

Dear sir / madam

My name is Anthony Bull. I am a sitting committee member of the prisoner's legal service, a board member and member of Jus Tas and for the last 20 plus years a long-term prison advocate in support of prisoner's human rights social reform and future opportunity for inmates.

I am writing this submission in relation to my experiences of both the boy's home, Wybra Hall / Ashley Boys Home as a ward of the state and an inmate of Risdon Prison for more than 20 years.

While for many of my younger years I was to grow up a neighbour of the Prison complex, as a youngster I was made a ward of the state and introduced to the young offender's institutions of Wybra hall and Ashley boys' homes.

While I have never blamed anyone for my offending, it was a road I chose as an adolescent, but I have to say, my negative experiences, experienced in these institutions played a very big role in both, the way I viewed not only myself but those 'who had control' my family and future offending.

From the early 80s when I first entered the prison system, it was back then a very industrial prison, The bake house, work gangs (botanical gardens), Fire crews where inmates fought bravely to save the houses and properties of many Tasmanians. The Laundry, Woodwork, paint shop, tailor shop and tinsmiths to keep the inmates both interested and busy learning new skills. Drug and alcohol courses, literacy, education, the spartan debating club, hobbies and to a big degree sports where we all the inmates who wanted to participate, had the opportunity to progress towards a newer more progressive life, beyond the prison walls.

While over the early years I seen many men return, there were a good many that never, because they had the opportunity and reason for a change of lifestyle and heart.

Risdon prison ideology, progress and practice has been to focus on containment and control, rather than rehabilitation and reward. Has done very little for a future beyond the one that you have grown to learn.

Over the many years I have seen the opportunity and resources for inmate's regress (almost disappear) rather than improve, leaving prisoners frustrated, angry and without hope.

With the Lack of employment opportunities, Continuous lockdowns, The Lack of appropriate educational opportunities, and the most basic of educational opportunities out of reach of most mainstream inmates, this as I have seen, only assists in promoting further resistance towards authority but also a gang mentality (us against them) that can have severe consequences for both the individual and society.

This along with high rates of drug offences and addictions and yet there still isn't an appropriate drug and alcohol program within the medium and maximum prisons.

A lack of a Tasmanian halfway house and housing where released inmates can work towards more permanent living arrangements.

While I understand that Prisons, or the running of, can be, at times very problematic.

As a man who was at one time, a committed criminal, consistent prisoner and very much institutionalised, to now a man that now been free and without conviction for 18 plus years I know and understand just how difficult it can be, to not only change your life, but also yourself. There is simply no reason no reason why a young, or old, man or woman can't go to prison a criminal and come out a carpenter, small engine mechanic or a cleaner returning into society being a more productive, son, father and member of society.

Regards Anthony Bull

Committee member Prisoners legal service

Justas Board member

Committed Justice reform advocate.