

MEDIA RELEASE



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EVERY DAY IS 'GRAVY DAY' FOR CHILDREN WITH A MUM OR DAD IN PRISON

Some 43,000 Aussie children will miss out on celebrating this Christmas with their mothers and fathers, because their parents are serving time behind bars.

As people around Australia mark Gravy Day, made famous by Paul Kelly's song, **SHINE for Kids** today pointed out that for tens of thousands of families, the painful lyrics are their daily reality.

"Kids with a parent in prison don't only suffer from the lost memories and missed special occasions, they are six times more likely to be incarcerated as adults themselves and 40 per cent more likely to drop out of school," SHINE for Kids CEO Julie Hourigan said.

"Kids with a parent in prison are amongst the most invisible victims of crime.

"As a country, Australia needs to do better at providing intervention and support to kids in this situation through no fault of their own, and help break cycles of disadvantage," she added.

"Fans of Paul Kelly's *How to Make Gravy* are familiar with the lyrics 'won't you kiss my kids on Christmas Day, please don't let 'em cry for me,' which articulate so well the suffering of these kids.

"Parental incarceration is a contributing factor to child poverty, we know these kids are missing more school than their counterparts, and today in particular we should reflect on what we can better do to support kids in this situation and prevent lifelong disadvantage."

One child, who cannot be identified, said; "I like to pretend Dad is still there on Christmas. Christmas is supposed to be about opening presents with your family and it makes me sad when he's not there. We still put a present under the tree for him that he can open when he comes home. Sometimes it helps pretending he's invisible, but I miss him so much."

"Both of my girls are an emotional wreck, they cry every night for their dad," said one mother, who wished to remain anonymous.

More than half of the Australian prison population have children and drastic action is needed to ensure history doesn't repeat itself for future generations.

"We need policy, programs and processes to ensure these invisible victims of crime are seen, heard and supported. Not just on Gravy Day, but every day," Ms Hourigan said.

SHINE for Kids is a national charity that supports children with a parent in prison, through programs to keep them engaged with school, supporting their goals and improving their well-being.

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Find out more about our work and support SHINE for Kids www.shineforkids.org.au.

Media contact: Billy Briggs | 0474 697 235