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PRISON NEEDLES RISK IS A FURPHY

“Unfounded fears and misinformation have deliberately been used to prevent prisoners accessing fresh needles and syringes,” Justice Action Coordinator Brett Collins said today.

Justice Action launched its paper ‘[Pricking the Bubble Around Prison NSPs](http://tinyurl.com/73hwagv)’ today after an exhaustive consultation with prison stakeholders and researchers of national standing.

“In fact, the risk of contracting hepatitis C from a needle-stick injury is only 1 in 200 - significantly less than the risk of driving and dying in a car accident at 1 in 83,” he said.

“These are some of the findings of research presented on the eve of an ACT Government decision on the [Moore Report](http://tinyurl.com/82axzsz)” said Mr Collins.

“This risk analysis disproves the myth that prison staff would be less safe. In fact the prison becomes healthier with greater respect given to staff. There has never been a needle-stick attack against prison guards in dozens of prisons across 10 countries with NSPs,” Mr Collins said.

“Opposition to the NSP by some staff and unnamed ex-prisoners are an expression of the inhumanity in the prison culture, suggesting that prisoners are irrational and don’t want to be healthy. This perpetuates the stereotype of them not being part of the community – the ‘others’ from whom we must be protected. It is the structural effect of building a cage for humans” said Mr Collins.

“Justice Action opposed the new ACT prison, saying that it would become a festering sore spreading its sickness by isolating people from their communities, cross fertilising their problems and increasing crime. But naïve supporters argued that the AMC would be human rights friendly. It is time to abandon the failed experiment” said Mr Collins.

“The Moore Report found that more than 50% of prisoners have hepatitis C and a quarter had injected in the previous month. An HIV outbreak in such an environment is just a matter of time despite the clear obligations under ACT law” said Mr Collins.

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