

Bridge Matters

Date : July 2011

Newsletter Number 33



The Bridge Foundation is a non-profit organisation, which works with the community to support released prisoners who wish to make a positive new start

Web: www.bridge.foundation.com.au

E-mail: bridge.foundation@ucgipps.org.au

Sentences Literary Competition

There is still time to enter....

Closing date August 31st

The Bridge Foundation organized its first Literary Competition in October 2006 and this year will hold its seventh competition.

The Competition has proved to be very successful and is open to members of the community and those in prison. There is no entry fee for writers in prison.

The Competition provides a focus for Staff in Education Centres to encourage their students to write and enter the competition and improve their communication skills.

Responses from the Competitions testify to the impact on prisoners of having their work recognized and encourages self-esteem.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Calling all volunteers and workers—we are putting together stories and anecdotes about working and volunteering with prisoners in the prison system and with ex prisoners, We would welcome contributions to our collection. We hope to publish late next year.

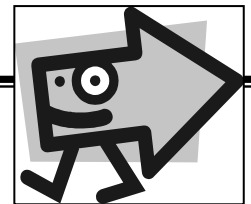
Send to The Bridge Foundation, PO Box 9279, Sale, Vic, 3850. or email to :

bridge.foundation@ucgipps.org.au

Snippets of interest :

- At 30th June 2010 there were 29,700 prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) in Australian prisons, an increase of 1% (383 prisoners) from 30th June 2009. This represented a national imprisonment rate of 170 prisoners per 100,000 adult population.
- Approximately 80% of prisoners were born in Australia.
- Of the total prison population 8% are female.

Source: ABS 2010



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Letter to the Editor ...



April, 2011

Thank you to the Bridge Foundation for agreeing to my request for assistance in providing part of the fees for a course I am undertaking through The University of Tasmania..

I was very grateful to hear the good news and I would like to thank each and every member of the Committee for helping me out. To tell you the truth, if it wasn't for your Foundation it would not have been possible for me. Thank you so very much for your help and support.

You do a great job with helping inmates like me.

A grateful prisoner

If you would like to make a contribution to *Bridge Matters*, please contact the Editor at:

P.O. Box 9279, Sale 3850, or
Email: bridge.foundation@ucgipps.org.au

Deadline for the October 2011 edition:
August 30, 2011

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all the *Friends of Bridge* who have re-subscribed and welcome to those of you who have taken out a subscription for the first time.

Those of you who haven't joined, we encourage you to consider doing so. The *Bridge Foundation* operates on volunteer time with donations and trust funding. Every little bit helps.

For as little as \$20 per annum, you can help to continue the work of the *Bridge Foundation* and make a positive difference to individual lives and the community.

The following is an excerpt from *IN PRISON* by Dr Debra Smith, 2008

PRISON AS REHABILITATION

Michael is 32 years old and has served three prison sentences, the last one, three years, the longest for drug-related offences. He comes from a middle-class suburb and has the support of his parents and sister. His father is a war veteran and their relationship is strained at times. Michael admits that he hadn't done anything useful with his life until he came to prison the last time. He worked in the kitchen, learnt a lot of skills, including how to use a computer, attended therapy groups and counselling. He has now been out of prison for over three years and has not been out of work. He is a case where prison did actually serve as rehabilitation. There are no indications that he will return.

Michael provides us with an example of someone who has been able to use prison as rehabilitation. He argues that he would not have stopped his drug use unless he had come to prison, and agrees that many drug users would be dead without prison. He not only stopped drug using, but also took advantage of the opportunity to learn useful job skills, and work on some personal issues in counselling.

Some prisoners believe rehabilitation should be the main role of prison. However, they believe that prisons today do little to encourage rehabilitation. Several times in the prison I was asked to work with long-term prisoners to address their offending behaviour. Many times this behaviour had taken place many years earlier and it was simply too late to try to address it now. It was more useful to work with them on what they could change now and how they could attempt some form of rehabilitation.

"I guess my main gripe is that there's no rehabilitation. Well, the system really doesn't get to know you. I mean, I'm through the net now, I'm glad I've got through, but 12 years ago they needed to get to know me. If I was ever going to be rehabilitated, they needed to know me then. They know nothing about me. They don't have a clue. I haven't used drugs, I haven't given a dirty urine, but they never got to know me. They think they've rehabilitated me because they've given me a fork lift licence and I haven't given a dirty urine, but in actual fact I'm 10 times worse since they've put me in. Emotionally I'm much worse."

A key to rehabilitation is education. Many prisoners are seriously lacking in life skills, particularly in relation to employment. Many prisoners are barely literate.

"You see, they have no skills when they get outside, they walk around and get into drugs again and they're bored. No ambition. The crime cycle again. If you've got a job to go to, then you can live comfortably. The first thing you need is an education. I had a bloke come to me yesterday and ask how do you spell "catch"? He wanted to write "Ill catch up with you." He was 31. I taught a bloke to read and write, he was 28 years old..... All they can talk about is drugs, what they can do when they get out. They have no literacy skills at all. They can't fill out forms."

—oOo—

A Selection of Prisoners Poems

Moving On

Moving on
No more surprises, everything's old
Same faces, same places, same people
The children have grown up
No more fun, time to move on
Moving on

Aaron Wade Austin

THE EAGLE

*The eagle flies, the eagle lands, and never shows emotions.
'Cause the eagle is real strong at heart, let's go easily of all devotions*

*He flies real high up in the sky, he glides, his shadow on the clouds.
The eagle leads a solitary life, avoids the mixed up crowds.*

*When he's down and injured, he's longing for affection.
But because he's stayed away so long, he's seeking, but finds no connection.*

*He brings himself back to reality, and takes himself away.
He cries out loud, but no-one hears. A loner he shall stay.*

*He's King again, feels high and mighty.
Finally he's free at last.
All his thoughts of loneliness, have drifted off into the past*

*He soars the sky with confidence, no message does he send.
I don't know what others feel, but I feel he needs a friend.*

Kylie Eastwood—2010

YOGA HELPS A



LONG STRETCH

Some of the state's worst criminals are being given breathing and yoga classes to teach them how to relax and get over their criminal pasts.

A yoga program being run in one of Victoria's biggest maximum security prisons has the philosophy that "inside every culprit there is a victim crying for help."

The Port Phillip Prison program, run by the International Association for Human Values, aims to help prisoners "experience freedom from past hurts and offences" by learning about the "purifying action of the breath."

Yoga instructor Bernice Bailey said the program reduced post-traumatic stress in prisoners locked up in cells all day. Ms Bailey said she had dealt with some of the state's worst and most notorious criminals, although she preferred not to know the offences the prisoners had committed. "It can be challenging for them (the prisoners). It can be very challenging she said. The people who make it through, they get heaps out of it. I get back from them a lot of humanness."

Victims of crime spokesman Noel McNamara said it was outrageous the inmates were being viewed as victims of their circumstances. "They are supposed to be being punished," he said. "They are in there for a reason because they have committed crimes against the community." Mr McNamara said prisons provided too many leisure activities for inmates, swimming pools and sporting fields, and now yoga classes. "They forfeit that right when they commit a crime," he said.

The yoga program is voluntary, and runs every month with eight two-hour sessions held over two weeks. In last December's issue of *Yoga Australian Life* the program was described as a measure to reduce stress in prisoners filled with feelings of "confinement, boredom, hopelessness, despair and guilt." "It's such a stress-filled environment, I mean, effectively you are caging people," Ms Bailey told the newsletter. "When we have the capacity to breath deep regular breaths then we increase the energy effect and also the cleansing effect of the breath."

A Corrections Victoria spokesman said prisoners in maximum-security prisons spent up to 18 hours a day in their cells and were able to take part in approved activities only when their work commitments had been met.

"Yoga has been trialled as an alternative to medication," he said. "The trial has been successful in reducing prisoners' dependence on costly medication for pain relief and for stress."

Anne Wright. Herald Sun, June 21, 2011

ANOTHER LETTER TO THE EDITOR.....

Thank you so much for your letter telling me that I am a prize winner in your short story competition. To say I was stunned to receive your letter is something of an understatement. While the prize money is nothing to sniff at, especially in prison, simply having my writing valued by someone else has been a source of sheer delight and esteem. Thank you very much.

When I finished my entry I felt I had written something special and knowing others believe so as well has been gratifying. Your letter was a welcome piece of news to brighten up the day.

A prisoner

THE YWCA BRIDGE PROJECT

Those of you who were present at the launch of the Foundation's publication "In Prison" by Dr Debra Smith in 2008, will remember that two of our guest speakers, Ian Jungwirth and Sherilyn Hanson, were from the YMCA Bridge Project in Melbourne.

This Project works with young offenders who have just been released from prison and helps them to find employment, a vital part of becoming part of the community. As Sherilyn pointed out at the launch the aims of this Project is the same as ours, to stop people becoming "tragedies of the prison system."

Their patron is Mick Malthouse, the Collingwood Coach, and he is a very active participant in the work of the Bridge Project. We have heard many good accounts of their work and success they are having in Melbourne.

One of our Committee members, Heather Phillipson, has a particular interest in this project due to the fact that her husband's business, Rock Drill, has taken on one of the young offenders and he has been one of the Bridge Project's wonderful success stories. After successfully completing his work experience with Rock Drill he has now been awarded an Apprenticeship. Due to his success they are happy to give others the work experience opportunity.

50 YEARS OF DEFENDING PERSECUTED WRITERS

By Arnold Zable

This is a special year for International PEN, marking the 50th anniversary of the Writers in Prison Committee. Set up in 1960 in response to the persecution of writers worldwide, the committee's milestone will feature a year long campaign named "Because Writers Speak Their Minds".

Formed in 1921, PEN now has over 140 centres in 100 countries across the globe. In linking the two dates, 1921 and 1960, newly elected president John Ralston Saul said:

"International PEN was created out of the scars of World War I to bring societies back together through their literature. Constant violence against writers quickly forced us to realize that free speech and literature are one and the same thing. PEN is the foremost and oldest freedom of expression organization in the world and since 1960 the Writers in Prison Committee has set the standard around the world for defending not just the rights of writers, but the free speech of everyone".

The annual case list contains the names of almost 900 persecuted writers, editors, journalists and internet writers. The name of the campaign, "Because Writers Speak Their Minds," is taken from the 1960 speech proposing the Writers in Prison Committee. The first 50th anniversary mini-campaign concerns Iran and was launched with a coalition of human rights organizations in February. There is also ongoing advocacy for imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

Melbourne PEN is marking the anniversary with a series of events. The first, "Double Jeopardy," was on 3rd March. Coinciding with International Women's Day, it celebrated the writing of brave women worldwide. A highlight is the Melbourne appearance of John Ralston Saul on 23 May.

Info: admin@melbournepen.com.au

THANK YOU, AGAIN....

BAGS FOR RELEASE

In our last Newsletter we announced that we have found it necessary to end the Bags for Release programme at Fulham Correctional Centre. To those of you who have donated bags to this programme, thank you once again. I'm sure that the hundreds of prisoners who received bags, and clothes, were very grateful.

The bags programme began when one of our Committee members found out that prisoners were being released from Fulham Correctional Centre with their belongings in plastic rubbish bags. This is no problem if being picked up by family or friends but if going by train you are immediately labelled as a released prisoner.

When the programme began we were supplying less than 50 bags per year but at the end of the Programme, in March this year, it had grown to 508! St. Vincent de Paul donated 50 good quality bags to us every year during this time and we have had many donations from community groups in Sale and some from further afield.

SO THANK YOU FOR HELPING US TO PROVIDE SUCH A GOOD SERVICE

Better Ways to Prevent and Treat Hepatitis Virus Infections in Prisoners .

A new three year grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has been awarded to support a partnership between my research team at the University of NSW and Justice Health, NSW Health and Corrective Services. The goals of the project being undertaken by this unique collaboration are to test the effectiveness of prevention programs for blood-borne virus transmission in the NSW prisons, and to expand an innovative model of health care for those with chronic hepatitis B or hepatitis C infections.

Very close relationships exist between illicit drug use, hep B and C infections, and imprisonment. Almost half of all Australian prison inmates report injecting drugs use and more than half are incarcerated for a range of drug-related crimes. It is not a surprise, then, that hep C infection occurs in at least one in three Australian prisoners and in as many as eight out of 10 of those who report injecting. Chronic hep B infection is less common—affecting about one in 30 overall, with somewhat higher rates both in injectors and Aboriginal inmates.

Chronic hep B and C cause cirrhosis, liver failure, and a form of liver cancer called hepatocellular carcinoma. In Australia, it is believed that there are about a quarter of a million individuals with hep C infection and more than half that number again with hep B. Chronic hep C is now the leading cause for liver transplantations amongst adults, followed closely by chronic hep. B. The number of Australians with cirrhosis due to these viral infections is expected to double by 2020. Given these frightening statistics, a lot of effort is now being focused on finding better ways to prevent new infections, and to treat existing infections in order to avoid the later complications.

In terms of prevention, immunisation against hep B is the mainstay as it is safe, inexpensive, and highly effective. The limiting issue amongst injectors has been uptake and completion of the program. By contrast, an effective vaccine to prevent hep C is still many years away, so the preventions options are more challenging, including education, drug substitution programs, and needle-syringe programs (NSP)). Implementing these approaches in the prison setting remains sporadic at best, and

for NSP, too politically sensitive. On another more positive note, we now have increasingly effective antiviral drug treatments for both hep B and C infections—with control of the infection readily achievable for the former, and cure for the latter. Although more such treatments happen each year in NSW than all other States combined, only a tiny proportion of those in prison with hep B or C are actually treated.

Recording the rates of infection has been a research focus via the Hepatitis C Incident and Transmission Study (HITS) cohort, in which we have recorded high rates of risk events (that is episodes with likely blood-to-blood contact) and a high annual hep C incident of 34 per cent. Under the auspices of the new project the HITS program will be expanded to encompass surveillance for new hep B infections. Perhaps more importantly, the HITS cohort will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of existing prevention programs such as bleach cleansing and methadone maintenance treatment in protecting against hep B and C. Similarly, the cohort will be utilized to examine the uptake and effectiveness of the hep B immunization in the prison setting. A modified (quicker) immunization schedule will also be tested.

The other key element of the Partnership Project will be the expansion of an innovative nurse-led model of care for chronic hep C, which was established in 2008 by my team in collaboration with Justice Health in three correctional centres. The model featured delivery of structured assessment and treatment of patients in the prisons by skilled nurses without direct specialist physician input or the need to move to another centre. Several hundred patients were recruited

This NHMRC Partnership Project builds upon more than a decade of both health care delivery and research in relation to hep B and C in NSW prisons by my team, and strong collaborative relationships built over that time with both Justice Health and Corrective Services.

We look forward to facing the challenges in improving both prevention and treatment programs for hep B and C to ensure better health for Australians in prison.

Andrew Lloyd

University of New South Wales

The Partnership investigators include : Professor Andrew Lloyd, Professor Kate Dolan, Professor Paul Huber, Professor Carla Treloar, Dr Fabio Luciani, Dr Jeffery Post and Dr Devon Indig.

ANOTHER NEWSLETTER.....THE NEW MOBILONG POST

In 2006 we held our first Literary Competition and First Prize in the Jan Summers Prisoner Poetry Section was awarded to Brett Stuart Williams who is in Mobilong Prison, Murray Bridge, South Australia. Brett is the Editor and Producer of a Newsletter called *The NewMobilong Post*. The project is funded by the Mobilong Correctional Centre's Offender Development Team and is fully supported by Management.

The *NewMobilong Post* provides information on services available at Mobilong, as well as being very entertaining with competitions, prizes and accolades. For new inmates this can prove to be very useful during their induction into prison life.

The aim of *The NewMobilong Post* is:

- to provide accurate and useful information for new arrivals about programmes and prisoner services.
- to report on fundraisers, sports events and other activities as they occur.
- to provide fun, entertainment and a forum for prisoner art and poetry.
- to provide a platform for various groups to address the prisoner population.

The circulation is 300, 240 for inmates and 72 for family and friends of inmates.

This is a very inspirational project and accomplishes what it sets out to do, to inform and entertain and make a difference in an otherwise depressing and negative environment.

The Editor's hope is that he can establish a network with other prisons who may have similar publications or who want to establish a similar project.

This year *The New Mobilong Post* was recognised with a Ministerial Award (DCS Team Excellence Award).

—o0o—

ANOTHER INTERESTING FACT..... ●

In 2003 770,000 people worked in the United States Correction sector, a number which is projected to grow. During the same year there were 880,000 workers in the entire United States automobile manufacturing sector.

More school to cut crime

Keeping children at school later to reduce after-school offending was among several radical options suggested to cut crime. Another was to make prison bosses accountable for the behaviour of offenders after their release.

The extreme measures, put to a high-level government committee just before November's state election, have been revealed as the latest Victorian crime statistics reinforce the possible need to consider innovative ways to tackle crime.

Crime figures released yesterday show that statewide the number of reported crimes against the person rose 2000, or 4.2 per cent, in the 12 months to March compared to the previous year.

The jump represented an increase of 2.5 per cent in the crime rate per 100,00, compared to a fall of 6.7 per cent in crimes against property.

The crime and public safety strategy options in a paper seen by the Herald Sun are believed to have been prepared for a group established by the heads of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Justice, and police Chief Commissioner Simon Overland.

Deputy Commissioner Ken Lay, a member of the working group set up last August, said yesterday the group had now "morphed into something a little less formal" but had met last week to discuss ways community safety could be improved.

Other options, believed to have been proposed by departments included:

FOCUSING police attention on reducing and preventing crime rather than arrests.

TACKLING knife crime by focusing on early intervention and education "not harsh law enforcement and punishment that potentially infringes on human rights."

MOVING high-rate of offenders up the queue for trial

MAKING prison conditions harder near the end of an offender's sentence as a deterrent measure.

The options paper, part of the former government's attempt to change community perceptions of crime and safety, said a key message was "There is no (significant) problem—but an opportunity to make good better." The former government's efforts to influence public perceptions are believed to have been examined during an Ombudsman's inquiry due to report this month.

Statistics released on October 28 said city assaults were down significantly, but did not mention increases in several other categories.

By Geoff Wilkinson, Herald Sun 9/6/2011

Bridge Publications Order Form

PUBLICATION	Unit Price	No. Copies	Total Cost
This is Serious <i>A collection of poetry by Ian C. Smith, illustrated by ex-prisoner Chanin Thattawatana</i>	\$20		\$
Fighting the Demons <i>A collection of writing and drawings by prisoners and people connected with the prison</i>	\$20		\$
Out of Sight, Out of Mind <i>A collection of essays, fiction and poetry about the prison. Includes Nicholas Cowdery, David Heilpern, Mark O'Flynn, MTC Cronin and others</i>	\$20		\$
Memory Like Hunger <i>A collection of poetry by Ian C. Smith, donated to 'The Bridge Foundation' for fundraising</i>	\$20		\$
In Prison <i>A gutsy first hand look at prison life by Dr. Debra Smith.</i>	\$25		\$
Sub Total:			\$
Postage:			\$
(Please add \$2 postage for each copy ordered)			
GRAND TOTAL:			\$

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Cheque/money order payable to the *Bridge Foundation* enclosed for the amount of \$ _____ .

Orders should be mailed to: **The Bridge Foundation**
P.O. Box 9279
Sale Victoria 3850

Please allow approximately 5 working days from when we receive your order for delivery.

Thank-you.

Calling All Friends of Bridge

Did you know your subscription has expired

Do you want to receive our newsletter in 2011?

Did you know it's still only \$20 per annum to be a 'Friend of Bridge'?

A big thanks to all of you who have supported The Bridge Foundation throughout 2010 by:

- Donating bags and clothing to our 'Bags for Release' programme
- Volunteering your time
- Becoming a 'Friend of Bridge'
- Contributing material to our 'Sentences' literary competition
- Generally advocating for our organisation

We hope we can continue to rely on your support in 2011!

Yes, please renew my subscription to 'Friends of Bridge'

- Please accept my cheque for \$_____ which will support the work of **The Bridge Foundation**
- Please send me further information about **The Bridge Foundation**
- Please add my name to The **Bridge Foundation's** mailing list

Name:.....

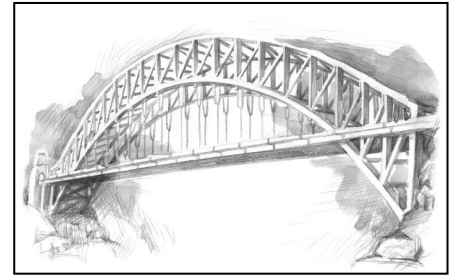
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Please detach this form and send to: The Bridge Foundation, P.O. Box 9279, Sale 3850, donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible

About Bridge ...



The *Bridge Foundation* is a non-profit organisation (funded by trusts, court fines and community donations), which works with the community to support released prisoners who wish to make a positive new start. His Honour Peter Gebhardt is the *Bridge Foundation's* patron.

The Foundation has a strong advocacy role, seeking to:

- ⇒ Improve **awareness** of issues facing the corrections industry, prisoners and ex-prisoners
- ⇒ Promote changes in society's **attitude** towards prisoners and ex-prisoners
- ⇒ Encourage **action** that has a positive impact on our corrections system and the community
- ⇒ Ensure a focus on **rehabilitation** by supporting skills development and education in prisons

Rehabilitation reduces the chances of re-offending and makes for a safer community; here are some interesting facts:

- Crime has reduced, but imprisonment rates have increased
- Prisons still focus mainly on punishment, not rehabilitation
- 67% of prisoners (2 out of 3) re-offend
- It costs \$65,000 to keep 1 person in prison for 1 year
- Only \$250 is spent on each ex-prisoner after release
- Australia's public housing is only 1%, but the United Kingdom's and Sweden's is 25%
- Aborigines are about 2% of our total population, but 20% of our prison population

You can support the *Bridge Foundation's* work by becoming a 'Friend of the Bridge Foundation' (see opposite, page 12), purchasing one of our publications (see page 15) or telling others about the *Foundation* and its work.

THE TRADITIONAL 10 TIPS FOR BETTER HEALTH

- 1. Don't smoke. If you can, stop. If you can't, cut down.
- 2. Follow a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- 3. Keep physically active.
- 4. Manage stress by, for example, talking things through and making time to relax.
- 5. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
- 6. Cover up in the sun, and protect children from sunburn.
- 7. Practice safer sex.
- 8. Take up cancer-screening opportunities
- 9. Be safe on the roads : follow the Highway Code.
- 10. Learn the First Aid ABC's: **A**irways, **B**reathing, **C**irculation.

Ten Tips for staying Healthy—Gordon, 1999

- 1. Don't be poor. If you can, stop, If you can't, try not to be poor for long.
- 2. Don't have poor parents.
- 3. Own a car.
- 4. Don't work in a stressful, low paid manual job.
- 5. Don't live in damp, low quality housing.
- 6. Be able to afford to go on a foreign holiday and sunbathe.
- 7. Practice not losing your job and don't become unemployed.
- 8. Take up all benefits you are entitled to, if you are unemployed, retired or sick and disabled.
- 9. Don't live next to a busy major road or near a polluting factory.
- 10. Learn how to fill in the complex housing benefit/asylum application forms before you become homeless and destitute.

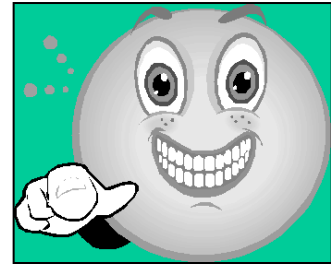
Source: *Gordon, D. Posting on Spirit of 1848 List, April, 1999*

Bridge Wants To Hear From YOU!

Are you a prisoner or an ex-prisoner?

Do you work at a prison?

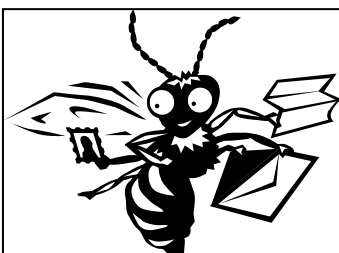
Do you have an interest in corrections?



Bridge Matters is published three to four times a year by the *Bridge Foundation*. It aims to raise awareness in the community of the *Foundation's* aims & activities

We are always on the look-out for interesting information and material to bring you through our Newsletter, and we welcome contributions and ideas from our readers

Perhaps you have a **poem** or **short story** to contribute, or wish to write an **article about prison life, projects, initiatives or experiences.**



Please forward your material to us by e-mail or post:
E-mail: bridge.foundation@ucgipps.org.au
Post: P.O. Box 9279, Sale 3850

The Bridge Foundation

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