

Lock-up mania: NT leads the world

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Australia that the Productivity Commission's Report needs to be considered. But again, to further contextualise these latest statistics of shame, let's go back to highlight the direction Australia continues to go with Aboriginal imprisonment.

Twenty-seven years ago, Australia launched The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. It took four years to investigate 99 Aboriginal deaths in custody across Australia. Early on, its Terms of Reference were widened to address what was immediately realised, and which founded the shameful backdrop of the deaths: the then grossly disproportionate Aboriginal imprisonment rate.

So the Terms of Reference were widened to investigate all relevant aspects including history, economics, education, health and justice which eventually led to 399 Recommendations designed to address what was considered then to be the

In the Northern Territory, as now, Aboriginal people made up about 30% of the NT's population.

Nationally, in 1991 the figures concerning Aboriginal imprisonment were:

- 14 per cent of the Australian prison population was Aboriginal.

- 69 per cent of the NT prison population was Aboriginal.

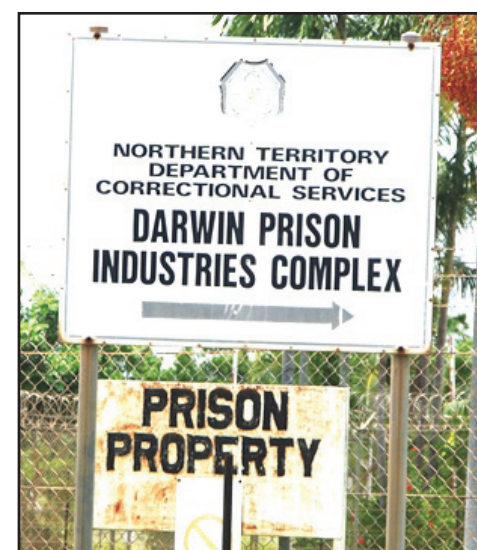
Australia 2014-15, well after the implementation of all 399 Recommendations by all States and Territory governments, the national figures on Aboriginal imprisonment are now:

- 28 per cent of Australia's prison population is Aboriginal (doubled).

- In the NT, 86 per cent of the prison population is Aboriginal.

The figures for Aboriginal women and juveniles are even more regressive:

- In the NT, between 2002 and 2012, Aboriginal women's imprisonment has increased by 72 per cent.



other State or Territory.

Remember, 86 per cent of adult and 97 per cent of juveniles jailed in the NT are Aboriginal. This is all about Aboriginal people.

These figures bear analysis and comparison internationally and interstate. They are calculated per capita, i.e. 1 person in gaol per 100,000 of subject countries' populations.

The country with the highest imprisonment rate in the world is the 'land of the free', the USA. Its per capita rate is 714 per 100,000; second is Russia with 532; then Cuba, 510 (International Centre for Prison Studies: 1 June 2014).

Compared with these international figures, Australia's national adult imprisonment rate is 187 (28 per cent being Aboriginal). Of interest in the comparison is New Zealand (161), England (148), Scotland (132), Canada (118), and Holland (82).

The NT per capita imprisonment rate is 843. This jurisdiction gaols more people per capita than any country in the world. And again, this is the point: 86 per cent of that imprisonment rate is Aboriginal (All Australian prison figures from ABS quarterly, ending September 2014).

The next highest rate is Western Australia at 255.

These statistics are real and they confirm what is clearly a national crisis and disgrace. They can't be published enough and need to be broadcast and emblazoned across Australia. They are a continuum and are now regressing at an ever increasing pace. No one needs to be a statistician to see the projection as to where this is going and what the end game is.

This disastrous situation was confirmed and amplified by the 2014 Productivity Commission Report which informed Australians that nationally, Aboriginal juveniles are imprisoned at 24 times the rate of non-Aboriginal juveniles. Further, there had been a 74 per cent increase in the national imprisonment rate of Aboriginal women since 2000.

The Report also recorded that one in four deaths in custody was an Aboriginal person, compared with one in seven at the time of the 1991 Royal Commission.

The reality of life in the Northern Territory is that, along with cyclones and crocodiles, Aboriginal men, women and children behind bars are the real and true life symbol of this part of Australia. This is where we continue to regress, rapidly.

And this horror doesn't come cheap. Gulag NT spends more money per capita

ON 12 November 2014, the space probe Rosetta -- some four billion miles from earth and 10 years after its launch -- landed on its target, comet C7P, which was two-and-a-half miles wide and travelling at 40,000mph.

Within minutes Rosetta began transmitting scientific data back to Earth, thus adding to Man's knowledge and understanding of the infinite and our creation. Another brilliant manifestation of man's incredible genius.

What can't man achieve? Read on.

One week later, the Australian Productivity Commission released its report, "Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage."

The findings described Australia's ongoing failings in dealing with the problems which continue to afflict Australia's Aboriginal population. It revealed ongoing and regressive disasters in the area of Aboriginal well-being as reflected in health, education, employment and the justice system. In particular it reported Australia's appalling rate of Aboriginal imprisonment.

The level of these failings needs to be put in the context of the United Nations National Rating of Countries' wellbeing, which is measured by its Human Development Index (HDI).

HDI ranks a country's level of human development and well-being by analysis of health, education and incomes. It provides the best litmus into a country's well-being and has been gathered and published since 1990. In 2002, Australia was third behind Norway and Sweden. Now it is even higher, sitting second behind Norway.

It is within this fact of a rich and well

shamefully disproportionate Aboriginal imprisonment rate. Their purpose was to halt that disproportion and reduce it. That was in 1991.

The disgraceful statistics since then disturbingly illuminate just how shameful the position is today.

In 1991, as now, Aboriginal people constituted just under 3 per cent of the Australian population.



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- 97 per cent of Juveniles presently jailed in the NT are Aboriginal.

The NT imprisonment statistics are staggering and beggar belief; in the past 10 years those numbers have increased by 70 per cent.

The NT per capita adult imprisonment rate is 4 to 5 times higher than any other State or Territory. Its imprisonment rate for juveniles is 6 times higher than any