

I truly thank God for Prison Network

We first met Kristie in Marmak when she was newly remanded and about 7 months pregnant. After giving birth to her first baby and resigned to the fact that he would be removed from her care in the prison, Kristie seemed to need some connection and a sense of community, saying Prison Network was a safe option. Below is a view of our staff and volunteers through her eyes:

From Kristie: I see my son Ashton on Sundays. He's a happy, curious, boisterous one year old. Anyone with a baby knows how valuable another pair of hands can be. Someone to help contain the trail of destruction they leave in their wake, play the 'I-drop you-pick-up' game and distract them while you have a much-needed caffeine hit.

Lyndel does all the above plus it's nice to hang out with a friend, someone I can confide in and tell about my week. Whether I'm content or need to have a robust whinge, Lyndel listens keenly and openly. And she makes me laugh. She's happy to do whatever I need, whether it's amusing Ashton while I change his nappy, trying to manage his 'flippy fish' behaviour (he'll stand up on the table if you let him) or singing and playing with him while I eat a marshmallow slice. I love the song Lyndel is teaching me and Ashton... *"Two little eyes to see His light, two little hands to do His work, two little legs to walk in His ways"*... she truly loves the little children.

Robbie, a Prison Network volunteer, does the Sunday visits sometimes too. She's fallen in love with Ashton as well and is so good with him. She'll do things like go out of her way to arrange a little tub of water for Ashton to play in, which he thinks is very cool.

I was so scared when I had to go to court for sentencing, facing a long sentence for a serious crime. I was so pleased and relieved when Lyndel offered to be there. *"Can you make sure my family is OK?"*

I was worried about my beautiful mum especially. *"Of course,"* she said. I knew I could trust her to do it. She seemed like it was no big deal to her but it meant so much to me at a time when I felt helpless and alone.

Seeing her on my team sitting at court really helped me hold it together and she had coffee with my family afterwards. My parents pronounced she was 'lovely,' which I already knew.



Name & photo has been changed to protect identity

Lyndel is so warm and interested and it's nice to relate to someone on a first name basis who can give an independent perspective. Lyndel comes to visit me at my unit wherever I am, she always finds me when I move. And I'm always glad to see her.

“All the Prison Network ladies are so nice and warm. They're there for you; and to pray or just talk with.”

Ashton is a bit young for the intricate craft activities (little beads look yummy) but I have his hand prints in paint thanks to Fun With Mum. I look forward to making crafts on Sunday when he's older and will stay still for more than 5 seconds! The Fun With Mum crew are so supportive, fun and enthusiastic. They'll make pretty biscuits, paper flowers, do lots of creative stuff which the kids and mums enjoy. People donating their time and love is so important. Prison can be isolating and Prison Network provides a true sense of community.

I am lucky enough to have a hugely dedicated family, but many women aren't and Prison Network is even more crucial for them. I feel like my relationship with God has deepened and become more secure.

Laurel is inspiring in her staunch faith and brilliant in the way she challenges our assumptions about ourselves and others. Christian Discussion Group provides food for thought and something to look forward to on a Tuesday when my weekend visits feel far away. It's usually packed with other women, too. The women really enjoy it and we talk about some really fascinating stuff.

Although they don't do it for praise and accolades, I can't express the value of what these amazing women do. I'm so grateful for the support I will have throughout my sentence because of their dedication. These programs are fantastic and I hope Prison Network continues to improve our lives as long as it is needed.

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We see transformed, free women, living a supported life in the community.

From our CEO

I read a story about a little boy who came across a raging house fire. He quickly grabbed a water hose, but as he frantically went to put out the fire, he noticed something peculiar. All around him were fire engines with fire-fighters who were all asleep! He had to make a quick decision. He could attempt the hopeless task of trying to put out the fire by himself, or he could take the hose, spray the fire-fighters to wake them up so everyone could put out the fire together! The choice seemed obvious.

How small each of our hands are when compared to the problems women in prison and their families face. But take those same hands, together with God, our Board, staff, volunteers, intercessors and donors, put them all together and we, like that little boy, are making a difference. The prison population is growing. And we have much to do to keep up with that growth.

I'm thrilled to unveil our new logo and branding as part of a strategy to build on our 70 year history while looking to the future. Our vision to see transformed, free women living a supported life in the community drives everything we do. But, keeping a not-for-profit charity financially viable is a real challenge. Every year, we must raise \$300,000 to cover expenses & costs for program delivery, post-release support, salaries, etc.

Look around you. Who do you know that could help? Do you know a philanthropist? A business looking for a tax-deductible charity to support? Or maybe you know someone who could volunteer to help fund raise. Could you possibly increase your giving? Or support us monthly? End of financial year is a good time to ask others to help us put out more 'fires'.

Contact me for specific project details on (03) 9873 4190 or 0434 393 033.

And thank you in advance for your support. God Bless you & yours.

Diane Spicer
Prison Network CEO



Myrtle Breen shares how she founded Prison Network 70 years ago

70th Birthday Celebration

Can you imagine yourself at the tender age of 20, knocking on the door of a maximum-security prison, asking permission to come in and talk with the prisoners?

This is what Myrtle Breen did 70 years ago and what gave birth to Prison Network. Our 70th birthday celebration, on 25th February, was a great opportunity for us to honour what God has done through Prison Network, and those past and present who have been obedient to God's call on their lives.

Many hands worked together to make a memorable event including an afternoon tea, provided by the ladies from One Community Church, with time to catch up with old and new faces while listening to live jazz thanks to the Alex Spicer Trio. Myrtle shared stories from the early days, we honoured Marj Swales, heard from several previous staff and from women who have turned their lives around and are now giving back. It truly was a celebration of the past 70 years and we are now looking forward with anticipation to what God has planned for the next 70 years and beyond! Happy Birthday Prison Network!



In their own Words...

We interviewed several women we originally met at DPFC who are now in the community (post-release). Here is an excerpt of one of their stories:

What was life like growing up?

Hell. And that's as far as I'm gonna tell ya.

How did you meet Prison Network?

Initially through sport. Laurel & the team used to bring girls in to play netball with the women inside. I was involved in sport all my life and I was an umpire so I used to go and umpire them. In the present situation, I wanted to occupy myself as much as possible. I heard about Christian discussion group and I love a chat so I went along to that too. It was just the stuff Prison Network did like running Game On Days and Craft days. Everything that was available, I signed up for and that was how I got to know them.

Who did you connect with?

Laurel was somebody that I would call "sent from somewhere else." She stuck by me and rang me and hasn't been out of my life since. And it was tough, really tough at times. And she was the only person; none of my family... none of them... it was always Laurel. Without Prison Network, she wouldn't be there, so I, for one, am extremely grateful.

How did Prison Network help you?

When you're in that situation (in prison), you feel alone and you feel like you are the lowest form of life and these people... I've had these people come into the prison and wash my feet* for goodness sake... I was overwhelmed by that. I mean, the fact that not only did these people take the time to come in and try to put a smile in our hearts, but then they got down on the floor and washed my feet. I still can't get over that. I can't... that they would put some sort of meaning back in you as a human being. That's what it did. They saw us as "yeah they are criminals, what society labels us as, but they are human beings and we are gonna put a smile in their hearts." That is just... magic... magic I tell ya. When you're in prison, that is very, very powerful.

*Part of our Beauty day; giving manicures, pedicures and facials to the women

A Special Request

It's not unusual for someone to comment "your job must be very rewarding." Absolutely! At times, it is very worthwhile and satisfying. When you see a life improve for the better, and you feel you've made a contribution to that happening, it's a great feeling.

On the flip side however, sometimes our role can be very difficult. Being with people in crisis continually, and lending an ear when they are pondering whether they want to live or die can really take its toll. Furthermore, it is never easy negotiating everything that comes with working in the prison system with all its many rules and regulations.

And then of course there is the constant struggle for charities to stay financially viable so that our work can continue. Sometimes amid the struggle I reach for my "encouragement file." It's the one down the bottom of the cabinet that contains all the notes, cards and letters that the women write to us. I thought I might share some samples from it.

“ It has meant a lot to me that you brought my daughter to see me. When I felt everyone, even my father and husband abandoned me, you amazing women brought me hope again. Thank you so much for everything you've done for me. ~ Trinh

“ To all the amazing women at Prison Network. The work and the time you invest in us women is truly inspiring and I appreciate it more than I could ever put into words. The care, compassion, understanding and love that you have all shown me over the years has helped me heal and grow as a woman. I am so thankful for each and every one of you. ~ Emma

“ Thank you sooo much for all you do with us and for us. You have given me spiritual guidance and purpose in this frustrating, distressing time. You show us the light in the darkness. Eternally grateful. ~ Ella

“ I could never be able to say how much that you have helped and loved me, but I want to let you know that when I think of how far I've come, you will always be part of that story. ~ Jenna

“ You're the best thing that could have ever happened to me. Thank you, thank you, thank you. ~ Jenny

“ I know that you don't really understand but I am so, so grateful for just everything that you've done for me, my daughter and her children. You've been such a God send to us all. Even just for me to have someone to talk to about things is enormous. I have no one else. From the bottom of my heart I just want to tell you I am so grateful. ~ Joanne's mother

There are many, many more notes and cards in the "encouragement file." It is full! These are just a few. So, after a few minutes reading, I am encouraged to negotiate all the difficulties and press on because I know it's worth it.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who do or have supported us financially in the past. Please know that what you do and what you have given is so appreciated and well worth it, but at a time of serious concerns about our financial position, can I encourage you to please give whatever you can to allow our work to continue. We desperately need more workers. We at Prison Network and all those we reach out to will be eternally grateful.

Laurel Gore - Senior Support Worker

The Ten Commandments According to Marj Swales:

1. Never make a cuppa soup; Make a pot
2. Don't seek a receipt for your smiles
3. If you run out of time; Sleep less!
4. When a child needs a hug; Hug his mate too!
5. If you're broke and see the needy; Mortgage your house
6. Don't question others' actions; Your actions answer theirs
7. Install an answering machine that records for 120 minutes
8. Be seen before you're heard; You tend to say more
9. Buy a car that can hold Texas
10. Make contact with your God; Before He contacts you

Fundraising:

GARAGE/CAR BOOT SALES

Garage Sales or Car Boot Sales are a "Win Win" way to raise funds with very little, if any, cost involved. Not only is it a chance to de-clutter and simplify, but also an opportunity to make a few dollars to help support Prison Network. Every little bit helps.

Would you host a Garage/Car Boot Sale? We will provide you with an information pack, guidelines for a successful event, banners and handouts so shoppers will know who they are supporting. Contact Jenni at admin@prisonnetwork.org.au or call the office.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU!

Look at what some of our volunteers & donors are doing!

We honour MiTech Publishing, the Maddocks Foundation, Westpac, Department of Justice, and every donor who enables us to continue this work. Thank You!

An anonymous donor sent us a cheque for \$50,000. Wow! What an answer to prayer and how fun it was opening that envelope! Whoever you are, may you & your family be blessed ten-fold!

Keith Morgan was a valued supporter and prayer partner of Prison Network for many years. We would like to honour Keith for the legacy bequest he has left Prison Network to ensure that his support continues while he rests in eternity. We are blessed by this very kind gesture. Thank you, Keith & family.

Please consider adding Prison Network to your Will. See insert.

supporting
inspiring
restoring

OUR PROGRAMS

TUESDAYS:

Craft & Cooking
Christian Discussion Group
Visits

WEDNESDAYS:

Outside Discussion Group
Talk It Out

THURSDAYS:

Fitness/Sports
Visits

FRIDAYS Fortnightly:

Tarrengower Craft &
Christian Discussion Group

SATURDAYS:

Game on Day (every 4-5 weeks)

1ST & 3RD SUNDAYS of the month:
Fun with Mum

LAST SUNDAY of the month:
Sunday Live

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS SEND CHILDREN TO HOLIDAY CAMPS

From a young boy, whose mum and dad have both been in jail:

"I really enjoyed this camp because I got to participate in new activities I haven't tried before and it's something I really look forward to around holiday time. It is really kind of the people who organise it to get the kids altogether. Thank you so much!"



YES! I WILL HELP WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES REBUILD THEIR LIVES

I WILL DONATE: \$50 \$100 \$250 OTHER

SPONSOR CHILD/CAMP \$300 (Full cost) or \$

FREQUENCY OF DONATION: Once Monthly Quarterly

I WOULD LIKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE RECEIPT
(All donations over \$2 are tax deductible).

PAYMENT METHOD

CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDER
(Made payable to Prison Network Ministries)

PLEASE CHARGE MY: Visa Mastercard Amex
(Please fill in details in area to the right)

If you would prefer to give by direct debit:

Prison Network Ministries BSB: 013250 Account: 298345342

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

SUBURB _____ STATE _____ POSTCODE _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

CARD NUMBER:

EXPIRY DATE:

NAME ON CARD _____

SIGNATURE _____