

Winnunga News

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CEO Update

At the outset I extend my best wishes to all my wonderful staff here at Winnunga, to our clients and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for the coming year.

There is much that many of us in the Aboriginal community can be grateful for as we celebrate, for example, those in our families and among our friends whose children are doing well at school or who have a steady job, good health and safe and secure housing. The sad reality is, however, that life for so many in our community is one of unrelenting hardship and struggle.

Because of this I have always felt somewhat self-conscious in extending 'best wishes' or 'season's greetings' or 'happy new year' to people whose lives I know are blighted by poverty, disadvantage, poor health, discrimination and/or racism. I fear that for people living in such circumstances any such salutation might strike as deeply hollow and perhaps even heartless.

My self-consciousness and diffidence is exacerbated by the knowledge that for the large cohort of Aboriginal peoples resident in the ACT who live such lives, that there is barely a single indicator relevant to their lives that has shown any meaningful improvement in the last decade. The sad reality is that in many instances, which I report on regularly in the Winnunga News, the outcomes have in fact worsened.

Having said that I do wish each of you the best for the coming year and assure you that I and everyone of us here at Winnunga are committed to doing everything in our power to support you and your families in any way which we are conceivably able.

I have included in this edition of the Winnunga News a summary of the latest Family Matters report. The report is prepared each year by SNAICC and provides a detailed exposition on issues relating to the care and protection of Aboriginal children in each of the Australian States and Territories.

The report reveals, consistently with what I say above, that the ACT Government continues to seriously neglect the needs of Aboriginal children in contact with the care and protection system and in fact, as revealed in the Family Matters report is one of the worst performing jurisdictions in Australia. Stuningly, for example, the ACT Government provides the lowest level of funding for intensive family support services of any Government in Australia.

Having regard to the serious failings identified in the Family Matters report it is incomprehensible to me that the ACT Government continues to underfund child



Julie Tongs OAM, CEO



Nothing About Us Without Us

protection services and drag the chain on the implementation of the Our Booris Our Way review. My concern on this and other unarguable failings of the ACT Government to address with any sense of urgency the needs of the Aboriginal community of Canberra is highlighted by the fact the Our Booris review was initiated almost six years ago and is yet to be implemented.

I urge anyone with an interest in or concern about the welfare of children in Canberra to not only read the Family Matters Report but also convey to the relevant Minister, namely Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith, your dismay and concern at the cavalier response of the ACT Government to the needs and welfare of our children.

In similar vein there is barely a single indicator relevant to the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples resident in Canberra that does not reveal that the life outcomes experienced by them is among the worst of Aboriginal peoples in all the States and Territories. It is as a consequence extremely frustrating to read, on a regular basis, the saccharine and in my opinion misleading responses of ACT Ministers and spokespeople about alleged or claimed improvements in the outcomes being achieved in the ACT.

By way of example, I have recently had cause to read the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 between the Elected Body and the ACT Government together with the annual report on the first phase of that agreement.



As far as I am concerned a majority of the 'achievements' identified in the report do not reflect reality. Coincidentally the Productivity Commission has this week begun the release of its annual series of Reports into Government Services (ROGS) with the first of the series, on housing and homelessness, revealing that the ACT Government has one of the worst records in Australia in respect to the provision of homelessness services. We don't, of course, need to ask who it is in Canberra who is most impacted by homelessness, and a massive shortfall in public, social and affordable housing. I really cannot fathom how the Minister for Homelessness, Ms Rebecca Vassarotti rationalizes this major failing.

I will provide a more detailed summary of some of the ROGS reports in next month's Winnunga News.

As I reflect, at the beginning of a new year, on the continuing failure of the ACT Government to address the range of issues adversely affecting Aboriginal peoples in Canberra I am renewing the call which I and a wide cross-section of Aboriginal leaders in Canberra have made repeatedly over the last two years for a royal Commission style inquiry into all aspects of the lived experience of the Canberra Aboriginal community.

I note in passing, by way of comparison, that the ACT Government did not hesitate to establish a Board of Inquiry into aspects of the recent aborted trial involving Brittany Higgins. I, and the Aboriginal community have not, of course failed to note the inquiry was agreed to by the ACT Government within a week of being called for, and that the repeated objection which ACT Labor and the Greens have made to such an inquiry into Indigenous disadvantage, namely that it would cost too much, apparently doesn't apply to non-Aboriginal focused inquiries.



If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

'Senator Pocock most recently contacted Julie to seek her views on the major issues of concern to the ACT Aboriginal community including budget priorities.'

Senator Pocock Sets The Standard

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga was pleased and honored to welcome Senator David Pocock to the recent official opening of Winnunga's new premises at Narrabundah. The new health and community facility is a place of not just importance but great pride to the Aboriginal community and the official opening was of enormous significance.



Senator Pocock at the official opening of the new Winnunga Building

While a number of members of the Legislative Assembly, representing all three parties, attended the opening for which Julie was extremely pleased, Senator Pocock was the only ACT member of the Federal Parliament in attendance.

Since the opening Senator Pocock and his office have maintained contact with Winnunga. Senator Pocock most recently contacted Julie to seek her views on the major issues of concern to the ACT Aboriginal community including budget priorities.

Julie who has been CEO of Winnunga for 25 years said that Senator Pocock's request of her for her views on the budget and other priorities of the ACT Aboriginal community of Canberra was the first and only request she has received from an ACT federal parliamentary representative for her opinion on these matters.

Julie wishes to publicly thank Senator Pocock for his interest in and concern for the Aboriginal community of Canberra.



David Pocock (@DavidPocock)/Twitter

Family Matters Report 2022

The foreword to the latest Family Matters Report, prepared by SNAICC -National Voice for our Children, contains the following lament:

‘Target 12 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031. It is deeply distressing that this target remains significantly off track. This policy failure undermines our children’s wellbeing and life outcomes across all domains, including health, education, employment, contact with the justice systems and social and emotional wellbeing.’

The report further notes: ‘After more than two years of the National Agreement’s existence, it is clear that limited progress has been made to redress over-representation and the drivers of child protection intervention. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be separated from their families, communities and cultures at devastatingly high rates. There were 22,243 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care: one in every 15.2 - as at 30 June 2021, making our children 10.4 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children.’ An over-representation that has increased consistently over the last ten years, including in the ACT.

The ACT is also identified in the Report as the jurisdiction with the lowest level of funding of intensive family support services (IFSS) in Australia. These services provide time-limited, typically in-home, intensive casework supports aimed at addressing the complex needs of families experiencing vulnerabilities. Jurisdictional rate ratios of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing IFSS in 2020-21, compared to non-Indigenous children, ranged from 6.64 in Victoria to 24.5 in the ACT.

The report notes, concerningly, that the ACT has amongst the lowest levels of investment per child in intensive family support services in Australia at \$68.14 compared for instance with Victoria and Queensland which invest in intensive family support services to the tune of \$136.01 and \$106.24 per child respectively. The report also notes, with concern, that proportionate expenditure on family support and intensive family support services decreased in the ACT from 12.3 % in 2019-20 to 10.7% in 2020-21.

SNAICC has incorporated into the report the most recent data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

The AEDC measures children’s development at the time they commence full-time schooling across five domains: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge. In short, the results of the 2021 AEDC show increased developmental vulnerability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children since 2018.

‘...the ACT has amongst the lowest levels of investment per child in intensive family support services in Australia...’

Fact: Intensive family support services decreased in the ACT from 12.3 % in 2019-20 to 10.7% in 2020-21.

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

Family Matters Report 2022 (cont'd)

Stunningly the report also reveals, shamefully, on page 49, that the ACT has suffered by far the largest increase in development vulnerability in Australia with the proportion of Aboriginal children in Canberra on track against all five domains of the AEDC declining from just over 80% in 2009 (the highest in Australia) to under 60% in 2021 (the third lowest, in Australia). This is an issue that surely demands an urgent, full and independent examination.

The Family Matters Report contains a brief summary of the views of relevant Aboriginal community controlled peak bodies and organisations about the progress or otherwise being achieved in their respective State or Territory in addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the care and protection system.

Following are the views of the Aboriginal community of Canberra about the performance of the ACT Government in this regard.

Building Block 1. All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive. 'The ACT Government has not invested adequately in universal services through either sufficient funding to existing community-controlled health or family service providers or development of new ACCO's. The community and ACCO's have been calling for increased funding for ACCO's to meet current demand and expanding service offerings.'

Building Block 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children. 'ACCO's continue to support the full implementation of the full complement of the Our Booris, Our Way review recommendations, including the case management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to ACCO's.

The sector continues to call for further investment in existing and new ACCO's to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and families have access to services that meet their needs in culturally appropriate ways. This needs to be delivered alongside an increased role for ACCO's in case management and family led decision making that is respected and acknowledged by Children and Youth Services. Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making needs to be independent of the Directorate and be delivered by ACCO's.'

Building Block 3. Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive. 'The ACT community continues to be alarmed by the lack of culturally safe and responsive practice from CYPs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to experience racism and discrimination at all points of the child protection system. Levels of training for staff are inadequate and are not resulting in culturally safe practices.

ACCOs and community members engaged with SNAICC in consultations on legislative reform to embed the Aboriginal Child protection Principles. ACCOs and community members expressed significant concerns that the recommendations from SNAICC will not be followed through on in changes to the legislation or in implementation.

Current practice for identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is extremely poor. Families are not being properly engaged in conversations about identity. This is resulting in children's identity being ignored or inaccurately recorded. This is reflected in low rates of placement of Aboriginal children with

Family Matters Report 2022 (cont'd)

Aboriginal kinship carers.'

Other/overall comment.

'The Aboriginal community continues to call for the implementation of all of the Our Booris, Our Way Review recommendations. The progress that has been made is welcome but is happening too slowly and the experience of children and families interacting with the child protection system continue to be unsafe and racially discriminatory.'

Complementing the views expressed above by relevant ACT Aboriginal community organisations and members, SNAICC has provided its analysis of the ACT Government compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child protection Principles. This is some of what it has to say.

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT were 13.8 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care. This is well above the national rate of 11.5 times. Of the children in out-of-home care, 48.5% have been in care for five years or more. This is an unacceptable rate of overrepresentation that must be addressed. In addition, the proportion of child protection funding provided to culturally safe prevention services was minimal compared to the need. The ACT's spending on family support and intensive family support services comprised 10.73 % of total funding spent on child protection in 2020-21. This is a decrease from 12% during the last reporting period 2019-20 and well below the national average of 16.9%.'

'Given Aboriginal children are significantly overrepresented in the child protection system in the ACT it is essential that ACCO's are provided with the necessary funding and autonomy to meet the needs of families and carry out work across the child protection spectrum.'

'ACCO's have not been funded and empowered to find, assess, recruit and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island kinship carers. Due to the very low rate of placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, ACCO's must be supported to carry out this work.'

'Community leaders have reported that the information being included in cultural plans is tokenistic and the plans are not fit for purpose.'

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga said that while she acknowledges there are glimmers of hope that the ACT Government's response to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in touch with the care and protection system are receiving some attention, this latest Family Matters report has once again revealed that little to no progress has been achieved to date and the issues are neither receiving the necessary funding or priority which they demand.

With the best will in the world it is simply not possible to characterize the findings and conclusions in relation to the care and protection of Aboriginal children in Canberra, detailed by SNAICC in this report, as reflecting anything other than a resounding and depressing failure.

Fact: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT were 13.8 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care.

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

'...the Commonwealth has the power, at least in the ACT and the NT to assert its 'radical title' to land even when to do so is inconsistent with native title rights.'

Territory Rights - The Job Is Not Finished

Regardless of one's personal views about euthanasia it is pleasing that the historic wrong which has denied residents of the ACT and the NT the same rights which residents of the States have, to legislate on the issue, has been righted. There do remain, however, other issues in respect of which residents of the Territories continue to suffer discrimination.

One such issue, as reported by the Koori News, is at the heart of legal action initiated by former Australian of the Year and Aboriginal hero Galarrwuy Yunupingu against the Australian Government.

Galarrwuy, who is acting on behalf of his people, the Gumatj Clan, is claiming \$700million in compensation in response to the establishment with Commonwealth approval, in the 1960's, of a mine on the Gove Peninsula, which the Gumatj Clan asserts breaches native title and was forced on the local Yolngu people against their wishes.



Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM

Photo source:

www.referendumcouncil.org.au

The Commonwealth has responded to the claim by asserting, in court, that the Commonwealth has the power, at least in the ACT and the NT to assert its 'radical title' to land even when to do so is inconsistent with native title rights.

Counsel for the Commonwealth has insisted that in the ACT or the NT if native title rights and radical rights are inconsistent, the Commonwealth can withdraw its recognition of native title.

'Radical Title' is a not so quaint legacy of the colonisation of Australia by Britain. It is a feature of English common law which propounded that when British sovereignty was proclaimed over 'colonies' English law was presumed to be a right of British subjects who settled in such 'colonies'. The argument apparently advanced on behalf of the Commonwealth in the case initiated by Galarrwuy Yunupingu appears to be suggesting that the Commonwealth retains radical title to land in the NT and the ACT and hence the right to extinguish native title.

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga says that while she hopes that is not the position which the Commonwealth has adopted in this case she believes the issue needs to be put beyond doubt and is calling on each of the ACT's Federal representatives in Parliament to pursue the abolition of any such law, with the passion and energy with which they fought for repeal of the constraint on the right to legislate in respect of euthanasia.

ACT Drags The Chain On Treaty

A review of progress in treaty negotiations in jurisdictions across Australia reveals just how low a priority the issue appears to be for the ACT Government.

While acknowledging that a first effort at consultation with the ACT Aboriginal community has been attempted, it apparently created such division and discord within the community that it was abandoned following an embarrassing apology from the Government for its ineptitude.

The situation in Victoria is starkly different, accepting of course that Victoria has a genuinely progressive government. Treaty talks in Victoria are well advanced with the Victorian Government having agreed in consultation with all Aboriginal representative groups and the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria that there will be a state wide treaty as well as individual treaties with each Traditional Owners group in the state.

The Victorian Government has backed its commitment to the treaty process by providing \$65 million over three years for a self-determination fund to assist traditional owners to prepare for treaty talks. The 2022 Victorian state budget also included \$151.4 million to advance the treaty process, with a further \$60.5 million to establish an independent treaty authority.

Notably Victoria has also enacted the truth and treaty elements of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart and has in addition established a truth-telling inquiry known as the Yoorook Justice Commission, which is currently holding public hearings.

Treaty negotiations are also being advanced in Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia.

'The situation in Victoria is starkly different, accepting of course that Victoria has a genuinely progressive government.'

Care Packs Donation

On 21 December 2022, Laura from 'Every Little Bit Helps' (ELBH) together with her sister Christina delivered some very welcomed toiletry packs for Winnunga clients.

Laura is the Canberra volunteer coordinator of the charity organisation ELBH who create care packs for people in need that are made up of donated hotel/travel toiletries.



Christina and Laura at Winnunga

A big thank you to ELBH for this kind donation!

For more information about ELBH please go to: <https://www.elbh.org.au/>

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

Winnunga ANFPP Update

ANFPP had a very successful Christmas lunch for our mums, bubs and their families! Everyone enjoyed the sunny afternoon, with lots of yummy food consumed. The bubs socialized together and generally 'ran amuck', blowing bubbles, gardening and stuffing their beautiful little faces full of food. It was lovely to see the mums and families enjoying each other's company and chilling out together. A big thank you to the Social Health Team for donating Xmas food hampers, puddings and \$100 gift vouchers for each of our clients. It was a lovely surprise for our families. ANFPP team gifted bubs with a cuddly toy and book and mums were gifted with a Nutrimerics bag! Thank you all for your continued support .

THE ANFPP TEAM

Saara Habil – Nurse Supervisor. I'm from England & have been a nurse for 26 years, working with children & their families & adults. I have three busy boisterous children. I love living in Australia & meeting people finding out about them. Parenting is a tough gig & constantly changes! I think I have a handle on it, then it all changes. I'm keen to help others be the best parents they can be.

Mary Mahina – Nurse Home Visitor. Firstly, extremely grateful to have worked with you all for the 16 months I've been here – still fresh, still learning and loving it! I was born in Auckland, NZ and my background is Tongan. Moved to Australia when I was 4 years old and have been living here ever since. I'm the eldest of 9 siblings, aunty to two beautiful nieces and a nephew. Finally, a proud mother to my not so little, beautiful boy. Grateful to be a part of the ANFPP team and providing a service that I am very passionate about to our first-time mums. I look forward to continuing work with you all in providing the best care and support possible for our community!



*ANFPP Nurse Supervisor Saara and
Nurse Home Visitor Mary*

We are recruiting for a range of ANPP roles, for more information please visit www.winnunga.org.au

ANFPP are starting small yarnning groups to cover topics Mums have indicated they want to yarn about. We hope to create a space for women to share stories, learn from each other and continue our growth on this journey we call – Motherhood!

The ANFPP team plan on scheduling group activities, which will run every second month at Winnunga. If you have any topics/activities of interest, we would love to hear from you!

ACTIVITY DATE & TIME

- * Self Care: Friday 17 Feb 2023 @ 11am to 12pm
- * Nutrition: Friday 14 April 2022 @ 11 am to 12pm
- * Connecting with my bub: Friday 16 June 2023 @ 11am to 12pm

Do contact us via the below details if you're interested in joining and/or have any activities you'd like to share.

Saara Habil: Phone: 02) 6284 6222 Email: saarah@winnunga.org.au

Mary Mahina: Phone: 02) 6284 6222 Email: marym@winnunga.org.au

Fact: the Winnunga ANFPP Team provided 36 clients with 327 occasions of service in 2021-2022.

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

'Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga said she applauded the new policy of openness which the AMC has adopted...'

Daily Mail Granted Access To AMC

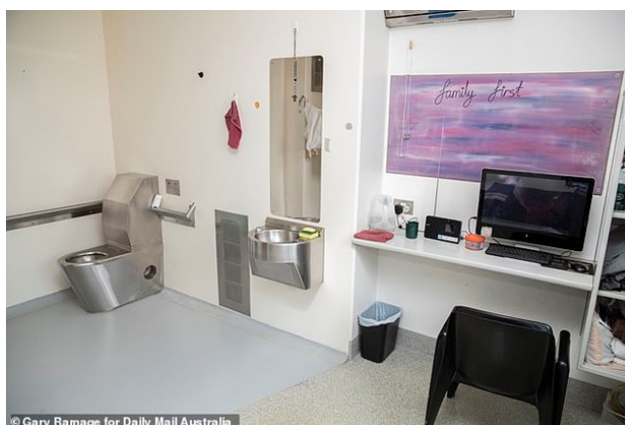
In what appears to be a significant departure from long standing practice AMC management has granted access to the AMC to a reporter and cameraman from the Daily Mail newspaper.

The 15 page article reporting on the visit, which was written by journalist David Southwell, was published on 16 January and includes interviews with prison officers and detainees and incorporates more than a dozen photographs from inside the prison.

Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga said she applauded the new policy of openness which the AMC has adopted and she will, she said, be formally applying for similar access to be granted to the Winnunga News. Julie said she is also urging other ACT newspapers and journals, such as the Canberra Times and the Canberra City News, to emulate the Daily Mail and apply for similar right of access to the AMC.

The Daily Mail interviews with both prison officers and detainees offer a unique insight into the operation and management of the AMC and raise perhaps far more issues of interest and concern than they resolve.

The article can be found at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11530649/Inside-Australias-wokest-jail-Canberras-Alexander-Maconochie-Centre.html>



Fact: In 2011 an Aboriginal person in Canberra was 11.6 times more likely to be imprisoned than a non-Aboriginal person while the national average was 14.4 whereas in 2021 an Aboriginal person in the ACT was 21 times more likely to be imprisoned while the national average was 15.8.

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

What Contributes To Prisoners Re-offending?

'The circumstances which result in the return to prison are often too complex to simply refer to as re-offending, or to parole violations as 'choices'.'

The below article is written by an inmate in the AMC.

Despite common rhetoric, the overwhelming majority of prisoners hate and fear prison and would do all that they can to not return. The circumstances which result in the return to prison are often too complex to simply refer to as re-offending, or to parole violations as 'choices'. There was a time where it would have been tough to convince me that engaging in crime wasn't a choice and I can certainly understand that many others are similarly skeptical. After 11 years of prison, I feel like I can put the majority of re-offending down to mental health, addiction, and what I would broadly term a lack of opportunity. The first two are self explanatory but when I speak of opportunity I'm being intentionally broad as I feel that this is what is misunderstood when re-offending or the return to prison is considered by those removed from the prison experience.

A lack of opportunity can mean different things to different prisoners. For example, a prisoner might not have had the opportunity to be raised in a loving family that valued education or employment or the rules that govern society, instead being almost solely exposed to pro-criminal influences. These men and women have a real uphill battle as the prison environment is commonly (not always) one that doesn't value education or employment (see the 2022 Healthy Prison Review for their breakdown on education and employment in the AMC). Additionally, staff attitudes, and prison policies and practices that serve to enforce and reinforce the inherent worthlessness and dangerousness of the prisoner couples with the pro-criminal mentality of some to ensure that a prisoner is more likely to be released with less prosocial attitudes than they entered with. For others, the lack of opportunity could be more practical in nature. A long term prisoner could be released without the opportunity to have learnt how to use a mobile phone or the internet. They may simply never have applied for or held a job, driven a car, or engaged in many of the everyday activities that many take for granted. Many of these prisoners find the outside world too much to handle all at once and instead find solace in the familiar (for example; crime, drugs, or criminal peers).

Another example is those whose lack of opportunity stems from the practical difficulties of returning to the community, even after only a short period in prison. The reality of re-entry for many is that they are given half a Centrelink payment and somehow expected to find a job, transport, housing, and purchase all the necessities of life from that couple of hundred dollars. It's not realistic but it's the current norm across Australia. For those without family support, the expectation that these people are able to abstain from crime is unrealistic.

I've oversimplified much of the above but I wanted to explain why despite a pitiful program capacity the Transitional Release Program (TRP) and the Transitional Release

Fact: ACT Aboriginal peoples are locked up at the highest rate in Australia, at a rate 21 times higher than that of non-Indigenous peoples, and have by far the worst recidivism rate at 94%.

If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

What Contributes To Prisoners Re-offending?

(cont'd)

Centre (TRC) hold such importance to prisoners as this is seen as the only way that many have an opportunity to at least partially address the lack of 'opportunity' I've just raised.

There is plenty going on with the TRP that requires attention, much of which would likely be resolved by providing some training and education to staff regarding why reintegration programs exist, what their goals are, and the benefits to the community of doing this properly. Clearly some staff resent the rehabilitative opportunities that are being presented to the few prisoners given access to the TRP, made clear by the way those who access the program are treated. My position on staff culture remains the same as always. That is, a punitive system will continue to attract and retain punitive staff. Adopting an approach which emphasises rehabilitation and community safety will likely result in those who thrive on power and punishment no longer finding the AMC environment so appealing. The hope then is that the right people with the right attitudes can be retained. I believe that the starting point for this is good policy. Unfortunately, there is a real uphill battle just to get staff to follow policy here but as I said, it's the starting point.

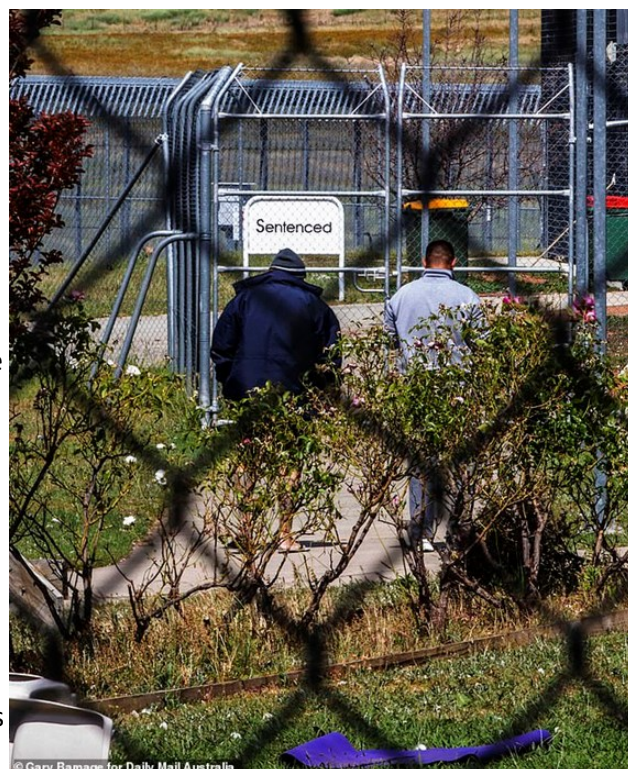
Regarding policy, a prisoner who was recently removed from the TRP is aware of this page and some of those who read it and has asked me to pose a question to readers: *Could you do your job if you were not permitted to operate a vehicle, use a phone, use a computer, access the internet, leave a predetermined worksite without two weeks' notice, or serve alcohol?*

Each of these are restrictions (among others) that have been placed on the work release scheme here in the ACT. I can imagine that for those who asked themselves the question, the answer was no, they couldn't do their job under these restrictions (I know I wouldn't be able to do any job I've ever held).

The prisoners I have spoken to who have experienced the TRP are all of the same opinion; that these restrictions exist to make employment in any meaningful role impossible. They are seen as existing only to ensure that prisoners not only have difficulty in finding a job, but that any job found is as menial as possible, providing little real-world skills and unsuitable for the continuation of employment upon release (as should be the goal).

Though the intention of these schemes is to put prisoners in work prior to their release, it seems that these restrictions have been designed to do the opposite.

Personally, I can't think of a single potential job in my future that would meet these restrictions. As with many areas of ACTCS policy and practice, there doesn't seem to be any real justification for the majority of these restrictions. What possible risk could using a phone pose?



© Gary Ramage for Daily Mail Australia

What Contributes To Prisoners Re-offending? (cont'd)

'ACTCS needs to stop thinking of this TRC as just another unit in the prison and the TRP as a privilege to be actively hindered at every turn.'

In fact, given that these are prisoners on leave, wouldn't it make more sense that they be required to have a phone on them at all times? I know if I was managing a program such as the TRP, I would want a direct line to prisoners (and them to me) at all times that they were off site. No internet? Again, what could the risk be? Yes, there are legitimate concerns about unmonitored internet access in a custodial environment but for those working in the community it simply makes no sense and only serves to add another barrier to employment and reintegration.

The technical divide between released prisoners and the general public has been well established as has the disadvantage this places on those trying to reintegrate. The TRP is an opportunity to address this issue with none of the risks that justify technology restrictions in prison and yet these restrictions are unjustifiably maintained. Why? Again, these seem to be artificial barriers that exist only to hinder the reintegration process, not facilitate it.

Not leaving a worksite renders any trade or construction style role off limits especially given that this rule then applies to your workmates as the prisoner must remain with their "sponsor" at all times. Not serving alcohol rules out much of the hospitality industry, an area likely to be suitable for many of the formerly incarcerated.

The sole goal of transitional release is to assist a prisoner transitioning to release (hence the name) and this needs to be kept in mind at all times if the TRP is to become meaningful. ACTCS needs to stop thinking of this TRC as just another unit in the prison and the TRP as a privilege to be actively hindered at every turn. Remove the unnecessary barriers and permit prisoners to access a reintegration program that is as normalised as possible so that, as always, the entire community can benefit from a reduction in re-offending.



Koori Mail - New Winnunga Facility Opens

Koori Mail, 25 January 2023

New Winnunga facility opens



AFTER a decades-long campaign, a new purpose built health facility has finally opened at Narrabundah. Staff and the local community celebrated the official opening after staying strong in their fight for the Aboriginal community of Canberra to have a health facility equal in design, appearance and utility as other Canberra health centres.

Named Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services (WNAHCS), the new facility takes its name from the Wiradjuri language, in which Winnunga Nimmityjah means strong health.

Winnunga chief executive Julie Tongs acknowledged the support of partners JUDD Studios, SAFM Solutions, RLB and Built in the design and construction process which, she said "has resulted in a building which is fit for purpose, and a place that we can with justifiable pride call our own."

The official opening included a Welcome to Country delivered by Ngambri Elder Dr Matilda House



Winnunga chair Craig Ritchie, Alana Harris, Winnunga deputy chair Romlie Mokak, Winnunga patron Lynette Goodwin, Winnunga director Aunty Matilda House, Winnunga chief executive Julie Tongs and Senator Patrick Dodson. Picture: Geoff Bagnall.

and Paul Girrawah House, with speeches by Senator Patrick Dodson, Winnunga board chair Craig Ritchie, Julie Tongs and ACT Minister for Health Rachel Stephen-Smith.

The new Winnunga Nimmityjah

Aboriginal Health and Community Services health facility will provide a culturally safe, holistic health care service for thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and surrounding regions.

COVID-19 Update (cont'd)

Please come in to Winnunga for your vaccination or call reception on (02) 6284 6222 to book in.

If you are unsure about getting vaccinated, we encourage you to discuss this with one of our healthcare workers.

For the latest advice and updates from the Department of Health, visit:
<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>

Winnunga Respiratory Clinic

The Respiratory Clinic is located in the old Winnunga building and does PCR testing for COVID-19. Anyone who has a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell should go directly to this entrance. If you require testing because of recent exposure to COVID-19, please also go directly to the Respiratory Clinic.

Temperature, symptom and exposure screening is in place for all clients presenting to the main Winnunga entrance and you will be redirected to the Respiratory Clinic if you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID.

Attending Winnunga and telephone consultations

Please maintain social distancing while attending Winnunga. Please do not gather in groups while waiting for services. Please use the hand sanitiser provided before entering the clinic, while waiting in the clinic and on your way out. You will also be required to wear a surgical mask while visiting Winnunga.

If you cannot attend Winnunga in person our doctors can do telephone consultations. To organise a telephone consultation call Winnunga on 6284 6222.

Rapid Antigen Tests

Winnunga is providing rapid antigen tests (RATs) to eligible Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients

Winnunga can provide Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients and families with rapid antigen tests if you are having difficulty accessing them.

If you have a positive RAT test at home please notify Winnunga nurses by calling 6284 6222. You may be eligible for antiviral treatments, which must be given in the first 5 days. This is particularly important for people who are immunocompromised, have chronic conditions or are not fully vaccinated.

Positive RATs must also be reported to ACT Health using the online reporting form:

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/rapid-antigen-test-rat-positive-result-registration-form>



If You Are Not Part Of The Solution You Are Part Of The Problem

Staff Profile



Name: Apurba Sharma Paudyal

Position: Human Resource Officer

Where are you from?

I come from the land of Himalayas and Mt Everest; Nepal.

Who is your favourite singer/band?

The Beatles.

What is your favourite song?

My heart will go on (Titanic).



What do you do on the weekends?

Window shopping and mostly go on drives.

What is your favourite food?

Italian.

What do you like most about working at Winnunga?

Community focused culture and staff given opportunities to engage in the community.

My Favourite pet?

Budgies.

What is your pet hate?

Comparisons between people, as everyone is unique on their own.

