



**FLIP THE SWITCH**



## **YOUTH DETAINEES CALL FOR ACCESS TO COMPUTERS IN CELLS**

---

“No jurisdiction in Australia currently provides telecommunications in cells for youth, although adult prisons in the ACT and NSW do.

The 85% youth recidivism rate and \$1 million a year cost per youth is outrageous. Yet Youth Justice NSW told us last week: ‘our commitment (to computers in cells) has not wavered, but we do not yet have funding’” said John Dowd AO KC, President of the CJC.

The negative outcomes of youth incarceration could easily be reduced by in-cell access to external counselling, restorative justice, video calls with family, and education including art and music, while they are alone and bored in their cells.

The [First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group](#) recommended in their [Roadmap p35](#) that immediately:

*‘All governments focus on ensuring First Nations Australians in vulnerable settings, such as prison...are provided with connectivity to remain connected to family and country.’*

If the TVs in cells were interactive, that would open up mainstream services at little cost. This is consistent with the [Nairobi Declaration for Detainee Telecommunications Rights.](#)” said Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans, Vice President of the Community Justice Coalition.

**Detainees ask imprisoning authorities to ‘FLIP THE SWITCH’** to connectivity by transforming the TV screen in every youth justice cell into an interactive device to allow detainees to actively respond rather than be passive recipients of mind-numbing content.

In-cell access to external counselling, restorative justice, peer mentoring and education including art and music through the ‘import model’ would be:

- Effective in providing trusted external counselling without a conflict of interest with a security role.
- Efficient, as they are often already paid for by governments.
- Existing through the sentence and available after release.
- Emotionally important, enabling detainees to feel connected to the outside community.

---

## Restorative Justice

First Nations peoples in many countries, including Australia, New Zealand, United States and Canada have restorative justice practices that involve all parties harmed by the offence (victim, offender and community). These restorative practices **relieve community tensions**.

Restorative justice is also a promising way for diverting young people from detention in the first place and for keeping them out of detention. A 2017 KPMG review of the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment initiative in Bourke found that **for every \$1.00 invested** in RJ activities, there was **a benefit to the community of \$5.00**. In Maranguka, just in the area of youth development, there was **a 31% increase in year 12 student retention rates** and **a 38% reduction in charges** across the top five juvenile offence categories **within one year**.

---

## Music

Studies have shown that inmates who engage in meaningful activities that keep their minds occupied while incarcerated have fewer violent incidents and better mental health and recidivism outcomes once their term of incarceration is complete. Jail Guitar Doors, a Music Arts program with the California Department of Corrections in the USA found that **Arts in corrections programs reduce recidivism by about 60%**.

A simple app on an appropriate and approved device with a headset and microphone, and managed access to the internet, is all that is needed to put a meaningful music program into prisons. **Music transcends losses in education as it links people to other forms of education**. Correctional Facilities state that programs in Arts improved emotional literacy, understanding of self, capacity to express emotion, increased empathy, and supported a reduction of impulsive behaviors.

---

## Education

Computer access in cells can maximise productivity in a safe manner allowing access to online education, counselling, and legal services. Empirical data has demonstrated that computer-aided education has a highly beneficial effect on reducing recidivism compared to restricted access. The Justice Reform Initiative specifically cites how the Youth Backtrack Program has resulted in a **35% reduction in crime** when youths participate in it.

---

IF YOU SUPPORT OUR WORK, **SIGN OUR PETITION** AT <https://chnq.it/y4Lp9R48TQ>  
**OUR WEBSITES** [Community Justice Coalition](#) and [Justice Action https://tinyurl.com/47f9bsnw](https://tinyurl.com/47f9bsnw).