LIFE NOT DEATH

AN EVALUATION OF "GAOLWIZE"
The Streetwize AIDS and Prisoners Comic

May 1990

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1. BACKGROUND TO “GAOLWIZE”

In mid-1988 “Glebe House”, a half-way house for ex-prisoners, in conjunction with Streetwize Comics and with support from the NSW Department of Corrective Services (DCS), applied for a community grant under the National AIDS Education Program to produce, distribute and evaluate an educational comic on AIDS. The application was successful, and research and production began in late 1988.

An editorial committee, comprising representatives of the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health, the Department of Corrective Services (NSW), Streetwize Comics and Glebe House was convened. A wide range of other experts and interests, including the Prison Officers Association, was consulted (see Appendix A).

The committee clarified issues relating to the target group for the comic. The comic was particularly directed at younger prisoners, but was also seen as relevant to all age groups. It was decided to target only prisoners and ex-prisoners, since to include youth detainees as originally intended would have been inappropriate given nature of the intended contents. The committee’s minutes noted that, “since this comic requires a sympathetic view of prisoners and gaol it was felt that it would further the expectations of young people to ‘hit the big school’ (gaol)” if it were distributed in detention centres.

The Department of Corrective Services agreed to distribute the comic, and to fund an “Information Kit” for use with the comic. This kit was distributed in February (after the research phase of this evaluation).

The proposal originally envisaged that the comic would be distributed in prisons in New South Wales and South Australia. These two states were to pilot the use of the comic, which was to be subject to evaluation, with a view to expanding the project nationally.

A “brainstorming” was carried out to highlight and prioritise the issues to be addressed. Research by the comic production workers included group discussions and workshops with prisoners in male and female prisons in NSW and SA to discover needs for different types of information, to produce ideas for stories, and to ensure that the correct idiom and background was used.

Rough versions of the comic were produced out of this process, and workshopped with prisoners. Substantial changes were incorporated, and finished art versions of the full comic were circulated to those experts and organisations consulted, and final corrections were made.

The NSW Minister for Corrective Services agreed to the distribution of the comic in NSW prisons, and 25,000 were printed. By May 1990 approval had still not been received for South Australian distribution.

2. EVALUATION RESEARCH METHODS

With the hold-up in distribution in South Australia, this evaluation is limited to NSW prisons. These problems in South Australia would obviously need to be considered in deciding whether to proceed with the project in other states, and such aspects will be
considered in concluding remarks. The reasons and background to the situation in South Australia will not be dealt with in this evaluation.

The major issues to be covered in this report are:

- the distribution of the comic in NSW prisons
- how the comic was used or read by prisoners
- how the comic was received (accepted, enjoyed, rejected) by prisoners
- the impact of the comic in imparting information or stimulating reflection about AIDS or related activities and social issues.

The methods used to carry out the research were as follows:

File data. Files held at Streetwize Comics documented the aims, target groups, budgets, processes and print run and delivery information. These were used to document the background to the comic (Section 1 above) and some aspects of the distribution of the comic (Section 3 below).

Interviews with Corrective Services and Streetwize staff. Again used to track the process of the comic's production and distribution, and included in Sections One and Three. Corrective Services staff interviewed included those in the Central AIDS Unit responsible for liaison over production, and the distribution of the comic, and AIDS coordinators, program organisers or drug and alcohol workers in various gaols, complexes or regions who were responsible for getting the comics to prisoners. No interviews were specifically held with prison officers, though relevant information on their attitudes and actions as they affected the distribution and use of the comic was available through the other interviews (with DCS staff and prisoners).

Comparable research on AIDS education. Research carried out by the Research and Statistics Division of the Department of Corrective Services since 1987 had looked at the impact of various educational programs, and assessed the level of knowledge of prisoners at various points in time. A subset of the knowledge questions regarding HIV transmission used in that research was reproduced in the present research, and provided comparative data (Appendix C, results discussed in Section 5). A former research worker from DCS who had carried out much of this work in prisons for the previous study, Frances Potter, was engaged to carry out all interviews and administer the tests in connection with the present research. Lisa Conolly, responsible for the DCS research, advised on the present research and made possible comparable computer analysis of the knowledge test results.

Prison census and “weekly states” data. Information from DCS on the characteristics of the prison population and the characteristics of the prisons was used in deciding the prisons to sample and in setting sample targets for particular groups (Aboriginal, women, under 25 years old).

Open ended interviews with 70 prisoners in six prisons. Prisons were chosen to be a representative sample of maximum, medium and minimum security, and to give a sample of 20% women. Beyond that, decisions were made on the accessibility of the
prison and the numbers of prisoners for ease of interviewing the requisite number.

Since the comic was particularly designed to reach young prisoners (under 25) and Aboriginal prisoners, we set targets of interviewing at least the proportion of prisoners in each of those categories as there were in the total prison population. Targets were:

- Aboriginal: 10%
- Under 25: 33% male; 25% female.

Each of these targets was exceeded. The characteristics of those interviewed are shown at Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAOL</th>
<th>MUL</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>AP</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL INTERVIEWED</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABORIGINAL/TSTI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDER 25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1: INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS**

**NOTE:** Mulawa (MUL) and Norma Parker (NP) are both women's prisons. 16 women were interviewed.

Other abbreviations: Assessment Prison (AP); Remand Centre (RC); Silverwater (SW); Bathurst (BA).

Within each prison, a random sample approximately twice the size of the required sample was selected from alphabetical computer print-outs of prisoners. 32% of those selected in this way were interviewed. Information on the reasons for not interviewing the other 68% was recorded (e.g., comic not seen; not available at court; refused, etc - see Table 2 in Section 3). This information forms the basis for some conclusions on distribution (Section 3) and language and literacy (Section 4).

67% of those interviewed came from the random sample, which was boosted by asking other prisoners passing by or encountered around the gaol on other business whether they had seen the comic etc. 33% of those interviewed were selected in this way.

The interviewer used an open-ended interview schedule which took about 30 minutes to go through (Appendix B). After introducing herself and the research (including confidentiality etc), and ensuring the person agreed to the interview, she asked for some relevant demographic information, and information about the subject's experience of prisons (including which prisons they had been in since June 1989, when the comic was first distributed. They were then asked whether they had seen the comic, and whether they had "read or looked through it." Those in the random sample who had not seen the comic had the interview terminated there, and those who had were asked further questions about where they had seen it, what they thought of it, what they recalled from it, and how they had used it. The knowledge test on transmission of the AIDS virus followed, consisting of 11 questions (ten of which were later scored at half a point each, giving a possible full score of 5: see Appendix C).
3. DISTRIBUTION

A print run of 25,000 comics for NSW was initially distributed as 16,000 to the Department of Corrective Services (AIDS Unit), 5,000 to Glebe House, and 4,000 to Streetwize Comics in about June 1989.

The Department adopted a policy of releasing the comics to prisons over a period of time, rather than "flooding" them with the comics as soon as they were released. Distribution methods were to be left up to the individual prisons, but suggestions were made that they could be kept in the reception room for distribution with the initial kit to incoming prisoners, and that the libraries could keep copies.

Mr Michael Clough of the AIDS Unit had done most of the initial distribution of the comics, in July 1989, though smaller numbers appear to have been distributed through the Corrective Services libraries. In some cases distribution involved contact with AIDS education officers, while in other cases boxes of the comics were delivered directly to superintendents or peer support committees.

Boxes, each containing 120 comics, were delivered as follows:

**Long Bay Complex**: 9 boxes initially (plus at least another 3 later) distributed by Eileen Adamson, AIDS education coordinator; 1 box to each of the gaols delivered by Michael Clough. In two of the gaols a comic had been placed in each cell by the peer support committee. In the Assessment Prison (sampled in this research) this was attempted, but with some difficulty given a degree of resistance, and the lack of an effective peer support committee. The other gaol sampled in the Long Bay complex was the Remand Centre, where the comics were to have been distributed on reception (though see our research results, below). Officers concerned with AIDS education and drug and alcohol workers had also given out copies of the comic in these gaols.

**Parramatta, Mulawa, Silverwater, etc**: 3 boxes delivered by Michael Clough to Mulawa and Silverwater, also distribution by AIDS education unit at Westmead to Parramatta and Norma Parker.

In Mulawa, Dawn De Loas and Silverwater the drug and alcohol workers had been involved in distribution within the gaols. All copies had been distributed by November 1989, and there seemed to be no clear means for these workers to get further supplies as required.

**Northern Gaols, eg Maitland Cessnock**: 2 boxes were sent to the AIDS education officer.

**Other gaols**: Bathurst- 3 boxes; Berrima- 1 box; Kirkconnell- 2 boxes; Goulburn- 3 boxes; Oberon- 2 boxes (via Bathurst); Cooma- 2 boxes; Broken Hill- 1 box.

Some comics had been delivered to Parklea (unclear how they were used or distributed there) and to Emu Plains by education officers.
Beyond these reports by Corrective Services staff, the random samples of prisoners in the selected prisons gave a further indication of the effectiveness of distribution (see Table 2). This indicates that across all six prisons, 58% of sampled prisoners had seen the comic. The rates of prisoners who said they had not seen the comic were highest in the two Long Bay gaols sampled (Assessment Prison, 61%; Remand Centre, 50%) and in Norma Parker, 50%. Access to the comic was best in Bathurst and Silverwater, where only 12% and 27% respectively had not seen the comic.

In those gaols where the distribution appeared to have been best, such as Mulawa and Bathurst, the greatest number of prisoners said they had seen the comic in that particular gaol ("in the wing", "in my cell"; "from the AIDS committee"; "lying around").

In those where distribution appeared to be least effective, many of the prisoners had seen the comic at another gaol. For instance, in Norma Parker, only one of those interviewed who had seen the comic had seen it at Norma Parker, the rest having seen it at Mulawa (4 of the 8), the police centre cells (1/8), etc. At the Assessment Prison, of those who had seen the comic only half (6) had seen it at that prison (3 in the library).

By comparing the information from both of the above sources, it is possible to conclude that the gaols sampled were representative of NSW prisons. Between them they account for between one quarter and a third of NSW's prison population. It is thus reasonable to suppose that four to six months after distribution about 58% of prisoners in NSW had seen the comic. This would have varied even more than is indicated in Table 2, since many who had seen it saw it in another prison where distribution was more effective. Effectiveness of distribution appears to have been the result of factors such as the approach of the peer support committees and the attitudes or initiatives of officers at each gaol.

**TABLE 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAOL</th>
<th>MUL</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>AP</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sampled</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused/unavailable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective sample</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic not seen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic seen, not read</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic read</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRISONERS HAVING SEEN/READ GAOLWISE (RANDOM SAMPLE ONLY)
The fact that more than half the prisoners in NSW gaols would have seen the comic indicates some success in distribution. However, the extreme variations between the prisons, and the vagueness of certain key officers as to how more supplies could be obtained suggest that a more active continuing promotion of the comic from the central level, coupled with targeting prisons where there appeared to be distribution problems, could achieve better results.

4. ACCEPTANCE, USE AND GENERAL REACTIONS

Extent to which the comic was read: We can see from Table 2 (random sample figures) that 58% had seen the comic; 46% had seen and read it; and 12% had seen but not read it. Of those prisoners who had seen the comic, 80% had read it.

Conolly’s (1990) study of AIDS education in NSW gaols provides some interesting comparisons on the distribution and use of pamphlets up to late 1987. She found that 50% of prisoners had seen pamphlets (8 percentage points lower than the Gaolwize figure), but that only 26% had actually read any pamphlets. Thus, while the distribution of Gaolwize was slightly less widespread than that of (generic) pamphlets, the readership rate was twice as high, indicating that prisoners were twice as likely to read Gaolwize than a pamphlet, given the availability of both.

Of the 70 prisoners interviewed, 29 simply indicated that they had read the comic, without qualifying this. Another 28 specifically said that they had “read it right through” or “cover to cover”, etc. Another three commented that they had read it more than once (eg twice, “so many times I’ve read it backwards”). On a number of occasions these types of remarks were accompanied by references to boredom in prison (or in “segro”), or by comments as to the inherent interest of the comic (these are to be dealt with below).

Four of those interviewed said that they had only “glanced at” the comic, or “browsed through it” or been distracted; another two said they had only read parts of the comic. Two indicated they had not really read it since they were “not too good at reading” (etc) and another said he could only read it slowly - and had only read about half - due to difficulties with English.

General comments - positive and negative: Most of the prisoners interviewed had some criticisms of the comic to add to their praise. However, 32 made only positive comments, without any criticisms, and six made only negative comments, without any praise (one of these was more neutral, but has been classified as only critical: “just a book...read it out of boredom”).

The positive comments, which came from 63 of the 70 prisoners, generally indicated interest and enjoyment. Beyond that, the quality most widely commented on was the realism or truth of the comic. Many prisoners interviewed commented that the comic had accurately captured gaol life:

“It’s what happens in gaol... That’s what blew some of the old heads out - ‘where’s all this information come from?’ - ‘a dog must’ve told’em’. The younger crims ask if it actually goes on in gaol, and it does. It lets them know.”
The various entertaining aspects of the comic were commented on: the humour, the stories, the pictures and the characters ("the dark haired one [Rosa in "Love on the Run"] was really smart - I liked her"). These were specifically seen to be appealing, so that people would pick up and read the comics, unlike pamphlets (a comparison frequently made).

Of course, the educational messages in the comic were commented on, and frequently seen to be a valuable aspect of the comic, that it is "telling you things, but in a good way. It gets you thinking. It's funny the way things are said... funny, but things do stick in your mind." It was in fact the juxtaposition of humour and interest with the useful information that was particularly seen as a positive aspect of the comic.

"We've joked about the language, but the message is still there - it's good. It sinks in. It's a good way of putting it rather than trying to ram it down your throat." or, "At first I read it for a laugh, for the characters, but then I got interested in AIDS..."

The other main characteristic of the comic that was commented favourably on, as the quote above indicates, was the language, the "bluntness". "Nice and blatant", was a comment from Mulawa.

Not all the prisoners interviewed agreed with all these points, however. Some of those who made criticisms thought the language "too mild" or not quite authentic: "In here every second word's a swear word.... The comic was too 'civilised' - this is a different society in here."

Only two prisoners interviewed saw the language as too rough: "every word [in the comic] is a swear word." The comic clearly was treading a fine line between being offensive and being realistic. The importance of realism or authenticity was highlighted by a prisoner who said: "There are people trying to help us learn something about some important issues, but it won't get across properly if it's not exactly how it works in here. The majority will think, 'well, if this bit is wrong, then the rest might be too'."

The question of the broader realism of the comic was more controversial. Despite the greater number of prisoners being impressed by the realism of the comic, there were criticisms on these grounds from two sides. One or two of those interviewed felt that the comic over-emphasised the bad side of gaol (though only one actually said that it was not realistic on these grounds). A number of prisoners were concerned with the image of gaol presented, and did not want the public getting the wrong impression (eg that "everyone in gaol is a junkie"). (The comic itself did not make it clear that distribution was restricted to gaols and ex-prisoners.)

Then again, a number felt, particularly in relation to the male-to-male sex story "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" that the portrayal was unrealistic. Several pointed to the unavailability of condoms in gaols (though this point was touched on in that story).

Others quite vehemently pointed out that it was "worse in gaol than what they say": "I got a bit mad about ["Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"] - it's not like that, you get forced - stabbed or bashed or whatever. In the story they agreed, but that's bullshit as far as I know. I know there is a few like that but they don't show themselves."
However, this prisoner went on to say, "I reckon ["Cat"] is realistic, but all gays should be shot. It really turns me off. I was stabbed and bashed one time and raped - it turns me right off." Others made similar, though less vehement, comments, such as that "Cat" was very informative, but that "the rape aspect should be taken into account".

Others were concerned that, even as the comic was, "it'd worry blokes", though many were enthusiastic that the comic should reach young prisoners to let them know what gaol was like.

How the comic was read: Most prisoners who had read the comic had done so on their own, or did not offer any comments on discussions with other people about it. However, a substantial minority - 21 of the 70 interviewed - referred to discussions or other reactions to the comic. Nine said they had discussed it with "friends", "cellmates" etc. One woman interviewed said she talked about it "with my partner - we thought it was good for getting the message across to people who don't know much about safer sex and about using". A young Aboriginal man said, "We know a lot of blokes like the characters and we were making up names for 'em."

Another three said there had been some formal discussion of the comic at AIDS committee meetings or peer training courses. The research was carried out just before the distribution of the Information Kit, and it is likely that the kit will stimulate further use of the comic in formal discussion, courses, etc.

Six said they had joked or laughed about it with others, and another four had given it to other prisoners. Two of these passed it on out of interest, while the other two were distributing the comic as part of a role (eg as head sweeper, etc.)

As indicated by many of the positive comments cited above, people have often picked up the comic to read for entertainment, but have then become interested in the information content, or the broader issues.

Out of the 70 interviews, only two indicated that their comprehension of the comic was limited by an inability to read. Given that 5% or more of the population are illiterate, and that these people are over-represented in gaols, this is a surprisingly low figure. Even one of these two knew that the comic was about cleaning and not sharing needles. In all there were only six prisoners of the 70 who did not indicate that they had recalled or understood anything from the comic - one of these had not read the comic, another said he "didn't want to know".

Of course, literacy and comprehension could have been a problem for some of the other 10 prisoners who were not interviewed because they had not read the comic, though the three who did give some information all said they did not read it because of lack of interest, without saying they had reading problems. Some of the five who refused to be interviewed could have done so due to inability to read.

Unless we assume that nearly all of those who did not read the comic or who refused to be interviewed did so because of illiteracy, and there is some evidence that that is not so, it appears likely that the comic is reaching people who would be regarded as functionally illiterate, inasmuch as they could not or would not read newspapers or pamphlets.
Inability to read English could also have been a factor limiting the accessibility of the comic. Our sampling and lack of an interpreter leaves that question unanswered. In the group interviewed there were five prisoners of non-English speaking background, only one of whom indicated any difficulty understanding the comic. However, even he had read half the comic and clearly understood what he had read: “I learnt about heroin and AIDS - that you can catch it from dirty needles. Yes, I learnt a lot.”

In another four cases (only three individuals - one was sampled twice on different days at different gaols!) people were not interviewed due to an inability to speak English.

5. RECALL, LEARNING AND REFLECTION

Recall: 62 of the 70 prisoners interviewed specified particular messages that they recalled from the comic, and all but three of these were quite unprompted (ie without seeing inside the comic, or being asked about particular stories or messages). This is significant given that about 84% of those specifying when they had read the comic stated that it was more than a month before the interview. About a quarter had read it more than 4 months before.

“How to clean needles” was most commonly recalled (42); followed by safe sex and condoms (28); not sharing needles (22); and other issues about safe sex between men (9 people, 4 of them women!).

Men had some particular points about safe sex between men that they mentioned, though the fact that they were almost outnumbered by women (despite being 77% of those interviewed) in recalling this suggests they may have been more reluctant to talk about it. Those who did mention this issue specifically included: “try not to cum in your partner”; if no condoms, “have other forms of body contact without body fluid exchange”; and “don’t muck around with other blokes!”.

Learning: 65 people interviewed answered the question “did you learn anything new from reading the comic?” 36 said “no”; 29 “yes”. Equal numbers of men said “yes” and “no” (25 of each), so the women were more likely to say they had not learnt anything new. (Conolly’s research indicates less resistance on the part of women to pamphlets and other forms of AIDS education, so this may have some relevance).

Of those who answered no, the usual response was that they knew it all already. There was no significant difference between the scores of those answering “yes” or “no” to this question. One man who said he had learnt nothing added, “But everything I know is in that book [ie the comic... There’s] 5 or 6 years of knowledge in the book.” Another answering no said he did not want to know (since he had never seen any drugs or sex in gaol); and another that he was “sick of AIDS lectures”.

Even where people had learnt nothing new, they sometimes commented on the value of getting reminders: for “keeping in touch” or as reassurance. The comic also led to some other reflection on the various issues (see “Reflection” below).

Those answering “yes” - they had learnt something new - also were sometimes referring to some reflection or attitudinal issues (seven responses were in this category:}
again to be discussed below). But many others specified particular facts they had learnt. 12 mentioned cleaning needles (with bleach, etc); eight said they learnt how AIDS is/is not transmitted; two referred to vaginal fluids; two "not to use drugs"; and one each mentioned: using condoms; "how to treat people" [who are HIV+]; "you don't have to root to get off" (male); issues about testing for HIV; and where to get outside advice.

Knowledge tests: As noted at section 1 of this report, it was possible to administer to prisoners interviewed a knowledge test relating to transmission of the AIDS virus, which was identical to tests done by the Research and Statistics Division of the Department of Corrective Services in the previous two and a half years. Results of previous tests, at different times and with groups exposed to different educational material were available for comparison. T-tests were run to indicate the statistical significance (p) of the different scores (ie the probability that they did not occur simply by chance).

Table 3 summarises the results. The average score of the sample who had read "Gaolwize" was 4.301. This was higher than the full Corrective Services previous sample (average score = 3.750) at a high level of statistical significance (p = 0.0001). The "Gaolwize" score was also higher than two other "educated" samples distinguished from that group, both a group who had been to a talk in gaol at some previous time (average score = 3.940, p = 0.026) and another group who had been educated by means of pamphlets only (average score = 3.898, p = 0.021). These p values also indicate statistically significant results.

The only sub-sample of the previous Corrective Services sample with a similar average score to that of the "Gaolwize" sample was a group who had been to a doctor's lecture on AIDS the morning before they were tested (average score = 4.452). However, the comparison with this group was not statistically significant due to the small sample size (p=0.50, ie there was a 50% probability that it could have occurred by chance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Average score</th>
<th>Number in sample</th>
<th>Significance (re: Gaolwize)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrective services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full sample</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0.0001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Gaolwize</td>
<td>4.301</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read pamphlet</td>
<td>3.898</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard lecture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(same morning)</td>
<td>4.452</td>
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<tr>
<td>Received any</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS education</td>
<td>3.940</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3: SCORES ON KNOWLEDGE TESTS: samples having various types of educational input (and statistical significance re Gaolwize sample)
While these results are useful, and indicate considerably better results for Gaolwize than for comparable educational methods (e.g. pamphlets), care should be taken not to overemphasise their significance. Tests of this sort have various limitations, and this is no exception.

In the first place, the approach taken to answering the questions is important. In a number of cases, prisoners indicated some discrepancy between what they really believed, and what they knew to be the acceptable answer, based on scepticism about the "medical" view on AIDS. In some cases they answered the questions as they knew was expected, while indicating their scepticism. In other cases they answered the questions "incorrectly", based on what they believed, while indicating that they knew the "medically correct" answer. For example, a young Aboriginal man, who scored 5/5 on the test, said "Although I know this is the medical view on things, I wouldn't take any chances with anyone"; and an older prisoner who lost points because of an incorrect response to the question about dried blood, had said, "I'm still not totally convinced that you can't catch AIDS the way they say you can't: what about atomised mist in operations? Or dried blood?" Both these men had similar knowledge and views: they chose to answer the questions differently. This is a problem that has been identified in relation to tests of this type in other contexts (e.g. IQ or aptitude tests, Hacker, 1989), and was discussed by Conolly (1989) in her use of the test data.

Secondly, the improved scores of the Gaolwize sample could have been related to other sources of information received in the period between the Corrective Services research and the present research. However, Conolly (1989) found that the impact of general "AIDS information sessions" on prisoners' knowledge and attitudes about AIDS in NSW gaols has been minimal.

Thirdly, the test only addressed issues of transmission, which was only one of the issues dealt with in the comic.

And finally, the context of the preceding interview could have had an impact on the ways prisoners answered the questions, either through discussion with the interviewer prompting or revising their knowledge, or through exposure to the comic itself prior to the test being done. Only the first page of each of the stories was shown to people interviewed, and these generally contain no relevant information as such. However, the effects of this and discussion with the interviewer, which occurred prior to all the test situations, could have had unknown results.

Reflection: As noted above, the narrative, humour and artwork in the comic provide opportunities for people to reflect on their actions and attitudes, rather than simply convey information.

Three of the people who said "no", they did not learn anything new from the comic, still referred to the value of the messages in the comic, e.g. that it was a "reminder ... it keeps you in touch"; "it makes you think ... it does happen"; "I knew most of it, but you still think about it"; "it just reassured me on things I knew".

In addition, a number of those saying that they had learnt from the comic noted some ways in which they had thought about things as a result of reading the comic. Two of them used the expression "it opened my eyes" (to what goes on, to what AIDS is about).
Others said that “it just makes you realise” (the big problem AIDS is). Other relevant comments, which give some idea of how people reflect on issues from reading the comic:

“I knew about condoms before, but I didn’t take much heed. Now I know.”

“This comic gave me a lot of insight and I always tell ‘em to use bleach now. I’ve got a lot of respect in the gaol, so they listen to me.”

“I really like the art on [the back cover] - it’s a real clear message. Life, not death, so you know what to do if you don’t want to die.... ‘Who cares?’ - that’s what they say in gaol. But I sorta care now because of my nephew.”

Some of the other comments on the “Life not death” back cover and other stories were interesting in comparing the affirmative approach of the comic with, say the scare tactics of the “grim reaper” campaign.

An older prisoner said, “I don’t think it’s blunt enough - the message has to be hammered in... put more fear in the message.” And another compared the comic unfavourably with the grim reaper campaign. But these were the minority, the older prisoners, and, as far as one could tell, not the users or high risk group: they thought that group should be frightened.

However, the younger prisoners in particular appreciated the relevance and the practicality of the comic, for example that it was “mainly trying to say not so much ‘don’t do these things’, but ‘do them the right way’. It’s not so hard line, it’s more sensible. People won’t do what they’re told.” Or:

“You hear these things all the time in different ways but this was in the context of how it should be practised. It showed how it relates to you day-to-day.”

6. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC STORIES

All Fixed Up: Many readers saw this as the “main” story, though there was not so much obvious identification with the characters or the humour as in some of the others. The use of bleach to clean needles was the most widely remembered “message”.

Love on the Run: This was popular as a story, and the approach or attitude to protecting people you love was more widely commented on than was any specific information. The characters were popular (eg “the dark-haired one was really smart - I liked her” - from a young male).

He Don’t Look Sick: This was a very popular one and probably most widely identified as educational. Many readers commented on the graphic representation of the AIDS viruses, and seemed to really have had some insight into the way the virus is transmitted as a result. The “you can’t tell from looking” message was also frequently commented on from this story.
All About Testing: Definitely the least popular. Most had not read it; several commented that it “looked like an ad”, and there was too much writing. One or two fairly sophisticated prisoners, with some experience of tests, etc, found it extremely useful, in one case specifically because of having phone numbers to contact OUTSIDE gaol.

Wanna Buy a Video: As the only story set outside gaol it had a particular appeal to some (though one or two didn’t see its relevance, for this reason). It also had a fairly specific audience, being generally well received by Aborigines and heroin users (this covered many of the people interviewed). Several of the Aboriginal readers made the connection with drinking, saying that even though they (themselves) didn’t use, they could relate to it since it was like their experiences with alcohol. One or two whites specifically did not relate to it because it was about Aboriginal people (“I’m a bigot”, said one). A young Aboriginal man said, “It’s pretty normal for a blackfella to go stealing a video to get money. Nothing unusual about that.”

Wake Up to It: The cell “ramp” was extremely popular, and said to be very realistic, though was reported to have been less popular with officers. The “plastic gangster” was also very popular. The “you can’t tell by looking” message had also come across in this story (with the HIV+ character doing weights, etc), and the issues about how AIDS is not transmitted seemed to be well understood.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof: Controversial, of course, this was widely read and commented on. Some of the comments on realism, discussed at section 4, were particularly relevant to this story. Apart from the offence and denial responses, there were several which seriously doubted that sex in male prisons was by consent, or involved the sort of negotiations depicted in the comic. Nonetheless, quite a number of those interviewed said that this was realistic, and made other comments (some quoted above) that backed this up.

Life Not Death was extremely popular as artwork. It has been pinned on walls, traced and sent to boyfriends, and people cannot wait to get out of gaol to have it tattooed. The message is appreciated and reflected on (see quoted comments above).

7. CONCLUSIONS

The Gaolwize comic presented a number of challenges. It needed to be authentic and relevant, without being so offensive to authorities or more conservative prisoners that it met with resistance. The need to depict high-risk activities, which may be illegal or widely disapproved of, added to this tension.

From the language used through to the approach adopted (eg scare tactics vs condoning), the project had to strike the right chord to be accepted by its target audience, and not sabotaged by their “gatekeepers”. The process adopted in producing the comic, involving closely working with prisoners and wide consultation with experts, prison officers and Departmental representatives has assisted greatly in this.
The major drawback to the whole project at this stage is the failure to gain Ministerial approval for distribution in South Australia, which presented problems of access to the comic for prisoners in that state.

The situation in New South Wales is in stark contrast to the South Australian experience. This evaluation has found that the distribution has been quite effectively carried out by the Department, though there have been some apparent blocks in particular prisons, probably deriving from resistance to the style of the comic among some prisoners and officers. There have also been more mundane limits on distribution, such as initially small numbers of the comics and some lack of awareness about gaining new supplies. Clearly, some of these problems have limited the distribution of the comics in NSW prisons.

This study has indicated that 58% of prisoners have seen the comic, though this ranges from 39% to 88% for different prisons. This is somewhat ahead of the proportion (50%) of prisoners having seen a pamphlet (of any description) on AIDS in a 1987 sample.

The comic has proved to be attractive to a large proportion of prisoners, to the extent that, while 58% have seen it, 46% have read it, half of these specifying that they had read it "cover to cover", "right through" or more than once. The readership rate is twice that of pamphlets on AIDS.

89% of prisoners interviewed specified particular messages that they recalled from the comic, and all but three of these were unprompted. This is significant given that about 84% of those specifying when they had read the comic stated that it was more than a month before the interview. About a quarter had read it more than 4 months before.

"How to clean needles" was most commonly recalled (60%); followed by safe sex and condoms (40%); not sharing needles (31%); and other issues about safe sex between men (13%).

50% of men and 27% of women stated that they had learnt something new from the comic, the most common points being cleaning needles; how AIDS is transmitted; and general attitudinal insights.

Apart from specific messages learned, even some of those who did not feel they learnt anything new, nonetheless had been "reminded", "reassured" or stimulated to "think about it" by the comic.

The realism or authenticity of the terminology and the characters were seen as major advantages of the comic, though this caused some controversy or disagreement among prisoners who had read it. Again, the general approach, as practical, helpful and affirmative was seen as an advantage of the comic, particularly among the more at risk and younger prisoners.

From the results of this evaluation study, there is no doubt that the Gaolwize comic is an effective educational medium for prisoners. It has roused their interest enough for most who see it to want to read it; it has engaged them in informed discussion about HIV prevention, and it has inspired some to identify with the characters portrayed and the messages conveyed.
**REFERENCES**

**Conolly, Lisa**

"AIDS Education for NSW Prisoners: Evaluation of the AIDS Education Programme for prisoners in the NSW Department of Corrective Services, March 1987 - March 1989"
Research Publication, No. 20, NSW Department of Corrective Services.(1989)

**Duffy, Beverley**


**Hacker, Andrew**

"Affirmative action: the new look"
APPENDIX A

LIST OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED IN PREPARING THE GAOLWIZE COMIC

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JOHN BAXTER
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MATTHEW LIOTTA
Radio Skid Row

JUDY MCMINN
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LEIGH SCHNEIDER
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KATHY KUM-SING
Streetwize Aboriginal Consultant

ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICE

ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE

BURWOOD HOUSE
Thanks also to the inmates that participated in the research and feedback stages of this comic at the following gaols;

NSW
MTC, MRP, MAU| Long Bay Gaol
Mulawa
Norma Parker
Bathurst

SA
Yatala Labour Prison
Northfields Prison Complex
Adelaide Remand Centre
SAYTAC
Mobolang
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE  DEC 1989 - JAN 1990

Gaol: Date: 
Name: (first name only) 
Age: Highest level of education:

Cultural identity: Born: Aboriginal? .......... 
Unsentenced.......  Sentenced...........  Ex-prisoner (released)............

How long have you been in prison on this, and previous occasions? ..................................................

What prisons have you been in since June 1989? ............................................................................................

Have you seen a magazine called "Gaolwise"? yes no
If "NO": prompt with cover, and repeat "Have you ever seen this? yes/no
[Note any information given on other publications seen, as in case of confusion with another comic, pamphlet, etc.]

If "YES" (to either of above):
Did you read or look through it? yes no  

Where did you see it, or get it from?

How long ago did you read it? 

What did you think of it?

What do you remember about it?
[Note each story recalled spontaneously]


how to clean needles (water/bleach/water)........
safe sex and the importance of using condoms........
you can't tell who's got AIDS just by looking........
how you get AIDS (exchange of blood and body fluids)........
you must always clean needles between each person ........
AIDS transmission- sharing needles and then sex........
a person can have AIDS without knowing it........
AIDS tests- 3 mth waiting period, antibodies, what HIV+ve means........
IV drug use and beating addiction (Aboriginal story)........
How you do and don't get AIDS (cigarettes, vomit)........
safe sex between men- condoms, AIDS from giving it........
other.................................................................
.............................................................................
.............................................................................
.............................................................................
.............................................................................
Show front cover: Do you remember any of these stories?
Re each story or item recalled: What was it about? Did you like it?
Did you think it was realistic? Why/Why not?

ALL FIXED UP    yes/no

WANNA BUY A VIDEO? yes/no

LOVE ON THE RUN

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF    yes/no

Show front page of each of following and ask:
Do you remember any of these?

HE DON'T LOOK SICK    yes/no
ALL ABOUT TESTING  yes/no

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

WAKE UP TO IT  yes/no

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

LIFE NOT DEATH! (back page)  yes/no

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

Did you learn anything new from reading the comic?  yes/no

If yes, what?.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

Have you talked about the comic with anyone else?  yes/no

(e.g. Drug and Alcohol workers, other prisoners)
APPENDIX C

KNOWLEDGE TEST

Here is a list of activities which may or may not pass on the AIDS virus.

I want you to tell me how likely you think it is that someone could catch AIDS from each activity.

Score 1/2 for each correct answer circled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>YES would get AIDS</th>
<th>MAYBE could get AIDS</th>
<th>UNLIKELY to get AIDS</th>
<th>No would get AIDS</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. sharing an apple</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. touching dry blood</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. sharing needles</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. sex with a condom</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. sharing cigarettes</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. blood splash on skin</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. kissing</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. using same toilet</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. touching</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. sex without a condom</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
<td>UNLIKELY</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>