

Fact File

More than 45% of inmates in Risdon Prison have been sentenced for non-violent crimes¹.

Around 14% of inmates in Risdon Prison have completed secondary education¹.

Upon release, inmates are given adequate fare to reach their destination plus the balance of their prison accounts - this may be very little if the inmate served a short sentence.

Recommendations:

Prison should be seen as one part of the continuum, from society to the justice system and back into society.

Therefore: Rehabilitation needs to be the driving force behind the method and aims of imprisonment.

Proper diagnosis of an inmates' health status should be made at the time of entry to prison and any treatment should be at the same standards as available to the wider community.

Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation services need to be given the highest priority.

Sources

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Prisoners in Australia, 30 June, 2005
2. Pathways to Prison Abolition - Reflecting on the New Zealand Experience, Jim Consedine, ICOPA XI
3. Prison - The Last Option: New Directions for the Millenium, Association of Heads of Churches in W.A., March 2000.
4. Prison Culture and the Pains of Imprisonment, UTAS School of Sociology Briefing Paper No.3, 2003
5. Crime & Punishment, Peter Nordern

Cartoon : www.newsart.com/ms/images/ms4045.gif
Artist: Margaret Scott

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Be aware that people who are imprisoned have differing needs and problems, including drug and alcohol addictions and mental illness.
2. Show empathy and positive supportive action, where possible, for prisoners after their release, to assist with their acceptance back into society.
3. Write a letter to your local MP stating that rehabilitation should be the utmost priority of Corrective Services and the Prison Service.
4. Spread the word about this Issue Sheet and the TCJPC.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.jss.org.au
www.justiceaction.org.au
<http://sao.clriq.org.au/cst.html>
www.hrw.org/prisons/
www.payback.org.uk

USEFUL READING

The TCJPC recommends the Jesuit Social Services publication "Crime & Punishment" by Peter Nordern available for download at www.jss.org.au

HOW TO CONTACT THE TCJPC

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PRISONS AND REHABILITATION

Issues Sheet Four : Fairer Tasmania Series

Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission

"I was in pri on and you came to me" (Mt 25:36)

When John Pãul II used these words in his address to inmates and wardens of an Italian prison during Jubilee 2000 he was inviting all of us to live them as a commitment to the dignity of all people.

Prisoners are someone's sons and daughters

In these sometimes troubled times it seems that Western culture has a preoccupation with punishment, with many politicians promising to 'get tough' on offenders. This simplistic approach fails to acknowledge that our prisons are made up of some of the most disadvantaged people in our community with mental illness, childhood abuse, poverty and addiction affecting more than 80% of inmates. It must also be acknowledged that for a minority, prison is still the most suitable place to keep those dangerous few to protect them from themselves and the community.

Do prisons work?

If prisons really do work then inmates should leave prison rehabilitated and motivated. Instead, most leave as bitter and maladjusted people with inadequate resources to find work and housing after release. Many battle homelessness and social isolation. Is it any wonder we have such a high recidivist rate of inmates - around 60% in Tasmania.



Source: www.newsart.com/ms/images/ms4045.gif
Artist: Margaret Scott

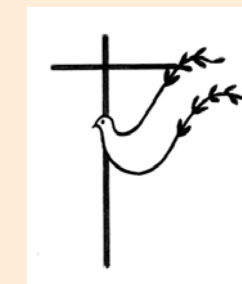
Focusing on Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice

The New Zealand model of alternatives to imprisonment, including Restorative Conferencing and Habilitation Centres has resulted in less youth offenders appearing before courts and the closure of many youth prisons and detention centres.

With some exceptions, almost all adult criminal cases are eligible for restorative justice measures.

The TCJPC recognises the efforts of the Tasmanian government with the opening of the new Risdon Prison August 2006. This should see major improvements in living conditions for inmates.

We encourage the government to continue their commitment to improve the entire system with more possibility for rehabilitation.



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"A common public myth that needs exposition is that the use of imprisonment will bring about a reduction in crime." **Peter Nordern, Crime and Punishment, 2002.**

"Criminal Justice Reform is an issue at the heart of human rights." **CJ Reform – International Perspectives, Dr Vivien Stern**

"True Justice must produce a positive outcome for the victim, for society and for the offender. It must be possible within the penal system for an offender to make different choices from those they have hitherto made." **Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster**

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." **Matthew 25:40**