

Submission
No 2

**INQUIRY INTO SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF INMATES SENTENCED TO LIFE
IMPRISONMENT**

Name: Name suppressed

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Submission to the inquire of the N.S.W. Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Law and Justice into the security classification and management of inmates sentenced to life imprisonment

As I write out this submission I am a patient of the Medical Surgical Unit of Long Bay Hospital, having been transferred here from the Goulburn Base Hospital (by car) on Tuesday 22nd September, suffering from Cellulitis in my right leg. I am told that I will be transferred back to Goulburn when my treatment is complete.

I was sentenced to 2 terms of live imprisonment in about June of 1974, back dated to 15-11-1973 and I did my time in Long Bay and the Maitland intractable section before being transferred to Katingal, being the 3rd prisoner there and there I remained until it was decided to close the place and in April 1978 I was transferred to Grafton Gaol. At that time Grafton was an A2 or A1 prison and when Grafton became a "B" gaol, I was granted a "B" classification but the gaol didn't change in any way and I remained in Grafton for ~~the next~~ 30 years.

In that 30 years I came south a few times for medical appointments and once for 3 months I did a course at 'Special Care' which helped me a lot with my personal development, my outlook on life and strongly enough, afterwards I no longer got migraine headaches, something I had suffered with all my life.

I see in the press/news media that its been stated that Lifers shouldn't be allowed to have jobs. When I first came to prison, everyone had a job, but over time that changed and it was usually the lifers and longer term

prisoners who worked, short term prisoners were use to being on the dole and they preferred to sit around and play cards, do their time and get out.

I arrived in Grafton on a Saturday and on the Monday I had a job because I went and asked for one and I was always employed (in different jobs) until I left Grafton in about August 2008 because I came south for a quadruple by-pass. I went back to Grafton in about February 2009 but after another heart attack I had a stent put in at the Coffs Harbour Hospital and I was again transferred to the L.B.H.

When I first went to Junee 'B' ~~gaol~~ gaol I wasn't allowed to work because I had sleep apnea and the doctor wouldn't let me work, but after another trip back to Long Bay where I was issued with a C-Pap machine I was allowed to get a job at the Junee industries where I worked first off making garden sheds then later in the textile shop, making prisoners clothing. At Grafton I worked on the maintenance gang, bookbinders, printshop and kitchen. While in the printing unit and the kitchen I had to do courses to do with my job and for about five years I worked in the print unit at the 'C' gaol while still living in the 'B' gaol. As soon as I could after arriving at Goulburn I got a job in textiles, working on the flatbed sewing machines.

One of the things asked in the inquiry is if inmates sentenced to life imprisonment should have access to rehabilitative programs and even though they aren't getting out there is no reason they should be kept in the dark. I came to prison before there were any personal computers, mobile phones, ATM machines, plastic money, fax machines or websites and I had to get access to education material to find out about these things.

At Junee gaol the TAFE run the education and all

850 inmates can apply to do any of the courses on offer. There was a laptop computer course that I applied to do, at least 8 prisoners were needed for the course to run but only 4 of us put our names forward, we did get other prisoners to apply but one of the original 4 only lasted for part of the session, he thought he was going to be allowed to play computer games and when he was told it was a course to learn about operating a laptop he decided he would rather spend his time playing cards. Also at Junee there was a choir group and always there were about 14 of us in the group, although often one or two would drop out and more would join, we did our practice of a Fridays during our lunch break and performed at the different concerts in front of outside visiting groups. There was also a chess group and other groups I didn't belong to but I was a member of the writers group that met every second Sunday afternoon and submitted our own short stories.

The writers group facilitator would take our work away and get it typed up and I have 3 or 4 stories away at the moment that I may never see again and only a few short stories in my cell at Goulburn.

When I began my sentence there were many more prisoners serving life sentences but that was before the truth in sentencing laws came into being and there were no registered ^{victims} units in those days but like all lifers I started out doing hard time, I was being punished for my crimes, but things eased off during the Royal Commission into prisons after Bathurst was destroyed. I was told that I wasn't in prison for punishment, but as punishment, and prisoners were allowed to buy transistor radios and later televisions, but only after having first served (5) years. Nothing was given to us, we had to save up our money if we wished to buy anything.

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Now it is being said that the lifers are being treated too leniently. Does this mean that persons sentenced to life are to be treated differently to persons who commit other crimes and not all persons found guilty of murder are given life imprisonment. Over forty years ago I received a life sentence for conspiracy but if I were to be found guilty today the maximum sentence I could receive is (25) years.

After the ~~the~~ 'Truth in Sentencing' laws came into being I was told by the 'Serious Offenders Board' that I had to apply for a set sentence, but I was knocked back and later I applied again after being told by many professional people that things had changed, I was no longer the same person who committed those crimes, I had moved on and changed but I was again knocked back, I'll not apply again for I have now been in prison too long and I have nowhere I wish to go, I'm getting old and I have too many medical problems. Having spent almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of my life in prison I very much doubt I could survive or function in a normal society.

I'm not asking for my freedom, just to be treated like a normal prisoner and given a chance to progress to a lower classified prison where my lifestyle will be improved and in my twilight years I can sit out in the garden and peacefully fade away instead of being in an iron cage and treated like the animal I use to be, where I will die a miserable death in a cold windswept, overcrowded concrete yard.