

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into a legislated spent convictions scheme

Melbourne—Monday, 1 July 2019

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Mr Arthur Bolkas, Consultant Criminologist.

The CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Mr Bolkas. Thank you so much for making some time for us today and for all the work you have been doing. As you know, we are hearing evidence in relation to our spent convictions inquiry. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by privilege. I think, Mr Bolkas, you are aware that we are recording this today.

Mr BULKAS: Yes.

The CHAIR: Great. If you would like to speak for 5 or 10 minutes and allow us some time to ask some questions after that.

Mr BULKAS: Okay. So I have been involved in the prison system for 42 years. I was a young man when I first entered it in an ignominious fashion. I was arrested for three armed robberies on TABs, one attempted armed robbery and two counts of being in possession of police pistols—very serious crimes.

The CHAIR: Indeed.

Mr BULKAS: I think I did not appreciate how serious they were at the time, but I have subsequently. So I went to prison, and in those days there were maximum-minimums with remission for good behaviour, and I ended up doing five and a half years, roughly, between the ages of 22 and almost 28. And that changed the course of my whole life profoundly. At the four-year mark of that sentence I embraced the Christian faith, and that turned my life back in a good direction, because had I been released the way I was after four years, I have no doubt I would have been a career criminal, I would have sold drugs and I probably would have ended up dead, because I was pretty self-destructive. So here I am all these years later, having got out of prison and never returned, which a police officer a few years ago could not believe and said, 'How come?'. And I shared my story and they were pleased.

When I had been out of prison, I think, around 10 years and had done a variety of jobs—youth work then taxi driving—I went back to uni and I ended up completing a master's degree in criminology and have since worked in the prison system in various ways, working for not-for-profit organisations that support prisoners, in the youth justice system for three and a half years. I have designed and implemented pre and post-release programs and the like, travelled the world on a Churchill Fellowship back in 2000 and got to see other jurisdictions and what they do and how they do it to try and rehabilitate offenders. And at the moment I am a consultant and I do a number of different things, but I am trying to drive bigger picture issues—for example, educating the public about the issues, because I see a lot of ignorance, and in my opinion nothing will change until the public understands what the issues are, who the people are, what happens to them, are they rehabilitated in prison et cetera, et cetera. So when I heard about this I thought I would give it a shot, because I have also experienced discrimination. That is what it is at the end of the day. I mean, I understand protecting society and all the rest of it, but when you have been out of prison—this is my 36th year without having offended—you sort of get a little bit tired of the cliché, you know, 'We want to rehabilitate you'. I think I am. I think I have probably contributed to the good of society more than most people, and yet I keep hitting these brick walls.

A few years ago I had the displeasure of flying to a conference, an international convocation of Christian prison ministries, if you like, in Canada. The plane landed in LA, but I was going to Canada, not LA. And there is your little questionnaire, you know, 'Have you been in prison?'. I said, 'Tick it. Don't lie', and they basically arrested me and kept me in a quarantine area with some Mexican border jumpers. Then they handcuffed me, walked me through the terminal and handed me over to the captain, and it was most demeaning. And when I tried to get some sort of justice I got nowhere, but I got a little bit annoyed.

I applied to the Canadian Consul General to try and have my visa conditions waived, and this applies to all commonwealth government countries, as you know. And I could tell you other stories—being held up in New

Zealand and told, 'You can't come back'. But in Canada I thought, 'Well, I'll be coming here a bit. I have got relatives'. So I wrote a letter explaining my circumstances and got a response back which annoyed me a little bit more: 'Well, you can apply to be deemed rehabilitated, but it'll cost you \$1000 Canadian. So I kind of politely said, 'Stick it'. I don't have to pay money to prove I am rehabilitated. I think I am, and I deserve to be treated accordingly.

And then there are lots of things you have heard: insurance—trying to get home and contents insurance, pushing the envelope to the point where I spoke to the general manager of AAMI and enlightened him, and he made a concession for me, but he could not do it for others; being sent a letter saying that, 'You've got to attend jury duty, and if you don't you can suffer some serious penalties'. So I said, 'Yes, I will do it, thanks'. But 'No, no. We can't have you, because you're dishonest or something. You're questionable'. I am a writer, and I discovered that if I write and publish my book, there is a chance I might have to face the confiscation of the royalties because I am alluding and referring directly to my experience in prison and the offences that occurred.

Then recently, because I am at the stage where work is harder to get, I thought, 'Maybe I'll go back to taxi driving'—I did it for three and a half years about 20 years ago; hard work, but I would do it—only to find that today because we have made such progress I cannot do that anymore. I have got a criminal record. And then last year I got short-listed for a job with Relationships Australia, and it was a good job for me. It was actually training people on community-based sanctions who have come out of prison and in the community about life skills and how to cope, and I thought, 'Well, that's me. I'm perfect at that', only to be told that the funding provider, whichever government department it was, made it clear that they did not want anyone with a criminal record. I tried to fight that, and I did not get anywhere.

And finally, having worked in the prison system for so many years, where on the one hand you are given a green pass in a maximum-security prison like Port Phillip and Barwon, and you are allowed to go wherever you like because you are providing the government, the public, a service for free. You are running a program, and a good program it was—three months intensive; I was in there five days a week. And then on the other hand, when the program ends and I am just Mr Arthur Bolkas, ex-prisoner, I had to write a letter to get permission to go and visit someone that I had worked with who is still in there and needs help. And I am really a bit past all that, to tell you the truth. I find it demeaning, I find it discriminatory, I find it wrong and I find that it makes a mockery of that word 'rehabilitation'. I do not think I am going to fall within this proposed legislation; I am one of the bad boys at the hard end. If that is the case, my question to this committee is: what are you talking about—seriously—when you use that word 'rehabilitation'? If you are not prepared to give me a chance as an individual—not put me in some sort of statistical basket with everyone else—if you are not prepared to do that, then you need to reassess what you mean when you are asking people like me to become contributing members of our community. It is a double standard, it is hypocritical and it is wrong. That is it in a nutshell.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Bolkas. It has been great to really hear from someone with that lived experience that you have had and that road to redemption that you have travelled. You are absolutely right about the proposal that has been put to us—the spent conviction legislation that is operational in every other jurisdiction would not include you. Some of the other jurisdictions have, however, introduced anti-discrimination legislation that does make it an offence to discriminate against someone for an irrelevant conviction. Have you had any knowledge of that anti-discrimination attribute in other areas and whether you have seen it be effective for ex-prisoners?

Mr BOLKAS: I am aware of it in other sectors. I did not consider it in relation to some of the issues I have faced. One reason too, I suppose, is that it just opens up another whole scenario that I frankly do not want to go down, and I do not see why I should. I suppose if the issue was serious enough I would consider it, but then what does that mean? Every time it comes up I have got to go and do the paperwork and go through this?

The CHAIR: Yes, and interestingly with your employment with Relationships Australia I think actually your conviction was entirely relevant to the work.

Mr BOLKAS: Yes, and I could have done that. But see, when an organisation that I am potentially going to work for is not prepared to back me—

And frankly I thought it was hypocritical of them because of the nature of their work and what they are trying to achieve. Here they have got specialists who fit the bill and they tell me that, and I am thinking, 'Well, why don't you go in and bat for me?'. I said to them, 'Why don't you go back to the authority?'. I know a few people pretty high up in the system, very high up in the system actually, and I went and spoke to one of them and he said, 'That's terrible, Arthur. Look, just tell them that they can call me and I will give you a reference or whatever they need'. I went back, but they were not going to push this issue because this was a funding provider, and it did not happen.

Dr KIEU: Thank you, Mr Bolkas, for sharing your story with us. Is very commendable that you came out of a very substantial conviction and then changed your life around. I have just a few questions. First of all, you mentioned that you are a changed person and that you have been rehabilitated; was it entirely due to the Christian faith and would that be applicable to some other people? How could people then become a normal and participating member of society?

Mr BOLKAS: It is a good question. There are different ways that people decide that they want to stop the lifestyle that they have been on. At the end of the day, for all the programming that is done, if a person does not want to change, nothing will change. The main criteria in the programs I have ever run in prison are: how genuine are you that enough is enough and you want to change your life? So that is the most important thing. For some people, like me, they embrace faith—religion, if you like; whatever. It is a lifestyle. It is not just being pious and good; it is how you live your life and how you treat people, and importantly it is the support that you receive, because when I became a Christian I had tremendous support from chaplains, from organisations, from people outside, from the church et cetera et cetera, and that played a really significant role. I really think that had that not happened I do not know that I would have sustained my faith in prison, because it was extremely difficult and I became a target for people's criticism and cynicism and sometimes abuse. They saw it as weakness, whatever.

For others, education, if I had to pick an issue. I often say if I ran the prison system I would make it about education/vocational training/whatever it means to the individual offender—who by and large is poorly educated. I mean, the average education attainment level is year 9. They probably stopped trying in primary school, if they ever did. So if you can find the key to their interests, I believe education—I have seen it; I could share many examples of that—is a powerful way to turn a person's life around, because it is empowering and it teaches them to use their brain and a lot of other things. For others, it is being reconciled to family. They have been estranged for a whole lot of reasons from their children. That can be a powerful incentive too. And some people just get to the stage where the madness of youth, if I can put it that way, is overtaken by some maturity. You have been in prison—you might have been in and out—and you sort of take stock one day. Research shows that it happens in your late 20s, early 30s. You kind of ask yourself, 'Well, is this going to be the rest of my life?', and you look around at others for whom it has been the rest of their life, and it is like a light bulb goes off in your head. So then you look for ways to try and turn your life around. That is where programs are important, but good programs—real programs. Not the token stuff that, frankly, I think might make people feel good and might tick boxes but does not ultimately achieve very much, except that it wastes a lot of money.

Dr KIEU: Thank you. And you are contributing to that program in your work.

Mr BOLKAS: Well, I try in my way.

Dr KIEU: Yes. I will come back to the Chair's comment just now: in most other states and jurisdictions the spent conviction would only be applicable to certain types of convictions—non-violence, for example, and non-sexual and some other types; and secondly, the conviction term is ranging from six to 30 months.

Mr BOLKAS: That is right.

Dr KIEU: In your case, you have been sentenced to 11 years and then you have served five-and-half years, as you just mentioned.

Mr BOLKAS: I am almost double.

Dr KIEU: Yes. So how would you like to see this system applied to your case? What is your opinion on that?

Mr BOLKAS: Okay. Look, I am not insensitive to the importance of taking extra precautions for someone who has done something violent, like I did. But you have got to keep it in context. I mean, on my understanding—maybe I am wrong here—in Western Australia, with the Spent Convictions Act 1988, they look at a sentence of more than one year, they have a 10-year waiting period and it is upon application to the District Court judge, who will exercise discretion. If that is true—and if I read that correctly—would that apply to me if I was in WA? Aha! So you see, it is not right across the board. When I read that, I was surprised. I thought, ‘WA? They’re meant to be rednecks, aren’t they? They’re not enlightened like us Victorians’. So I thought, ‘Well, why don’t we follow suit?’. Why don’t you, if I choose to benefit from this spent convictions scheme, give me the opportunity to go before a judge? I am happy to do that—because I am not assuming it will be a one-off; I will not have to do it every time I hit a problem—and have the opportunity to present my case as an individual. See, one of the things that really upset me about being in prison was that my individuality disappeared. I was treated like just another offender, not as a person, and I felt demeaned by that. I felt disempowered by that. I would like an opportunity to change that, to put my case before a judge and to have that judge determine whether he or she thinks that in the time that I have been out—and bear in mind, I was a first offender and I have never offended again. That needs to be taken into consideration. The fact that I pleaded guilty and spared the state a trial, which would have cost a lot of money, should be taken into consideration. The fact that I made restitution as best I could should be taken into consideration, and certainly what I have done since my release should be taken into consideration—not just lump me with everyone else, which is wrong.

Ms LOVELL: Mr Bolkas, have you ever sought out your victims and apologised to them?

Mr BOLKAS: I was on *Insight* the other night. You should perhaps see it, if you are interested, because it was—people tell me—a fascinating show. I thought it was a bit limited because of the time frame, and there were so many issues I would have loved to have explored and elaborated on, but I was one of three ex-prisoners on the panel. When I was asked the question by the host, ‘When you were arrested, did you feel sorry for what you had done? Did you feel remorse?’, and I said, ‘No, I didn’t’.

Ms LOVELL: You felt sorry you got caught, yes.

Mr BOLKAS: And I went on to explain that I think it is a little but simplistic to take a person who is a drug-addicted, out-of-control lunatic doing these crazy things who gets arrested, nearly gets killed—because I was fired upon—and nearly killed the police officer, in a sense, when I disarmed him and took the gun off him, and expect me to sit and think about the victims of my crimes. I did not. What I thought about was that I was arrested, that my world had basically exploded in my face. I felt remorse my family and what I had done to them. They were the immediate victims, as far as I could see, and it took me many years to actually think about the actual victims of my crimes. One reason for that is I felt that I was the victim of this system that we call the criminal justice system.

This was not on-air, but I said that the night that I was arrested—and this is no reflection on all police, because I believe some police are wonderful people and they helped me actually, in many ways—and charged I was stolen from, my wallet, money, jewellery, but I am the criminal. So where does remorse fit in there? I was angry. Then when I had to try and find a barrister, I discovered that if you have not got a lot of money, you do not get QCs and SCs, you get legal aid. That made me angry, because of their incompetence, through no fault of theirs. They were just time pressured. Thirdly, when I went to prison I was damaged—I was, systematically damaged, over time. So, remorse? No.

The other thing is, the victims became amorphous people. I mean, I could not even remember their faces. If they had spoken to me, I would not have known who they were. But they were not in court. I did not hear them speak to me and share their pain. I think had that happened I would have certainly felt for them, I would have, and perhaps a process of change might have begun to occur. But thrust into the prison environment all I cared about was surviving it. So my focus was very self-centred surviving that experience, and most drug addicts are that way anyway. It takes a process to turn a life around.

So 20-odd years later—I mentioned this on the program—I have been working in secondary schools now. This is my 19th year. I do presentations, and I love talking to young people and sharing what I have learned in life to try and help them not to make similar mistakes. I was due to go to a school. On the eve of that I was told that a

teacher at the school would resign if I turned up. It turns out her aunt was one of my victims, and it hit me like a sledgehammer—it really did—to think that all those years later.

That set me on a path of actions where I was trying to make amends as best I could, so I wrote a letter to the aunt. I do not know whether she received it. I wrote a letter to the police officer whose gun I took and threatened. I do not know whether he received it. And then having been involved in a program at Barwon at the time, I introduced a new module, which I presented, and I called it ‘Victim awareness’. It is all based around restorative justice, which is a really fine principle and one that I really, truly believe is transformational for both parties when it can happen, and I wish it happened more in the adult prison system for the right people. And so I presented that, and that was my way of trying to redeem myself, to express my remorse, by doing something practical and useful and trying to help other offenders to understand all that.

Through the show, on *Insight* two weeks ago, I have received so many calls, emails, Facebook connections, messages and things, I am just overwhelmed. And would you believe three of them were from immediate victims of my crimes from 42 years ago? And that has had a profound effect on me. I am not sitting here feeling guilty. I cannot afford to go there. I have worked my way out of guilt. But I try to be proactive, so I wrote back to these people and offered what I could. One of them has written back, and I will continue to correspond with that person. I have offered to meet with them if they choose. That may not happen. But then I have had other victims, who are not connected to me in any way, who reacted to the show and wrote to me seeking help, and I am trying to work through those too.

Ms LOVELL: You spoke about feeling disempowered and demeaned in the jail system. Don’t you feel that your victims were disempowered and demeaned when you stuck a gun in their face?

Mr BOLKAS: Absolutely, they were. Absolutely; they were terrified. The judge told me that when my barrister sort of said, ‘Well, Your Honour, he didn’t have a real gun. He didn’t intend’—intention is important, isn’t it? I mean, if I had gone in there with a double-barrel shotgun, loaded, trigger cocked, you would say my intentions were pretty serious. But an imitation, in my mind, at that time and living in this fantasy world that I was in? I mean, I was a drug addict—

Ms LOVELL: No excuse.

Mr BOLKAS: It is not an excuse, but it must go some way towards mitigating what you have done, surely. I mean, if I went in there and fired at someone, it is a bit different to saying, ‘I’ve got a gun with bullets in it’. Anyway, that is my opinion. Intent, I think, is really important. So, yes, they were traumatised, but I cannot undo that. What can I do? I went to prison for five and a half years. I was—

Ms LOVELL: Five and a half years? Your victims get a lifetime sentence. I have been a victim of crimes like you performed. I ran a Tattersall’s agency, and we have been victims of these types of crimes.

Mr BOLKAS: Of course.

Ms LOVELL: Staff that have lifetime sentences that have never returned to work.

Mr BOLKAS: Yes.

Ms LOVELL: The feeling of never being safe in your own workplace again, never being able to work back late at night because they did not feel safe to be in that building, and you say five and a half years and you have done your time? People get lifetime sentences from the crimes that you have committed. They are very serious crimes.

Mr BOLKAS: They are.

Ms LOVELL: I do not see how you think that they should be wiped from the record.

Mr BOLKAS: Well, look, if we applied what you have just said to me right across the board in the community, in relationships, in life, where would we get, because what you are saying is, ‘I can’t forgive you

for what you did, and I don't want to. I want to hang onto it, I want to hang onto the effect of it on me, I want to remain a victim the rest of my life and I want you to pay', and it—

Ms LOVELL: No, I am not a victim. I choose to live my life and not be a victim, but I know other people who cannot work—

Mr BOLKAS: Okay.

Ms LOVELL: who have been so traumatised, who have been so demeaned and disempowered by actions—

Mr BOLKAS: I know. I know.

Ms LOVELL: that they have affected their entire life. They cannot say, 'Oh, five and a half years—it's all over. Let's get on with it'. It really resonates with them. And can I tell you, the smell of gunpowder and the smell of oxyacetylene, how that can bring back memories. Twenty years later my sister still runs that business. We had a safe that was oxyacetylened—

Mr BOLKAS: Yes.

Ms LOVELL: and inside the safe still smells of the oxyacetylene. I walked in there last Friday as the safe door was replaced, and she asked me to get something for her out of the safe. When I walked in and smelled the smell, 20 years later every memory comes flooding back.

Mr BOLKAS: Of course. Look, I am not diminishing that, but what can I do? Is there something I can do to make amends, to fix it, to make you feel better—or whoever? I mean, this is what I am faced with right now, and I did go to prison. Right? That was the punishment apparently, but the punishment does not stop, and again my understanding is that the aims of imprisonment are to do a number of things, but the bookends, as I call them—what the public expects—is for someone to be punished, and I believe the punishment needs to be redemptive, because if it simply brutalises, all it does is make the person worse and society less safe. But the public expects rehabilitation too, and if we are serious about that then we need to ask ourselves, and it is a question I would put to you: what do you mean when you say that? Because I am getting mixed messages here. I do not understand what you mean exactly, so if you could explain that to me—

Ms LOVELL: But I do not understand how you could go out and brandish a gun in someone's face, so I do not understand where you were coming from when you performed those—

Mr BOLKAS: But with respect, I did that. I did that. I mean, society is full of people doing the wrong thing to other people. Domestic violence is rampant in our community, kids are being abused left, right and centre. I mean, it is everywhere. This is one instance of it. You are not going to fix the problem by telling me that I did something 42 years ago and I can never be redeemed. I mean, if that is the case, then enshrine that in law. Make it clear to people like me, because I think the people you really need to work hard with and rehabilitate are the ones at the more serious end of the scale. If they think that society will not accept them, then what is the point of even trying. I mean, I know people like this. Again, I come back to the anguish that I feel because I am disempowered. I really cannot do anything, and if you keep reminding me, 'You did it 42 years ago', well, what can I say? How do I come back from that? It happened, it is unfortunate, I was punished for it, I have turned my life around, I have made a contribution, I am not the same person—yes.

The CHAIR: Yes. I appreciate that, Mr Bolkas, and going on with the work that you are doing in the prisons and in youth justice, certainly restorative justice and talking about the victims is one way that we should be exploring a lot more. But the spent convictions scheme that we are seeing in other jurisdictions and are considering here, do you think that is going to help the people that you are working with?

Mr BOLKAS: Absolutely. Oh, gee, unquestionably. Look, I could tell you hundreds of stories. My specialty is reintegration from prison to the community, because at the end of the day that is where they mess up, even the ones with the really good intentions who want to change. And they give it their best shot, but with a person like that—and you need to understand, and this is what a lot of people do not understand—we are talking about these people who have grown up in subcultures, socio-economic subcultures. I mean, a statistic came out a few years ago that I quote everywhere, because to me it highlights how profoundly entrenched these

issues are—that 50 per cent of all Victorian offenders, prisoners, come from 6 per cent of Victorian postcodes. I often say, well, if we know that: that there are little boys in those postcodes who are going to grow up and enter the youth justice and then the adult system—and these days they are actually bypassing, many of them, the youth justice system, unlike in the past, because of the nature of their offending, because a lot of them are ice-driven and so they are more violent et cetera, and they are going straight into the adult system—why don't we go into those environments and salvage those little boys, particularly those little boys, because we are talking about systemic issues, we are talking about family issues, we are talking about things that you cannot just throw some legislation or some money at? This is something that has developed over generations, and it is going to take generations to turn it around, and that is where I get a little bit cynical, to tell you the truth.

The CHAIR: I have just actually been to a reintegration conference last week. Is there anywhere in the world that you think is doing this well, that is enabling that reintegration? I think the only measure that we seem to have for that is that people do not end up back in jail.

Mr BOLKAS: Yes.

The CHAIR: It seems to be the only measure that we have, but are you aware of anywhere that we should be looking at that is doing this well?

Mr BOLKAS: The Nordic countries—the Swiss, the Norwegians. I mean Norway is a good example. They spend in the vicinity of \$190 000 per year per prisoner, and that is a huge amount of money. Do you know how much Victoria spends per annum per prisoner? One hundred and thirty thousand dollars. We are talking about Victoria being in the top five. The difference, though, with Norway and the other countries that spend large amounts of money is the outcomes. They have much, much better outcomes. They do not have people getting out and reoffending at anywhere near the rate. One in two in Victoria in two years are back inside. You know, if it was a business, it would have gone bankrupt, but we keep pouring money into it. Therein lies the huge difference: you are putting a lot of money in, but you are not getting appropriate returns for your investment.

In my opinion a lot of that money should be used, yes, in the prison system for rehabilitative purposes instead of warehousing, which is what we are doing more and more of, and tacking on some programs at the end of your sentence, because you have got to do violence, you have got to do anger management, you have got to do drug and alcohol—tick, tick, tick—and you might get parole. Our prison system is just bursting at the seams.

So I think Norway is a good example, because if you look at their history, they were a really punitive nation, but they got to the point where, like some American states—like California—they thought, 'We're spending more money on imprisoning people than we are collectively on education. We can't sustain this realistically. We've got to do something. We've got to change'. So what happened in Norway is that there was a wholesale drive to educate the community, and a culture shift occurred in people's thinking. And when that started to happen pressure started to be applied to politicians, who could not justify continuing to do what they were doing, so reform started to happen across the board.

Now, if you look at Singapore—another country—they have the yellow ribbon campaign. You are probably familiar with it. Fabulous. How did that start? A senior prison official thought, 'This is going nowhere, this sausage factory. We need to do something'. So it was a bit like the campaigns around drink-driving and mental illness to help the public understand that these offenders by and large—the nature of offending has changed a lot from the time I was in prison when I remember I started hearing about junkies. What are junkies? Junkies are heroin addicts. They were not around in the early 60s. They were not offending. They started to become a real force in the prison system as more and more of them came in, and of course today prison is awash with drug addicts and people with mental health issues. So they are not the hardened career crims of the past; they are tragic people with all sorts of issues, and they really need a lot of help. I am not going soft on crime or criminals by any means. If you have done something wrong you have got to wear it and you have got to bear the responsibility of what you have done, and given an opportunity you take it and you try and turn your life around. But you need to have access to those opportunities too, and if you have not, then we are simply talking about a theoretical process. Do you know what I mean? Rehabilitation, again; what does that mean?

The CHAIR: Mr Bolkas, that is all the questions that we have. I very much appreciate your honesty. I missed the *Insight* program, but I will be certain to go and look at that. Sorry, just one other quick question:

when you say ‘educating the public’—and I think I know what you mean—I think the yellow ribbon is a good example, but just briefly, is that the sort of education that you think the public needs? I think of restorative justice, because I think looking at the victims here, who very often do have a lifetime sentence, that we need to be focusing on that. But if we are going to move on, if we are not just going to keep locking people up forever, what do we need to do to educate the public?

Mr BOLKAS: When I went to Sydney to SBS I spoke to the producer of *Insight* about being introduced to the documentary makers at SBS. My dream, and I am going to give it my best shot, is to try and have a three-part documentary produced on imprisonment in Australia: where did we come from; what do we have and does it work; and what should we perhaps be looking at and doing, including prevention, which is a subject that we do not talk about anywhere near enough. We are always talking about the effect, not the cause.

The CHAIR: I think you are absolutely right. Thank you, and thanks for bearing with us.

Mr BOLKAS: Thank you.

Witness withdrew.