



Goulburn Regional Art Gallery

Comin' Home Soon

GOULBURN CORRECTIONAL CENTRE PROJECT
with playwright and multi-media artist Alana Valentine,
Alison Murphy-Oates, Aboriginal inmates and
SHINE for Kids Aboriginal children
of inmates

26 October - 17 November 2012





FOREWORD

Comin' Home Soon is an exhibition of artworks by Aboriginal inmates at Goulburn Correctional Centre and children from SHINE for Kids; in conjunction with playwright and multi-media artist Alana Valentine and Indigenous Producer Assistant, Alison Murphy-Oates.

Comin' Home Soon is part of the second off-site project the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery has undertaken with Aboriginal inmates at Goulburn Correctional Centre through a Strategic Industry Development grant from ArtsNSW.

Most of us are happy that offenders are locked away and forgotten about. I see it differently. While teaching art in a women's prison for 5 years, I became conscious that prisoners don't generally need more punishment; instead they need positive and creative input to help them become aware of their situation; insight into how they got where they are (in gaol) and the tools to learn how they might live a different and better life when they get out.

This exhibition is a result of workshops where Aboriginal inmates inside Goulburn Correctional Centre and Aboriginal children on the outside created a drawn thread that linked both the prisoners and the children of prisoners in a unique collaboration that encompassed both art and story telling. Conceived of and co-ordinated by Alana Valentine, the visual art workshops provided an access point for the storytelling revelations. While the inmates told their stories and expressed their pain, happiness and anger; Alana wrote and they drew. The inmates' drawings were images of things that they held dear or dreamt about. They were purposely incomplete. Alana arranged to take them outside to SHINE for Kids- an organisation that works with children of prisoners, for them to fill with colour. The drawings on the gallery walls and the clocks were all created in the workshops throughout 2012 and represent a union between the parents and children who are affected by incarceration. Alana also completed a sound artwork to accompany the installation.

The culmination of the project will be Alana Valentine's play: *Comin' Home Soon* that will be performed at the Lieder Theatre in April 2013.

Thankyou to the gallery staff for their belief and commitment to the project; the staff and management at Goulburn Correctional Centre; ArtsNSW for supporting the project through a Strategic Industry Development grant; all the artists 'inside' and 'outside'; Goulburn Mulwaree Council; SHINE for Kids; Alison Murphy-Oates and a heartfelt thanks to Alana Valentine for her compassion and integrity that shone throughout the project.

Jane Cush
Director
October 2012





SHINE for Kids

SHINE for Kids is excited to be part of this project, it has allowed children to have a voice and to express what it is like for them when they have a dad goes to prison.

It's not their fault but they suffer.

SHINE for Kids vision is to build futures where kids can shine.

SHINE for Kids works with and for young Australians affected by family member involvement in the criminal justice system. We support them and help create hope, we inspire them to reach their potential, we nurture their growth and we empower them to succeed.

SHINE for Kids is a unique community-based Australian service. SHINE for Kids seeks futures where children and young adults with family member involvement in the criminal justice system can shine. It does this by working with everyone concerned to:

- a) Support, help, inspire, nurture and empower in a child-centred manner. SHINE for Kids' work is conducted in a way that is appropriate to each child's unique background, listens to the voice of the child and acts in their best interest.
- b) Break cycles of intergenerational offending, reuniting and strengthening families if possible. SHINE for Kids also works with community and government to address systemic issues that impede children's futures.
- c) Develop and provide services to help as many children as possible, at their point of need.

Gloria Larman
Chief Executive Officer





COMIN' HOME SOON

GRAG, GCC, SHINE For Kids 2012 Storytelling Performance and Visual Art Project

Da Yard

The yard is small and no bigger than the average backyard
With huge walls all around
with Razor wire on them
the best way to describe it is hostile and there's a lot of tension
almost everyone has shivs on them or stashed somewhere nearby
i've seen a lot of fights over the simplest things things that people on
the outside wouldn't worry about but we don't have many things in
here and I think that's why people are willing to fight for them
stupid is the person who thinks he is safe in the yard because no one
is in here for being happy go lucky good people
you don't know what other people are thinking so there's no way of
telling if they are going to snap and hurt someone
So you keep your back to the wall look out for yourself and be ready
for anything
because when things go wrong they go wrong fast
this isn't a game
you can't press pause and ask for time out
and the only time I feel safe is when I'm locked in my cell.
True that.





THE PROJECT

The first two days I went into Nura Warra Umer I conducted writing workshops with the Aboriginal inmates. They wrote stories about things that their parents had taught them as a child, the first time they were visited by their family, and aspects of their daily life like being in the yard, using the showers and trying to get on the phone. 'I've watched my kids grow up via photos and the phone' one inmate told me and his fellow artists.

Then I was invited to go out to the SHINE For Kids complex at Silverwater Goal. In writing workshops there I invited the Aboriginal children to tell me about the experience of living with a parent in goal. They talked about their first time through the metal detectors, the strain on their relationship to their school friends and others and the special nature of their 'secret'. And then, together, we made up elaborate fictions, imaginative conjectures and funny bits to distil their experience for people who might judge and misunderstand them.

Finally I spoke to the people who work with both the children and the inmates - the SHINE for Kids workers, the Correctional Centre officers, the prison visit supervisors. I drew on my own observations and reflections and I went back into Goulburn, back out to SHINE, back into Goulburn and back out to SHINE. Again and again and again.

This year's project *Comin' Home Soon* is a conversation between the stories of GCC inmates and the stories and experiences of the children of inmates. By drawing large artworks for the children to colour in, they have created a metaphor that points the way toward a hopeful future for both. These artists have provided hand-made colouring-in templates for 'their' children and in doing so, they have taken the time to focus on and privilege a child's needs in a way that their incarceration does not allow them to do for their own families. By making such large and beautifully planned and executed outlines, they are asserting their esteem for the

children who they miss, instilling a love of cultural knowledge and exhibiting guidance about the value of discipline and self-expression. The pictures are detailed and careful, they contain cultural symbols and feature a relationship with nature that children respond to and inmates long for. But most importantly, they require a child's hand to bring them most colourfully to life. And in all of them, as the men make art and the children make art together, time continues to pass, time that can be remade and readjusted in the future, time that ticks and clicks and taps away from all of us and them.

The artworks were coloured in by the children, with 'creative assistance' from Alison Murphy-Oates, Leeann Turley, a SHINE for Kids worker, and myself. Some of the children sat quietly in a circle and the sound of crayons scratching the surface was all that could be heard, or Alison told them what her own father had taught her about the symbols in the artwork. Children came and went as relatives left to visit inmates in the adjoining complex and, when their arms got 'colouring in fatigue', they jumped up for a little Wii tennis or football. Even as we were packing up, one young artist was still experimenting with glue and glitter and colourful feathers such was her engagement with the artworks and their collective making.

The stage play at the Lieder Theatre, scheduled for April 2013, will feature aspects of both the artworks and the storytelling so let me end with a child's perspective on where her father has gone and why.



He got washed down the dunny. He got flushed down the dunny for throwing my chinese african american half human bunny called honey down the dunny. it was only funny when he tried to get out of the dunny. He finally landed in asia and ran off with a runny shark chinese african american bunny that had flushed the dunny and he got flushed back to me.

Alana Valentine
October 2012



INMATE COMMENTS

Dwayne: It was all good, Alana was great to work with.

Phil: I enjoyed doing the work shops the most all the boys really got into it.

Ryan: I love coming to Nura Warra to do the programs, it gives me a reason to get out of bed.

Neville: I liked doing the workshops, because it will help the Shine For Kids program.

Michael: Alana was really good to work with she really knew her stuff.

Ryan: Although I didn't do much of the workshop I liked the idea of painting the clocks for the art show.

CORRECTIONAL CENTRE COMMENTS

Over the last few months when Alana has spent time at Nura Warra Umer the inmates have taken a lot of pride in the work they have been doing with her and she has been a breath of fresh air in the work shop in getting the inmates to think outside the box with their work and the different aspects of art in general. The program has been a huge success. On behalf of Warren, the inmates and myself I would really like to thank Alana, Jane and the staff at the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery for working with Nura Warra throughout the year and hope the exhibition is a huge success.

Mark Mortimer

Overseer in Nura Warra Umer

I would like to thank Goulburn Regional Art Gallery in conjunction with Arts NSW for their continuing support for our programs involving Aboriginal Inmates in our Nura Warra Umer workshop at Goulburn Correctional Complex. Jane Cush and her team at the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery have once again been successful in gaining a grant from ArtsNSW to help develop and encourage the skills of Aboriginal men within our Correctional Complex.

To have a playwright of Alana Valentine's stature and renown involved in this project shows just how much Jane and her team regard the importance of running these projects.

Alana has embraced this project with much enthusiasm and is intent on making a difference to the lives and relationships of inmates and children of inmates. She has been visiting children of inmates at SHINE for Kids and the inmates at Goulburn on a regular basis.

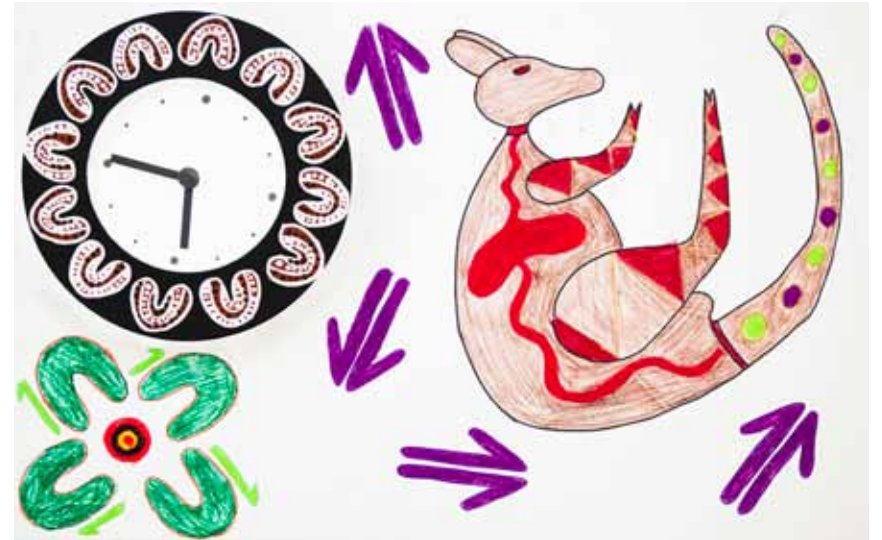
The inmates have shown Alana a side of themselves that often does not come out whilst they are in an environment that they find themselves. They have been open about their lives and experiences, which has helped Alana gain a true perspective of their lives to base her play on.

On behalf of the Management of Goulburn Correctional Complex, I would like to thank everyone involved.

Gregg White

*Manager Centre Services & Employment
Goulburn Correctional Complex.*







ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ArtsNSW, Strategic Industry Development Grant

Alana Valentine

Alison Murphy-Oates

Perc Carter © Carter Images

Gloria Larman, Leeann Turley and other SHINE For Kids transport co-ordinators and workers

Lieder Theatre

Gallery Staff:

Jane Cush, Director

Angela D'Elia, Curator and Exhibition Officer

Janenne Gittoes, Gallery Administration

Michelle Stuart, Public Programs and Education Officer

Goulburn Central Motor Lodge

Goulburn Correctional Centre Staff:

Rick Jones, Gregg White, Mark Mortimer and Warren Freebody

Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Phaedra Leah, Graphic Design

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data

Editor: Jane Cush

Title: Comin' Home Soon

<http://catalogue.nla.gov.au>

ISBN: 978-0-9807642-7-7

