

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE IN THE  
COMMUNITY MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART,  
ON THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2011.**

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**Mr ANDREW VERDOUW**, INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT, AND  
**Ms HELEN GARDNER**, SENIOR PSYCHOLOGIST FOR THE TASMANIAN PRISON  
SERVICE AND MANAGER, THERAPEUTIC SERVICES UNIT, WERE CALLED,  
MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Wilkinson) - Thank you both for coming along this morning. The evidence will be transcribed and it will be on *Hansard*. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms GARDNER** - I am the senior psychologist with Therapeutic Services within the Tasmanian Prison Service.

**Mr VERDOUW** - I am the acting team leader of the Intervention Programs Unit at the Tasmanian Prison Service. Our opening statement would be that we were surprised and asked ourselves the question, 'What could we provide to a committee looking at community violence?' and clearly our input would be limited to the population that we work with on a daily basis in the prison. We had a lot of questions about what the committee would like to hear and I did ask Vanessa that question. We are happy to have a conversation and respond to all questions, within the limitations of our knowledge and limited perspective.

**CHAIR** - What we are endeavouring to find out about is violence in the community. As you know, the committee has been going for a bit over a year now. We have seen that the statistics, so far as the police are concerned, are coming down in regard to violence. What we are also looking at is not only the violence aspect but also ways in which, hopefully, there can be some government measures put in place to stop it from occurring. It seems to me that there is a cultural issue, cultures can change when we look at smoking and see how the culture has changed in relation to smoking over the last decade. I know we have spoken a couple of times about the fact that what we would hope for here is that there would come a cultural change but that is not tomorrow, that is over a period of time, but in between looking at other stop-gap measures that can assist. We thought you would be of assistance because you know the system well so far as people who come before you are concerned and you know what makes those people tick. If there is anything you think should be in legislation which would assist in helping those people not fall into the present system, we would love to hear it.

**Mr VERDOUW** - We looked at the statistics for inmates and I think we had lots of reservations about sharing that information because what we could provide would be very one-dimensional. We do know that it is a significant issue. There are a large number of inmates who will walk into the prison system having experienced violence, either as victim or perpetrator. One of the activities that we undertake when they come to prison is that we do a complete assessment of all their criminogenic needs. These are eight particular areas in their lives that shape their behaviour. We consistently hear the story of their childhood which includes violence in the home. We hear their relationships and friendships being characterised by activities that include violence. We

note that their capacity to deal with anger in their life is limited and so violence becomes the strategy, their ability to cope with issues. Those things we cope with on a daily basis - for example, if you are walking through the city and you're held up, you immediately become angry. You are in a hurry, you're on your way to a committee meeting and the lights are red, so you become immediately frustrated and your anger starts to build - most of us have the capacity to deal with that very effectively and it is innate within us that anger is a normal part of human behaviour and a reasonable response in many situations. It is how we manage that. What we know in violence is that anger has reached a place and is being dealt with in a very ineffective way. You cannot look at community violence in an isolated way. You mentioned cultural perspectives and it is part of our culture. Helen, you mentioned it yesterday. We were debating this whole issue and you talked about football and all those ways that we celebrate violence in society and accept it completely. I am saying this is not okay and Helen pointed out, quite correctly, that we go back through history and in any organised culture anger and violence have been part of the normal human behaviour, which is about fight, flight or freeze. To protect ourselves we have had to adopt violence and have done so for the last 8 000, 10 000 or however many thousands of years you choose to consider.

**Mr DEAN** - So far you've gone through all of this and you've not mentioned alcohol and any part that would play in the violence in this area. What is your position in relation to that? What part does alcohol play in the personnel you are dealing with in that system?

**Ms GARDNER** - I think alcohol is a significant contributing factor and I think it helps to lower some of our inhibitions and responses to situations around us. That process of stopping and thinking about the consequences is interfered with with alcohol and other drugs. I think that is part of the cultural issues, too.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, I don't think there's any doubt about that. Substance abuse comes into that as well in a similar way, not just alcohol.

**Mr VERDOUW** - When we come across people who enter our system as a result of violence in the community, so often there is profound regret about what has occurred. There is disbelief at what has happened. We read in the media about what's occurred and society says, 'This person should be in prison. What happened was not okay'. When we talk to the people concerned you hear this profound regret. They talk about that part of the brain that makes those right decisions being switched off - well, they don't talk about that but we recognise that is what has happened. They are purely acting out of that basic human belief which is around fight or flight - in their case it is just fight.

**CHAIR** - If you look at factors such as alcohol and drugs which heighten a person's ability to act in a way which is out of character if they are not using them, it seems that the overarching thing you're saying is that the real issue is that these people have a difficulty in coping with anger and anger management issues. That relates back to their early upbringing and the way their parents may have reacted and the way their friends, peers and family react. Therefore they have no real ability to look at the way others react to and cope with anger because all they see is that if someone is cross they fly off the handle and hit them. Is that right?

**Ms GARDNER** - I think that's partially true. I think there are certainly people who grow up in households where they have very poor role models but who don't act in violent ways. Whether it is because they have a good role model somewhere else in the community or through their own reasoning develop other ways of regulating their emotions and dealing with their own emotional responses, I do not know. I think it is quite complex. I think there are biological things that underlie this - if you look at, say, the effect of testosterone and all those sorts of chemicals and biology in general, so males are more likely to offend violently -

**CHAIR** - Although more females now are offending violently. What's the cause of that?

**Ms GARDNER** - That's true. I think we can look at that as a cultural thing. When you look at, say, females and their smoking and alcohol, there is that cultural thing of 'I'm one of the boys', almost. There is also the learning environment that we live in and the examples that we are shown. Even the impact of seeing violence perpetrated against somebody else and how that affects your own brain chemistry. There are lots of different pathways to violence and it is very complex.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I thought it would be of interest to the committee to get a bit of a feel for how you respond to offenders who come into the prison system who have been convicted of a violent offence and what you might do in terms of interventions to try to reduce their likelihood of reoffending.

**Ms GARDNER** - My team very much works on an individual basis. Our primary goal is around suicide and self-harm, so trying to ensure that people don't kill themselves or hurt themselves while they are with us. Part of that becomes a counselling role in terms of addressing the things that lead to the poor coping that expresses itself as self-harm and suicide. We do individual interventions and sometimes that includes things such as anger management, but often it includes more basic things around regulating your emotions. My team is not particularly looking at violent offenders, it is more about helping people with their coping. Andrew's team is much more about the general programs and offending.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Our team runs a number of programs throughout the prison on an ongoing basis. We run very short-term programs that might last four to six weeks. We also run the longer-term criminogenic programs that will run over three to four months and will be very much based on individual need. It's about matching the type of treatment, the length of treatment and the intensity of treatment that we will give to particular inmates, particularly in programs such as the sex offender program. Somebody can get through the program in a three- to four-month period, somebody else may take nine or 10 months to get through the program, depending on their individual response to the intervention that we are providing.

We run one program which is very much focused on general offending and which includes how you manage your anger. It is a criminogenic program and what we essentially do is, we take inmates through an understanding of the events that lead up to the offence, which may include the weeks before, the days before, the hours before the offence. So we look at what was happening, what was going on in their mind and what their emotional stability was, what were they feeling at the time. We get them to begin to understand that violent outbursts do not just happen in isolation; they have a whole

history of thinking, feeling and behaviour that occurs leading up to that moment. That is about giving people control over their life.

A lot of our programs look at things like empathy, and what we do know about people's behaviour is that they seem to switch empathy off and that is what allows them to offend because it is rare that somebody who feels empathy would deliberately offend against another human being. You have to be able to switch it off somehow. In giving people insight into their behaviours, into the way they think, the way they feel, we get them in touch with who they really are and hope to see behavioural change as a result.

We run three long-term criminogenic programs. One is a drug and alcohol focused program, one is a general offending program which looks at anger management as well as all of those other general offending issues and the third program is the sex offender program. We also run a number of short-term preparatory programs and programs for people who are really contemplative about or pre-contemplative about changing their life. It is fair to say that a lot of people are resistant to change and do not see a need to change. Those types of programs also work in the area of drug and alcohol general offending and we are just adding a specific anger management program to that suite, if you like, which will run over about four to six weeks, again, just as a preparation to the longer-term programs or to give people that early insight into what is going on.

**CHAIR** - With your experience, you have the job and they say to you, 'You are tasked with the job of doing all you can to reduce violence in the community'. What would you do?

**Mr VERDOUW** - I guess we can only speak from our own personal experience, and certainly not as public servants.

**CHAIR** - No, I was just looking for your expertise in helping the committee come back with what you believe to be appropriate recommendations.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Certainly they are very much personal. Again, this is something we debated yesterday.

**CHAIR** - It was not a Dorothy Dixier.

*Laughter.*

**Mr VERDOUW** - The idea that we celebrate violence as a legitimate means to deal with situations in life is an issue. I love football. I have been to Melbourne to watch the best team, Essendon, play and many of the other pretenders. An Essendon and Collingwood game, for example -

**CHAIR** - So you have handled your anger management pretty well?

**Mr VERDOUW** - I have, yes. We watch a game and we see 50 per cent of the people cheer when one of our team flattens a member of the other team and I guess that is an outlet for our particular anger. The person who has flattened the other person is dealt with within the rules of the game and the police are not involved. Our society accepts that that is okay and that is a reasonable response. So as a society we've actually said violence is

okay. I think education about how we manage those situations is important - violence actually is not okay.

I think I have read some of the discussions earlier in this committee - some of the publicans - talking about how they manage community anger. Here in Hobart, we have people on the streets at all hours with lessened inhibitions with all of those expressions of anger rising to the surface. So they see somebody who looks different who they don't understand, whether they're from another culture or whether they look different, and nothing stops them from expressing their anger in that violent way.

That is what our society has grown to expect.

**CHAIR** - So that's a societal thing and that cultural change that we were talking about.

**Mr VERDOUW** - I think you hit the nail on the head right from the beginning, yes.

**Ms GARDNER** - My personal opinion is, if there are more spaces you can have an effect - so if you can start with parents and how they bring up their children, if you can perhaps have in school some stuff about how you deal with your own emotions and how you interact with others, that sort of value that you develop and that empathy that you develop for others.

So if you can have an effect in a number of different places and then if you can have an effect on people who have been violently driven there's a number of different strategies such as then looking at alcohol and how we use alcohol in society and our cultural changes. There are a number of different portfolios, I guess, that interventions can go over.

**CHAIR** - Can I finish that line of questioning and then I'll be quiet. It is in relation to teaching. I've had a couple of anecdotes in relation to teaching young children still in primary school. They are now saying extraordinary things to the teachers. If the teacher says to a child, 'Don't ruin her work', or something like that then the boy will say, 'Screw you!', and just walk out of the class. I know that has always happened. But years ago there used to be a bit of a Sword of Damocles. hanging over their head in that they might get the cane.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Or their parents at home.

**CHAIR** - Well, both from school and their parents at home.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - That culture has changed now and you get a lot of younger people snubbing their nose at people who are endeavouring to help them, even though they can't see they're endeavouring to help them - they have them up there as an authoritarian figure telling them what to do, they don't like it for whatever reason and so they say things which you and I would class as being not the right thing to do.

What do you do with that? Unions Tasmania

**Ms GARDNER** - Not being an educator, I wouldn't want to necessarily answer the questions about what's going on in schools. I think there are parenting issues there, potentially, and a whole raft of things that are really beyond my experience and my expertise.

I have talked to offenders in their mid or late twenties who start to say to me, 'I would like to work with youth', and that kind of stuff, and I say to them, 'What would have made a difference to you?', because most of them have had opportunities where people have tried to reach out to them and tried to make a difference and steer them on a different path, and they really can't answer that question. I think that is really tough - is there something that's occurring biologically or socially? What is actually happening there that means that the outreach that's there isn't being taken and I don't have the answer to that question.

**Mr DEAN** - You're obviously in the position to deal with the greater majority of people who went into the prison system and you would obviously work, I would think, fairly closely with all of those in there on violence offences, in particular. My question from that is, on a percentage basis, how many would be in there for offences of violence where alcohol and/or some other substance hasn't been involved?

**Ms GARDNER** - I really can't speak to that. I don't know the percentages. As I said, we're dealing with an individual thing in terms of keeping people safe.

**Mr DEAN** - But as part of that surely you -

**Ms GARDNER** - I don't calculate percentages because I'm dealing with the individuals.

**Mr DEAN** - No, but I would have thought that you would have a reasonable idea - a reasonable position - on just how much of a role alcohol or another substance abuse plays in violence, and particularly with those ending up in prison. I would have thought that that would be -

**Ms GARDNER** - I think that the system does collect that kind of data so I would suggest that talking to the Justice Department and asking for that particular sort of data is probably the best way to go rather than us spitballing.

**Mr VERDOUW** - That is right. We do know it is a significant issue of alcohol or drugs being involved. Doing the initial assessment, as I said earlier on, we do know that alcohol and other drugs play a significant role in shaping the lives of a great number of the individuals. I think the point is that when we look at the justice system it is much greater than the Tasmanian Prison Service because we are only one aspect. There are many other ways to manage offenders and so we thought strongly that the best data will be available from the Justice department generally, rather than asking for the prison perspective.

**Mr DEAN** - My next question then follows. Of the programs that you are currently running - and you have identified some of those programs and some of the things that you are doing - what is the success rate of the programs and how do you measure the success of them? Those that have been involved in these programs obviously move out of the system and I guess your test would be how many come back into the system. I guess that

would be one way of identifying the success rate. Tell us, what is the success rate of the programs that you currently run?

**Mr VERDOUW** - I know there are a number of ways to measure that again and I am not going to try to be evasive about this but I need to acknowledge that I sat in a presentation the other day where I heard a number of figures and the figures can vary between 24 per cent and 50 per cent, dependent on the way that you measure the data. Is it within the last two years, or is it in the last 12 months, or is it - ever?

We do not match data between people who return and those who have completed programs so it would be unfair for me to actually give you a figure or even suggest a figure. However, anecdotally I can tell you that for some of the inmates who do return and who have previously participated in programs it is encouraging to hear them express learning. In fact they will say something like 'de Bono Six Hats', which gives you six different perspectives at looking at a situation, that is something that we talk about and people begin to realise they can look at a situation from a different perspective, and somebody will come back and say, 'That was the perfect place for me to have used that - but I never thought to'. Not only have they now heard the concept; they have now gained a level of understanding.

**Mr DEAN** - Obviously it has taken a while for that to sink in.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Absolutely. And what we also know about human development is - I guess it is around 25 that we believe that people reach that level of development that gives them the opportunity to think as an adult.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I think women get there earlier but we can leave that debate for another day.

*Laughter.*

**CHAIR** - You could argue there is a conflict of interest there.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I don't know why.

**Mr VERDOUW** - We could go down that road further. We do know that alcohol and drugs, brain injury, all those things can impact on the maturation process. So we do know that for inmates, the numbers drop as they get older and so we can reasonably expect that that is part of the process they are going through. They are maturing slower than others and with barriers much greater than others. So when we look at program success, when we have mentored by doing those things that perhaps normal parents and a good teaching system will do when children are present for that teaching, they may begin to offend later and eventually stop.

I think, Vanessa, I will mention U-Turn. I had the opportunity to manage the U-Turn program before working with Tasmanian Prison Service and, again, we saw a group of young people and we celebrated the idea that their offending was reducing significantly as a result of the intervention. The pure statistics will tell us that they were still offending after the program, yet the offence was not stealing cars. In some cases the offence was a speeding ticket because they had a licence, and I guess that is the difficulty with figures.

But we know that we see anecdotally that the offending behaviour is moderating as a result of intervention. It is very difficult to measure.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Andrew, I just wanted to pick up on something you said a bit earlier. I think you said something along the lines of when they actually commit the offence in some cases the empathy button is switched off. Is it the case that there are some people who do lack empathy or is it not the case and in fact everyone has a capacity to feel empathy? What is the mechanism that is switching off the empathy? Is it the alcohol, or what do you think it is? What is happening there?

**Mr VERDOUW** - I can only speculate and I actually looked at Helen because I thought as a psychologist she might have more to share.

**Ms GARDNER** - Certainly the DSM would suggest that psychopaths do not have that empathy, but that is a very small percentage of the population. In terms of switching off the empathy button I think you can speak to that.

**Mr VERDOUW** - In terms of switching it off it is about the fact that people's offending does not begin at the severe end. What we do know about offending is that so many people will begin with small offences and basically what they are doing is managing that emotion and that empathy. For somebody to offend against another human being you need to be able to disassociate from how you value that person. So if I do not understand somebody from another culture it is much easier for me to not have empathy for that person, and I think that we read that in the paper quite regularly and listen to it on the news, that people from other cultures come to visit Hobart and are being attacked by young people who have no understanding of those cultures. It is hard to feel empathy when you do not understand the other person. The question is whether it is switched off or is it just not present because there is no capacity for it to be present.

Then I guess we look at the opportunity for education as you spoke about as a means of understanding that multiculturalism is part of our society. Again I guess that is a personal view. I think empathy is just something that we recognise particularly in sex offending. People don't wake up in the morning and think I am going to commit an offence this morning, or today. Quite often it is opportunistic and there is a point where they need to be able to switch that off. So we know that it has taken a long time to reach that point. Perhaps it started with looking at images on the Internet, perhaps it has begun by personal experience, being victims of abuse themselves. It is something external that they have been exposed to that has helped them to create an emotional separation. We hear it all the time that there was no thought for the other human being, it was purely about me. That whole part of the brain that thinks about all of that is just switched off. I do not think that has answered it very well.

**CHAIR** - Would I be right in saying that the best thing that any legislation could do would be to ensure that in the formative years there were resources put in to assist parenting, to assist those children that we know - and in Tasmania we do know to a great extent - are going to have some difficulties. But then you might say do you get bang for your buck by doing that because will that assist. That is the other thing because you know that as soon as you get out of the equation they revert back to the family that really is dysfunctional in some situations.



**Ms GARDNER** - I think it is really complex and there is no simple one-solution-fits-all way to deal with it unfortunately. As Andrew said, there are going to be people who have incremental slow learning and we are not even going to see that in a prison environment but we can see that in the family environment. I certainly think that is a part of the solution and it is important.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Most of the population manage relationships well. We are talking about a very small group of people when we talk about community violence. I think you said the statistics tell us the numbers are reducing, which is fantastic. I think we are acutely aware of it because we are so exposed to the media.

**CHAIR** - Plus you have your mobile. If it happens you can ring up straightaway, therefore people are becoming more aware of it and they are quicker to react. It is quicker for the police or whomever it might be to come onto the scene and hopefully quell the incident the best way they can. So the statistics are good in that way and yet we have the violence in the hospital setting where people are going for assistance. The staff at the hospital are doing the best they can to give them that assistance and yet it seems that these people do not want to accept that that is the case, even though they have come there in the first place.

**Ms GARDNER** - That comes back to values and expectations - their personal mindsets.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Another thing you mentioned, Andrew, was that when you do the assessment of criminogenic needs when they come into the system, it is found that some of the prisoners have been victims of violence or possibly victims of sexual abuse. One of the things that has struck me when I have gone into the prison on previous occasions and done some research and interviewed prisoners is that often they will talk about something that happened way back when they were a child - sexual abuse or something like that - that probably they did not disclose until much, much later in their life but it obviously had this quite significant impact on them and led them down this path of offending and their self-medication with alcohol and all of those things. Are you hearing those sorts of stories and what is happening? Is it the fact that they are not disclosing early, or that there is no intervention even if they do disclose? Is there something more we could be doing earlier on to try to address it before it is too late and they end up in the prison system?

**Mr VERDOUW** - Are you talking about the early childhood factor?

**Dr GOODWIN** - Yes.

**Mr VERDOUW** - I cannot speak on behalf of the department when I say this; this is purely practical experience working in this area. I know that programs like Good Beginnings and some other programs have worked with children in those first five years of life. In fact they have worked with the families of children in the first five years of life, and that is about trying to create a safe learning environment. The conventional wisdom, and research does support this, that those first five to seven years in life shape the attitudes, ideas and behaviours of children into adulthood. So money spent at that early part of life is much better spent than programs that we run for teenagers and adults to correct behaviour. That is just a practice wisdom statement rather than any departmental position. I certainly cannot say that on behalf of the department.

**Mr DEAN** - What part does poverty play in this whole thing?

**Mr VERDOUW** - I think that when you look through history - a personal opinion again - you see many families who live in poverty and do so successfully and celebrate life in a really positive way. So, no, I actually do not think poverty of itself is an issue.

**Mr DEAN** - It is an interesting one because from my experience as a police officer, the police are able to identify with absolute accuracy who the next lot of career criminals and violent offenders are going to be. A lot of that is to do with the environment in which those people are living and poverty and family background come into it as well.

**Mr VERDOUW** - So you ask is it actually poverty or is it all those other things you saw that seemed to correlate with poverty?

**Mr DEAN** - Well it is a combination of things, but the unfortunate situation is that poverty is involved in a huge number of the cases. I could go through the families and I think our committee chairman could do that as well, with his background. I guess we should be intervening in those families at an earlier stage. Should we be doing something in that area to try to help them in the situations they are obviously being brought up in with learned behaviour?

**Mr VERDOUW** - Again I cannot speak for the department.

**Ms GARDNER** - The research that I have read, as Andrew was saying, does not necessarily say that it is your income that is the important factor. It is the other things that tend to come with that; that is the issue rather than just poverty by itself. Certainly low socioeconomic background is associated with higher levels of offending. That is a risk factor but it is not the only one.

**Mr DEAN** - I know that there are programs that police are working with just to try to become involved with those families at an earlier stage. I am just wondering whether or not we are doing enough in that regard.

**CHAIR** - Can I ask about bullying? Does bullying in schools and things like that have anything to do with a person at some later stage leading to a violent reaction?

**Ms GARDNER** - What an interesting question. I don't know.

**Mr VERDOUW** - It is. We need to think about the anger meter. When we look at anger, and we know that anger is a reasonable response, we see it escalate. I wonder, and I am only wondering here, whether bullying is on that particular meter. We know that the very end of that meter is explosion and as a result violence and aggression and things like that - frustration, and all those things. So maybe bullying is seen that way but I need to think about that.

**CHAIR** - Because you not only have the person that bullies but the person being bullied as well.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Yes, with the powerlessness of the people being bullied, which means that they are in fright. They would flee if they could I guess, but how then do they manage that?

**Ms GARDNER** - An interesting question.

**Mr VERDOUW** - Sorry we cannot answer it.

**CHAIR** - Thanks for being honest. Any final questions?

**Mr DEAN** - Where does this punishment fit with these violent offenders? Just what impact is that having on them and just being incarcerated? Is that really doing much good at all? Where does that fit in, or should it be longer?

**Mr VERDOUW** - Well there is the ABC model, isn't there?

**Mr DEAN** - Some would say that when they commit an act of violence they get into the prison system and then become involved with people who are probably more violent than they are. Once again it is a cycle that really makes them stronger in their resolve to behave in a violent manner.

**Mr VERDOUW** - I think it is really hard because we cannot speak about that.

**Mr DEAN** - You are working with it.

**Mr VERDOUW** - That is right. We have some initiatives that are breaking the cycle, which is an acknowledgement that we want to break that cycle of offending behaviour so that people can actually participate in the community. I know that there are a number of strategies and that is what we are looking at. There are significant questions being asked around that and we are part of that.

**Ms GARDNER** -Incarceration is not necessarily just about the offender. It is also about society's expectations and that sort of thing. But I think there is an element of truth in what you are saying.

**CHAIR** - Do any people think, oh, I am going to prison if I do this? I would say they don't, just prior to doing it. That is the real question isn't it, I suppose.

**Ms GARDNER** - As Andrew was saying, that executive function is basically where that empathy is and that ability to see around corners. It is switched off and they are acting from a primal -

**Mr VERDOUW** - Yes, it is quite primal.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I was interested in your thoughts on offenders with intellectual disabilities or acquired brain injuries and how that impacts on their ability to experience empathy but also to have insight into their actions and whether that is a particular group of offenders that you have a different approach with. What are the challenges there?

**Ms GARDNER** - I think it comes back to that executive functioning in terms of how our brain works. If that is not working well then there are still things that you can do to try to stop and think about things and take a moment. It is about intervening at that level in terms of what are the pathways and how do I recognise that that is where I am and therefore I need to do something different. Sometimes you have to do that at a more basic level and obviously you are not going to get into a great philosophical discussion, but I think it is still possible.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Is that a significant part of the prison population - people with intellectual disabilities or acquired brain injuries?

**Ms GARDNER** - Interstate studies suggest that it is about 80 per cent of the population that has an ABI, an acquired brain injury. I think that it is a reasonable percentage.

**Mr VERDOUW** - I am not sure if you have spoken with Mark Lamont. He is a neuropsychologist who delivers ABI training to many community organisations around Hobart at the moment. His insight into brain behaviour would be really useful to give you more information about that. Our hesitation is that we know that he is the expert in this area and would certainly have something to share in terms of understanding about executive function of the brain as a result of ABI or other types of intellectual disability.

**CHAIR** - Helen and Andrew, thank you very much for coming along and giving us your expertise and answering the questions in the way that you have. It is really helpful. It is a difficult task because, as you say, there is not an easy fix to it. It seems to be a complex argument that has been around for centuries and we are not going to solve it. Hopefully we can do something though to try to help it along the way. Thanks very much for coming.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**