

Just Us

The Voice of People in prisons and hospitals

NSW STATE ELECTION SPECIAL

March 2015 Vol.6

Why an election newspaper for people in the prison and mental health systems?

Political parties talk a lot about prisoners and people in mental health units- especially during election campaigns- but very rarely do they speak to them, and even more rarely, for them.

That is what this issue of Just Us is all about. We have been in contact with all political parties, as well as a few Independents, to give them a chance to explain what they will do for people in New South

Wales prison and mental health systems and their families. Many of the answers compiled here come straight from the pre-election questionnaire organised by CJC/ICJ.

Your vote is important. Prisoners and people in mental health facilities are citizens who can and should fully participate in the electoral process. Your vote puts you on equal footing with

every other Australian voting in this election.

“Your vote puts you on equal footing with every other Australian voting in this election”.

Further, your equal status as a voter and as an Australian gives

you the right to information and the right to express yourself whilst inside. Take these rights seriously- and assert them!

You should use your right to vote to determine what sort of housing, health, transport and other policies are available on the outside, as well as policies affecting you on the inside.

Use your vote wisely- it is valuable.

Statements from Political Parties

NSW Greens Party

The Greens advocate for restorative justice rather than imprisonment, adhering to principles of justice reinvestment and supporting evidence-based measures to reduce crime.

They recognise the need for a justice system that engages with the community and caters to particular gender, social, educational and cultural needs. Diversionary programs should be given first preference for juveniles in order to keep them out of the prison system.

The Greens emphasise the right to high quality health care, especially a harm minimisation approach to drug use. They intend to limit the use of involuntary medication, as it is an ‘extreme violation of civil liberties’.

The Greens also support the transfer of prisoners from dangerous situations including jurisdictions with the death penalty, poor prison conditions and language barriers.

They are opposed to the amendments made to the *Bail Act 2013*.

Australian Labor Party

The Labor Party believes imprisonment should be a last resort. They support diversionary programs and rehabilitation as an essential part of the justice system and aims for occupational rates not to exceed 90-95%.

If elected, they are committed to extending services such as Drug Courts to Illawarra. They were responsible for introducing the MERIT and CREDIT schemes and are concerned that the Coalition will reduce the scope of CREDIT while in power.

Labor is sceptical about the amendments to the *Bail Act 2013* and supports an ongoing review.

In terms of Indigenous prisoners, they will explore the approach of justice reinvestment as a strategy to reduce Indigenous incarceration. Education and training in prison is also strongly valued.

Regarding female prisoners, Labor suggests the use of scanning rather than strip-searching, and to extend diversionary programs for women. Similarly, where

appropriate, diversionary programs and rehabilitation should also be priorities for juveniles in custody.

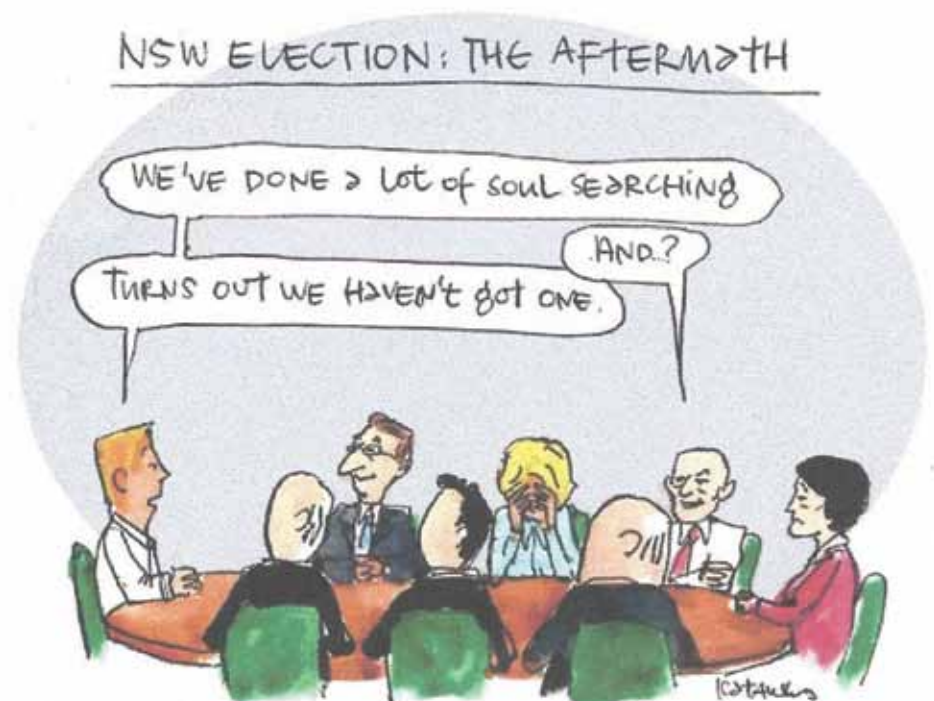
Labor further supports the role of Justice Health in the current system and advocates that all people in custodial care have the right to the same standard of health care as the general community. They are committed to providing ‘adequate services and treatments’ for prisoners with mental disorders.

Prisons should recognise vulnerable prisoners and those with special medical conditions, and services should be culturally appropriate with no discrimination.

Liberal Party

The Coalition supports programs for victim participation and juvenile justice programs that aim to reduce reoffending, including the Forum Sentencing program and Youth on Track respectively. They are committed to investing into evidence-based programs that break the cycle of crime, such as the Court Referral of Eligible Defendants into Treatment (CREDIT) and Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) programs.

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Statements from Political Parties

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Liberal Party (cont).

The Coalition values the importance of education and training in reducing reoffending and is committed to investing in Intensive Learning Centres, which provide prisoners with nationally accredited certificates. They will also invest in initiatives for transnational support services that ensure a range of transitional support services will be provided to more than 1,000 offenders each year.

Regarding female offenders, the Coalition is committed to providing programs and services to meet their specific needs of mentoring and maintaining mother-children links. This will be done through new training programs for Corrective Services staff.

The Coalition recognises the right of prisoners to the same standards of health care as the community and supports the role of Justice Health in their provision of health services to prisoners. They are seeking to make amendments to the *National Health Act* to enable prisoners to have access to Medicare benefits and preventative programs available to the rest of the community. Additionally, regarding mental health patients, where medication is prescribed by the Mental Health Review Tribunal, the Coalition acknowledges that 'Justice Health reserves the right to enforce

medication'.

The Coalition are committed to policies and programs to reduce the proportion of Indigenous peoples in prisons, including the development of Kariong Correctional Centre into a specialist prison to provide educational and rehabilitative support services for Indigenous offenders.

They recognise the different needs of prisoners from culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds and make arrangements for significant religious or cultural events that will allow prisoners to celebrate, including the purchase of particular foods through the 'buy-ups' scheme. A chaplaincy program that offers religious and spiritual guidance is also supported.

The Coalition supports the amendments to the *Bail Act 2013*.

Socialist Alliance Party

The Socialist Alliance believes in prevention, not punishment, and that reducing poverty will reduce crime. Prison should be treated as a last resort. They support the greater use of community-oriented rehabilitation schemes and emphasises the importance of alternatives to imprisonment, including the use of restorative justice methods such as circle sentencing.

It is important to have a justice system that caters to specific cultural needs and support

increasing funding to Aboriginal Legal Aid services. The party is committed to increasing funding for special development programs, including programs for literacy and special health care. They also support the transfer of prisoners suffering from mental illness to proper care.

Socialist Alliance opposes mandatory sentencing, believing it eliminates judicial discretion. They also oppose the amendments to the *Bail Act 2013*; instead supports full presumption in favour of bail and bail with fewer restrictions. They are also opposed to the privatisation of prisons.

Finally, the party are strong supporters of providing education and training in prison, believing it is imperative in order to allow prisoners to pursue work and receive an income and to ultimately become full members of the community.

Alex Greenwich, Independent

Greenwich advocates for the use of prevention, early intervention, diversion and rehabilitation programs to reduce re-offending and support ex-offenders and their integration into society. In particular, he believes efforts should be made to keep juveniles out of the prison system, and that diversionary programs should be given first preference.

He supports programs and policies addressing specific circumstances of Indigenous prisoners, migrants, refugees and

women. He is also committed to providing education and training in prison. In terms of health and welfare services, he emphasises the importance of them and supports programs addressing health issues of the prisoners, especially those that address the specific needs of those with a disability or mental illness.

He opposes the *Bail Act 2013* amendments and supports presumptions in favour of bail.

Greg Piper, Independent

Piper advocates for rehabilitation over punishment in the justice system. He is opposed to mandatory minimum sentences, as he believes this will result in unfair sentences due to the erosion of judicial discretion.

Piper is especially committed in providing more support for female prisoners. He supports the increased allocation of resources to support programs for women in prison, especially those with mental health issues and those who have suffered sexual abuse. He is committed to enhancing contact between imprisoned mothers and their children and believes women should have greater access to support services and affordable housing when they leave prison. Furthermore, he wants to improve access to education for women and end discriminatory payment practices.

Finally, he is strongly opposed to the amendments to the *Bail Act 2013*, believing the bill will violate the rights of the accused.

Lawyers

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 - Unlawful imprisonment claims
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The System is tough...


a WIPAN mentor might assist you

WIPAN are supporting women in the community affected by the criminal justice system.

With the WIPAN Mentoring Program you:

- Meet face-to-face weekly
- Get assistance to find other necessary services
- Talk confidentially about life's challenges
- Enjoy activities together
- Strengthen confidence and self-esteem
- Create mutual trust and respect
- Have a positive role model
- Develop life skills

If you are interested in having a Mentor contact the
Women In Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN)
Tel: 02 8011 0693
Mobile: 0415 454 770
Email: mentoring@wipan.net.au
Website: www.wipan.net.au



Make your vote count!

How do the political parties stack up?

The Bail Act	Mandatory Sentencing	Mental Health	Health
<p>The Coalition (NSW Liberals & Nationals) The Coalition supports the current Bail Act and believes that a person that poses an unacceptable risk should be refused bail.</p> <p>New South Wales Labor Support ongoing review of the act and is skeptical of the amendments made in 2014.</p> <p>The Greens Oppose the new Bail Act. They wish it to be amended in order to eliminate the requirement that the accused show cause for why they should be released.</p> <p>The Socialist Alliance Oppose the new amendments. They support imposing a full presumption in favor of bail for all accused.</p>	<p>The Coalition (NSW Liberals & Nationals) The Coalition will not remove mandatory sentencing laws.</p> <p>New South Wales Labor The NSW Labor party has worked to amend legislation that contains mandatory sentencing.</p> <p>The Greens The Greens support sentencing reforms to reduce sentences and remove mandatory sentencing.</p> <p>The Socialist Alliance The Socialist Alliance opposes mandatory sentencing and believes that the justice system should be focused on rehabilitation not naming and shaming offenders.</p>	<p>The Coalition (NSW Liberals & Nationals) The Coalition supports the role of Justice Health in determining the methods by which mental health patients are cared for. They believe Justice Health reserves the right to enforce medication where it is prescribed by professional clinicians and authorised by the Mental Health Review Tribunal.</p> <p>New South Wales Labor The NSW Labor Party is committed to providing adequate services and treatment for prisoners with mental disorders and illnesses. They support the use of diversionary schemes where appropriate.</p> <p>The Greens The Greens intends to limit the use of involuntary medication and believes NSW needs a system to ensure this is only done in appropriate circumstances.</p>	<p>The Coalition (NSW Liberals & Nationals) The Coalition supports the role of Justice Health in providing health services to prisoners and acknowledges the right of prisoners to the same standards of health care as the community. They wish to make amendments to the National Health Act to enable prisoners to have access to Medicare benefits and preventative programs available to the rest of the community.</p> <p>New South Wales Labor The NSW Labor Party believes that Justice Health fulfills an important role. They suggest all people in custodial care have the right to the community standard of health care, and that health services should be culturally appropriate.</p> <p>The Greens The Greens emphasise the right to high quality health care, in particular the need for a harm minimisation approach to drug use.</p>



We explain how family and friends can deposit money into your inmate account.

By Michael Duffy, *Corrective Services NSW*

FAST FACTS

- Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) does not accept cash deposits at correctional centres.
- Families and friends can electronically deposit money into your account by using BPAY (internet and phone banking), or they can make a deposit using cash or a debit card at any post office.
- BPAY deposits are free.
- Australia Post charges a fee for every deposit made at a post office. Check with Australia Post about the fee.

Families and friends who wish to deposit money need:

- a Visitor Index Number (VIN) which is allocated the first time a person visits an inmate in a correctional centre; and
- a CSNSW Depositor Reference Report, which contains a personalised Customer Reference Number (CRN) for BPAY and for Australia Post and the BPAY biller code for CSNSW. A CRN is provided only to those over 18 years old.
- If they wish to deposit money into more than one account, they will need a different CRN for each account.

- The CSNSW Depositor Reference Report can be:
 - obtained by families and friends at the correctional centre when visiting an inmate;
 - sent electronically by CSNSW staff to their email address; or
 - posted by CSNSW staff to their home address.
- The maximum amount which can be deposited per transaction is \$100.
- The General Manager of a correctional centre may approve a deposit greater than \$100 to cover an inmate's external medical and/or educational costs.
- The money deposit can be expected in the inmate's account after two working days.
- Inmates can check the balance of their accounts each month.
- An inmate can receive up to \$600 per month into their account.
- If an inmate receives more than the maximum \$600 in a month, the money will be given to the inmate when released from custody, or it can be returned electronically to the person who made the deposit. CSNSW will require the bank account details of the person who made the deposit.

Family and friends can find out more from the CSNSW website: www.justice.nsw.gov.au

Red Cross making a difference

Red Cross is committed to making a difference in the lives of people and their families who are involved in the justice system

Red Cross runs a range of education programs aimed to empower people to be able to look after the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and their mates.

save-a-mate equips people with the knowledge and skills to prevent, recognise and respond to harm from the use of alcohol and other drugs.

The Hep C awareness program looks at harm reduction strategies associated with Hep C prevention, contraction and treatment.

For more information about this work of Red Cross go to <http://www.saveamate.org.au>



the power of humanity

Freedom of the Sky

*Concrete walls,
Besser bricks,
Iron bars,
Wire mesh.*

*Wrought iron bed frames,
Porcelain wash basins,
Steel framed doors,
Concrete floors.*

*Razor wire,
Atop cyclone fences,
Enclosing well trod yards,
With concrete paths.*

*But all that steel and
stone,
Iron and wire,
Cannot contain the sky.*

© Julian Knight 2010

Cell Bed Yoga

From Inside Time March 1st 2015 The Prison Phoenix Trust

Many of you don't have the space to practice yoga on the floor in your cell, so we've made this routine for you - all you need is the space on your bed, even if it's a bunk. You may bump into the wall but that's okay. Just improvise and do what you can.

You may find this routine calms you down, helps you sleep or makes your sore back feel better. Try it out and see if it works for you - and write us a letter to let us know how you get on!

Cobra
Breathe In

Child
Breathe Out

Move slowly between these 10 times

Side Stretch
Hold for 5 long breaths each side

Locus
Hold for 5 long breaths each side

Tiger 1
Breathe In

Tiger 2
Breathe Out

Move slowly between these 10 times

Plank
Hold for 5 long breaths. Build up to 20.

Dead Bug
Hold for 10 long breaths. Balance so your shoulders and hips are pressed to the floor with the weight of your arms and legs.

Twist
Hold for 10 long breaths each side

Sitting
Sit on a folded pillow or a couple of thick books, so you have 4 inches under your bottom. Relax everything and begin counting the breath silently: in:1, out:2, in:3, out:4 and so on up to 10. The breath is natural and easy. It is common to loose count, so don't get frustrated. Just start again at 1. If you have an alarm, set it for 10 minutes. Become your breath. Let go of everything else. Enjoy. Keep going!

iExpress provides free services including personal emails and online profiles. Write to us if you would like to be a part of this.



History and Purpose of JUST US

JUST US is a publication by Justice Action that aims to give voice and strength to people in prisons and hospitals.

In 2007 we ran a constitutional challenge to distribute JUST US to prisoners before the federal election, and again in 2011 we challenged and were successful in forcing mental health authorities to change their policy and to allow consumers access to outside publications to make an informed vote.

This current edition focuses on the NSW state election in order to help those inside make an informed decision when they exercise their right to vote on March 28, 2015.

We strongly encourage people inside institutions to contribute to the next publication in order to make their voices heard. Please send us letters, artworks, poems or simply suggestions about what you would like to see in the next edition.

BREAKOUT MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS funds JUST US and Justice Action.

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