

From: [REDACTED]
To: [justiceinquiry](#)
Subject: Inquiry Into Victoria's Justice System
Date: Wednesday, 13 October 2021 2:12:16 PM

To whom It May Concern,

Name: Patricia Dattilo

I note that submissions for the above inquiry have closed, however, I would like to submit my submission in the hope it can be accepted.

My interest with this Inquiry stems from my experience with the Justice system.

My submission:

My husband is currently serving time in prison. He was at Marngoneet Correctional Centre for almost 3 years until being transferred to Lodden recently. Marngoneet mainly housed sentenced people until this year when due to Covid delays, the prison commenced bringing in more prisoners on remand. My husband noticed a change in the atmosphere whereby prisoners were more tense and anxious, mainly because of the level of uncertainty surrounding their circumstances and knowing there were increased delays with the courts due to covid. My husband decided he could do something to help and together with my assistance, we started referring remand prisoners to lawyers we knew rather than waiting for Legal Aid to reply back to them. This seemed to be a common complaint amongst the prisoners which caused them anxiety and sometimes led to bad behaviour within the prison. There were also many who felt lost and needed some guidance especially if it was their first time in prison.

We started a program in July 2021 called Prisoner Support Services and we have so far referred approximately 90 prisoners to lawyers, (equating to 1 prisoner per day) fast tracking their time spent in remand and prison by shortening the time they needed to wait to have a lawyer call them. The feedback we received from prisoners who we have assisted has been so far positive as some have told us they have been released sooner, whilst others have finalised their matters giving them a sense of direction and certainty. This in turn has helped with the smoother running of the prison as anxiety levels have been greatly reduced. It gave prisoners comfort knowing someone who understood their circumstances could relate to them and thus they felt more willing to be guided by a fellow inmate who had gone through the same experience.

We have recently launched a website [prisonersupportservices.com](#) in the hope to continue assisting prisoners from all prisons with any assistance they require. Unfortunately, my husband was recently moved to Lodden and he had to stop the support he was offering, and whilst the needs of the Lodden prisoners are different as they are mainly sentenced, he is not able to help those that need it the most. It would be great if the website was advertised within the prisons and officers were aware of it as well, so that the word could get around that there are other support options available to prisoners, especially those that are new to the prison. It would also be beneficial if we had the support of the government in what we are doing so we could broaden the support we could offer.

I thought it would also be beneficial to this inquiry to have the insight of an actual prisoner participating and give feedback on the matter first hand and listen to what he believes is missing within the prison system.