

Association of Participating Service Users (APSU)

APSU believes that individuals who use alcohol and other drug treatment services are the reason the system exists; their needs, strengths and expertise should drive the system. APSU is run by and for people who use or have used services.

We invite you to join us in having a say. We need your help to give us all a fair go. If you would like to become a member, (at no cost), please fill out the form below.

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- Receive the quarterly FLIPSIDE newsletter
- Be sent information about how to become involved.

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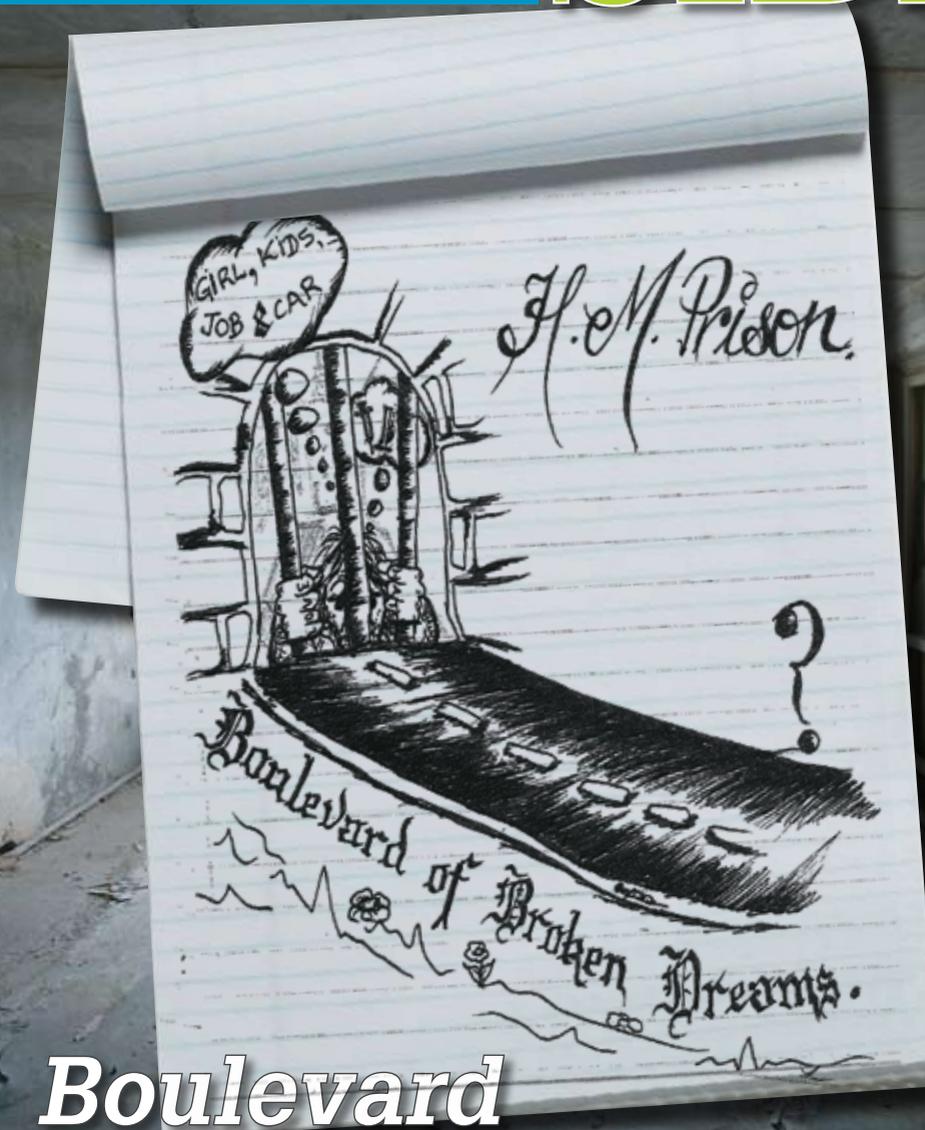
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Mail to:
The Association of Participating Service Users,
140 Grange Road, Carnegie 3163.

FLIP SUMMER NEWSLETTER SIDE

The Association of Participating Service Users



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Check out our new website
at www.sharc.org.au
and click on APSU

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DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in the articles contained in the Newsletter do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of APSU.

Please send any articles you would like to see in Flipside via EMAIL to apsu@sharc.org.au or by post to 140 Grange Road, Carnegie Victoria 3163. Telephone: 9573 1736 ABN: 18052525948

Boulevard of Broken Dreams

MY NAME IS JOHN T. THIS DRAWING (COVER) SHOWS ME MANY TIMES OVER, WHILE I WAS IN PRISON. I HAD THE PLANS OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD, OF GETTING BACK WITH MY GIRL, OF GETTING A JOB, SOME KIDS HAPPENING, AND SETTling DOWN, AWAY FORM MY PAST LIFESTYLE. I MADE THIS PLAN ON SOLID GROUND, SIX WEEKS BEFORE GETTING OUT.

I wanted so much to achieve my goals but was obsessed with having one big taste first off, and catching up with my ol' mates. If I couldn't get a job I would just have to do one good earn, and if it was a well paid earn I'd get that property in the country with a long driveway, kids at school, crop growing, sell speed during the day.

Of course I never did fulfill those goals. Ninety-nine percent of the time I'd end up with a habit on speed, my drug of choice. I never let myself come down. I needed to use to feel normal. Occasionally money was good and drugs full on, but eventually I had neither and it was society's fault and everyone else's, until I had my next hit and then all was ok again.

My girl usually pissed me off and at that point of time I was glad, as then I was able to use more. I ended up in prison again with a few bails and no chance of another bail. I was getting my shit together this time. Three meals a day, weights from 3-6 days a week. I'm gonna do it this time. The crims that were doing years for banks drugs and murder, I looked up to. Until I got 7 1/2 years for armed robbery.

Before this sentence eventuated, I was at a point that I was sick of the prison bullshit and I heard about some mates going for a section 13 drug rehab shit, instead of jail. My head said all right, that'll give me more time to use. At that time, back in early 1980, I had to go to an NA meeting once a week and do three

urines. I used to get myself to do the urines, go to a meeting and all I thought about was the next hit. Nothing else mattered. Crime and the next hit was all that filled my day. Prison saved my life, but the shock of nothing in my system upon entering back into prison shocked the system. Largactil shuffle eased the pain and me into a psychiatric division as I was hearing ants fart, I was off my head.

Due to situations re court I often ended up in detoxes, rehabs and NA meetings. At meetings I heard similar stuff to what I had gone through, or where I was at. People who used like me were living similar lives away from using that I had always planned to do on my six week plan before getting out of prison and they reckoned they weren't using. I thought these people are full of bullshit, they've got onto a good rort, kicked some goals, got someone else selling the gear for them, bringing the money in, having a part-time job to cover their arse. But there was something there and some people I knew from jail or at dealers who hadn't been there for a while and who told me to keep coming back and weren't trying to get anything out of me. I wanted to know what this was all about.

Over the years I did keep coming back and there was a bunch of addicts talking about how their lives had changed, doing some of the stuff I always planned to do before getting out of jail. As a result of doing what these addicts were doing, not using drugs, my life has turned around. I got the partner, two sons who are now eight and seven years old. The partner has gone and I've been a sole parent for nearly seven years. Been out of prison for over ten years. I haven't been clean all that time but for most of it. I always kept going back to the fellowship of drug addicts who have a desire not to use. Weird, it kept getting me clean. I always thought that drug addicts did one thing – use. It feels good not to anymore.

To whoever out there that reads this, there is always hope that all will be better, no matter what's going on.

John T

GRAFTON

Sometime in 1972 (I was 19), I made the mistake of getting busted breaking into a doctors surgery at Coffs Harbor. The mistake was more than getting busted (which was never one of my favourite events, especially waking up in the cells the following morning), but in getting busted up the NSW north coast in the early '70s.

The reason this was such a big mistake was called Grafton Goal. I had heard of Grafton's reputation as the intractable prison and the torture inflicted on the "tracks" prisoners, and this is where you go on remand on the north coast.

After a day or two in the cells a paddy wagon with a couple of us in it took us to Grafton. It was early afternoon and our arrival coincided with a couple of other deliveries of people on remand. We were directed to arrange ourselves in a line at the reception area, and were faced with a Crown who looked up from the paperwork and asked "Who's B.....?" (My surname), "Me sir" I replied in my most sheepish voice. "Druggie hey, we don't like druggies here" he said. A few big screws, well armed with batons, emerged and proceeded to give it to me fairly hard. When they seemed satisfied I was suitably chastised for being a "druggie" they shouldered arms for the next round. The next round proved to be every other one of the new arrivals lined up with me; I was simply the warm-up.

I had been in a few NSW prisons (in the early '70s these weren't much different to what they would have been in the 1800s when they were built) before arriving here, but this was something else. Firstly there was a machine gun turret on a central tower, armed and manned. We were instructed not to ever look up at it, to look at the ground whenever the "tracks" were being moved. In fact I learned quickly not to look at anything or a baton would come from behind. Every inch outside of

the wings had overhead bars; it really felt like a cage.

The evening "bar check" remains one of my fondest memories of the place. Every afternoon, soon after lock up, a crew of about 3 screws supervised by a Crown would come into each cell to check the window bars by hitting them with a hammer. The game was that the occupants of the cell (me and my cellmate in this case. I can't remember his name or face but I can sure remember him and me in this game) would face the wall, noses about an inch from the stone, and the screw would either hit one or both of us on the back of the head with the hammer as he went past. The alternative form of the game was our faces would be pushed into the wall.

The purpose of the game was to see if one of us cracked under the pressure of anticipation (head or face, hammer or push, coming in or leaving, me or my mate?). One afternoon it happened. My cell mate bolted from our cell into the wing and into the

welcoming arms of the Crown. As I watched him getting the shit belted out of him (from the corner of my eye), I felt a debt of gratitude. That time I got neither the hammer nor the push.

Next trip to court I got bailed, returned to being a druggie in the safety of the city, and spent the next 4 or 5 years in prisons other than Grafton. I collected many stories of Grafton over this time, some from those with direct experience and the scars to prove it. Royal commissions and other enquiries since then have somewhat exposed the torture and inhumanity of Grafton goal in that era. There are disturbing parallels with what I'm reading about the imprisonment of people like David Hicks now. Not many of us were wrongly imprisoned in the first place, but over 30 years later I'm still recovering from some of the experiences I had.

David

Luke's Story

IT WAS EASTER IN 1997 WHILE DRIVING TO VISIT MY MOTHER; I WAS PULLED OVER FOR A RANDOM BREATH TEST WHICH I PASSED. THE COPS, WHO WERE LOCAL, KNEW ME AND DID A WARRANT CHECK AND EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OUTSTANDING WARRANTS, I WAS CUFFED AND TOLD THAT THE LOCAL CIB WANTED TO QUESTION ME.

I was taken back to the Morwell Police Station, was questioned by the CIB and was charged with an aggravated burglary that had happened about 15 minutes before I was arrested. I saw a magistrate and was refused bail because of my previous convictions. I was sent back to the cells in Morwell.

While I was in the cells in Morwell, I was given my methadone and my epilepsy medication. However I was later taken to the Melbourne Custodial Centre. Whilst being processed, I brought up the situation with my medication and asked them to look in my property bag which had all my tablets, a letter from a doctor indicating that it was medically dangerous for me to be without the medications. The police laughed and threw the doctors letter in the bin saying "You won't be getting that here, you can see the nurse tonight". Hours later I did see the nurse, who gave me the paperwork to try to get my methadone. (The methadone was never given to me). The nurse gave me two panadol and sent me back to the cells, without the medication for epilepsy

and without methadone. By this time I'd been without any medication for about 24 hours.

I was already in a bad way when I saw the nurse. Shaking, sweating, nauseated and unable to eat.

I was in a cell with three other guys. Later that night I apparently had a seizure and was removed to a 'padded' cell by myself. I woke up alone in the cell not knowing what had happened. I banged down the door and was told I'd had a seizure and that a nurse was coming to see me. Hours later the nurse came. They opened the cell door, he looked in, we talked briefly and then they all left. He didn't examine me nor give me any medication. I think he reported to the police that I was just in withdrawal.

The police then tried to take me back to the first cell with the others. I was naked, my clothes had been removed, and I was shaking violently, felt like I had an axe in my head (a leftover from the seizure) and was scared. I refused to go back to the common cell without first getting some proper medical attention.

For this I was beaten with small and large batons and had mace sprayed at me, there were about six officers involved. I was then put back in the padded cell.

I was left naked in the padded cell for about a week. Over this time I was without blankets, given water infrequently and had nothing to eat. I continued to have seizures, and was unconscious some of the time. I experienced severe nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. There was no toilet; the only facility for this was a small drain hole in the corner. Sometimes there was blood in my vomit. By this time I was wishing I was dead.

At one stage, a police officer with a lot of brass on his shoulders came to visit and I asked for his help. He said after what I'd put his officers through he wasn't going to help me but that if I pulled my head in and stopped disturbing the rest of the place with all my vomiting that I might get my methadone that night. At about eleven that night (the police told me what time it was); they came to get me to receive my methadone from the nurse's station. They threw me a blanket and told me to cover myself as there were female officers around. On the way to the nurse's station I noticed the board (which has all the prisoner's detail's on) didn't have my name on it. It had been rubbed off. (Later I found out that my family, solicitor and barrister had been trying to locate me but 'the system' claimed not to have me anywhere). The nurse got me to sign for the methadone then, after going in to look for the dose, came and told me it couldn't be found. I was taken back to the padded cell without any methadone.

Back in the cell, I felt defeated; I was hoping that they would just come in and shoot me. Eventually they came for me to transfer me to the MAP. They taunted me about the condition of the cell, saying I was an animal and made me clean it despite still being in a terrible physical condition. I did, as I knew I wouldn't get to go anywhere until I did.

I was transferred to the MAP where I received medical attention. It took me months to get over the physical effects of what had happened. I'm still, nearly ten years later, recovering from the emotional effects.

I spent seven months on remand, after which time the aggravated burglary charges were dropped.

Luke

LEFT BEHIND

MY ARTICLE WAS INITIALLY GOING TO BE ON KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AND AS IMPORTANT AN ISSUE KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS IS, QUITE FRANKLY I'M LOST FOR WORDS... YES AS SHOCKING AS THAT MAY SEEM TO THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW ME!

Anyway I do want to touch base on the prison aspect of this issue. No, I've never been to jail for longer than 12 hours so I'm not going to write how jail life is because I wouldn't have a clue. I do however know exactly what it's like to be on the receiving end of losing the person you love to prison and in true form, it's a shit go.

Waking up every morning and for a split second not realizing that they're gone, perhaps they woke up before me, oh no, wait, they're in the fucking Map... people who go to jail I don't think ever quite realize just how awful it is for the one left behind and that's why I get so angry at people who say "oh it's just like going home." What about the home we created?

Then there is the one contact visit a week and you sit there the whole time biting your gums trying not to burst into tears. All you want to do is hold the person and never let go, but that's not allowed and you sit there spinning, 30 minutes is up and you see them getting taken away and they see the back of you bursting into tears... prison life is the lowest because it's not just you that's incarcerated for 2 years it's me too.

Three box visits a week and I'd turn up to every one, just to see your face and it slowly killed me. I can't touch you, smell you, feel your breath or hear your heart beat, I couldn't have you. Fuck prison; fuck what heroin does to people to have an end result like prison...

If you take but one thing away from this short memoir of mine let it be this... before you go out there and run hectic again, re-offend - call it what you will - try and remember the girl you leave behind.

Briony

'WITH HUMANITY and respect?'

Current Conditions in Victorian Police Cells

Over the years I have heard numerous tales of cruel and inhumane treatment of prisoners. Many were told to me directly from those who had these experiences; some were repeated to me second hand by my parents who, over many years have visited prisons as volunteers.

The worst stories I heard were of deliberate cruelty by prison guards, who after being given a little bit of power had become monsters. Other stories were about strip searches before visits, having the evening meal at 3.30pm or family being refused visits after rural train trips because of lost prison paperwork or misinformation. It seemed these stories were routine, just part of the system. No individuals were specifically to blame; it was the whole way that prisons and the justice system were set up.

Still more stories concerned the time prisoners spent in police cells. The stories were scary. People left to detox from alcohol and other drugs with no medical treatment. Requests to see doctors for other medical conditions refused at the whim of Police Officers. Having to go to the toilet in front of other prisoners. No drinking water, no medication, no change of clothes. Days or weeks in cells designed only to hold prisoners during the day. Being moved from one set of cells to another so that a prisoner would not appear to be in one place too long. I was horrified at these stories. I couldn't believe that those in authority would allow people to be treated so inhumanely let alone allow people experiencing severe medical conditions to be denied access to treatment, some at risk of dying. I must admit (and apologise for) thinking that some of these stories were untrue, uncommon or at least exaggerated.

Nevertheless I had heard enough stories to know that things just weren't right in Victorian police cells. Recently I decided to ask a few friends who I knew had been in jail what experiences they'd had in the cells. Without going out of my way, over the space of about a week, here are the stories I was told.

'J' has been in police cells numerous times and was always drunk or stoned on arrival. He was not seen by a doctor nor given his prescription medicine. Only ever saw a doctor once in the cells, that was when he was bashed by police and was only able to see a doctor after asking a lawyer to request it. J also told me of a fellow cellmate who had been hit by a police car at the scene of arrest. The cellmate was refused a doctor while in the cells and his broken leg was discovered two weeks later in prison.

'L' was not given his usual methadone or his epilepsy medication. When he asked for a doctor it was refused because the officers said he was 'bunging it on'. L was then left in opiate withdrawal in a police cell, stripped naked and left shivering without even a blanket after which he suffered an epileptic fit.

'R', in opiate withdrawal in an overcrowded cell, with no medication for her symptoms (including diarrhea) was forced to use the toilet frequently not only in front of other prisoners, but also in sight of officers and visitors.

'B' was waiting, locked in an interview room at a large police cell complex either before or after a visit. Needing to urinate he bashed on the door to attract a guard's attention. No one came. He urinated in the corner of the room and ashamedly apologized to the guard when he finally returned. The guards response was "Don't worry, it happens all the time".

'D' has been arrested for being drunk heaps of times, he never saw a doctor in the cells. He says he was loud and aggressive and was always in withdrawal. He did ask for a doctor on some occasions but was refused, probably because he was seen as a nuisance.

A handful of stories in a handful of days. I wondered what I'd find if I did some more research. The Ombudsman in 2002 and again in 2006 had done a thorough investigation of conditions in Police cells, the 'Report on the Conditions for Persons in Custody'. The stories were the same. These were not untrue or exaggerated or isolated stories of cruelty and inhumanity but a systemic failure to treat "all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for their inherent human dignity" (The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibility – Protection of Freedoms and Rights for Everyone in Victoria).

The Ombudsman reported that:

- 1 Cells were overcrowded, people were kept in cells much longer than the specified times and that people were transferred between police stations to decrease the timeframe on paper
- 2 Due to overcrowding, people were mixed inappropriately; drunks, young people, old people, sex offenders, convicted, remanded, those with a mental illness.
- 3 It is dangerous to keep drunks in cells even though this is done routinely
- 4 Indigenous persons are over represented in the cells just as they are in the prisons
- 5 Many cells are still physically unsatisfactory; hanging points, broken security cameras, damp or exposure to the elements, firetraps. The 'duress' buttons for emergencies often not working or ignored.
- 6 Access to basic amenities; concern about bedding and sleeping facilities, questionable quality of food, no access to drinking water in some cells, toilets that can be observed by other people in the cell and male and female officers.
- 7 Access to healthcare was often inadequate or absent; At least half of people in cells are on prescribed medication for conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, asthma, heart complaints, schizophrenia and opiate addiction. Few of these people get their medication and if they do, it is not kept for them when transferred to other cells or prison. Others go into withdrawal in the cells and are left untreated (for anyone unaware, this can sometimes be fatal, especially when due to

alcohol or benzodiazepines). It is left to (untrained) police to decide what to do when a person has health concerns, whether to call an ambulance, a doctor or nurse or simply ignore the request. Information available about specific risks to people in cells such as previous self harm attempts while in custody can be overlooked, at least once with fatal consequences. Access to mental health care whilst in a cell is severely lacking.

- 8 That nothing much had changed in the four years between reports despite numerous recommendations to Victoria Police

Australia is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Victoria has recently developed the Victorian Charter of Human Rights. All of these contracts contain comments on how people deprived of their liberty should be treated. The conditions in police cells are, in my opinion, breaches of the human rights contained in these documents. (I realise that Australia is no stranger to breaching such rights). The United Nations declares that a government not having the money to ensure these rights are upheld is no excuse! Victoria has legislation such as the Corrections Act, the Corrections Regulations and the Corrections (Police Goals) Regulations that also forbid such treatment of people. The Victoria Police Manual describes duty of care and the conditions for police cells; I was unable to easily obtain a copy.

So, we know these appalling conditions exist, we sign treaties and make laws against them and yet nothing much has changed. People are still mistreated, denied medical and mental health care and required to put up with undignified and inhumane practices. People still die. Some of these people are innocent. Most of these people have yet to be convicted. All of these people are someone's son, someone's daughter, someone's brother, sister, mother, father.

And at least one of them is my friend.

Miriam

Making a complaint against the police

The statistics on police complaints aren't great. Ordinary people facing criminal charges are found guilty around 70% of the time, but police are only found guilty of complaints about 10% of the time. Nearly all complaints against the police are handled by other police. Only really serious cases are handled by the independent Office of Police Integrity.

It is especially hard to make a successful complaint about stuff that happens in police stations – usually the only witnesses are police. Often police admit the allegations, but succeed in saying they were justified because the person making the complaint attacked them or resisted arrest.

If you want to complain about verbal abuse or rudeness, ask to speak to the Duty Inspector of the police district. They should keep a written record of your complaint, so ask them to take notes if they aren't. You can talk to the Duty Inspector at any time. The Duty Inspector has the power to dismiss the complaint if they think it is just trivial, for example if you say the police gave you a foul look.

If it is something more serious, like a bashing or theft by police, it is better to contact the Office of Police Integrity or Police Victoria Ethical Standards Department. You should also make sure that you see a doctor and have photographs taken of any injuries.

The best time to make a complaint really depends on whether you are facing charges or might face charges. If you haven't been charged with anything and you aren't likely to be, make the complaint to the Duty Inspector as soon as possible.

If you have been charged or the police have an option to charge you, maybe leave it for the time being. Sometimes when people make complaints, they end up having charges laid against them, or have extra charges made against them. Instead, it's really important to make a record of the event. Write it down or tape yourself, detailing everything you can – time, date, place, events, people, everything. If you write it down, sign it and date it, and get someone to witness your signature. If possible get down every detail on the police involved – name,

rank and badge number. Next, contact a lawyer. Once the smoke has cleared and you're out of trouble, make your complaint.

There is a chance that the police will harass you for making a complaint. Follow your gut feeling on this – if you reckon the local police might make life hard for you, complain directly to the Office of Police Integrity or the Police Victoria Ethical Standards Department. At least this way you can bypass the local police for a while.

The bottom line is, when you're making a statement, make sure it is really detailed and totally correct. This is the most important thing. If you give an oral statement and the written account is different from what you said, don't leave until the written account has been corrected. Hopefully if everybody does this, the odds of success will improve.

Stan Winford

Stan is a lawyer at Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS) which operates outreach clinics and street outreach in various locations in the City of Yarra and the City of Melbourne. In addition to casework, FLS undertakes law reform, advocacy and legal education for the alcohol and other drug sector.

Office of Police Integrity:

Level 3 South Tower, 459 Collins St, Melbourne 3000.
Tel: 8635 6188; toll free 1800 818 387
Fax: 8635 6185
Aboriginal Liaison Officer: 8635 6135

Police Victoria Ethical Standards Department

Level 1, Building A, World Trade Centre,
637 Flinders St, Melbourne 3005
24-hr tel: 9247 3374

Fitzroy Legal Service

124 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, Vic 3065
Tel: 9419 3744

SHIT HAPPENS

If you had been breakfasting on a sausage Mac muffin at the Keysborough Maccas one sunny winter's Wednesday in '96 and were looking out at the car park between 9.15 and 9.30 you might have been forgiven for thinking a cop show was being filmed.

A bronze '91 Falcon pulls in and parks. A minute later two dark unmarked cars, 'Starsky and Hutch' it into the car park, box in the Falcon and then it's all men in long black overcoats and guns and yelling and two guys getting dragged out of the Ford and being "proned" on the tarmac and cuffed with guns in their ears.

The guy on the driver's side, face pressed into the tarmac by a large knee, was me.

I had done a "geographical" to my mum's in Melbourne about a year before, running from an insane co-dependant relationship, the ACT's methadone program and a life progressively more unmanageable. After jumping off the 'done and having no good ideas about what to do next I decided to study. And there I was, a 30-something middle-class uni student living at his mum's and only using a few times a fortnight. Sure whenever I wasn't stoned I was drunk, but that wasn't a problem. I was doing well, hell, I didn't even have a habit.

Every Wednesday morning I would drive my mum's car around to Roger's place. Rog could score. One week I would get an Austudy payment, the next Rog would get his dole, and I would pick him up, we would go and meet a guy near Keysborough shopping centre, score a half

gram of smack and get stoned. On the weeks I paid I took some home and had a few more shots while Rog would sell some of his on so he could do it all again. It wasn't Al Pacino in Scarface, just two really low-level heroin users scoring a small amount once a week. Unfortunately Big Brother had been watching.

I was thrown into the back of one of the unmarked cars by three of what turned out to be Parkdale CIB's finest and we sped away. Apart from being savagely hung over and really annoyed we'd been grabbed before I got drugs into my arm, I was confused. I had managed to only have a few run-ins with the law, being a reasonably law-abiding, middle-class, "recreational" (mostly) kind of junkie, but I was getting a sort of overkill feeling about all this.

The feeling grew. The boys were adrenaline pumped, and during the trip to the station (after me establishing myself as a "smart-arse" at the start by asking that they put a seat-belt on me), the two non-driving officers encouraged my cooperation with a stream of verbal abuse and the occasional elbow to the solar plexus when my attention lapsed. When we arrived I was placed on a bench and listened to two other members of the team discuss how to safely remove the blood

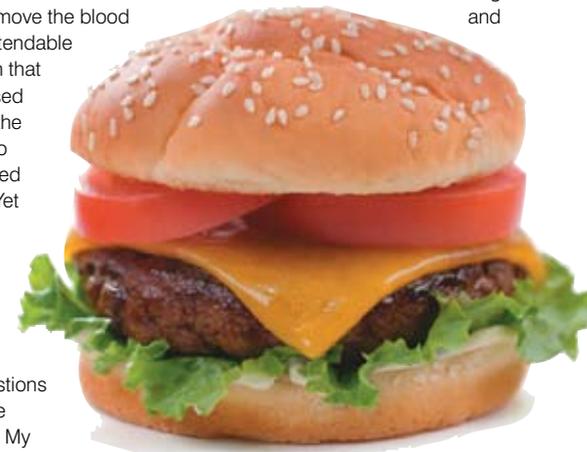
and from the extendable metal baton that they had used to "pacify" the "target" who had couriered the drugs. Yet another detective sat down next to me and started asking questions I didn't have answers to. My

lack of answers upset him. I volunteered that I was hepatitis C positive. This also upset him but he stopped hitting me in the face, confining himself instead to ribs and solar plexus.

After about ten minutes of this he made me lie on my back, hands cuffed beneath me on the floor in a room that was a kind of thoroughway between offices. A chair was thoughtfully placed above my head so I was not distracted from the many "accidental" kicks and treading ons by the many officers who had to pass over me. I couldn't see but I could hear and for the two to three hours I lay there I listened and thought a lot. Rog and I had been swept up in large scale drug operation following some weeks of surveillance. As we only scored together once a week we were obviously picking up large amounts of drugs and were in fact mid-level drug dealers ourselves. The overkill was starting to make sense.

By the time I was allowed off the floor and taken to an interview room I was a lot less confused, a bit sore and fairly annoyed. I understood what they had been doing: verbal and physical abuse, humiliation and powerlessness are long-established methods of

disorientating and



Family recollections

DURING THE HEADY HEROIN DAYS OF THE 90'S MY FAMILY COLLIDED WITH THE PENAL SYSTEM. HAVING NEVER HAD CONTACT WITH THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM BEFORE IT WAS A MINEFIELD TO NAVIGATE. THE DIFFICULTY WAS KEEPING THE WHOLE FAMILY FROM BEING SUCKED INTO A BATTLEFIELD AND FEELING LIKE THEY WERE CRIMINALS TOO.

Our family included three younger teenagers that had to deal with the barrage that occurred because of their older brothers addiction. An older sister moved to Sydney as she found it too stressful to deal with. My husband and I worked full time at keeping the family afloat.

It started with the police banging on the door, or worse shining their torches through our windows at 3am. Arrests at the devils hour of 3am were common and part of the course, the disruption to the family was huge. Could we leave the younger children traumatized and travel to the Fitzroy police station from Kew? One of us had to go leaving the rest of the family sleepless and scared.

Was it necessary to take statements at 3am? I don't know but it left us all befuddled the next day trying to resume normal life. For vulnerable teenage children who had committed no crime it left them feeling anxious and jittery not wanting to go to school the next day, the very worst outcome. Keeping a routine in the chaos became increasingly difficult.

Then came the calls from probation officers, it was obvious that reporting daily to a police station is an impossible task for someone with an addiction, so calls came frequently. Often our younger son answered the phone and was harassed and called a liar as he tried to explain it was not him but his brother, even more difficult if he had friends over. So of course they stopped bringing friends home, and became anxious if the phone rang. A knock on the door would send tremors around the whole house. This all resulted in unease and guilt amongst the whole family.

Then came the time in lock up at the Broadmeadows Police Station. Lock up was not a suitable place for someone who had to come down from addiction. The police aren't trained to deal with it, the cells were overcrowded mattresses across the floor.

softening subjects before interrogation, but even though the way I had been treated was laughably mild compared to stories of police interviews conducted with telephone books and suspects in custody "falling down stairs" that I'd heard while growing up (and thought urban myths), I naively thought such tactics were a thing of the distant past or even baseless exaggeration.

Even allowing for the police's probable disappointments (a tiny amount of drugs seized, their assumptions proven false) I don't know why they bothered. I couldn't imagine why anyone would be more likely to cooperate after being treated that way (I wonder about the quality of information coming out of Guantanamo Bay). I think I was more annoyed that they thought it would work on me than with what they actually did.

The interview process was long but mostly civilized. Any cooperation they got from me was in response to threats to impound my mother's car for forensic examination (worked heaps better than abuse), and they eventually accepted that I was a very minor player and basically knew very little about anything. I was charged with possession and use, even though I hadn't got stoned and it wasn't my dope (that time), and bailed to appear at a later date.

As I left the CIB boss looked me in the eye and asked if I had any complaints about the way I had been treated. It was 3 o'clock. I laughed.

And by the time it got to court I had a habit.

Andrew C

The sweats and vomiting and no change of clothes. Taking clothes to Broadmeadows everyday was no mean feat. The police were busy and not wanting to be nurse maids having to stand around watching young offenders change out of their dirty clothes.

My son had also thrown a fit in the lock up and I was very concerned. I rang around and found there was a person in charge of moving people from the lock up police system to the penal system. I rang him every day until they moved him to better equipped facilities at the MAP. We navigated the court system and then he was sent to Ballarat.

Every Sunday the 5 of us visited. At first we were caught out with ID, the younger children didn't have enough points, not having driving licenses or bills in their name and to travel all that way and not be able to visit was awful.

Constantly I was trying to keep the younger children from feeling like the system was out to get them, it was very hard I did not want them to feel like they had done something wrong, yet they were constantly put out and felt under attack.

As other charges came up there was to be another court case and he was moved to Port Phillip to travel to court at the end of his three month sentence.

MY SON TOLD ME IN HIS EARLY DAYS IN JAIL NOT TO TALK OUTSIDE TO ANY OTHER VISITORS AS THE INMATES WOULD USE ANYTHING THEY COULD AGAINST YOU IN JAIL. I GOT CAUGHT ON MY OWN ONE DAY WHEN I VISITED PORT PHILLIP I HAD DECIDED NOT TO TAKE THE FAMILY TO VISIT THERE. UNFORTUNATELY THERE WAS A LOCK OUT AND I WAS STRANDED IN A ROOM WITH OTHER VISITORS AND ONE COUPLE KEPT QUESTIONING ME ABOUT MY SON. I FELT ANXIOUS I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, I WAS VERY FEARFUL AND CONCERNED FOR MY SON.

All of his charges were from the same period of time so when he went back to court my son had organized to move to SHARC, an alcohol and other drug rehab, we went to court to be with him and give witness. The judge ordered that the charge was part of those already served (concurrent) and wished him well in rehab. As we waited outside the sliding aluminium door for him to appear the doors rolled up and there were three pairs of feet. I was bending down looking as the door rolled up. My son was handcuffed; he had been arrested on release for yet another charge from the same time. My husband was waiting in the car reading and when he saw the handcuffed son he jumped out standing on his

glasses. They took him away to the South Melbourne Police station we followed in our car, he was released to us.

The penal system and the lock up time were not beneficial in fact the reverse. The greatest haven for the whole family and my son was the time spent at SHARC when he was able to work on himself and work through his situation. Relapsing, which is all part of the course, was very difficult for everyone.

One relapse resulted in charging to an account several expensive pairs of runners in a school clothes shop under my other son's name. The police were angry when I wouldn't press charges.

THE PAIN AND DAMAGE OF HAVING ONE SON WITNESS TO ANOTHER SON WAS MORE THAN I COULD MANAGE SO I PAID OFF THE \$2000 ACCOUNT. THIS MIGHT SEEM WRONG TO MANY BUT I FELT THAT COULD HAVE BECOME A BARRIER THAT MIGHT NEVER BE BUDGED.

Another time that I insisted my son give himself up to the Malvern Police Station they were so shocked they said he could go, he'd broken parole and used at the same time causing havoc to a Christmas family party. I drew the line then but at the Malvern Police Station, the charge officer said:

"I only know what to do when someone does the wrong thing not the right thing"

– My son said: "I don't know what to do when this is a terrible time for me."

– I said: "I don't know what to do when this is a terrible time for me."

We all agreed, the police, my son and I, that we were all ill equipped to deal with this heroin scourge. For once we were as one. This was the 90's. Now in 2007 I am one of the lucky ones, my family survived, I am very grateful.

Angela

