



JUST US

The Voice of People in prisons and hospitals

FEDERAL ELECTION SPECIAL

June 2016 Vol.7

Inside this issue of Just Us:

The 2016 Federal Election is fast approaching - but why bother to enrol or vote for upcoming elections? The right to vote is a fundamental one, which was successfully defended in 1997 and 2006. It enables the right to get information, and to express your opinions. The vote gives you status that must be respected, especially as the state itself controls all your services.

Contrary to popular belief, most people in prison and hospitals can vote. Your vote is equal to any other citizen! However, while 78% of the general population are eligible to vote, only two prisoners in one of Australia's largest prisons voted last election.

This situation calls for change.

You can help bring this about. This issue outlines how you can re-enter the political process. Inside, six

political parties have summarised their relevant policies to inform your voting decisions.

This issue also explains how you can use online services such as iExpress to communicate with the outside world, and describe your treatment as well as the quality of external services available.

The political process gives you an opportunity to be part of the public debate about issues most relevant to you. Law and order is always a defining topic but few voices are heard from inside. Get involved and vote! It is easy to demonise people whom you can't see or hear, but it is harder to do so once they speak up. Let your voice be heard, make your vote count. Send the message that you still care. It is a message that can make a difference.

Don't smoke your vote.



Breakout of Online Services

Aboriginal ex-prisoner Johnny Harris launched the iExpress Online Services project at Sydney Trades Hall on Friday June 10.

"Online services into prison cells will be the big game-changer for our community in the future. Outside inside. Inside outside. Gaining skills and dealing with problems".

This edition of JUST US was launched at the same time with representatives of political parties presenting their policies and answering questions.

See page 3 for details.



Statements from Political Parties to voters detained in prisons and hospitals, and their families

Australian Greens Party

Every Greens member, candidate, councillor and Member of Parliament is committed to protecting our democratic freedoms and human rights and improving access to justice for all.

We are working hard to strengthen Australia's equality laws through investing in high quality public services and justice reinvestment programs. We want to reform Australia's punitive 'counter-terrorism' measures to ensure that we uphold international human rights and civil liberties, expand the Human Rights Commission, repeal our out-dated sedition laws and introduce an Australian Bill of Rights.

In NSW, the Liberal government is attempting to introduce 'Serious Crime Prevention' orders, which would grant police powers to place curfews, bans and restrictions on individual citizens who are deemed to be 'associated' with an offence - even if they are not guilty. The Greens are working hard to fight these draconian laws. We are:

- Fighting plans to privatise prisons in NSW, which is a serious risk to our democracy and will put in place dangerous incentives for multi-national corporations to lobby and donate to political parties in order to drive profits and gaol more citizens.
- Campaigning for fairer bail laws after changes to the scheme have sent prison populations skyrocketing, and as more people are held on remand rather than released on bail.
- Highlighting the chronic underfunding of educational training within NSW Corrective Services.

The Greens are also working on:

- Reforming Australia's migration laws to end mandatory detention and offshore processing
- Ending the Northern Territory Intervention, which has entrenched punitive welfare, and promote self-determination for all Indigenous peoples.
- Standing up to the Coalition and ALP against the cashless welfare card income management scheme.
- Legalising same sex marriage by removing discrimination from the Marriage Act.
- Increasing welfare payments like Newstart and Youth Allowance to better reflect the cost of living, and calling for Work for the Dole Program to be scrapped.
- Defending privacy and civil liberties and standing up to the mass electronic surveillance mandatory data retention scheme backed by the major parties.

Australian Labor Party

Labor believes that justice cannot be viewed only through the lens of punishment. We understand the need for a strong health based approach to complement law enforcement as well as investment in crime prevention and diversionary programs.

A Shorten Labor Government will deliver a nationally coordinated approach to closing the gap on indigenous incarceration and victimisation rates. These rates have reached crisis point.

The first COAG meeting under a Shorten Government will prioritise the inclusion of justice targets under the Closing the Gap framework.

Labor will also support the development of justice reinvestment by:

- Resourcing a long term effectiveness study of the justice reinvestment project currently underway in Bourke NSW;
- Establishing three new justice reinvestment launch sites that build on existing community led initiatives; and
- Establishing a national coordination body through COAG to collect data, build evidence and measure progress on the justice targets and justice reinvestment.

Federal Labor will continue to oppose mandatory sentencing laws. There is no evidence that mandatory sentencing has a deterrence effect. Rather it can lead to unintended consequences and unjust outcomes. Labor has twice blocked the passage of mandatory sentencing laws put forward by this Liberal Government

A Shorten Labor Government will also ensure mental health is a national priority, utilising existing Primary Health Networks to deliver regionally tailored mental health programs that meet the needs of the individual and the community.

We will be guided by the recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC). As part of our interim response we have committed to the NMHC's target to reduce suicide by 50 per cent over ten years.

As the party that established NDIS, we remain committed to making sure people with mental illness and their careers continue to be supported as the NDIS is rolled out.

Continued on page 2

Statements from Political Parties to voters detained in prisons and hospitals, and their families

Cont from page 1

Liberal Party

The Turnbull Coalition government is focused on delivering the best possible health services for the Australian people.

As part of this, we are committed to delivering a more efficient, integrated and sustainable mental health system.

In response to a review by the National Mental Health Commission, the Turnbull Government is implementing a series of reforms that will transform Commonwealth mental health funding and programme delivery.

This includes a particular focus on improving mental health services in regional Australia, led by Primary Health Networks. Primary Health Networks will work with Local Hospital Networks and non-government organisations to provide services that meet local needs – refocusing efforts in primary mental health care to reflect the different levels of care needed by consumers.

The Coalition is also developing a consumer-friendly Digital Mental Health Gateway that optimises the use of digital mental health services and technology. The Gateway and associated phone line will help people access the most appropriate online and telephone services for their specific needs.

Support for child mental health will be better ‘joined up’ with other health, education and social services to create more effective interventions for early years of adolescence.

A national workforce support initiative will be developed to assist those working with children to identify, support and refer children at risk. And early intervention support will also be provided to a broader group of young people with, or at risk of, severe mental illness.

The Coalition is also putting in place:

- A new innovative funding arrangements to support coordinated packages of care for people with severe mental illness being managed in primary care;
- An integrated approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health services; and
- A new approach to suicide prevention, focusing in particular on evidence and community based suicide prevention activities.

The Turnbull Government will continue to work with consumers, carers, mental health stakeholders and state and territory governments to implement these reforms, help prevent suicide and improve outcomes for Australians with mental illness.

The Palmer United Party

The Palmer United Party believes in Australia, its people and its future. We value the innate worth of the individual and ones right to be independent through basic freedoms of thought, worship, speech, association and choice.

All Australians should have equal opportunity in reaching their full potential in a tolerant national community. The distinctive egalitarianism of Australians is reflected in attitudes, which have become part of our social fabric – the disdain for rigid class structures, the celebration of mateship, a belief in a “fair go” and an uncompromising commitment to democratic freedoms. The Palmer United Party doesn’t promote a fixed ideology, but a broad-based political philosophy that relates a core set of enduring values to the changing realities and challenges that societies confront over time.

We envisage a just and humane society, where those who cannot provide for themselves can live in dignity. If elected, we will provide for the needs of special groups in the community, including the disabled, the aged, Aboriginal Australians and remote communities, and oppose discrimination based on irrelevant criteria. With this goal in mind, we have already:

- Stopped \$10 billion cuts to social security.
- Freed over 436 children and families from detention.
- Resolved over 30,000 cases in detention.
- Kept Low Income Support.

However, there is more to be done, particularly in the health sector. We cannot desert the sick and the dying. Medical staff are overworked and hospitals inadequate. Our medical staff are at breaking point. Australia needs an additional \$80 billion in funding for health in the next three years and we must do whatever needs to be done to fix healthcare once and for all.

We see that our nation is in need of both strength and resilience and will strive to reinstate Australia as the “lucky country” once again.

Socialist Alliance

Socialist Alliance: For a people’s movement against racism and corporate greed

Both Liberal-National and Labour governments have served the interests of the corporate rich. The Australia Institute calculated in May 2015 that income tax cuts between 2005 and 2012 have taken \$169 billion out of federal revenue but multinational corporations have paid the smallest proportion of their profits in tax ever. Yet, Turnbull’s Liberal-National government wants to lower corporate tax rates even more.

Poverty is a crime for which both Labour and Coalition parties in government are responsible. Both governments have boosted the incomes of the rich in a country where the richest 10% already own more wealth than all the rest. They have criminalised poverty, jailing people for minor offences while the rich are allowed to rob and cheat society of billions of dollars with little fear of persecution.

Socialist Alliance’s lead Senate NSW candidate Ken Canning, a leading Aboriginal activist and poet, spent a decade of his youth in prisons – mostly for his escape bids. He says:

“Aboriginal and working-class youth are being jailed at an increasing rate and denied their basic rights. They are being cheated of a decent future because of the major parties ‘law and order’ hysteria.

The major parties have introduced prison privatisation, which creates a profit motive to lock even more people up. I have seen what is happening in the US: it is nothing less than the return to slavery!”

The growing suffering and insecurity that many Australians experience today is a direct result of the bipartisan cuts to social services, privatisation and attacks on workers’ rights with anti-union laws.

Socialist Alliance is campaigning for a future in which all our society’s main resources are brought under public/community ownership and control, so that they can be used in a way that respects the environment and delivers social justice.

The Australian Sex Party

The Australian Sex Party understands the need for a criminal justice system that protects society without infringing on the rights of the individual. This system must reflect evidence-informed best-practice, rather than relying on tough on crime rhetoric. Policies must be designed to minimise harm, rather than to punish people.

The Australian Sex Party believes that no system of justice is truly just unless it is equitable, accessible, and fair. Cuts

to legal funding, loss of aid to advocacy services, and the slashing of social welfare initiatives have significantly decreased access to justice, while increasing social inequality.

Tough on crime approaches are not effective, and they seek to fix harm with further harm. These approaches do nothing to remedy the root causes of poverty, systemic inequality, social exclusion, gender inequality, discrimination, and lack of access to health, education, and justice that underpin crime.

The Australian Sex Party acknowledges that to abolish our current prison system entirely is not feasible. The need for incarceration does exist, but only for a very small contingent of violent and dangerous individuals who represent too much harm to the community.

The Australian Sex Party would like to:

- Improve access to justice by increasing funding to legal and community aid services
- Decriminalise personal use and possession of drugs
- Focus on innovative justice practice, rather than continuing to push the expensive and harmful adversarial approach
- Monitor and review transparency of government agencies with powers to detain, interrogate, and compel witnesses
- Review and reform laws which encroach on freedoms to ensure that they are proportionate to the social harm they claim to prevent

POLITICALLY CORRECT

By Jim Huber



Online Inside

Computer technology is used daily by members of the general public. It is seen almost as a human right. But it has bypassed people locked in prisons and hospitals despite being especially effective to counter physical isolation.

Firstly it would allow positive influences, information and communication in proven safe ways. Secondly it would counter the destructive boredom of stone and steel cells unchanged from the penal colony. Thirdly it would maintain the rights to democratic and legal involvement whilst posing minimal risk. The exposed failure and exorbitant cost of prisons, with little time out of cells, will inevitably drive its rapid adoption.

Every prisoner gets a TV in the cell, but even a standalone computer is almost unobtainable in many

systems. But restricted access to the internet through a safe server is long proven, just as is mail and phones. Through online services, prisoners would be able to stay connected to their family, obtain legal advice, further their education and training, gain professional advice to change behaviour and seek employment. These would assist prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration, which are core aims of an ideal criminal justice system.

Online counselling has actually been proven to be more effective than face-to-face therapy. Experts say it is particularly effective for prisoners. The reasons cited are: long periods of isolation in cells allows time for reflection; the maintenance of stability and continuity of the counsellor through the sentence and after release; greater trust as conducted by an

external provider; empowerment by encouraging self-management, and to top it off, it is cheaper.

At the NSW Parliamentary Lifers' Inquiry, Justice Action offered to supply a free three-month pilot project for online counselling. It was referred to the Minister whose department said it "considers an online service [to] not be appropriate without adequate support or engagement with mental health staff." Blocked.

Leapfrogging such attitudes, Justice Action created iExpress in 2014. It is the world's first full online platform for people in prisons and hospitals, and legally independent of government. The website allows people to send and receive emails free, as well as put up their profile, art etc if they want.

Ask us about it.

The latest iExpress development has been the addition of profiles for every prison in Australia and NZ. Now you can describe your conditions giving details in a Questionnaire on the website. Send us a letter or ask others outside to fill it in. This empowers you to confidentially comment on safety, respect, use of your time etc. We will rate the prisons.

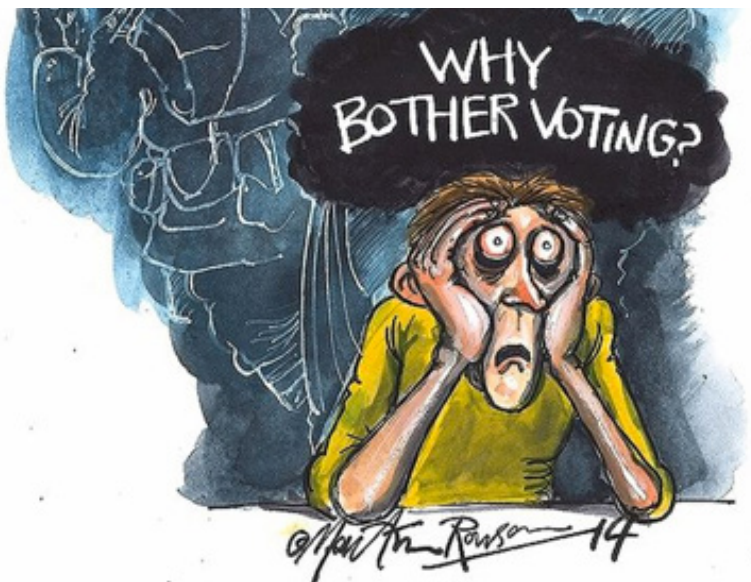
On the Justice Action website we now have a Directory of lawyers, welfare, health and prisoner services. This is to help choose who are good or not, as they will be rated by your review. Do you trust them? It empowers you as a consumer. Send us a letter or ask others outside to fill in information about your experiences, or suggest additions. The reviews will be available for all to see, including funding authorities.

Cell 86:Down the line

Lucy, just a short poem to let you know
My 5th cat died. The other 4 hobble on
Somewhat less ebullient but nevertheless
Alive. I'm a word smith, you said, and my craft
Is letting people see and tho I've a long long lot left
To learn, I'm happy sometimes, dammit, and I will
Have retribution! Not that sort, the modest
Kind that singeth of summer when all around
Is dew and popular fires, when all around
Is sticky-date pudding and shame. Ooh, dramatic.

But, Lucy, why!? I don't understand you nor anything.
We were happy, right? This is my love song to you, my
Degraded epitaph. Will I ever get out so I can visit
The cemetery where you live? Your suicide has
Taken everything from me. I hope and that's
Sadly not enough. I need more, like seaweed
Like fire like roman candles exploding in night
Like dying med like hobbled emperors like
Penguins like funfairs like a kerchief, like
Sorrow. I need more, dammit, just
A little.

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Just Us



Make sure you're **enrolled to vote**.
Visit www.aec.gov.au

Are you eligible to vote in federal elections?

With a federal election looming, making sure you are on the roll and your details are up to date is an important part of exercising your right to vote.

All Australian citizens 18 years or older can enrol once they have lived at their current address for at least one month. Enrolment is also compulsory for all eligible Australian citizens.

There are also a range of special enrolment provisions to help everyone enrol and vote. So, if you are in prison and have no fixed address, you can enrol for the address where:

- A) you were last eligible to be enrolled (this will generally be the place where you last lived for one month)
- B) one of your next kin is currently enrolled if you have not previously been eligible to enrol
- C) you were born, if neither of the above apply
- D) you have the closest connection if none of the above apply

If you think that having your address on the roll endangers the safety of you or your family, you can apply to be a silent elector, where those details are withheld.

Voting in federal elections

Everyone on the electoral roll must vote in federal elections or referendums. If you are in prison, you are still able to vote if your sentence is less than three years.

During an election, you can apply for a postal vote, where you ballots papers will be sent to you. Mobile polling may also be available, where polling officials will visit a range of special institutions in the two weeks before polling day.

For more information on enrolling and voting call 13 23 26.

Postal Address: Locked Bag 4006, Canberra ACT 2061

Elections ACT

ACT prisoners can vote in the federal election only if their sentence is less than three years. However, it is compulsory to vote in the ACT Legislative Assembly election on Saturday 15 October 2016 for all prisoners in an ACT prison regardless of sentence length. A mobile election team will visit the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

For more information for prisoners in the Australian Capital Territory on enrolling and voting in the federal election or the ACT election call (02) 6205 0033.

Postal Address:
PO Box 272, Civic Square, ACT 2608

For more information for prisoners in Queensland on enrolling and voting in the federal election call 1300 881 665.
Postal Address:
Electoral Commission Queensland
GPO Box 1393, Brisbane QLD 4001

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN Electoral Commission

For more information for prisoners in Western Australia on enrolling and voting in the federal election call 13 63 06 or (08) 9214 0400.

Postal Address:
Western Australian Electoral Commission
GPO Box F316, Perth WA 6841

LET'S RETHINK JUSTICE

The Australian Red Cross has released its 2016 Vulnerability Report urging government and policy makers to develop a range of reforms within the justice system.

Over the past 20 years the prisoner population in Australia has doubled, however the rates of violent crimes have either declined or held steady. Some of these imprisoned are the most disadvantaged among us – since 2004 the Indigenous prisoner population has increased by 88%.

We spend \$3.5 billion per year on prisons. If we reduced the size of the prison population by 2% we can save \$2.3 billion over the next five years.

Let's reinvest this money in strengthening disadvantaged communities and reduce long-term crime.

Our Recommendations:

- Change justice approaches to lower crime rates, lower incarceration rates, reduce prison costs and strengthen communities.
- Urge governments to fund and evaluate justice reinvestment across high crime communities.
- State and territories commit to broader justice reform policies to prevent crime, increase non-custodian sentencing and improve reintegration into the community.

Our Goals:

- 10% reduction in adult imprisonment rates over the next five years.
- A Closing the Gap Justice target to reduce high adult imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by 50% over the next five years.



ELECTIONS

ELECTORAL COMMISSION
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

In New Zealand, people who are in prison serving a sentence of imprisonment are not entitled to enroll and vote. However, a person who is on remand awaiting trial or sentence is eligible to enroll and vote.

The New Zealand Electoral Commission works with the Department of Corrections and New Zealand Police to provide enrolment and voting information and services to eligible remand prisoners.

For more information for prisoners in New Zealand on enrolling and voting in General Elections including referendums call +64 4 495 0030. Postal address:

PO Box 3220, Wellington 6140, NZ

Support LGBTIQ community inside and outside prison.

Inside Out is a new Australia - wide group aiming to build a network both inside and outside prisons for LGBTIQ folks and supporters. We want to create a newsletter, which can give imprisoned members of the LGBTIQ community a voice and which highlight issues both inside and outside of prison.

We invite all LGBTIQ people inside to participate in the production of our newsletter and contribute with your writing, poetry, letters or artworks made by and for LGBTIQ people in prison.

We would love to hear from you!

Send us your contributions or simply write to us if you wish to receive a free copy, sent four times a year.

Mail to: Inside Out, PO Box 2446, Footscray, Vic, 3011.

1 Cat
Breathe in.

4 Child
Stay like this for 10 slow breaths, or longer if you wish.

6 Knees to Chest
5 slow breaths. Rock back and forth if you like.

10 Rest
Lie still and count 20 deep, slow breaths, allowing the body to relax more and more with each out-breath. If any thoughts or worries come to mind, let them go and keep concentrating on your breath and your body. If your back hurts, you can also lie with your knees bent, gently resting against each other.

2 Cow
Breathe out - flow between these two postures with the breath. Do each 10 times.

5 Bridge
Lie with your feet close to your bum and lift your hips upwards. Hold for 5 Slow breaths. Come down slowly and rest for 3 deep, slow breaths. Repeat twice more if you're feeling strong.

7 Lying twists
5 slow breaths each side.

8 Legs up wall
The trick to this is getting your sitting bones as close to the wall (or door) as possible before taking your legs overhead. Stay in this position and relax for at least 10 breaths - or several minutes if you want to.

Yoga to de-stress

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History and Purpose of JUST US

JUST US is a publication produced by Justice Action that seeks to inform people in prisons and hospitals of their rights, as well as the issues currently facing them. This edition focuses on the upcoming federal election, providing important information on the policies of candidates running in the election. This information will ensure that you can make an informed decision on polling day. The paper also addresses the importance of

ensuring everyone has the right to vote on July 2, 2016, by explaining how those inside prisons and locked in hospitals can enrol to vote.

We strongly encourage prisoners and patients to contribute to the next publication in order to make your voices heard. Please send us letters, artworks, poems or any suggestions about what you would like to see in the next edition.

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