T R A N S C R I P T

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Children Affected by Parental Incarceration

Melbourne—Wednesday, 30 March 2022

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WITNESSES *(via videoconference)*

Mr Norm Reed, Executive Officer, Onesimus Foundation,

Ms Stacey Milbourne, Doorways Manager—Tasmania, Salvation Army, Australia Territory,

Ms Teresa Pockett, Student Support Leader, Learning Services, Department of Education Tasmania, and

Ms Julie Bunyard, former Family Consultant, Tasmania Prison Service, Children Affected by Parental Offending Steering Group.

The CHAIR: Hi, everyone. Welcome back. As I am sure you all know this is a public hearing of the Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into Children Affected by Parental Incarceration.

I am very pleased that we have now been joined by a steering group called CAPO, which is the Children Affected by Parental Offending Steering Group. They are all based down in Tasmania at the moment. On the screen with three members we have Mr Norm Reed, the Executive Officer of Onesimus Foundation; Teresa Pockett, the Student Support Leader for Learning Services at the Department of Education; Julie Bunyard, who was a former Family Consultant at the Tasmania Prison Service; and on her own we have Stacey Milbourne, who is Doorways Manager, working with the Tasmanian Salvation Army. Thank you all. We are really grateful for you making that time to meet with us and we are very keen to hear what you have been doing as a steering group.

Can I first just let you know that all evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege, and that is provided by our *Constitution Act* but also by our very own standing orders of the Legislative Council. Therefore any information that you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing. However, were you to repeat the same things outside this hearing, you may not have the same protection. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee could be considered a contempt of Parliament.

We have Hansard sitting behind us listening to every word that you say and transcribing it diligently. That transcript will ultimately be on the committee's website, but prior to that you will be sent a copy of that transcript. We encourage you to have a look at it, make sure that we did not mishear anything or misrepresent you in any way. As I said, ultimately it will become a public document.

Again, we are very grateful for the time that you are providing to us today. If you would like to make an opening presentation, we will then open it up to committee discussion. Thank you.

Mr REED: Thanks, Fiona. Perhaps I will start. One of the things that is quite unique about Tasmania is we only have one prison. The prison is located in the south, in Hobart. It has all jurisdictions, so medium, maximum and minimum, and also a women's prison. In addition to that we have two prisons basically at the courts—one in Launceston and one in Hobart—which are reception prisons.

To give a bit of context to what we do, the fact is that I arrived here about 10 years ago as the pastor of a church which is right next to the prison—we have 64 acres of land that immediately adjoin the church—so I became quite interested in getting involved in the prison in some way. And in the process of doing that, Julie actually rang me one day and asked me whether I would be willing to do a kids program in the prison. So to cut a long story short, because I am really good at making them very long, we took an old program that had finished up which really was not working that effectively and started a program called Kids Days. It used to be called dad's day, but even the rebadging of it—it was focused around children. So it was a time for children when they would go to the prison and then basically sit with their parent in the prison, and they did not have another adult with them. We took them in as a group and we ran activities. We ran that for quite a number of years. It stopped during the COVID time. We did that over about 10 or 11 years. I think 2012 was the first event that we ran. We would probably do about 80 children a session, like in each of the school holidays, four times a year—quite impactful.

I suppose the challenge for me was to look then at what families went through. So in my background I then did a trip overseas to do a Churchill Fellowship, which again Julie suggested that I do, and that took me to 21 prisons from Singapore into Belgium, France and then through England, Wales and Scotland, particularly

looking at the challenges that families face when someone is incarcerated. A number of initiatives came out of that visit. When I came back I was very interested to see how that worked out in the community, and that led to meeting a number of people. Perhaps I could just firstly throw to Julie to introduce herself a bit more and just talk about her role, and then I will talk about how we met Teresa and then what happened there too. Julie, do you want to just—

Ms BUNYARD: Okay. Sure. I was employed by the Tasmania Prison Service for 10 years as their Family Consultant. I retired in January 2021. Initially I started to do a research project, and I was asked to look at ways the prison could better support the prisoner and the family relationship. It was very inward-focused research—how could the prisoner be supported. We did that, and I made a number of recommendations, including parenting programs and about visits and things like that. But over time it evolved and we realised that we actually needed to be looking at how we can better support the family and in particular the children, because one of the things they had asked me to look at was intergenerational offending. So we expanded that to looking at what is it that the family needs and more importantly what is it that the child wants. We still looked at visits and things like that, added the Kids Days; we did parenting programs. But then it also started to occur to us that these were not just our children and our families; this was housing, this was health, this was education, this was child safety, which was in particular becoming more important in our world. So we started to look at how we can bring other organisations into the prison, and in particular non-government organisations as well—make it everybody's problem or issue.

Mr REED: So when I came back from my trip overseas one of the things I had learned about was a thing called Hidden Sentence training. This particular training was training that recognised that when a person did a term of sentence in a prison their family also were sentenced, but it was hidden, and that raised a whole pile of questions. So one of the things that I then did was I visited the local school, a school quite close to us, where Teresa Pockett was the principal of the school. Do you want to just quickly tell your story?

Ms POCKETT: Yes. I was in a school of about 460 children. That is about a medium-sized school in Tasmania. We were actually physically, geographically, quite close to the prison—not very far away—and my school has quite a large number of social and economic challenges. We are situated in a space where a lot of the parents are unemployed and there are health issues, all sorts of issues really and problems, and Norm came to visit the school. He came in a year that we had had four major murders—people who had passed away had been killed—and all of them involved children of or related to the perpetrator and also children of the victim.

In my school, in my community, it actually is not very safe to remain neutral; you have to take a side. So my school was splitting each time these things happened, and not just that, but also every time there was a vigil, every time a court started, every time there was a memorial service and it was in the media, a new wave would sweep the school and the parent community. I had more high-level assaults happening between adults who were waiting outside the school for children than I did actually inside the school itself. So we were getting help from the police from half past 2 to half past 3. We divided up different areas of our school for drop-offs and pick-ups so families did not cross over each other. I had a very young staff. It is one of those things where often we end up with very young staff. So I was trying to support the staff at the same time to remain vigilant and to be safe themselves, but also about how to be working with the children.

When Norm came it was a challenge because he asked me what I was doing to support families. I felt a little bit overwhelmed because I thought that actually in a way it is not education. I thought, 'Why is this education if you look at things like literacy, numeracy, development and so on?'. But it then afforded me the opportunity to really think about this and to think about what we did in our school to be able to support our families and our children. When I thought about it, we actually explicitly teach social skills—emotional and social education—in our schools. We teach protective behaviours alongside our literacy, our numeracy, our science, history—those sorts of things. I then was a bit upset that I actually had not as a leader been able to see this, and it was a great opportunity then to engage with Norm, to be invited into CAPO, to be able to then make this a subject that all of our staff could talk about and plan for. It provided a great opportunity for us then to engage in a space that actually had a big impact on our children, but also on our staff and our parents. So it was a great opportunity.

Mr REED: So having met Teresa, we decided we would run a Hidden Sentence training program, so Julie and I put this together based on the UK model, and we got people together that were interested. Stacey was one of those, but, again, a range of other people too were particularly interested in being in this space. Stacey is just coming back again. So, Stacey, I was just saying that having met with Teresa, we then got a group of people

that were interested and we ran Hidden Sentence training for people that were interested. It included you, it included Teresa, it included Belinda from CatholicCare, and a range of others that came along. In the Hidden Sentence training basically we have a bit of a quiz, we talk about what being incarcerated means, we have a little video that we show—we have a lot of discussion. We also do a tour of the prison, so we take people into the prison to understand it. Then after we had finished our particular Hidden Sentence, we came at of it and said, 'Well, what are we going to do differently as a result of this? I mean, having done it, how does it affect what we do and how we as a group engage?'. We basically decided to get together and stay in a committee, which we called at that stage CAPI, Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment—or incarceration. Over time we realised it is not just children whose parents are incarcerated that actually this issue is for, because people can be on this offending journey over many ways. As soon as a person commits an offence, they are affected by offending behaviour. When they come out of prison the problem is not solved, so how do you continually engage in that space? So CAPO was formed.

I was very fortunate through my church or fellowship to come back with a lot of resources. We ended up taking this particular resource, which I think has been referred to you. It is called the I-HOP quality statements—I think it has been referred, and if not, I can certainly make it available. Basically it is eight quality statements if you are working with children whose parents are offending. I will just go through them really quickly, but basically it is an awareness: just being aware that you have children in your organisation that are affected by parental offending. Then the second one is to identify them—how do you identify those children? The next quality statement is: how do you listen to the voice of the children? The fourth is: how do you work together in a multi-agency setting so you can make a difference? Then the stages of the criminal justice system—how do you identify this not just at the time of imprisonment but elsewhere? Then the support services that work around this: how do you challenge the stigma which arises? And then finally: how do you build the evidence? Essentially what we did, as a group of people that had actually done a Hidden Sentence and started in CAPO, was we all went back to our own areas. So T went back to the school. Stacey went back again—I will give Stacey a chance to say something in a minute; sorry, Stacey. It was particularly helpful in trying to help us on: how do we identify the effectiveness of this? And you may want to speak to that in a minute, Stacey, as well.

So we all went back. Child Safety Service joined us for our group. I will just give you a one-off instance. Julie mentioned before that when we had our kids day, for example, in 2012 we may have had about 30 or 40 kids, but there was only one child that came from Child Safety. Towards the end of the period, more recently, we are having 10 or 12 children come. We have actually seen a change in Child Safety in their willingness to engage and bring children into the prison. Particularly I think this is effectively useful, because the Child Safety worker on our group, who was a team leader, actually got every team leader in Child Safety to do the Hidden Sentence training. We got them together and we took them in for the tour of the prison. We actually let them hear the voice of the children, which is in our video that we show. They became aware, and we kind of demystified prison. We try to show how you can do some things safely. It actually has brought about a change in culture. Every one of our advice and referral line people now—the current people doing the advice and referral line—have actually done the Hidden Sentence training and gone into the prison.

Look, I will throw to Stacey to also introduce her sort of role. Let me just say one other thing, because Stacey was instrumental in this as well. We also started producing our own resources. For example—you can speak to this in a minute, Stacey—this book here is from Save the Children. We produced this little booklet for children visiting the prison—pictures of teddy bears, and Julie took the pictures. Again, it is producing Tasmanian resources, specifically for the prison in Tasmania. So, Stacey, do you want to talk about how you then validated the program we were doing and also talk about your involvement?

Ms MILBOURNE: Well, I guess I will go back to the beginning, before the group came together, because my former role was as the manager of Communities for Children in south-east Tas, which is funded through the Department of Social Services. What we recognised in one of our locations, which is where T was the principal of the school, was there was an awful lot of early intervention for that pre-birth to five age group in that area. But what we also recognised—and T used to come to the collective for that as well—was that in that eight- to 13-year age group we had a lot of children still disengaging with education, and we were trying to figure out what would be the reasons. One of the reasons that came up was the fact that they had a close family member who had been imprisoned, so the children were going through a grieving process and had different reactions and different behaviours because of that separation from the parent, and some were being excluded from school. But nobody really knew how to open the conversation or how to support children in this situation, and we recognised that they were going through a grieving process.

I got introduced through one of our Salvation Army programs. They said, 'Go and have a chat to Julie Bunyard at the prison', who then introduced me to Norm, and we then went and saw T, and from that CAPO was born. So it was just about recognising that there were a lot of children that were almost being put in the too-hard basket, and it does affect their literacy, their numeracy and their education because they are missing out on really valuable time at school because they do not know how to express themselves and no-one knows how to help them through that process or what supports and resources are there for those children. So then, linking with Norm, it was like music to my ears with the Churchill Fellowship he had done and the Hidden Sentence awareness training. And then we actually got together and we actually put forward to the Department of Social Services the Hidden Sentence awareness training as one of their innovative programs, and it was approved as an innovative program. So we were able to actually use a certain amount of our funding to fund that training so we could really reach out to people working within that sector with children who were in that situation, and not just the children but also those other children within that space and other families so that the children were not wearing the shame, because we had a lot of children bearing the shame of the adults' actions, and the idea was that we opened that door and that education so children did not have to wear that shame either going forward.

Part of that was developing a book called *Waiting for Dad*—I do not know if you can see that. It is about two young children. The dad is in prison. It is based very much on the Tasmanian prison system and the different types of programs that are in there, what can happen and what happens when you go into prison. Writing a letter is probably the best way to contact a parent or a family member in prison because sometimes phone calls are not an option if the prison is in lockdown, that type of thing, and that can give the message to children that the adult does not care because they have not made the time to call—but writing is the best way to contact the person in prison.

Doing the actual walk-through as part of the Hidden Sentence training, I could see with all our community partners that we had go through this training it was almost like the penny dropping when they realised that, you know, if you are 5 minutes late you do not get in. And I remember T actually verbalising that she had a parent who at certain times would almost scream into the car park, throw the children out of the car and take off again. But when T realised it was because she had to be there at a certain time or she would not get in—it is just that comprehension, I guess, as to what some families go through, and in particular the children, and how we need to provide that support for those children so they can get on with what they need to do without it really impacting adversely on them as they go forward and as they grow into the future and miss out.

Have I missed anything, guys?

Mr REED: That is great, Stacey. That is fantastic. Stacey was fantastic in bringing people together and again starting some of the—

Ms MILBOURNE: Connecting.

The CHAIR: I know.

Mr REED: I think then the Hidden Sentence training actually grew further. So again as a committee we ended up doing roadshows. We took this into Launceston, into Burnie, into St Helens and into Smithton, and the idea of the roadshow was again to try and get people together. In Launceston, for example, I think we ran four sessions, and we actually intentionally got departments together. So we had police and the education department together; we had child safety and community corrections together. We basically got these departments together to have different sessions. I did it to a whole bunch of church leaders in one of the evenings. We got non-government agencies together, and we ran it specifically to try and talk about how people could engage in the space. The whole aim really was to present what happens to children—that actually they are affected when somebody is offending—and how we can respond. Through all these things each of our own organisations began to develop their own resources and began to work in this space. I think one of the reasons it worked well—and it has worked well. We have not met for a couple of years, but I think probably at the level that we were all at, we were all actively engaged from Child Safety's perspective. So when we did our Hidden Sentence, T would be part of that process, Julie was, I was, and also Child Safety.

When we were speaking to these professionals, when we actually were talking, it was not just delivered by one person, it was delivered by the agencies talking. The other thing that was really good about this—it was actually not a large amount of funding that Stacey provided, but apart from this, this had no funding. The roadshow and

who ran it—each department would kind of pay their own fares to get up there, so it was not about money. We were actually working around the best interests of children. I will just say a couple of other things, and I had better let you ask some questions, because I can talk for a long time. The other thing that also—

Ms MILBOURNE: Sorry, Norm, could I just interject to build on what you were saying about the agencies? What was really, really special about what we did was that we all worked together; there was no competition. It was all about working together, filling gaps and providing the best outcomes for those families and children. It was.

Mr REED: I mean, Belinda from CatholicCare unfortunately is not able to be here, but I was just talking with her yesterday. Within Tasmania about 50 per cent of the people are Catholic, and it has been really interesting. She was part of a social impact program, and the difference, she was just saying, having had Catholic education, social services, the parishes and housing all kind of involved in this space—so she would have different people come from each of those organisations because she wanted this story to be told across their organisation. And the way that it has impacted them—they are currently now funding a person to do family engagement work in the prison, so they have actually been inspired to do that. It has affected their flexible learning centres, the way they do that. It has affected the apprenticeship programs. They just have an awareness of children who are affected by parental offending, knowing how to respond to them slightly differently, more compassionately, and at least understand their voice a little better.

So there is another thing that we also did. Barnardos was great. I do not know whether you can see that booklet. I think you have also got copies of that, or I did mention that earlier. It is actually called *Supporting Children and Families Affected by a Family Member's Offending: A Practitioner's Guide*. So in addition to the Hidden Sentence training—by the way, we have done that with more than 1000 people and probably 100 organisations, and it became a fishing ground—where you had school psychologists and social workers, you had different people, this actually went to another level. It is a 4-hour training session, and T and Jo Jumper, who is the Save the Children manager, ran this program. It actually digs deep. So we took the manual provided by Barnardos, and we adapted it to Australia. We had one of our volunteers fly over to Monash to speak with Catherine Flynn and also be involved in making sure it was Australian in its content. We adapted this, and we began to run this program for professionals who wanted to dig deeper and get some skills around—anyhow, you have got copies of that.

The CHAIR: Yes, we do.

Ms POCKETT: It is a strength-based program—sorry, it is T—and it really looks at what the families and the children already have and how to build upon that, but it is also flexible because we also understand that the needs of the children and the needs of the family change very much on the offending journey. Some of these journeys are so long that things change. You know, people get new partners. Sometimes it becomes safer when people are removed from the home, sometimes it causes a great deal of stress. Children, particularly if they have called in a situation themselves to the police, feel very guilty about things. Things change. We work with children who desperately need face-to-face time very often, and then it can change through to sometimes them actually deciding, 'No, I don't need that sort of support anymore. I've got other things in my life'. So the things we put in place always need the voice of the family and the child there, because what we might think is important today might not be important tomorrow at all. We need to be listening.

The CHAIR: Thank you. And I think it is quite fascinating rounding up with such a multidisciplinary organisation such as yourself and one that actually is pulling out and breaking those silos of different government departments. We have actually spent a lot of the day talking about the lack of that crossbreeding and the lack of those conversations across housing, across child protection, across health and across corrections.

Ms POCKETT: To be honest, I truly believe that it is because the people that were involved, although they were part of strategic planning for different departments and so on—and most of the people were at that level—also still had operational components. I think for our space that operational component is the thing that really glued us together, because the need for change for the children was so evident. So I think that that then made our goals really simple.

The CHAIR: Yes. And I think the kids day at the jails is really fascinating. One of the issues that has been raised with us today is around the lack of data. Maybe this is a mainland thing. In Tasmania do you know how many people in your prison have children?

Ms BUNYARD: I did do some data. I did a snapshot for three months. I cannot remember; it was too long ago.

Mr REED: Seventy-five per cent.

Ms BUNYARD: I think it is quite high.

Mr REED: About 75 per cent.

Ms BUNYARD: And it is not completely accurate, because it was people self-declaring and sometimes they do not want to tell us figures—they have got child safety involvement or sometimes it is complicated. They may have multiple families, and who do they consider their children now and who are their actual biological children? So it is very complicated, but at least 75 per cent, I would say. They were not all actively involved with their children, but they all considered that they had children that they were responsible for.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Julie. So the nub of your program is that by educating all of the managers and practitioners in those different agencies, when they come across a child who has a parent incarcerated they can then be conscious of the services that are available and be conscious of the impact that that is having rather than when that child's parent is incarcerated services being alerted to that child and that child being sent to wraparound services. Is that correct?

Ms BUNYARD: Well, I think everybody needs to talk so that everybody is working together. One of the big problems I had was, particularly before child safety became more involved in the prison, that the prisoner would often be telling us one story about what their contact could be, and we did not know if that was true or not. But now that we have really good contact with Child Safety we know what the contact actually can be. So if they say, 'We're not going to support visits at the moment', then we can reiterate that to the mum or dad—'We're sorry, but at the moment visits aren't going to happen, but we need this, this and this to happen, and then they will consider visits', or, 'When you get out you need to contact Child Safety, and then they'll look at reinstating visits'. So it is all that communication to keep things moving forward—that was what I found at the prison—rather than us not knowing what was happening and not being able to support the parent or the child.

Ms POCKETT: We do not have a formal notification system, though, if that is what were talking about.

The CHAIR: I am just wondering in the prison, then, does that become part of an induction process that you are conscious of? So when someone is coming into the prison—

Ms BUNYARD: Did we ask them?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms BUNYARD: When I was there I was trying to get it consistently, but there was no legislation around it. It was always self-declared, and there were issues around whether the question was actually asked.

Mr REED: And one of the challenges too is that often people coming into prison do not want to declare they have got children, because it may invoke Child Safety getting involved if it is not already involved. So they have their own fears about what they do. I think the prison here does a survey every two years. Certainly there are a lot of questions about family, and I will dig up whether it asks the question about the number of children.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr REED: What we have started to do within the prison is certainly become more child focused. For example, when there were family group conferences, which Child Safety would often facilitate, we ended up making sure that the parent could engage in those. We would provide video where they would participate in family group conferences, so it was a much greater involvement. Initially when we started and a person was in

prison it was almost like they had no voice. And so I think there has been a big change over the number of years, so there is certainly a better engagement in that space.

Ms MILBOURNE: I think just to build on that, Norm, the Hidden Sentence training also gave some awareness for the parent in prison that they could, where it was possible, participate in like a parent-teacher as well, or if the child was up on the north-west coast of Tasmania and unable to visit the parent, that could be done via a video link, in particular if that parent was in maximum security as well.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Tania.

Ms MAXWELL: Thank you, Chair. Thank you so much for being here and for that really informative introduction. I am just wondering—I am actually not able to open the attachments for some reason—do you have any case studies that you can send to us that support some of the outcomes?

Ms BUNYARD: Homework club? I was just thinking about the girl when we did the homework club.

Mr REED: I have certainly got a number of things we have written on. There is one I sent to you just before. It is actually talking about a young man who came with one of the local schools. He is called John in the report. There are two aspects to it. This was actually published by a professional educator, Dr Elizabeth Robinson, who was the principal of the school. She was the assistant principal at the time. It talks about the impact in this young man's life of trying to make a connection with his dad. All he wanted to do was see his dad. So he had this story. I have sent you both the original copy she did. So, again, it is making the availability so prison does not exclude. She talks about the change in his life as a result of that. As it turns out, we followed this young man through. This same young man did a video visit—I think you may have looked at our website. We do a homework program via video. Richard Branson actually viewed that visit of this young man having to visit with his dad at a homework session.

So we have continued to run it going through the schools, because again, often the problem with prison visit times is they are all during school hours. Of course with separation, we do not have a prison that is close to where people are—they are up north. They cannot do that, so video has been used quite extensively, and we have done that in schools doing the homework program. So we developed an MOU with the education department to try and work in that space. There are many, many anecdotal stories that have come out of that, and we have got quite a collection of stories. Have we actually gone through and quantified it all? No, we have not.

Ms MAXWELL: Okay. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Perfect. Thank you. Tania, Rod and then Lee.

Ms MILBOURNE: Sorry. It is not so much a case study, but when we were developing *Waiting for Dad* we actually had a dad in prison read it to two of his children to get feedback. So with the process, everyone reads and children would say, 'No, we wouldn't say that. We wouldn't say it like that'. So it is very applicable to children. There is one point in it where the main character is talking to his best friend and did not want a couple of the other boys in the class to know because of how they would then treat him and bully him et cetera. Do you remember, Norm and Julie, there was that feedback? For this particular dad, he looked at his two children and said, 'Has this happened to you?'. And it was almost like he did not realise the impact of what he had done—how that could actually impact on his children in school or socially in that space. So it is not so much a case study, but it was quite a penny-dropping moment for that dad in that space.

The CHAIR: Amazing.

Mr REED: I mean, there are anecdotal stories—I could go on and on. We actually did a Hidden Sentence training also with one of the schools, and they came through—we did not actually go into the prison but we went and looked at the prison. We were doing that, and I was walking away from it. One of the young men came up to me and he said, 'Do you remember me?', and I said, 'No'. He said, 'I came in for a kids day to visit my dad many years ago'. I said, 'How's it going?'. He said, 'Great. Dad's out. We're continuing to engage. Everything's going really well'. But he talked about the impact that the children's day, the kids day, had on him and how it helped them build that relationship.

The CHAIR: That is fantastic to hear. Rod.

Mr BARTON: Thank you. A very informative presentation, so thank you very much for that. The *Waiting for Dad* book—I am going to go out and see if I can find one and have a look at that.

Ms MILBOURNE: I will send you one.

Mr BARTON: All right. I would love that, thank you.

Ms MILBOURNE: If I can get your contact details, I can send you one, definitely.

Mr BARTON: Yes, sure.

Mr REED: We have this one as well, which is *Visiting Dad*, which is basically for zero to five, so it is actually more of a picture story with bears and just big words. I can hold that up there.

Ms MILBOURNE: I can send both of those if you like. I have got them here.

Mr BARTON: That would be great, thanks. That would be awesome. Are you planning or have you started reintroducing the kids program, bringing them in now—kids day?

Mr REED: The kids day, yes. We did one a little while ago. We actually did one during COVID, and we did it via video. So we actually had kids taken out to the homes. I think we only had about 16 people participate in that. It was not big, so it was just a trial where we were trying to use video to do that. It was okay. It was good, during that space. They have had two since COVID, so I have not been involved in that. We pass it on to, say, the children, and they take that on as a project. We are just kind of working on what it looks like now, coming out of COVID.

Mr BARTON: Great. I really have not got any questions. It was a very informative presentation. So thank you very much, and I will pass it back to the Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will go to Lee, thank you.

Mr TARLAMIS: Thank you, Chair. Unfortunately I came in a little bit late and missed part of the presentation, so I do not have any questions. I will be sure to read back over the transcript to make sure I am across anything that I did miss, but thank you for presenting today.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Tania, did you have further questions?

Ms MAXWELL: No, not at this stage, thank you.

The CHAIR: Lovely. I am not quite sure what it would look like, but has there been any evaluation of the impact on either recidivism or on the outcomes for the children of people who have been part of any of the programs since CAPO and since this program and since the Hidden Sentence framework has been rolled out?

Mr REED: There is certainly, again, anecdotal evidence, and most of it is following the stories. Because you actually build a relationship with the children if it is over a long period of time, I could tell you stories of two young girls who have just actually turned out brilliant young girls and gone on to be school captains; of another young man—there were three in the family—who went on to get a scholarship and go on to university. Yet when his dad went in—I think there is story after story. I could tell you stories of kids that would come in and do homework. We used to do a homework program in the prison, and again just the connectedness with the child would see them continuing to engage. In some cases too the success has not always been the father or the mother that has changed. Sometimes they go on with their offending behaviour. But I think it is actually walking with them on this journey that is really so important.

Ms POCKETT: We have not really got anything longitudinally, but as Norm was saying, we have certainly got understandings—we could do case studies, I suppose, of individuals certainly, whole families that have had a different pathway, I think, because they have engaged with Hidden Sentence.

Ms MILBOURNE: Yes. And what we did do for a short period of time as well was do that pre and post peer training evaluation, and the difference in the understanding and knowledge of the post was quite

significant in relation to understanding the impact of imprisonment on prisoners, prisoners' families, improved understanding of the prison system and how it affects families et cetera. So there were about six questions, and the change was people who were working in that space. It was more the professionals working in that space, because when we looked at trying to put an evidence base together to submit to AIFS, we could not actually do it with the children or with the families, because that was quite a fluid, I guess, for want of a better word, group, whereas we could do it with, as an example, our teachers in our schools or people working in that space, for their pre and post understanding of it.

The CHAIR: Of course. I was interested in certainly the homework program. I know some of these have been passed on, but one of the issues that has been raised with us over today but also over a number of months in other inquiries is access to communication. So I love your idea of writing letters, because the telephone is quite a different and difficult thing. We have also found that telephone calls can be price prohibitive, particularly for women in prison, because they have less work options in those prisons. During COVID the video interactions and the video visits actually were hugely popular and really enabled parents to see their children at home doing their homework, patting the dog et cetera. In the last session it was raised with us that there was an awful lot of paperwork to enable these types of communications to occur. I wonder if in Tasmania the processes are slightly more streamlined so the homework club and things like that can happen more easily.

Mr REED: I think from our perspective, if I can just offer my appreciation really to the prison service in some sense. There are lots of challenges being in the prison. There are lots of challenges. You can start in an area. Prisoners often move from one place to another because of behavioural issues. We do have a benefit in Tasmania: we only have one real estate, so even if they go from a minimum classification to a maximum classification because of something they do, they are still in the same real estate. One of the big benefits has been that the staff have actually really recognised that if we are doing something—I mean, I found I could argue for children but I could not argue for the prisoners, so if I was presenting about the consistency for a child, I cannot recall an instance where the prison actually said no. If a person was having a homework program or a visit with his child in minimum and he got moved to a maximum facility, the prison did not say no, because it was about the child. So the argument was about the child. It was not about the rights of the prisoner, it was the rights of the child to be able to have those contacts. I think that has been what we have tried to push consistently through the system, and I really have found the prison as helpful as possible within the constraints of what they have got to do. There are staffing issues and other things, and when places are locked down it is really difficult, but we have been able to work in that space. We have been doing video visits though since well before COVID. I mean, we have been doing the homework programs and we have been visiting with families. So COVID has not introduced—it has actually opened up a greater door. And even when COVID first started, I have got survey results from families talking about the effectiveness of videos and their assessment of the value for the child—and you mentioned that—so we have got some good evidence around that. Yes, you have got to work through the system, but it has not stopped us doing what we want to do.

Ms POCKETT: I think from a school's point of view the paperwork is not onerous. There are a lot of other programs and so on that have a lot more paperwork that goes with them. It is around the permissions, and I think education staff are really relieved when it is clear that there is actually a process before children are allowed to access the homework club or go on face-to-face visits, for example. So that brings a bit of security around that for children, because the last thing we want to do is to put children at risk. So I think that that really helped for staff in schools to feel comfortable and confident.

And I think the other thing is with the homework club in particular online, it actually has been really useful for a lot of our families, a lot of my families. A lot of my kids have communication issues. They struggle to actually verbalise and articulate what they are feeling or what they want. A lot of their communication is through behaviour. They find sitting for 45 minutes extremely difficult, so a prison visit is actually too long for a lot of my kids. And of course a lot of my families are quite large, so one poor parent is struggling with four kids, six kids, eight kids. Sometimes it is a grandparent that has come in to save the day, and trying to make sure everybody actually wants to be there at the same time is so difficult. So being able to maybe have something like that at the school or the PCYC, where kids can actually be much more in a natural environment and come in and out of the screen time a little bit, and working with the prison to actually have a shared story that the person inside has while we have outside is actually a much more natural environment in a lot of ways.

The CHAIR: Yes, that is right. The visiting space is incredibly artificial and daunting and for many of your people would involve significant travel getting from one side of the island to the other.

Mr REED: Yes.

Ms POCKETT: Yes. And stress—just the stress of sitting in there, yes.

The CHAIR: Yes, exactly. Thank you for the work that you do, and thank you for such an innovative program. It is really wonderful to hear, and I think one of the messages that I have just heard loud and clear is—

I have been watching that bear, Norm, so I am pleased to see it has finally made an entrance.

Mr REED: I mentioned it is one of the programs that we do. It is a song, but what we actually do is allow parents to record their voice. It is a 10-second recording. They pay for it, basically, and then the bear is sent to the child. This has been amazingly impactful—for example, for a dad who might have his first child—so they actually push this. One of the things that we do, because we also do the child supported visits with child safety—we did this a couple of times where the bear actually arrived while the child safety worker was doing a visit with the child, and so the child safety worker was there and gave the bear to the child and the child opened it up and saw that it was really nice, but then she heard Mum's voice coming from the bear. One of the dads actually did three of these—he has three kids—and he said that whenever his son sits and talks he puts the bear down and he talks to the bear like it is Dad. He says, 'Hi, Dad', and he talks to Dad and hears Dad's voice come at the other end. So it is just one of those things. I think there are immense opportunities, and I think a lot of kids really do suffer when someone goes into prison. Can I give you one more story because I know—

The CHAIR: One more, because Rod and I are already crying. So one more.

Mr REED: This is about the children, and a lot of kids do it really tough. There are so many good stories that come out of this, but one of them that I have is from a number of years ago. It was just a strange coincidence. I was meeting with a guy who wanted to try and talk with his stepdaughter. He tried to arrange it, but it really was not appropriate, and the reason it was not appropriate was that he actually had killed the girl's mum. He wanted to make contact.

The other thing is that I am also the pastor of a church—that is the other thing that I do next to the prison—and so I have these strange coincidences. One day I was leaving and a correctional officer said to me, 'Can you help me?'. This correctional officer's relative was caring for a girl whose stepdad was in prison. She said, 'This young girl wants to visit her stepdad in prison. Can you organise it?'. It turned out to be the same girl. It was just one of those coincidences. I went to visit her, because I had been trying to organise it and I could not pull it off. When I met with her I said, 'Why do you want to see him?'. She said, 'I want to tell him that I forgive him for killing my mother'. It was just an amazing thing. She was about 15 years of age.

Anyhow, to cut a long story short, basically we talked to the prison about it and they were a bit sensitive around the whole issue, rightly, so we did it via video. We set up a video visit. We had one of our workers go to the house, and then I actually went into the room and I sat in this room with the inmate and some other people that were there. They had a good conversation. They had not spoken to each other for years, and they were getting close to finishing the visit and I said, 'Do you want to say something?'. She said, 'Yes. I want to forgive you for killing my mum'. He said, 'No, you don't have to do that', and she said, 'I do. I need to do that'. There was not a dry eye in the house—not on my end, and at the other end the worker was in tears.

I think in this a lot of kids do it really tough; they are working with emotions, and they are working with issues in their lives. For her, she has grown up to be a mature young lady. She is very competent. I brought her in for another visit later, when they were able to have a hug and they were able to talk. But again, the kids do it tough and they carry a lot of baggage. The ability to have a relationship I think is important. How you do it in the prison setting is really difficult, but I think as we advocate we give the children a voice because we listen to their voices. The children have a right.

Can I also say this—that is kind of a story about why it should happen, but also—

The CHAIR: We are hitting the clock, Norm, but fire away.

Mr REED: I am sorry. The last thing is that even the title, 'children of prisoners'—I think we need to be careful, because I have also had the negative stories when I have reached out to families and I have tried, because the person inside wanted to connect, but the children and the mum have said, 'We no longer want to be

identified with him; we don't consider ourselves his family anymore'. I think the children need to have the right to choose and we need to listen to their voices. We need to be sensitive in this space because it is a complicated space.

The CHAIR: That is right, and I think what we do know is that the children are the victims in this. Possibly on some of your advice and certainly on some of the advice of some of our other witnesses we by motion this morning changed the name of the inquiry, so it is now the Inquiry into Children Affected by Parental Incarceration. If it was partly your suggestion, thank you for that.

Thank you so much for today, Norm, Julie, Teresa and Stacey. Thank you for the work that you do but also for sharing it and really leaving us at the end of the day in tears but with a sense of optimism. I can see Rod's mascara is going everywhere.

Mr BARTON: Again.

The CHAIR: Certainly I will be doing some reapplication. Again, on behalf of all of us and certainly the secretariat, who has also been watching and listening to this behind you, thank you so much. As I mentioned at the outset, you will receive a transcript of today. Please have a look at it. I do not know whether the bear is going to get in there; I am not sure whether Hansard was quite able to pick up the words of that song, but feel free to add in the words from the bear.

Mr REED: It is okay; it is just the words of the dad or the mum.

The CHAIR: Thank you again. That concludes the public hearing for today. Thank you to anyone who has been tuning in online. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible behind the scenes. We will reconvene tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

Committee adjourned.