



REPORT 2009

RECENT SUCCESS — FUTURE PLANS

The past year has been enormous for JUSTICE ACTION. We have been working on our infrastructure to prepare some serious challenges to the system. Everyone sees its failure – the expanding costs and damage caused by exclusion.

The **smoking ban** in some secure mental health institutions was a big issue in 2009. We proved that the ban was causing destructive tensions and not helping patients quit in the long term. People need to want to quit and decide themselves, otherwise they smoke again immediately upon release. That is patient control of their right to choose just like other people – as it should be. The Department of Health has now backed down on its ban.

The Health Department's lack of respect for patients' rights and self determination has been exposed. Patients are much worse off than prisoners. The situation with **forensic patient Saeed Dezfouli** is now central focus. He has served longer than if he had maliciously done the act for which he has been found not guilty due to mental illness. He is non-violent according to the nurses. But because he has asserted his rights he has been locked in the highest security area at the highest cost, and forcibly injected every fortnight. Promises to review his placement have been made and dishonoured. He is refused education, tobacco, proper social contact and exercise. We have taken on his **primary carer** role.

Justice Action joined with the **Community Justice Coalition** for an **inspection of juvenile justice prisons** in 2009. The failure there is worse than for adults. Sixty percent return within two years and each young person costs over \$200,000 a year with most being Aboriginal. Community and family have little assistance outside but there is lots of money for cells.

We have been working with the prison officers and all the community organisations against the **privatisation of prisons** in NSW and NZ. This slavery by another name has been shown internationally to work against the community. The multinationals want more people in prison for longer and held cheaper to make more profit.

We were asked to give the prisoners' view of what an effective Australian inspection system should be under a new **UN convention against torture – OPCAT**. Torture includes attacks on dignity and equity. And the following week we presented to the **UN Special Rapporteur on Health** for detainees. In both we concentrated on getting out detainees' voices directly through prisoner committees. We pushed for training and community development, and recycled computers in prisoners' cells linked to servers and including contact with families by email. It is happening in some states now. We proposed the use of the video cameras in high security units as communication devices for prisoners, rather than only for monitoring by the administration.

The next edition of the prisoners' newspaper **JUST US** is almost ready. Last time it went in to five states and territories' prisoners. After a Supreme Court challenge, NSW has been told it must explain any attempted refusal.

We took on **social inclusion in the Ferguson case** where police tried to force him back to prison. We said "no". They tried to prove that there wasn't a place for him except in prison but we held the line and continued the battle by getting an AVO on the vigilante that put a coffin on his doorstep. If the most unpopular person survives outside then the rest of us can too. Community support through mentoring is a way forward. Add to that restorative justice and we can take on the prison system working with the victims.

New volunteers have come in, and interns from the universities are helping with our campaigns. Our website is full of information and gets lots of traffic, as well as our constant Twitter, Facebook and Newsvine updates.

John Thornton recently launched his book "**Above the Law**" about his time in Grafton tracs. You can find out more about this and other publications Breakout has designed and printed on their website www.breakout.net.au

Breakout DesignPrintWeb pays JA's costs, and needs more production work to build this **strong and independent social enterprise**. If you have a friend who does publications or runs a company, ask them to put work our way and we can do more!