



Prison Fellowship Australia
RESTORING LIVES INSIDE OUT

Annual Report

2023-24






**The key thing about
seen in the darkest
in a brightly lit room
darkness, and even**

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Without light is that its radiance can best be seen in the darkest places. It's difficult to see a candle flame in a dark room, but strike even a single match in the darkness and every eye will be drawn to it.

Chuck Colson

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Greetings to the Prison Fellowship family!

Let's take a moment to give thanks and celebrate the power of the Gospel to change lives inside prison walls. Sometimes, when the brokenness of the world is on full display, it's hard to see what God is doing in the lives of men and women. But He is still at work redeeming the lost and the broken.

After shaking off the pandemic and the extreme measures that were taken, war in Europe and terrorism in Israel have captured the media's attention, and sometimes it appears like things are out of control. Habakkuk 2:14 tells us that one day, the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, which includes people in prison.

We have seen God moving in the lives of men and women again as volunteers go into the various prisons across Australia, sharing the good news about Jesus with those who find themselves inside. I had the opportunity to deliver biscuits with the Easter biscuit bake in Victorian prisons recently. As I moved from unit to unit, inmates thanked me for the work PFA does and said that they felt cared for and loved by this simple act of giving. This is repeated across Australia as **each of you contribute in so many ways to sharing the Gospel in word and deed.** The guys receiving biscuits were blown away when they heard they were all baked locally by a bunch of Christians. Whilst some of what you do may not directly engage with inmates, you are part of the mission to reach those inside and what you do is important. Thank you for the many hours you invest in this ministry.

Be encouraged; God is on the throne and still at work. Prisons have generally opened back up fully to our activities, and we can celebrate what He has done in this past year again in the various ministries we are engaged in. Thank you to our volunteers, staff, councils, and board members for the work you do in fulfilling our mission to share the Gospel with prisoners and their families.

As we celebrate this past year, can I encourage you to be in prayer for more doors to be open for the Gospel? The truth of Jesus is the only power to save in a world looking for answers, and we have had greater opportunities to share this truth through programs like *The Prisoner's Journey* this past year. It would be fantastic if every prisoner in Australia had an opportunity to hear the Gospel through this Bible-based program, and I would encourage you all to pray for this to happen. **Prayer changes things!**

I want to thank Glen, his team, and the national board for their support. Thanks for all you do. Let's seek God's guidance for what he wants to do through us in this coming year.

God Bless,

Pete Hall

Board Chairman

Can I encourage
you to be in
prayer for more
doors to be open
for the Gospel?

OUR BOARD



Peter Hall

Board Chairman and
Independent Director



Michael Wood

Board Secretary and
Tasmania Representative



David Cormack

Queensland
Representative



Ruth McCrindle

Independent Director
(Acting NSW Representative)



Antonio Pisano

Western Australia
Representative



Melissa Binks

Independent
Director



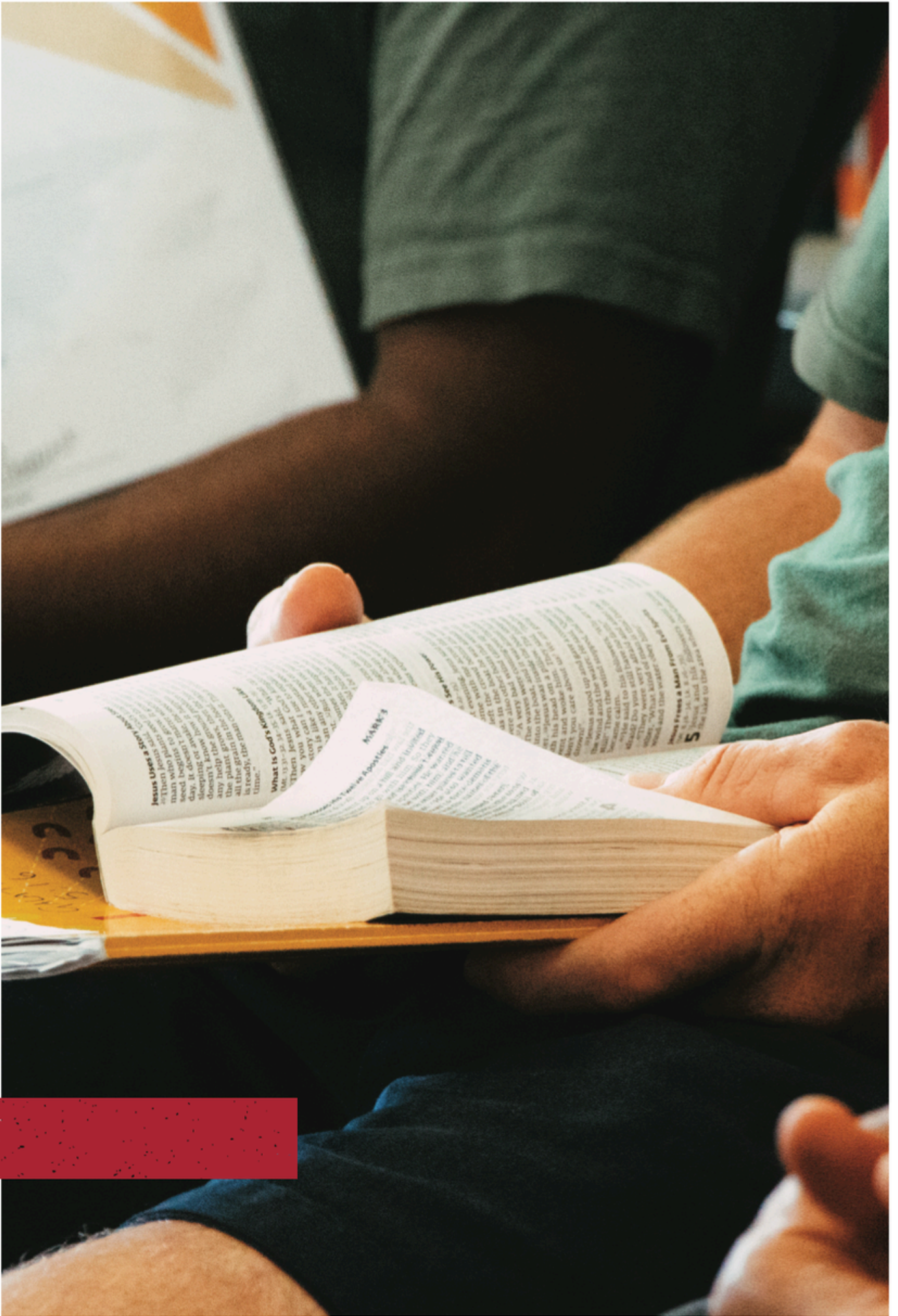
Derrick Toh

Victoria
Representative



David Berry

SA and NT
Representative



Jesus Uses a Seed
Then Jesus
man who
seed began
day. It does
sleeping co
doesn't a
any hills
the plant
all the gra
time."

What is God's Kingdom?
the, 33:31-35
Then Jesus
how you
story is li
an an

MARK 4

Jesus and his disciples
went to a town called
Bethsaida. There
he began to teach
them in the synagogues.
They were all amazed
at his teaching, because
he taught them as one
who had authority,
not as the teachers of
the law.

Jesus went to the lake
and sat down. A large
crowd gathered around
him, so he got into a
boat and sat down
there. The crowd
followed him on the
land. He taught them
many things, and they
were all amazed at
his teaching, because
he taught them as one
who had authority,
not as the teachers of
the law.

Jesus Preaches a Parable
The lake to the right of the
city of Bethsaida in Galilee.
The boat was made of
galilee pine.



Pictured: Arthur Bolkas

FROM THE CEO



Your prayers, donations, and of course, your volunteering efforts are so crucial in this ministry.

My friend, colleague, Criminologist, and former inmate, Arthur Bolkas said recently,

“Without support from good people, I couldn’t have made it. I couldn’t have made it on faith alone, I needed to be embraced, loved, and helped. That is critically important. That’s why prison ministry is so important. If we’re going to be true to our faith and model the lifestyle of Jesus in our lives, then we have to care, we have to try to put ourselves out there, as hard as it may be. It’s one of the toughest ministries, but also one of the most rewarding.”

Arthur’s words capture the essence of Prison Fellowship Australia. We’re passionate about caring for and walking alongside inmates in their darkest moments, sharing the hope that outshines all others - the gospel of Jesus Christ!

In the last 12 months our tough, caring, and rewarding ministry has borne wonderful fruit, thanks to your ongoing partnership and God’s goodness. **Some highlights from the past year include:**

- Increased opportunities in prisons, including building new relationships with prisons in rural and remote parts of the country
- An overall increase in the number of people volunteering, including hundreds of prison visitors and chaplains
- Doubling the number of Sycamore Tree Project courses run in prisons, with 78 graduates just this year!
- The advent of new ‘Day Camps’ which have proved very successful in building and maintaining connections between local churches and families who have a loved one in prison
- And of course, a very successful pilot of our newest program, The Prisoner’s Journey Continued.

Your prayers, donations, and of course, your volunteering efforts are so crucial in this ministry. Thank you for the role you have played! I look forward to seeing where God leads us in the next 12 months.

Our theme this year is ‘Illuminate - Let light shine out of darkness’, based on 2 Corinthians 4:6. This was perfectly illustrated when I attended our annual ‘Art from Inside’ exhibition of prisoners’ art at the glass-walled Waterside Pavilion in Hobart earlier this year. The blackness of the night was lit up by the lights inside, bearing witness to the hope exhibited by the artwork.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff team who, with their passion for our Gospel mission and their gifts and talents, faithfully facilitate this ministry to prisoners and their families. Thank you, team!

I hope you will continue to pray, give, and volunteer towards this important ministry, which I’m so proud to be a part of. **Thank you.**

Glen Fairweather
CEO - Prison Fellowship Australia

STATE MANAGERS



Tim Attwood
Queensland



Steve Farr
NSW & ACT



Richard Boonstra
Victoria



Steve McKinnon
Western Australia



Ian Townsend
SA & NT



Cameron Brett
TAS Coordinator



Pictured: Grace* - names changed for privacy

OUR PROGRAMS



My name is Grace*, and I've been part of Camp for Kids for almost 12 years now, starting as a young camper myself.

In all honesty, when I first went to camp I didn't want to be there. All I could think about was how I wanted to go home.

I was nervous I wouldn't have anyone to talk to and hang out with because I always felt so alone when I was young. But, quite fast, my mindset changed.

The leaders I had on camp made me feel so unconditionally welcome and like I was part of something greater! I felt like I knew everyone instantly. I felt I could be myself there like I didn't have to hide who I really was, so I just let myself be free.

I met some of my best friends at camp whom I still see and talk to to this day - friends who have been there for me through some of the hardest days, and who know more about me than others. They made those 5 days at camp some of the best times of my life.

I remember camp bringing me such joy as a young child who came from a broken home and I know all the leaders filled some emptiness for us.

I never wanted to leave at the end of the week. I would count down the days and try to savour every moment I could - I would stay up as late as I could giggling and chatting and being so silly just so I could take these memories with me.

Some of my favourite moments of camp would be all the fun activities we got to do. I felt so adventurous like I could do anything! Every year you would catch me first in line for those quad bikes, the flying fox, and canoeing, even though everyone on that boat would somehow fall off!

I hold these memories so close to me, because not only was it all fun and games, it felt like another family to me. A family that felt like these were people I knew I could trust so deeply with anything and everything.

As a young girl, I dealt with some really heavy things. I never thought I could share or ever tell another soul. But one year, as we were all sitting down to listen to Sal*, one of the speakers who would come talk to us kids, I felt this feeling in my chest like I couldn't breathe.

She told us how she had come from an abusive home, and even her foster home was an abusive place, too. She described herself as this mirror that had been picked up and thrown to the ground and shattered into a thousand pieces. And then she said, 'My new foster parents made me come to a camp like this, and I heard

about the hope of Jesus, and about a father who would love me, and never ever stop loving me, and would never judge me, and would always be with me through thick and thin. And slowly, Jesus picked up every part of that mirror and put it all back together and made me whole again.'

I'd been holding inside for so long a personal experience that I didn't feel I could share with anybody, and so I ran into the bathroom and I sat there crying. I could hear that she was finished talking and everyone was leaving. My leader, Anne*, waited for me until I came out of the bathroom and just sat with me. No pressure to say a word, she just let me speak and let me cry and let me tell her the most painful things I've ever said before. I told her that what happened to Sal happened to me. Anne was just was there for me like she knew I needed in that moment, and right then and there, she was the one person I trusted more than anybody in the world, and the one person who helped me get through one of the hardest things I've faced. Anne and Sal helped me see that I didn't need to keep my secret any longer, and that if I told the police about what happened to me, they would help me. And eventually, the person who had hurt me as a little girl went to prison. Anne even spent time talking with my mum and was there with us through the whole court case.

Anne has always looked out for me, even now I'm an adult living a grown-up life I still hear from her checking in on me.

Anne and all the leaders and all the kids have kept me going back every single year because it makes me feel complete when I'm there. Every year camp brings a light into my life and helps me feel close to God.

Now that I'm a leader on camp, I love being able to guide these children as I was guided throughout all my years as a camper. This camp and all these people really are so special and truly amazing - everyone and everything there has changed my life in such a happy and positive way that I find so hard to describe.

Seeing this camp change and grow over the years has been amazing! Watching everybody grow up and always wanting to come back and even join the leaders let me know the amazing work and effort that is always being done to ensure these children are happy and safe.

Camp for Kids truly is a blessing, and I hope you all can feel what I have said today and feel, on some level, what I feel about this camp.

Thank you,

- Grace



My name is Jan and I've been volunteering with Prison Fellowship since 1992.

One year, we were asked by the Department of Corrections to support seven men on parole who had agreed to participate in a Horticultural Course as a means of acquiring skills that might be useful after their release. One man, Alf*, wished to participate in the course, but he had an intellectual disability and couldn't read or write. Alf was on parole for 25 years, with an ankle tracking device.

I clearly remember the day I was taken to be introduced to Alf. This was my first time meeting an inmate, and I remember thinking, 'God, couldn't you give us an easy one to start with?'

As I walked into the room, I took in a man with long unkempt hair, very few teeth, cross eyes, and a gammy leg. I'm sad to admit, he looked like a typical ex-con in my eyes. But I quickly saw that Alf had a happy smile and had a quick mind and a good memory. He was very keen to learn!



Each week, Alf was visited by one of our team. We would revise the horticultural lessons he had had in the past week and read with him, answering any of his questions. To be sure, Alf did all of the work! He would patiently write out the answers to each question, as I spelled out each letter for him to write. And his hard work paid off. At the end of the course, Alf was the only man to complete the course, and he gained a certificate! This was the first time Alf had finished anything, and we had a great celebration the day he received his award. Alf was over the moon!

It was only after Alf had finished the course that we realised how much progress he had made, not just in terms of his literacy, but personally, too. This was the first time Alf had made some friends! We felt compelled to continue to support him however we could. While the Horticultural course was not a Christian course, Alf told us that he wanted to go to church. He had never gone to church before and he knew nothing of the Bible. I gladly agreed to help him find a church, but he said, 'No, I want to go where my two volunteers go, that is where I

want to go.' This was my home Uniting church, and so began a series of requests, visits with the Department of Corrections, Alf's psychologist, my church minister, and the Church Council. Finally, all parties agreed to allow Alf to visit the church on Sundays. There were Statements of Regulations set down and to be adhered to by all parties. Nevertheless, Alf became a regular church attender. A few months later, Alf told me that he knows God is in the church, as he can see His light when he enters the building each Sunday.



For the past 25 years, Alf has attended church regularly, and praise God, has been supported by the congregation of this Uniting Church. I am proud of this congregation for the love and support shown to Alf over the years. One of the ministers at this church told me, "This is the best thing I have ever been involved with in Church."

Last year, Alf invited the volunteers who visit him, some members of his church, and his disability support worker to a luncheon to celebrate the end of his parole! Alf is now a free man. That day, Alf looked completely remade since the first time I saw him. He was well-dressed in a suit and tie, with his signature beaming smile. I am very proud of Alf and his hard work over the past 25 years. At the luncheon, he prayed aloud, thanking God for those who have continued to support him. My heart is full with the knowledge of our God of Grace, and I am grateful for his blessings!

- Jan Davis

Volunteer, Queensland



Pictured: Alf and Volunteers



OUR MINISTRY

Our babysitter, Rosie* freezes as she hears my parents' drunken footsteps on the path. I can see the panic in our babysitter's eyes. Silently, she wraps her arms around me and my little brother - she's holding us so tightly like she will never let go. I feel safe in her arms, but I know any second that feeling will vanish.

The front door slams shut as my mum and dad move into the house. Just the sight of them stumbling around scares me. Rosie stands up and shields my brother and me as my parents start to bicker. Terrified, I hug my brother close to me and we try to make ourselves as small as possible, hiding behind Rosie's slight frame. It won't be long now until my dad starts beating up my mum.

Evenings like this were common in my childhood. Rosie would regularly act as a boundary, trying to shield me and my brother from witnessing our father's violence.

I was 6 when my mother passed away. We're still not sure what it was that killed her - the drugs, the abuse, or some kind of disease? Either way, it wasn't a natural death. From that time on, I became like a mother to my 4-year-old brother, and my dad directed his anger and aggression our way. I would try to protect my little brother, but there's only so much a 6-year-old can do to stop a fully grown man.

Most afternoons after school were spent at the local pub. Kids had to leave by 10pm, so Dad would hide us under the table to sleep, hoping no one would realise we were there. There was no one in my family I could turn to for help or protection. With mum gone, I was at the mercy of not just my dad but also of my cousin and uncle, both of whom abused me.

I hated my life. I felt so alone, so confused. I often wished my dad had died, not my mum.

It will come as no surprise that by the time I was 13, I was smoking weed, drinking, and even selling cigarettes to my schoolmates.



When I was 14, my dad moved four hours away with my brother but let me stay. I had nowhere to sleep and nowhere to live, but for a moment, it felt like freedom! I wasn't under my dad's roof anymore, but I was couch-surfing and only intermittently attending school. I fell pregnant at 16, and after my daughter was born, I was drinking and smoking weed every day. By the time I was 19, **I was out clubbing every night and became addicted to ecstasy, speed, and cocaine, and I began selling drugs to fund my addiction.**

A few years later, I was using and selling methamphetamine, and at 27 years old, I was charged with \$500,000 worth of drug trafficking, possession of illegal arms, and car theft. They said if I plead guilty, the charge would be reduced to trafficking \$50,000. But the judge refused the deal of a suspended sentence and put me on board-ordered parole, where I had to serve extra time while I applied for parole. I was on remand for 18 months.

Walking into prison didn't feel real. I was brought in very late at night, and they didn't have a cell for me. I was given a cold meal and placed in the Detention Unit. It was cold and lonely, and it felt surreal.

I felt a lot of guilt and shame at that time, but I also felt alive and free! I knew I would spend my time on the inside wisely, but I never thought it would be a Godly experience. I spent some time in the 'care bears' unit, where I was under observation for self-harming. While I was there, I had visits from a few different chaplains. Talking with Debbie was the first time in my life that anyone had really listened to my story; it was the first time anyone had even cared enough to ask me those questions. I could see that she was genuinely interested, and I began to trust her.

When I met Wendy and Audrey, my initial reaction to them was, like a lot of the girls, 'How can I manipulate these ladies to get what I want?' Wendy was never fooled! Neither was Audrey, but she would always bring me books. Audrey is one of the most gentle souls you could ever meet. She really loves Jesus! At the time, I didn't understand, and I just saw her as a loving grandmother

figure. Towards the end of my time in prison, we discussed everything from my life goals to marriage and the scriptures. I always looked forward to Tuesdays when Audrey and Wendy would come in! Audrey really listened and empathised with me, and I knew with all my heart that she loved me.

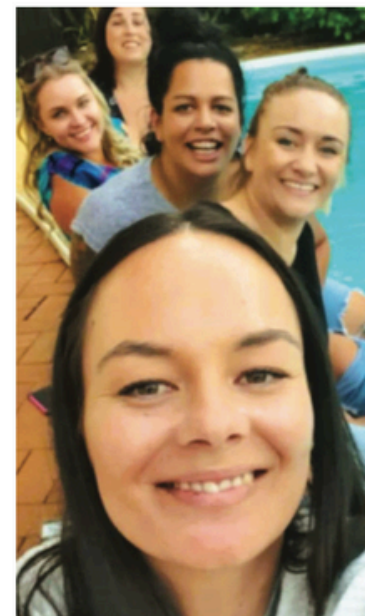
Each chaplain I encountered shared their faith so genuinely, in their own unique ways. I don't recall Audrey carrying a Bible or telling us to study scriptures. It was more about the way she loved us. God's love poured out of her so generously that it was hard not to be impacted.

I gave my life to Christ in 2020. His love genuinely changed my life. I have been clean from all drugs since 2016. I now own my own cleaning business and have a ministry with my family where we help others to get back on track. My daughter turns 18 this year, and I'm in the process of adopting a baby. I'm part of a wonderful church family. My life is completely new - it's a miracle!

My brother has a similar story to me, struggling with a drug addiction. He's 33 this year, and I can see that he is starting to get on track.

Things are not always easy, and I'm not perfect. But God is, and He is the reason I'm here today.

- *Jasmine*
ex-prisoner



Picture: Jasmine*, friends and family (names changed for privacy)

FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JANUARY

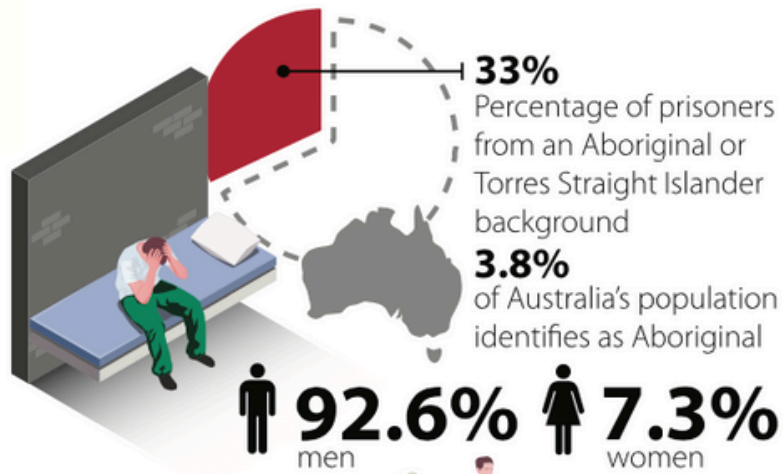
REVENUE	2024	2023
Donations	1,793,775	1,710,668
Grants	505,148	501,188
Bequests	50,101	65,871
Sales	-	60,424
Interest	26,860	7,771
Other	8,645	10,642
Total	2,384,529	2,356,564
EXPENSES	2024	2023
Program Expenses	256,096	298,726
Staff & program support	1,587,945	1,528,697
Administration and Accountability	530,734	692,662
Total	2,374,775	2,520,085
Surplus/(Deficit)	9,754.00	(163,521)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 JANUARY.

ASSETS	2024	2023
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	946,955	900,533
Trade and other receivables	14,337	49,028
Inventories	-	-
Other	27,766	27,803
Total Current Assets	989,058	977,364
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant, and equipment	57,982	79,173
Total non-current assets	57,982	79,173
TOTAL ASSETS	1,047,040	1,056,537
LIABILITIES	2024	2023
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	197,627	179,300
Grants/Income received in advance	151,714	142,608
Provisions	127,306	131,979
Other	27,383	52,443
Total Current Liabilities	504,030	506,330
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Other	23,322	40,273
Total non-current liabilities	23,322	40,273
Total liabilities	527,352	546,603
NET ASSETS	519,688	509,934
TOTAL EQUITY	519,688	509,934

43,305

PEOPLE IN FULL TIME CUSTODY IN AUSTRALIA
UP 6.7% FROM THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS



7902 People receiving in-prison support from PFA

For over 40 years, PFA has ministered to prisoners. During this time more than 200,000 prisoners have been reached



43,000*

CHILDREN WITH A PARENT IN PRISON
*Estimated by Dr Catherine Flynn - Monash University



133

Prisoners children on PFA camps



10

Prisoners' children being mentored



5177 Angel Tree gifts delivered to prisoners children

Extraordinary Lives comprises mentoring, Camp for Kids, Angel Tree, school support, and prison visit support.

1-in-3

* **prison entrants** had an education level of Year 9 or below.

287 PEOPLE RECEIVING POST-RELEASE SUPPORT FROM PFA



42.5% OF OFFENDERS WILL BE BACK IN PRISON... within 2 years

PFA volunteers help ex-inmates get their life back on track and flourish in the community.

48% OF PEOPLE BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON... are expected to be homeless

Our Vision

To share the **gospel of Jesus Christ** with prisoners and their families

WHATEVER PART YOU PLAYED

Thank You



Jesus said:

"I was in prison and you came to visit me ... truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

(Matthew 25)



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