Our thanks to Walkley Award winning political cartoonist, Jenny Coopes. Jenny illustrated a similar cartoon in 1985, originally designed for the front cover of the Women in Prison Task Force Report. Unfortunately, the cartoon was deemed too controversial and did not make it onto the Report. Jenny has kindly recreated the above cartoon, from 30 years ago, for this event.
There has been a 131% increase in the imprisonment rate of women in NSW from 1985 to 2014.
Rate of Indigenous Women in Prison, Australia 1996 - 2015

This indicates a 134% increase in the imprisonment rate of Indigenous women across Australia from 1996 to 2015.
SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN IN PRISON IN NSW

• 87% were unemployed prior to incarceration
• 30% were placed in out-of-home care before the age of 16
• 39% did not complete Year 10
• The average age is 35 years

8 correctional centres in NSW incarcerate women and girls

• As at June 2015, there are 847 women in prison
• 18 females in juvenile detention
• Women make up approximately 7% of the total NSW prison population

46% recorded prior imprisonment

22% have had Juvenile Justice contact

Women in NSW typically spend less than 6 months in prison

59% have experienced some form of sexual coercion or violence

Over half of those released in 2013/14 served 3 months or less

• 49% have children
• 14% have more than three children under the age of 16

• 43% have had a mental health condition
• 54% have chronic illness or disability
It’s cover was black, shiny and confronting
its contents luminescent and heartfelt -
I had to pinch my copy from some unsuspecting civil servant
so much was its wisdom in demand.

What do I recall of the taskforce?
Above all else the rare privilege to be accepted -
a man in the struggle
when masculine interpretations of female deviance
were at the heart of the problem.

There was no over-aching consensus
It had to be forged through the fire
of the suffering of women forgotten
in prison, imprisoned, feared and forsworn.

We worked from a basic commitment
hammered out across conscious divides
to resist the modernist seduction -
bricks and mortar could cure broken lives.

Were we suffering elitist conviction?
No new prison when the old was defiled.
It was more about filling new cells
than it was about dignity, choice or tomorrows.

The experience shaped my conception of justice
it molded my values of making a difference -
it shouted its values
it cemented life’s friendships
and above all else
it gave voice to the voiceless, that today
should speak the same message, anew.

Professor Mark Findlay
Member of the Women in Prison Task Force 1985
Deputy Director, Sydney Institute of Criminology
SPEAKER BIOS

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Brad Hazzard is the NSW Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister for Social Housing. Minister Hazzard is a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly representing Wakehurst for the Liberal Party since 1991. Minister Hazzard served as the Attorney General of New South Wales and the New South Wales Minister for Justice between 2014 and 2015.

Helen L’Orange AM
Helen was a member of the Women in Prison Task Force in 1985 and the Coordinating Committee on Women in Prison from 1985 – 1988. During the 1980s, Helen chaired several Violence against Women and Children Task Forces and Councils. In 1985 and 1991 Helen participated as an expert in UN meetings on Violence against Women that lead to the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Helen was a Member of the Corrective Services Women’s Advisory Council from 2009 – 2012.

Helen is a member of the NSW Women’s Electoral Lobby Executive, and convenor of WEL’s Violence against Women Action Group. Helen is an Honorary Associate in the School of Public Health at La Trobe University. Recently, Helen worked as a consultant to the World Health Organisation, where she worked on Women’s health policy and gender analysis. Helen was awarded an AM Order of Australia in 1994 for services to local government and improving the status of women.

Ann Symonds AM
Ann Symonds joined the Australian Labor Party in 1967. In 1974 she was elected to Waverley Municipal Council, becoming the municipality’s first female Deputy Mayor in 1977. Ann became a member of the NSW Legislative Council in 1982 and resigned in 1998. She held executive positions in Branch and State and Federal Electorate Councils and Labor Women’s Committee. Ann also sat on the New South Wales Member National Social Justice Committee, and has also held a number of positions related specifically to women, including:
• Chairperson of the Women & Homeless Inquiry in 1983
• Deputy Chairperson on the Women in Prison Task Force from 1984 – 1985
• Deputy Chairperson Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women on Women’s Housing from 1984 – 1988
• Founding member of the National Foundation for Australian Women in 1989.

Ann was also a founding member of the Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform in 1993 and Vice-President of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation in 1994. In 2015 Ann was awarded an AM Order of Australia for significant service to social justice.
Kat Armstrong
Kat Armstrong is an ex-prisoner, having served almost 10 years in prison. While in prison, Kat commenced a law degree and started mentoring other women prisoners. Upon release from Prison, Kat remained in Sydney, homeless and not knowing one other person. In 2008, Kat co-founded the organisation, the Women in Prison Advocacy Network. WIPAN is a NSW organisation that gives direct support, case management, specialist mentoring and advocacy to women affected by the criminal justice system. Kat is the Director of WIPAN (a voluntary position), managing the day to day operations, and supervising and training staff and 62 community volunteer mentors, and is the driving force of WIPAN’s continued success.

Kat has recently completed the Practical Learning Training for a Bachelor of Laws and will be admitted as a solicitor by mid-2016.

Dr Ruth McCausland
Dr Ruth McCausland is a Research Fellow in the School of Social Sciences at UNSW. She has a background in research and evaluation with a particular focus on women, people with disabilities and Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. Her PhD was on evaluation and the diversion of Aboriginal women from prison in NSW, and she also has a Masters in International Social Development. She was previously a Senior Researcher at Jumbunna, UTS, and a Policy Officer at the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and Australian Human Rights Commission. Ruth is Vice-President of the Board of the Community Restorative Centre.

Peta MacGillivray
Peta MacGillivray is a Kalkadoon woman who was born and raised on Darmumbal land in Central Queensland, who now lives and works on Gadigal land in Sydney, NSW. Peta is a solicitor in the Children’s Civil Law Service at Legal Aid NSW, which is a holistic, wraparound service for young people with complex support needs. Prior to this she worked as a graduate lawyer at the Public Defender’s Office of NSW. Peta has also worked as a casual academic and researcher at both UNSW and James Cook University. At UNSW she was the Project Officer and Project Manager of the Indigenous Australians with Mental Health Disorders and Cognitive Disability in the Criminal Justice Project. Peta is on the Board of Management at the NSW Community Restorative Centre, Hepatitis NSW and is also a Director of the Ngalaya Aboriginal Corporation.

Professor Julie Stubbs
Julie is a Professor in the Faculty of Law and Director of the Criminal Justice and Criminology program at UNSW. She joined the Faculty in 2010 from the University of Sydney, where she was Professor of Criminology and previously had been Director of the Institute of Criminology. Prior to that she was a senior researcher with the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.
Sources

• Australian Prisons Project, Imprisonment Rates, UNSW.
• Australian Prisons Project, Indigenous Imprisonment Rates, UNSW.
• Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011, catalogue number 3238.0.