangga (elbow)
7. Wurru (mouth)
8. Maniga (Fish)
9. Wala (water)
10. Yimilang (today)
11. Dhatjiba (sister)
12. Lilima (bone)

J	W	W	Q	H	G	N	A	L	I	M	I	Y	A	K
A	A	P	Q	I	Q	A	M	I	L	I	L	T	S	R
G	R	C	V	R	A	M	E	W	U	R	R	U	A	D
G	R	P	A	G	N	O	H	D	B	T	J	C	H	F
N	A	A	J	D	I	J	T	A	D	G	O	A	T	A
A	K	E	G	W	Z	E	R	E	V	K	T	B	A	V
N	R	J	R	J	G	Y	S	D	X	J	Y	P	R	T
U	R	Y	M	A	N	I	G	A	I	W	H	J	R	W
G	O	L	N	G	O	W	E	B	L	X	I	S	U	V
N	G	F	W	A	L	A	A	E	N	B	N	E	Y	P

Creative

Jailhouse Blues

By Abdullah

Abdullah writes from a prison in NSW.

Another day another cell
Can't believe I'm locked in a cell
Imagine this is what it's like living in hell
Lawyers to pay but no money and nothing to sell!
Heart of pain and disappointment, hit rockbottom once again I fell
Can't even talk about it without starting to dwell.
Locked in at night nothing to do but pray and write
Counting down the days I have freedom in sight

Until that day comes I have demons I need to fight!
Suffocated by darkness it's a struggle to see any light
Will the C/O's ever understand the cuffs are too tight?
Too much on my mind but can't let myself go insane!
So I push it all aside to focus on physical and mental gain
Put my body through extreme pain and go all in every time I train
Muscles getting bigger but depression never leaves my brain!
At least I don't let it get the best of me and put a dirty needle in my vein.

Hardest part about being in prison is being away from my son!
Missing out on memories and not giving him any fun
I have many reasons to be out but he will always be my number one!
I'll never forget when I saw him last he screamed "Daddy" as he started to run
My biggest regret is losing him just after I walked out on his mum.
Never have anyone visit, write back or even answer the phone
Since 2022 all I've been doing is trying to go home
Never understood why the government make sure I'm always alone!

Why is my happiness and freedom the target in their firing zone
Everywhere I go they harass me, it's like I'm watched from a drone.
But hopefully soon I'll finally get out and have a chance to be free!
Part of me still believes that will only happen if I get on a plane and flee
Don't understand why it's such a problem to just leave me be
I just want to live in peace and happiness and get to be me.
For now I have a five month wait for a hearing due to a not guilty plea.

What Will Be, Will Be

By Gypsy

Gypsy writes from a prison in QLD.

Do you feel confined, please sympathise my pain.
The lack of understanding,
I find it very vain.
Just imagine freedom,
independence stripped from you,
How would you feel and what would you do,

I'm broken, I feel lost. I wanna be set free,
Why has this path decided to choose me,
Who am I to judge, I suppose no one's perfect,
I'm the worst of 'em all but promise

I'm still worth it.
I'm real enough to own it, no reason to talk shit,
Elaborating, over-explaining will only get you hit.
The truth comes out in the end like the tyre stuck in the ditch.

Crying Your Eyes Out

By Justin

Justin writes from a prison in NSW.

You begin to scream and shout
Roll about time to let it all out
Emotions running wild from the hurt and pain
It's starting to hurt my brain

Frustration and anger sets in,
where do I begin?
I feel like a train wreck, I think
what the heck am I sitting here in jail when I should be out on bail?
Gotta chill stay still get my head in a positive space for one day again I will join the human race
Gotta be staunch like a trooper and launch into a brave me for my time will come when I'm set free

Don't quit life even if in strife for all the brothers have your back
Give it a crack, don't ever look back on the past you can't repair
Only leaves your heart in pieces
feeling lost broken in despair
Remember the ones who care
they will help get you there

Have hope and belief time to rock and roll and once again be back in control.

The End

Lines For Define

By Jon

Jon writes from a prison in VIC.

"The colours of the rainbow
so pretty in the sky"
The colours of my jocks lying
on a bench
Uncovered by shutters
Unarmed waiting snakes

Too clean to congo
Too late to be vague
Cos reality is a disease
And all must please

The Society blisters
The eventful sleaze
Wrapped in iron bars
Closed behind doors

The sky is different
Some grey ugly war
Between insanity
And the reason

Parlours of goodbye
Never needed teasin'
Instinctive beginning
Call for hollow ends

Ending of the path
To another life rend
Yes, there may be colours
Stilled + on the page

After all disasters
The sky is still the sage
Of whispered prayers
And balderdash gods

Only in the inequality
The grey is in the odds
we play the game
and welcome tears as friends.

Burning Broken Thoughts

By Wolverine

Wolverine writes from a prison in QLD.

I know you think you're broken far too much to ever heal properly,
Like all those other folk that make life seem so real.

Well I know of a special trick that can help with any healing.
Simple, quick and easy things work best when they're appealing.

So box up all your broken thoughts, that's all to be done, my dear.
Then burn them in the fiercest fire, in minds eye, with no fear.

Share Your Art

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

About Time
Reply Paid 94762
Melbourne VIC 3001

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

contribute@abouttime.org.au

Beyond the Steel Mesh

By Anonymous

The author writes from a prison in QLD.

I hope you enjoy this poem I wrote, taking an absurdist perspective on life in here, for we all have the choice to frame what we experience either positively or negatively.

Steel Mesh
The cage stands bold
With its steel-clad mesh,
For within its grip
It's us it holds.

Ten foot walls
Of cold creme concrete,
For outside we muster
Like horses in stalls.

For some will find
Every day these walls and cage,
Encroach and enclose
Into their steel mesh minds.

Those who look
However
May not always see.

For this beautiful cage
A kaleidoscope of silver,
Glowing in the golden sun
Over our concrete stage.

Contrasted by
The brilliant blue sky,
And handsome clouds
Drifting by.

Each golden ray
Dispersing explosively
On our steel mesh minds
As begins a new day.

For it is only when
We learn to see,
That our minds
Can be set free.



Dan draws from a prison in the ACT



Sofia, Ink on paper 2025

Somebody's Daughter Theatre offers women within the prison system in Victoria the opportunity to participate in weekly art workshops. Participants are introduced to a range of art materials and given guidance to explore their self-expression and creativity in a supportive environment. Artworks produced by the women are exhibited annually in conjunction with the Somebody's Daughter Theatre Production for the prison community, family and friends, dignitaries including members of parliament and the general public.

Self-Reflection

Often I try to self-reflect which turns into waves of rings around me. This picture reflects my days in general; life is static, surrounded by waves around.

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.

This is our 25th edition, distributed to all prisons in every state and territory in Australia.

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.

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• Play

Quiz: Winter Warmer

By Gadjet

Gadjet writes from a prison in VIC.

1. A Brian Hyland song is about an itsy bitsy teenie weenie yellow polka dot what?
2. In the 2011 animated film *Puss in Boots*, who was the voice behind the leading feline hero?
3. What do you usually hang above your fireplace at Christmas time for Santa to fill with gifts?
4. Sombreros are a popular tourist purchase in which Central American country?
5. In Disney's animated version of *Cinderella*, what is Cinderella's slipper made out of?
6. Lovefool was a hit song by which Swedish rock band in the late 1990s?
7. *The Tuxedo* was a 2002 American comedy film starring which martial arts actor?
8. Which animated characters starred in the 1993 short film *The Wrong Trousers*?

Sudoku

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

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

Bad Jokes

My dog used to chase people on a bike. It got so bad, I had to take his bike away!

Why does Snoop Dogg carry an umbrella? Fo' drizzle

Brain Teaser #3

What number comes next in the sequence below?

59682, 5682, 562,

Brain Teaser #2

Jane, Emma and Lizzy enter an apple eating contest. Jane ate 20 apples in one hour. Emma ate four apples every 15 minutes. If the contest went for an hour, and 60 apples were eaten, how many did Lizzy eat?

Brain Teaser #1

Make four five-letter words below by adding the same letter before and after.

For example, owe = ROWER. The first letter of each four new words will spell a hidden word.

1. lur =
2. lit =
3. loh =
4. aya =

Hidden word:

Brain Teasers

By Gadget



chief when you ask for a straightforward cell swap:

Meicho writes from a prison in QLD.

By Meicho

Meme of the Month

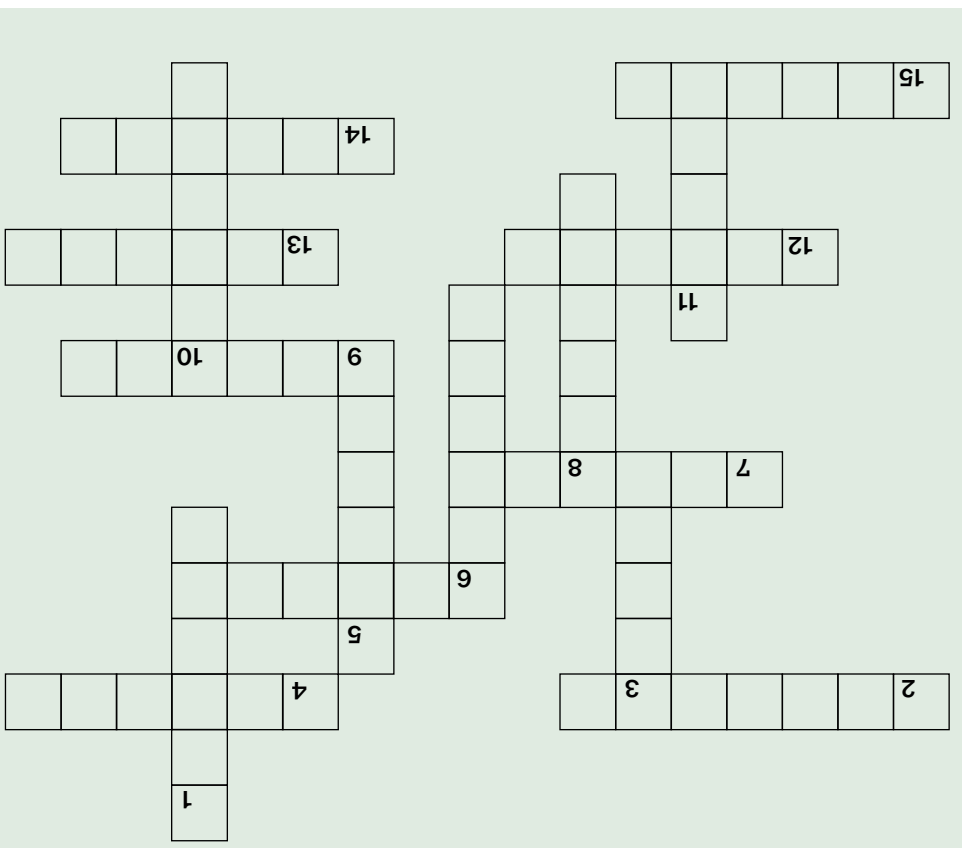
Crossword

ACROSS

2. A portable light with a handle (7)
4. A place where people buy and sell goods (6)
6. Structure built over a river or road (6)
7. Orange vegetable often eaten raw or cooked (6)
9. The coldest season of the year (6)
12. Small pouch sewn into clothing (6)
13. Heavy object used to stop a boat drifting (6)
14. Used to take photographs (6)
15. Land surrounded by water (6)

DOWN

1. A place where flowers and vegetables are grown (6)
3. A long stream of water flowing to the sea (5)
5. Soft support for your head in bed (6)
6. It's to fasten a shirt or coat (6)
8. Vehicle that travels into space (6)
10. Paper or card that lets you enter or travel (6)
11. A very large body of salt water (5)



Brain Teaser Answers

#1
1. Blurb
2. Elite
3. Aloha
4. Kayak

BEAK

#2
24

#3
52 (the highest number gets removed each time)

Quiz Answers

1. Bikini
2. Antonio Banderas
3. Stockings
4. Mexico
5. Glass
6. The Cardigans
7. Jackie Chan
8. Wallace and Gromit

Crossword Answers (ACROSS)

2. Lantern
4. Market
6. Bridge
7. Carrot
9. Winter
12. Pocket
13. Anchor
14. Camera
15. Island

Crossword Answers (DOWN)

1. Garden
3. River
5. Pillow
6. Button
8. Rocket
10. Ticket
11. Ocean