

## The past 6 months

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**Theme: Knee-jerk reactions**

**(and a recap on some events from the first six months of 2025)**

### **Junee Correctional Centre transfers from private to public management**

Following an announcement in November 2023, Junee Correctional Centre was brought into public operation at 6pm on 31 March 2025. Junee opened in 1993 as the first private prison in NSW. It was managed by GEO Group Australia, but is now operated by Corrective Services NSW. Parklea Correctional Centre is expected to be similarly brought under public control in October 2026 when the management contract of MTC Australia expires. Australian Prison Reform Journal welcomes these changes. That will just leave Clarence Correctional Centre as the only private prison amongst NSW 36 correctional centres. Clarence, Australia's largest prison with a capacity of 1,700 inmates, is operated by Serco under a public-private partnership.

[Public Services Association of NSW \(31 March 2025\) PSA](#)

[Andrew Mangelsdorf \(01 April 2025\) ABC News](#)

[Anoulack Chanthivong \(03 November 2023\) NSW Government](#)

### **Victorian Government's tightened bail laws**

Jacinta Allan's ALP government reintroduced strict bail laws that they had previously loosened in 2023 following a [coronial inquest into Veronic Nelson's death](#). The focus was on tougher bail tests, especially for youth offenders. The changes were described as "knee-jerk" by many who opposed the law reform, including Victorian senator, Lidia Thorpe, and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services chief executive, Nerita Waight (refer to discussion of knee-jerk announcements below). According to the police and government, the tightened

bail laws are designed to address about 300 repeat youth offenders. Australian Prison Reform Journal argues that the harsh bail laws affect many more youth offenders, making it more likely that these young people will be detained or imprisoned and exposed to criminogenic risk factors. APRJ advocates instead for short and long-term community safety through early intervention, medical treatment, actual rehabilitation, restorative justice for healing and justice reinvestment for real opportunities for young people.

The table below summarises comments as reported in *The Guardian* on 12 March 2025:

For tightened bail laws	Against tightened bail laws
Jacinta Allan: Her government had “got it wrong” when they loosened bail laws, vowing to introduce Victoria’s “toughest bail laws ever”	Aunty Donna Nelson (mother of Veronica Nelson, an Aboriginal woman who died while remanded in custody): “Shame on you Jacinta Allan, your lack of leadership will cost lives.” The premier’s comments were “an insult to my daughter Veronica’s memory”
The Police Association secretary, Wayne Gatt: The changes would “swing the pendulum back in the favour of good, innocent people and families”	Coroner Simon McGregor, investigating Nelson’s death: The state’s bail laws were a “complete and unmitigated disaster”. That had a “discriminatory” impact on First Nations people with “grossly disproportionate rates” remanded in custody
Herald Sun’s “Suburbs Under Siege” campaign	Kate Bundrock, executive director of criminal law at Victorian Legal Aid: A “backwards step for Victoria,” that would cause “serious harm” to vulnerable people facing poverty, homelessness and trauma
“Bring on Bail Reform” petition by FM radio hosts Fifi, Fev and Nick	Michelle Bennett, president of Liberty Victoria: the bail law changes were “in complete opposition” to the principle of innocence until proven guilty. “It’s counterproductive and will make the situation worse”
Social media influencer, Rebecca Judd (with 750,000 followers): “She [Jacinta Allen] clearly cares more about not upsetting violent offenders than innocent Victorians”	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services chief executive, Nerita Waight: The government had “prioritised their political agenda and votes” rather than “tackling the real problems”, such as access to housing, employment, mental health, substance abuse and family violence services. "For us, this announcement is betrayal to our people, because we know that granting bail saves lives..."
	Victorian senator, Lidia Thorpe: The move was a “shameful kneejerk reaction” which contradicted the

	federal government’s Closing the Gap target to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in custody
	The Australian Lawyers Alliance, Human Rights Legal Centre, Federation of Community Legal Centres and Justice Reform Initiative were also critical of the proposed reforms

[Benita Kolovos – article 1 \(12 March 2025\) \*The Guardian\*](#)

[Benita Kolovos – article 2 \(12 March 2025\) \*The Guardian\*](#)

[Richard Willingham and Judd Boaz \(12 March 2025\) \*ABC News\*](#)

[Judd Boaz \(13 March 2025\) \*ABC News\*](#)

[Rudi Maxwell and Cameron Gooley \(13 March 2025\) \*NITV\*](#)

[VALS and 92 organisations – Open letter \(17 March 2025\) \*VALS\*](#)

[Leanne Wong \(18 March 2025\) \*ABC News\*](#)

[Kate Bundrock et al. \(12 March 2025\) \*Victoria Legal Aid\*](#)

## **Machetes banned in Victoria**

The Victorian government has also outlawed machetes following their use in home invasions, robberies and gang violence.

[Richard Willingham and Judd Boaz \(12 March 2025\) \*ABC News\*](#)

[Allanah Sciberras and Eleanor Wilson \(12 March 2025\) \*9 News\*](#)

## **More knee-jerk announcements and actions**

An explosive-laden caravan was notified to police on 19 January 2025. It had been parked on the roadside in Dural, north-west of Sydney, since 7 December 2024. Inside were the addresses of Jewish Australians and a synagogue, and a note with the words, "f--- the Jews". A covert police inquiry involving over 100 counter-terrorism investigators commenced, which was later leaked to a Sydney newspaper. The initial controversy was whether the public should have been informed of the inquiry. Premier Chris Minns defended NSW Police commissioner Karen Webb who thought the inquiry being publicized limited their available

strategies. The state and federal oppositions advocated informing the public immediately. Minns and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese initially described the incident as “terrorism,” but later Minns adjusted his label to a “potential terrorist event”. Minns described the incident as “undeniably an escalation in race-fuelled hatred” and set about legislating against this. The caravan was later found to be organized by criminals trying to earn brownie points regarding investigations by providing information on the caravan, although their plan was foiled when a local found the caravan, towed it to his property and looked inside. There remains a serious issue: The NSW legislation was rushed through as a knee-jerk response to the public demand for quick action on antisemitic attacks in NSW when the caravan did not in fact have an antisemitic or terrorist motive. Minns has since defended his legislation, saying the threat to the public was not overstated.

[Madeleine Wedesweiler \(29 January 2025\) SBS News](#)  
[Sarah McPhee \(01 February 2025\) The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

### **Stark statistics for suffering men – poor health, isolation and suicide**

Surveys of over 10,000 people across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US, reveal that men are breaking down, often in silence and isolation. Suicide is claiming the lives of more Australian men aged 25 to 44 than any other cause, and is the third deadliest threat for those aged 45 to 54.

*Mensline 1300 78 99 78*

*Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636*

[Naziya Alvi Rahman \(23 April 2025\) The Epoch Times](#)

### **3 June: 33 years since Mabo decision**

On 3 June 1992 the High Court of Australia recognised that a group of Torres Strait Islanders, led by Eddie Mabo, held ownership of Mer (Murray Island). *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* is a landmark decision of the High Court of Australia that recognised the existence of Native Title in Australia and rendered *terra nullius* a legal fiction.

[Mabo decision, National Museum Australia](#)

[Katie Kiss \(31 May 2025\) \*The Saturday Paper\*](#)

## **Losing It by Jess Hill**

Australian governments promised to end violence against women and children in a single generation. Instead, it is escalating. Why? In *Losing It*, Jess Hill investigates Australia's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children to find out what's working and what's not – and what we can do to turn things around. This compassionate, groundbreaking essay lifts the lid on a national crisis.

[Quarterly Essay: Losing It: Can we stop violence against women and children? By Jess Hill](#)

[Losing it with Jess Hill | Interview on Australia's Biggest Book Club | The Australia Institute](#)

[Jess Hill Keynote | Family and Domestic Violence | Women's Agenda](#)

[Jess Hill on Stopping Family Violence | Wheeler Centre](#)

## **Why Monique Ryan voted against mandatory sentencing**

On 05 February 2025, Labor caved to weeks of Coalition pressure to force automatic jail time on terrorists and people displaying Nazi symbols, avoiding a political fight but defying the party's own policy platform in a major backdown. However, Teal MP Monique Ryan argued that politicians should not create mandatory sentences because it leads to poorer outcomes for the justice system. She told the ABC that sentencing decisions should be made by "judges, not politicians". Although she supported the hate crimes legislation, she was disappointed that the government back-flipped on mandatory sentencing. "I think we need to treat these crimes very seriously ... but mandatory sentencing impedes the independence of our judicial system."

[Angus Delaney \(06 February 2025\) \*The Sydney Morning Herald\*](#)

[Pablo Viñales \(05 February 2025\) \*ABC News\*](#)

## **NACCHO Media Release: National Yarning Circle starts in Adelaide**

On 29 April 2025, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) opened the second Elder Care Support National Yarning Circle in Adelaide, bringing together frontline workers, health leaders and policymakers to lead a culturally grounded and community-driven reform of aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The first Elder Care Support National Yarning Circle was held on the Gold Coast on 5-6 June 2024. NACCHO's Executive Director Monica Barolits-McCabe stated, "Our elders carry our culture, wisdom, and stories. Caring for them is a sacred responsibility, not simply a service. Through the Elder Care Support Program, we are transforming aged care by placing culture, connection to Country, and community at its heart. This Yarning Circle is an opportunity to celebrate our progress, share stories of resilience, and collectively build the next chapter in Aboriginal-led aged care."

[NACCHO \(05 June 2024\) NACCHO](#)

[NACCHO \(29 April 2025\) NACCHO](#)

## **AHRC calls for reform After 600 Aboriginal deaths in custody**

All seven members of the Australian Human Rights Commission have issued a rare joint statement calling for reform to deal with Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The Commission reports that 12 Indigenous people have died in custody since the beginning of 2025, with recent cases in the Northern Territory pushing the total number of deaths since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), to nearly 600. "There is an urgent need to invest in prevention to stop people from entering the justice system in the first place," said Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss. Commissioner Kiss also called for the full implementation of recommendations from the RCIADIC.

[Naziya Alvi Rahman \(13 June 2025\) \*The Epoch Times\*](#)