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From: Jane Paterson [mailto:jane.paterson@sa.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 26 February 2010 9:44 AM
To: Standing Committee, Community Development & Justice
Subject: MAKING PRISONS WORK SUBMISSION WOMEN IN BLACK
Submission to the Committee Community Development and Justice

For the Inquiry Making Prisons Work

Perth Women in Black

26th February 2010

Perth Women in Black believe the terms of reference, for the Inquiry 'Making Prisons Work', have the appearance of merit, but no substance in practical terms unless more emphasis can be placed on reducing the number of inmates in our prisons.

We do not think imprisonment succeeds in producing well-rounded citizens, yet the terms of reference set out for this Inquiry implies that you aim for that goal. Therefore, we urge you to consider methods that will reduce the need for prisons.

We are very concerned at the present overcrowding in all WA prisons. Basic resources are stretched past the limit and conditions for warders and inmates inhumane and stressful. The most that can be hoped for is a holding pattern. Rehabilitation is impossible.

The disproportion of Indigenous numbers in prison when compared with their number in the overall population is troubling and growing. Surely it is time to admit the system is NOT working ?

It is time to look honestly at the way non-Indigenous Law has been used to control the Indigenous population to their disadvantage. It is time to seriously REFORM this situation.

It is time to look honestly at how our non-Indigenous attitudes of superiority and disdain, work to keep the majority of the Indigenous population out of sight and on the edges of our society. We need to work at changing these deep-seated attitudes so that we work, 'with us rather than on us' (Mick Dodson)

Meanwhile we think that 'Making Prisons Work' is an oxymoron. Reducing the need for imprisonment must be the way to go.

There is plenty of information on how to achieve that goal: the Social Justice Report 2009, Chapter Two, which can be found at:

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sj_report/sireport09/chap2.html

is worth considering.

Thank you for your attention.

26/02/2010

Jane Paterson

(for) **Perth Women in Black**

