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To: [CSJS](#)
Subject: Submission Inquiry into Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters
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Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters.

My name is Amanda and I am the engaged partner of an inmate (*Mr X) currently incarcerated in the maximum security unit of Risdon Prison Complex (RPC) Tasmania.

Background

Mr X had previously served 11 years at Risdon before being granted parole in 2019. He was sentenced to three months imprisonment from January to May 2022 after life circumstances got the better of him and after being home for just eight days, sadly his parole was revoked in May 2022 and he has been incarcerated ever since. These past twelve months are the first real life firsthand experiences I have had with the Tasmanian Department of Justice. I had heard many stories from Mr X from his teenage stint at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and his eleven years at RPC. Some were disturbing, others were heartbreaking, almost all were horrendous.

Mr X gave his witness statement to the The Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings and is part of the current class action against AYDC.

My Experience - Lockdowns

Mr X warned me many times that no one can prepare you for serving time at RPC whether you are the inmate or the loved one at home.

I can tell you with absolute honesty - No one, nothing can prepare you for what you will witness if you have a loved one in RPC, especially maximum security where my submission is focused.

Constant lockdowns, up to 5 dsys a week are a more common occurrence than any consistent schedule out of cell time (OCT) . To add context, since January 1, 2023 the maximum security unit at RPC has had in each month:

January - 12 dsys full lockdown (no OCT at all; 11 half days (whereby the inmates are either out 8-11.20am or 1-4.10pm)

February - 9 days full lockdown and 15 half days

March - 11 days full lockdown and 15 half days.

For further context, inmates were locked down for 23 and a half days of January's 31;

16 and a half days of February's 28;

And 26 days of March's 32.

Saturday 18 February to Saturday 25 February is the only week maximum have had OCT every day (bar Wednesday 22nd for staff training).

There is no phone access during lockdowns for us families at home to receive a call from our loved ones. Lockdowns which can last anywhere from 1 to 5 days, I would say 2-3 days in a row is the average, and families have no idea of lockdowns unless we ring VRC and ask the reception staff (which we become reluctant to do after a while as it wastes their time). When lockdowns are over and the men are allowed out, there are 2 telephones in the yard to accommodate up to 30 inmates - sometimes you are lucky to get a call, so every single minute counts.

Recently the entire unit was put on a 5 day lockdown after an isolated incident involving just a few inmates (a protest of their peer's treatment which ended with Officers spraying the unit with capsicum spray - whether you were involved or not was apparently irrelevant. Mr X suffered burning to skin on his arms and face and his eyes which persisted for several days after.

My Experience - Inmate Wellbeing

I will keep this section as concise as possible as it covers a fair bit.

From processing right through to release the men in maximum security are, for no better use of the word, "warehoused". They are treated as subpar humans, denied of basic human rights at times, and offered zero opportunity for rehabilitation or treatment - literally ZERO opportunities. No classes, no courses, no education, no vocation, no access to online learning, no access to drug treatment and often employment within the unit is difficult to obtain. The men are, to be brutally honest, left to rot in RPC.

To watch your partner slowly but surely fade away right in front of you .. it tears you apart. It rips your heart into pieces, it steals the air from your lungs, to see little more than a shell of the man you have loved for so long. There is no colour to his face, no warmth to his voice, no soft edges like you'd see in him at home while he'd cook the family dinner. He looks like yours, has the same voice as yours, but you know in your heart the man you love is gone and all you can do is pray and hope and wish that he eventually comes back.

They are defeated, beaten down and stripped of anything that could possibly represent progress and positivity.

Health requests - mental and physical - go unanswered. Sometimes they get lost between the inmate giving to an Officer and that Officer giving to Health. Mr X wrote very clearly in 5 different requests, he was suicidal and needed help. He begged me to call "someone, anyone, i need you to get me help". I eventually got in touch with the Correctional Primary Health department and wrote several complaints to them and the prison. If i was lucky enough to receive a reply it was a useless generic "sorry we can not disclose information", I never once asked them to disclose I simply asked if Mr X could receive a little health care.

This battle continues.

Dental work done on Thursday 6 April for example. Mr X had two teeth pulled out. The doctor said he'd give Tramadol for 2 days, Mr X only received it for 1 and was in agony over Easter and into this week also. The stitches fell out of his mouth the night of Friday 7 April and reported to Officers the next morning. Officers may or may not have contacted health but it wasn't until Tuesday 11 April that Mr X was seen by health and given antibiotics for an infection.

Noteworthy points here include:

The health clinic being closed as of Thursday afternoon through to

Wednesday morning for the Easter break. Not even a skeleton crew to attend to prisoners.

Health requests are being ignored or misplaced or not triaged and calls for help are going unheard.

There is literally zero productive things for the prisoners to do in maximum. No access to education, personal development courses, behavioural/drug rehabilitation.

The learning classroom has in fact been converted into a staff meeting/multi purpose room; and Apsley, the drug treatment unit was dismantled some time ago and is now used as segregation space instead and no replacement exists for what Apsley was doing for the inmates. It just went and it continues to stay gone.

The men are left to rot and lose any sense of self for the duration of their time at RPC, and then on release day they are shown the gates and sent on their way with nothing. Only the number of their new parole officer and whatever property they had in prison. They have no money, no follow up support, no one guiding them through each logical step of being back out in the community.

They leave prison all but destined to fail. Destined to fail because their state's Department of Justice refuse to acknowledge they too have failed. Except their failings have massive - MASSIVE - repercussions on other people's lives and FOR the rest of their lives.

I speak for my partner and I when I say there has to be a shift, if RPC continues on this course, not one of those men stand a chance of ever breaking the cycle. And inmates like my partner, are left with lifelong scars and demons and memories so deeply traumatic they are permanently imbedded into the very core of their being.

PTSD, Anxiety, Depression, Substance Abuse, Recidivism.

Flashbacks, Nightmares, Suicidal Thoughts, Blackouts, Insomnia..... and so much more that we just can not comprehend, yet we - both/either inmate or loved ones alike - we are all handed that basket full of those 10 soul destroying things each and every release day, and we are expected to simply go forth and be Fruitful and Faithful.

No. Families begin to rebuild and repair while the system set up to fail works its inevitable devastating magic.

To close, did you know over two thirds of the current Risdon Prison population have been in there before?

Did you know around half of released prisoners will return within two years?

Did you know one third of the drug using population within Risdon Prison never had a drug problem prior to their incarceration?. - yet our system is working? No. It's not.

On behalf of my partner and I, thank you most sincerely Committee 1, for your time and your dedication to this Inquiry.

Yours in thanks,
Amanda