



Prison Songs – Media Release

Documentary shines spotlight on our national prison shame

A ground-breaking documentary to be screened on NITV on August 31 takes you into one of Australia's toughest prisons and promises to change the way we look at Indigenous incarceration.

Prison Songs goes behind the barbed wire at Darwin's Berrimah Jail to shine a spotlight on the shockingly high prison rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's prisons.

Shane Duffy, Co-Chair of Change the Record, a national coalition of Indigenous and human rights organisations, says the documentary exposes the need for immediate changes.

"*Prison Songs* reveals the truth about incarceration in this country and the urgent need for action: we need to look to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the solutions." Mr Duffy says.

"Better investment is needed in early intervention, prevention and diversion strategies – smarter solutions that increase safety, address the causes of crime, and build safer communities.

"Culture also has an important part to play to break the cycle of incarceration; helping to light a path to a better life, away from the criminal justice system."

Change the Record has twin goals - reducing incarceration rates, and reducing victimisation rates, especially of Indigenous women and children – *Prison Songs* shows why these are so important.

CTR Co-Chair, Antoinette Braybrook says it's 25 years since the tabling of *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* and the evidence shows not enough has changed; Australia faces an even deeper crisis than that interrogated by the commission in 1991.

"In the past 10 years we have seen an 88% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison. Our people are now 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people," Ms Braybrook says.

"There are still shamefully high rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and they are also the fastest growing prison population.

"This year alone a Royal Commission has been ordered into youth detention in the Northern Territory while a separate independent inquiry has been launched into Queensland's youth detention centres.

“But this is a national problem. We are seeing children being "fast tracked" from child protection into youth detention - thereby increasing the likelihood of their incarceration as adults.

“Our minimum age of criminal responsibility in Australia is only ten years old - the median age internationally is 14.”

Producer of *Prison Songs* Kelrick Martin says the funny yet achingly sad account of eventful lives is delivered via the musical performances of real people.

“The film features a number of male and female protagonists, each with their own past and story to tell. The songs were written by Shellie Morris and Casey Bennetto – the award-winning composer of *Keating: The Musical* – although the lyrics came from the participants’ own words.”

Prison Songs airs on NITV at 9.30pm on 31 August and 12.00pm on 1 September. See a trailer at www.prisonsongs.com.au

More information at: www.changetherecord.org.au.

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A GOOD PITCH AUSTRALIA FILM

