



Enrolment for the 2013 Federal Election

Justice Action was recently engaged in a nation wide enquiry into what efforts had been made to guarantee that all eligible prisoners and non-voluntary patients are able to vote in the upcoming election. Voting is a fundamental civil right for any citizen and nobody should be excluded from this process. Justice Action revealed a lack of adequate consideration being put into preparing that all Australians have their fair opportunity to participate in Election Day.

A person who is able to vote has the same voice in our democracy as every other Australian, because a prisoner gets one vote just like Rudd or Abbot when it comes to ballot time. It is a question of equality that has been fought hard to win and to preserve throughout Australian history. This issue is of vital importance for those affected and a concern for all those who value democratic values.

Australians who are held inside institutions against their will rely on those in charge to allow them a chance to vote. Australian prisoners who are serving a sentence of more than three years are not eligible to vote under current law. Mental health

patients are vulnerable to lose their voting rights if they are deemed to be unsound of mind by a medical practitioner. There are already many challenges for eligibility to vote so those who are eligible must be given a proper chance to vote in the election

Only as recently as 2007 were prisoners allowed the right to vote when Vickie Roach challenged the high court on the Howard government's decision to take the right to vote away from prisoners. When the High Court held that the law was not valid it was a huge victory for prisoners throughout the country and for democracy.

In the eight states and territories across Australia, the Electoral Commissions and prisons did pretty well. Our interactions with the Australian Electoral Commission were mainly positive and respectful in this process. The Health Departments and hospital systems were patchy, some trying to ignore their obligations to the citizens they detain. In New South Wales the corrective services had done a fairly good job of ensuring that eligible prisoners were registered and enrolled. All in all, Justice Action wishes you read this edition of JUST US to help you decide who you vote for on September 7.

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

The Australian Greens Party

With ten members of federal parliament and many more at the state and local council level, the Greens advocate for social justice, the environment, non-violence and grassroots democracy.

We have announced policies across every portfolio area, directly benefiting people living in prisons, mental health facilities and in the community, in the lead-up to the federal election.

The first legal package the Greens announced, in July 2013, included a commitment to keep the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) on the agenda. Australia signed this agreement in 2009 but is yet to make it law.

By ratifying OPCAT, the Greens will protect people in detention – whether prisons, mental health facilities or immigration detention – from cruel or degrading treatment.

We will also introduce compensation for wrongful convictions, and a federal human rights and anti-discrimination bill: <http://greens.org.au/equality-everyone>.

The Greens have also committed to:

- > Injecting \$842.6 million into legal aid, community legal centres and Indigenous legal services.
- > Investing money into the community, under a 'justice reinvestment' approach, to reduce the primary causes of crime.
- > Increase welfare payments like Newstart and Youth Allowance, with a supplement for single parents.
- > Legalising same-sex marriage.

Australian Labor Party

Federal Labor believes in a proper balance between the right to vote and the temporary removal of that right for individuals who have been convicted of serious crimes. In 2007, the High Court overturned legislation passed by the then Howard Government that sought to ban all prisoners from voting. The Coalition has recently announced its intention to again seek to reduce the threshold for those banned from voting to anyone serving a sentence of at least

one year. In contrast, Labor believes the current three year threshold represents an appropriate balance.

Mental illness is the largest single cause of disability in Australia, affecting people of all ages. That's why Federal Labor has invested \$2.2 billion in mental health reform over five years, Australia's largest ever mental health package. This includes \$200m in individual projects which increase services, including more accommodation and better support for people when they move in and out of hospital.

Federal Labor is also the party delivering the historic DisabilityCare Australia that will fundamentally transform the way we support people with disability, their families and carers.

As the justice systems is delivered by states and territories they also have responsibility for the health and wellbeing of prisoners.

Liberal Party

The Coalition's Policy for Disability and Carers will deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Too many Australians, people with disability and carers alike, have been left behind. They deserve so much better.

That is why our support for the NDIS is unequivocal.

If elected, the Coalition will honour the Commonwealth agreements with New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory for launch sites. The Coalition will honour the Commonwealth agreements for the full state-wide rollout with all the states and territories.

The Coalition will also expand the responsibilities of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the NDIS to ensure that this project remains on track through three parliaments.

The rebranding of the NDIS as DisabilityCare Australia has not been well received by many with disability. The Coalition will revert to the use of 'NDIS'.

We will also improve the level of support for people with disability by reducing the complexity and red tape that accompanies disability support. Despite good intentions, the current system can be a maze that is too difficult for many to manage.



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

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The Coalition will ensure greater accountability in the placement of people with disability in employment. We will put all policy and programmes for employment of people with disability under the responsibility of the Minister for Disabilities.

Every day, tens of thousands of Australians with a disability require the assistance of a carer. We will protect Australia's carers and maintain the Carers Payment, Carers Allowance and Carers Supplement.

We will also bring carers as well as people with disability closer to the decision making that impacts their lives by establishing an industry advisory council for the disability and carer sector.

Young carers in particular carry a difficult responsibility looking after family members. To assist young carers, the Coalition will establish a Young Carer Bursary Programme to assist hundreds of young carers and help with the cost of study while caring for a family member. Australians with disability and carers can have confidence that the Coalition will deliver on our commitments because the Coalition will build the strong economy that will underpin the implementation of a better deal for Australians with disability.

The best guarantee for the NDIS in the long term as well as support for carers is proper management of the Budget and the economy by a government that can live within its means.

Supporting Australians with disability and carers is part of the Coalition's Real Solutions Plan to build a stronger Australia and a better future – for all Australians.

Nationals party

Underpinning all Nationals' philosophy is the notion of a 'fair go' for all Australians, wherever they live. Equality of opportunity to participate in our community to the full extent of ability, capacity and desire is the birthright of every Australian.

As we represent some of the most disadvantaged electorates in the country, the plight of our seniors, carers, those with a disability, our Indigenous population and the underprivileged is our core concern.

Our commitment to social justice is the foundation of all of our policies including improved support services for those with a disability and their carers to better meet the needs of disabled people and their family carers.

The Nationals believe in greater support for community groups engaged in the provision of accommodation to provide accommodation on a long-term sustainable basis increase funding to combat youth mental health issues and to support better relationships between child and adolescent mental health services and adult mental health services.

The Nationals are determined to eliminate the divide between those living in and those living outside major capital cities, including any limitation on access to a fair legal system that respects the rights and responsibilities of all Australians.

In this regard The Nationals are committed to:

- > Ensuring the legal system is accessible to all Australians regardless of their circumstances;
- > Reviewing the family law and child support system to ensure that the interests of children are paramount; and
- > Removing any discrimination against sexual preference, while upholding the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman.

Socialist Alliance

Both Liberal and Labor governments have squandered the fruits of the biggest ever mining boom which has come to its peak. The Australia Institute calculated in May this year that income tax cuts between 2005 and 2012 have taken \$169 billion out of federal revenue and had disproportionately benefited the richest 10%.

Mining companies and banks have made hundreds of billions of dollars in record profits but paid the smallest ever proportion of these profits in tax. Labor's mining tax was a dud.

Meanwhile 2,265,000 people, including 575,000 children, are still living below the poverty line in Australia.

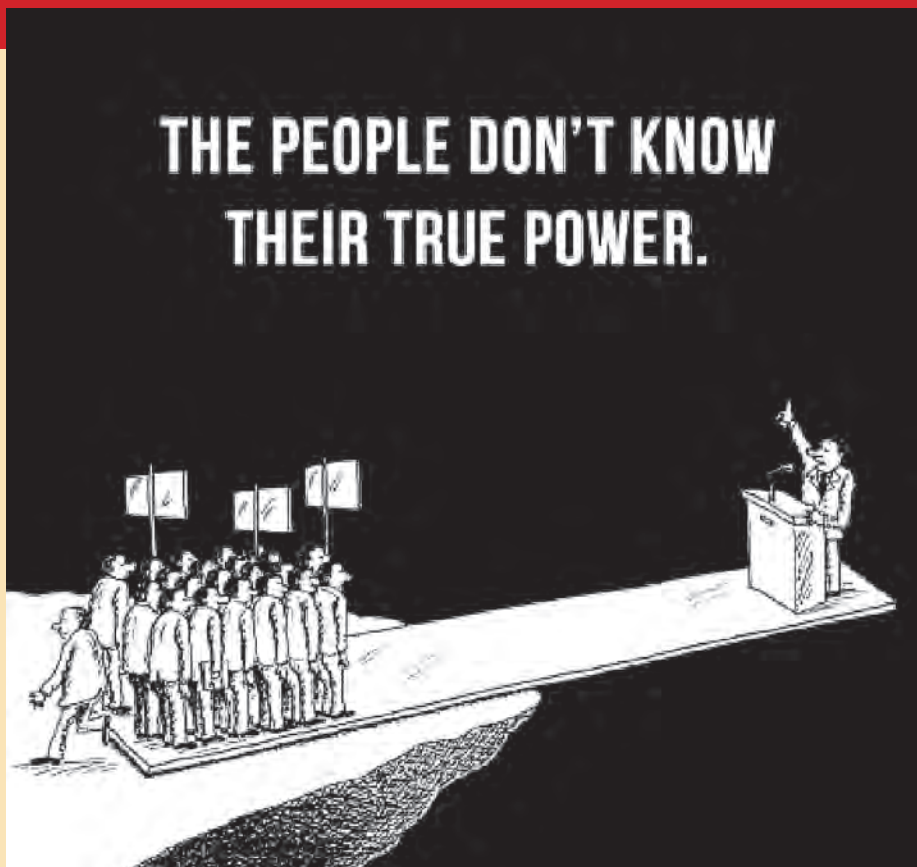
Poverty is a crime for which both Labor and Liberal parties in government are responsible. In government, both parties have boosted the incomes of the rich, in a country where the richest 20% already own two-thirds of the wealth and the poorest 20% are left to share just 1% of the wealth.

Socialist Alliance is campaigning for the mines, the big banks and the energy companies to be nationalised under public/community ownership and control, so that they can be run in a way that respects the environment and social justice.

The Australian Sex Party

The Sex Party is a party that formulates policy based on evidence and not on morality or what 'appears' to be right. It is for this reason that we seek to legalise all recreational drugs and take them out of the criminal justice portfolio. We believe that drugs need to be treated as a medical or health issue. Everyone uses drugs. Politicians, judges, lawyers, police officers and prison officers are no different from anyone else. Whether they be pain killers, alcohol, heroin, coffee, marijuana or tobacco, we all use something to change mood and consciousness. Current drug policy is based on a 'my drug is superior to yours' attitude and not on evidence of harm.

The Sex Party believes that the focus of prisons and mental health institutions should be rehabilitation rather than punishment. We want more needle and syringe programs in prisons. Improved access to education in correctional centres and mental health facilities also needs to be provided as well as improved access to relevant treatment services in prisons and mental health care centres.



Channels of advocacy for individuals in prisons need to be improved as well as general conditions including food, visits and programs. We think there needs to be increased awareness regarding an individual's cultural background and an increase in culturally-appropriate services and programs. In this context we would like to see more awareness around women's issues and the need for special services for women and children.

Christian Democratic Party

The Christian Democratic Party believes in restoration of people back to full and whole community health.

A person found guilty of an offence needs to pay the price – a form of punishment from a fine to a prison sentence.

A person needs restoration back to society – to again to be restored back to society will mean accepting of the wrongness of the offence and to learn corrective behaviours in this area.

Prisoners must be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Therefore time in confinement must deal with correcting the behaviour, establishing the behaviour was wrong and paying a penalty relevant to the offence.

Before release a demonstrated understanding that the behaviour was and is wrong and that there is a demonstrated understanding of corrective behaviour in regard to the relevant matters.

There are many things that can be seen as causing mental health issues developing in otherwise healthy people and all must be attended to see a full recovery.

Some of the causes: Drugs and other addictive substances, Loss of employment, Grief and loss, Relationship breakdown, Poor health, Poor body image, Financial loss or hardship, Homelessness, Addictive behaviours, Birth defects, Learning difficulties

Other disabilities, Sexual assault or Other assaults,

Treatment of mental health must be to recover and not a program of maintained and stable state of ill health.

Treatment drugs of dependence must be carefully monitored so as not to replace one problem with another.

Recovery programs must deal with the whole person so that the negative life choices are removed from the persons life and that issues arising from events external to the person must be dealt with due care and diligence.

Some persons state of mental health may require internment against their will and that should be permitted after full and careful assessment. Assistance to again reconnect with society will need to be given where necessary. Currently, there is inadequate funding for programs that look to prevent relapse.

Australian Independents

The Australian Independents is the party to vote for. We are the only party in Australia that is for significant investment in education and health; we are the only party for ending child abuse. Our party is the only party for ending homelessness and poverty and effectively addressing mental health issues and drug and alcohol problems.

The Australian Independents won't ignore you. Regardless of what you have done in life, what mistakes you have made, what ill-choices you have made, we are for giving you a second chance. We believe that everyone makes mistakes, ourselves included. We don't believe that we are better than you; we believe that all human beings are equal and regardless of their station in life, deserve to be treated with respect.

The Australian Independents stand for rehabilitation; not retribution.

We believe that politicians are elected to serve, support, fight, protect you. And that's exactly what we will do for you if you give us a chance.

Please vote for the Australian Independents.

Please invest in the Australian Independents so that we can invest in you.

Please give us a chance so that we can genuinely give you the opportunities in life that you deserve.

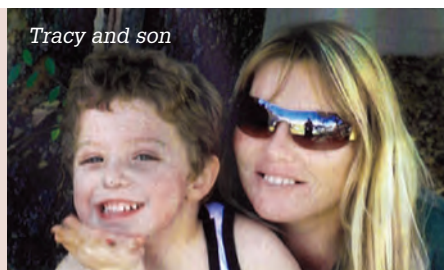
Dr Patricia Petersen. Leader – Australian Independents.

Deaths in Custody: Let Tracy Brannigan's Be the Last

On Monday the 25th February 2013, Tracy was found dead in her cell at Dillwynia Correctional Centre: the cause of her death was suspected to be a drug overdose.

Had proper services been provided, such as drug rehabilitation, intervention or sufficient monitoring and supervision, Tracy would have been saved. Instead, because of Tracy's known drug use she was locked in the 'high needs' area of the Dillwynia Correctional Centre where she was isolated from her support network.

Tracy was a strong advocate of education in prisons and computers in cells and assumed a leadership position on the Inmate Development Committee.



Tracy's family has asked JA to ensure that such tragedies be prevented in the future.

We have proposed the Tracy Brannigan Action Plan to the minister and commissioner but so far nothing has changed. It includes the creation of a culture that respects the human rights of prisoners, a clearinghouse for deaths in custody, review of current procedures and protocols in place for disciplinary sanctions, cessation of isolation as a sanction especially in the case of at risk prisoners, investigation and review of Drug and Alcohol addiction and rehabilitation programs and ensuring access to education by allowing computers in cells.



UK and Australian Prison Links Call on Newspapers and Legal Services

People in prisons and hospitals may well want to know how JUST US is viewed by people from other countries. On the 3rd of July, 2013, Eric McGraw, editor of the UK prisoners paper Inside Time visited Justice Action in Sydney. He raised the significance of prison papers and the importance of proper delivery of legal services.

Eric said that newspapers such as Inside Time and Just Us are "partly to entertain, partly to inform . . . it makes a very important contribution to rehabilitation." More than anything it allows prisoners a chance to express

their grievances and puts power back into the hands of those who have had it taken away from them.

In the UK recent changes to the law are being prepared so that prisoners are not allowed to choose which lawyers give them legal advice and representation. Funding for Legal Aid was cut by \$33 million each year for 2003-2004, despite it already being described as 'grossly underfunded.'

Justice Action are fighting for a system where consumers are able to choose their own lawyer and use legal aid money properly, as is currently under threat in the UK.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme, supported by all political parties and funded by a 0.5% increase in the Medicare levy, was proposed by the Productivity Commission. Consumers choosing their service providers gives three times the benefit rather than the old system where service providers decide what to do with their funding. Tax payers expect that people in prisons and hospitals should get full value for their legal and healthcare money.

Australian Prisoners' Union

The Australian Prisoners' Union (APU) was launched in July 1999 to represent and advance the interests of people detained in prisons and hospitals.

Its founding belief was that human rights do not end at the front gate but instead society must acknowledge that they are members of the community who, in spite of their past, will return after their period of incarceration.

The APU is opening up membership again. Some key issues are:

1. The right to choose or refuse services such as medical, educational, legal etc
2. Right to choose to smoke
3. Computers in cells
4. Encouragement to develop

If you have any concerns, or would like to become a member of the APU, please let us know by contacting the APU directly or through family at

Australian Prisoners Union at
PO Box 336, Broadway, NSW, 2007.

or apu@justiceaction.org.au

Jail

Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre

*How I wish to feel the grass under my feet,
Run Through The Neighbourhood Streets.
Smell Perfume through The Air,
Or just to colour my Hair.
See a River flowing Down Steam,
Escape this place in my Dreams.
Have a Bath for once and not a Shower,
To Simply pick a Beautiful flower.
Walking to The Letter Box,
Wear a Skirt for once and not Socks.
Not being Stripped and Always Searched,
Dress up on Sundays and go to Church.
Finally seeing your Daughter through glass,
It's a Box Visit cause of your past.
To Gaze at the Beautiful Night's Star,
Looking through a window without Bars.
Feeling Rainbow on my Skin,
Or Anything on the outside and not In.
Longing for the Loving Touch of my Man,
The Smell of The Ocean and the Sand.
Listening to my Music when I am Down,
Being all Alone with no one else Around.
Being told what to do and when to pee,
Missing my family and when I was free,
Longing for my Loves ones and my friends,
Wishing everyday that this would end,
I'm Living this nightmare and it's Real,
I hope this shows you how I feel.*

Letters from Inside "The System"

Paul Nardelli Matraville NSW

Firstly you know me as Paul Nardelli. I am a part Aboriginal person that has spent most of my life in gaol for things I regret, which was wrong and in the past. But in 2002 I was sent to prison, for something I never did. For over 9 years now I have been fighting for my innocence. But people in high places do not want to know. This is what I say is a circle of rejection, and the time it has taken is limitless, and amazingly long. Drawn out, never ending. This has got so bad that the letters I write are answered with complete lies. They don't want to hear the truth, 'Why'. Who knows, reputations on the line. All one big family protecting their lively hood, hiding their shame. It makes me wonder how they sleep at night without tossing and turning; or is it just another day. Another crime, another stripe; and a handshake to acknowledge how good a job they have done, at the end of the day. A man his life taken away. His family devastated, without a voice, just

a number. They say when someone has nothing to loose, you fight back. And along the way. You know you're in for one hell of a fight. And hopefully come out the other end. SANE.

Along the way I've lost briefs of evidence taken, removed from centre to centre. As making too many waves. A re-test of samples that has taken 2 years, and still waiting. It has got that bad. I had to go to another state to get my case looked at. What a joke. At least this way I will get answers. Over this 9-year period I've asked for an independent re-test of a DNA sample; but this has gone back to the very same person that did the original testing, and may I say made mistakes and mix-ups. The result from 1 in 10 billion to 1 in 310? The final decision goes to the DNA review panel. Question, who is the chairperson? SHADBOLT. Yes the judge that sentenced me. This is the circle in this SYSTEM. I will strive forward with a positive, more stronger attitude. Rejection is only a word. Facts are results, proof. Common sense would tell you that. Until someone is serious enough to look at them. I will be one of many innocent people looked up. A tealeaf in a teacup. Not high profile, just someone who is fighting for what is right, and someone who wants his life back.

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Australian
Sex Workers
Association

Support Sex Worker Rights.
Sex Work is Work.

Australian Sex Workers want FULL DECRIMINALISATION of SEX WORK

Website: www.scarletalliance.org.au Email: info@scarletalliance.org.au

Commitment Needed For Mental Health Reform

by Chris Wagner for the Mental Health Council of Australia

During The 2010 federal election campaign, mental health was a hot button issue. Leaders appealed to voters with ever increasing commitments to the mental health sector. By polling day, literally billions of dollars had been committed. However, during the 2013 election campaign, mental health is nowhere to be seen.

In response to this, the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) has called for an immediate commitment to mental health reform by all sides of politics, following a complete lack of acknowledgement for the issue by party leaders in the first weeks of the campaign.

"One in five Australians will experience mental illness this year. That means almost three million voters have an acute interest in this issue and demand an ongoing commitment for change from their potential leaders," MHCA CEO Frank Quinlan said.

As part of their push, the MHCA wrote to every single Federal Member of Parliament and every single Senator, calling on them to work with the charity organisation to help build the best mental health system in the world.

"Following the release of our major publication 'Perspectives', the MHCA

has called on every federal politician to consider the specific mental health needs of the people in their electorate, and to make all party leaders take an interest in system reform."

"We propose a coordinated, long term approach to programs and policy. This is critical to creating an inclusive system that empowers people who experience mental illness to lead productive, contributing lives. That's why we have called on politicians of all persuasions to work with us to help achieve this vital reform," Mr Quinlan said.

Amongst its demands for the election, the MHCA is calling for:

- > Agreed 10 year targets and indicators for good mental health in Australia, with endorsement by both COAG and the non-government mental health sector
- > A national peer workforce strategy, including a national training and accreditation strategy
- > A national funded and targeted public awareness campaign aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination
- > A fully funded inquiry into:
 - The costs of mental illness, both direct and indirect
 - The value of good mental health, including implications for productivity
 - The best investments in mental health, including promotion, prevention and early intervention

"Mental health is rightly a major issue for Australians. We know from research only a quarter of those people who experience a mental illness in Australia in any given year, actually seek help. Our system is fundamentally broken, and we need to get it fixed," Mr Quinlan said.



Art in Prison

Art in Prison' is a new project that has been developing for some time now. The project looks at prisoner art as a genre, documenting how it is expressed, its essence and what forms it has taken and its evolution throughout history. Taking a broad perspective, the project shows how art can be used by those in the inmate community to creatively express a message, an idea or perhaps something that is too difficult to put

into words. Art offers a powerful form of communication for any who engage with it.

The project is currently in the process of creating a website, intended as a place where prisoners may have their art viewed (via photo). This will create public awareness and stimulate further discussions around art as a unique communicative tool and to provide some insights into who prisoners are and what they do. Opening a line of communication between prisoners & the broader community, through art.

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.

For instance, Step Out provides mentoring and support for young people who are leaving custody or who have been in contact with the justice system, to help them to achieve their goals and reconnect with the community.

For more information about the work of Red Cross in the justice area go to www.redcross.org.au/offenders-and-their-families.aspx



History and Purpose of JUST US

Just Us, is a publication by Justice Action which aims to keep people in prisons and hospitals informed of their rights and the current issues facing them. This current edition will focus on the upcoming federal election in order to help them make an informed decision when they exercise their right to vote on September 7 2013.

Just Us is continuing the fight to keep people detained in prisons and hospitals informed by ensuring that it gets to where it really counts,

inside Australia's prisons and mental health facilities. After our battles in the courts in 2007 we again entered the affray in 2011 and won another victory in forcing mental health institutions to allow access to *Just Us* to consumers to allow them to make an informed political vote.

We will continue to fight to make sure that prisoners and patients have to *Just Us*!

We strongly encourage prisoners to contribute to the next publication in order to make your voice heard. Please send us letters, artworks, poems or simply suggestions about what you would like to hear about in the next edition.

Address your letters to

**PO Box 386,
Broadway NSW 2007
Australia.**



Sex workers and people with disability coming together these two marginalised communities can face.

We also provide information for people with disability or their carers on how to access the sex industry and maintain a Referral List of disability-friendly independent sex workers and accessible commercial sex services premises (brothels)

Touching Base Inc is a charitable organisation that has been active since October 2000. Touching Base developed out of the need to assist people with disability and sex workers to connect with each other, focusing on access, discrimination, human rights and legal issues and the attitudinal barriers that

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Letters may be edited for space, and content that might get you or us in trouble.

Unless otherwise indicated, authors will be identified by first name and prison only.

JUST US needs your support!

Help is needed with other projects.

Everyone, in or out, contact us if you want to get involved and be part of the push back. Donations used well.

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