

In honour of the life and work of Suzette Broderick, we call for organisations servicing prisoners to have a majority of Board members and staff being former prisoners.



SUZETTE'S LESSON:

Prisoner community control
of prisoner services

Suzette's Lesson

Suzette Broderick was a revered leader in the prisoner community. Her lived experience and the respect she had earned amongst prisoners obviously put her in a unique position to fiercely advocate to improve the lives and prospects of other prisoners; despite this, she was never given a job or training post-release that would have enabled her to lift into a management role for participating in the direction of women prison services. She instead got diverted into damaging relationships and drug use, ultimately dying in tragic circumstances in November 2025.

The lesson we have taken from Suzette's life and death is the need for community control to be integrated into prisoner services, and for prisoners to be supported in taking on leadership roles in them. Our aim is to achieve a situation where most staff at prisoner service organisations are former prisoners, and most members of the boards of such organisations are too. It has been demonstrated, time and again, that community-led initiatives play an essential role in ensuring that the voice, needs, and expertise of people with lived experience remain at the centre of advocacy and service delivery. It is time for the principles of consumer-controlled funding to be applied to prisoner services. The active involvement of those most affected by the justice system is essential in shaping solutions.

Former prisoners who did time with Suzette – Lynda Rich, Leanne Carr, Naomi Davis, Deb Yesimite, and Kat Armstrong – call for this change, as does Suzette's daughter Brittany Glasby.



More about Suzette

Suzette Louise Broderick (formerly Suzette Louise Glasby) was born on 29th September 1974. She was arrested at the age of 20 on a charge of murder. While she did not murder John Thiessl herself, she was found to have colluded with her then husband, Gary Zane Glasby, and John's wife, Carmela Thiessl, for the murder. She was sentenced to a minimum of nine years in prison with an additional three years for refusing to name her husband as a principal offender.

During her time in prison, she became highly-regarded as both a leader and fighter. She cared for others who weren't so strong and protected them from abuse. She represented them in Prisoner Committees advocating for their rights, whilst also servicing other women with hairdressing and presentation. She was Head of the then Print Shop at Berrima Correctional Centre, and completed a variety of prison education programs, including a Certificate 4 in Business Office Administration, numerous computer courses, and a statement of attainment in horticulture.

On release, she joined the board of the Women In Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN) along with Kat Armstrong. She later became the Vice-President and President of WIPAN, now known as the Women's Justice Network (WJN). This community-controlled organisation is aimed at offering support for female ex-prisoners in response to a lack of support for women in correctional institutions. The goal is to advocate for systematic changes in prisons, improve support available to women in prisons, and reduce recidivism. Suzette was integral to its work, meeting with Members of Parliament and CEOs from other services, and mentoring women pre and post release from prison.

If Suzette had received the support she needed, training, and the means to project her voice and experience, she would have become a significant leader for female prisoners in the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, while some funded organisations were pleased to be seen beside her, Suzette did not get the opportunities offered to her to enable her to continue her work, and she struggled to be relevant after her release.

Her death in November 2025 was attributed to a relapse in drug usage, a problem which originated from the time prior to her sentencing. She also had an early history of alcohol abuse and suicide attempts. Suzette's lesson is also a recognition of the susceptibilities of many women prisoners, and the consequent need to provide support for them in their development into role models and inspiration for other women in prison, and their assumption of governance positions in prisoner services.

Consumer-Controlled Organisations

Consumer-controlled organisations have the benefit of getting direction from personal experience and empathy with those who use the services. This is particularly important for those organisations whose consumers are vulnerable, depend on government funding and are otherwise powerless. The services they manage are co-designed by experts and individuals with lived experience. For example, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations offer culturally appropriate services developed specifically by Aboriginal people to improve health outcomes for their communities.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), introduced in 2013, provides people with disabilities the funds to seek and select services specific to their disabilities. Before consumer-based funding was introduced via the NDIS, disabled people had to beg from service providers who were directly funded by the government, leaving the less wealthy or difficult cases little access to the services they needed. A Productivity Commission analysis showed that the NDIS was three times as effective in consumer satisfaction.

However, this scheme is still absent for Australian prisoner services. Currently, taxpayer dollars are still invested into services and not the consumer, creating a barrier that diminishes the quality and access for prisoners to seek the services that they need.



It is time to introduce consumer-controlled funding for prisoner services so prisoners' voices are heard and respected.

An appropriate way to honour the legacy of Suzette Broderick would be to provide the permanent advances we are calling for here in grassroots leadership for prisoner services. We need to learn Suzette's lesson.

Community-Controlled Organisations

Evidence of Effectiveness:

- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12889-020-09943-4>
- [https://www.lowitjajournal.org.au/article/S2949-8406\(25\)00035-X/fulltext](https://www.lowitjajournal.org.au/article/S2949-8406(25)00035-X/fulltext)

Further case information is available on AUSTLII:

- Regina vs Glasby 2000
- Garry Zane Glasby pursuant to s 78 of the Crimes
- Supreme Court of New South Wales v Suzette Louise Glasby



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