

CONVERSATIONS WITH  
PATRICK ALOYOUISIS

Debra Smith, Bridge Foundation

# Patrick Aloysious

- Patrick is a 40 year old man, who grew up in Melbourne's suburbs, who has a sister and an aging mother. His father is dead. His sister has six children, all aged under ten. When I met him, in prison, ten years ago, he described his life as 'I've never really done anything useful. Got bored as a kid, started using drugs for something to do. Now I just go in and out of prison – can't seem to get anything worked out.'
- I was working as a Psychologist in the prison and he had applied to be a peer educator in the drug programme. He didn't quite finish the 13 week course himself but he decided to attend counselling to try to do something differently next time he was released from prison.
- He is a very pleasant man, who seems much younger than he is. This may be because many times in his life he has failed to take on responsibility as an adult, or the effects of multiple times in prison slowing his development; or having the same adolescent type experience of drugs, partying, crime, prison, released, drugs and on it goes not aiding mature development of adulthood, or allow for normal life experiences .
- Despite all his time in prison he is not a thug, he cares about his mother, sister and nieces and nephews. He is polite and gracious. I have an enduring memory of him last year, when he launched my book about the prison, of him chatting with my mother and impressing her, not with his charm, but his inherent 'okayness' as a person.
- Yet, of course, he is flawed. He is in many respects hopeless. A hopeless case; in and out of prison; committer of petty crimes; unable to care for his own child. No major trauma as a child, no mental illness, just hopeless. Yet, not hopeless. Enduring, resilient, coping. Patrick, like the rest of us, is a human being with all the complexities we all have.
- It has taken him a long time but he is now drug free, alcohol free, over four years out of prison, still homeless until very recently, but managing. I have had many conversations with Patrick over the last eight years and these provide glimpses into a life very different to mine, but ones which are important in understanding the issue faced by people struggling on the edge of society.

# 1999 Inside: Therapy 1

- Scene :Counselling room. Concrete box with window in wall and door, duress alarm point, small table, two chairs – plastic garden variety, armless.
- Deb : Hello, come in. What can I do for you?
- A : I want to do something about my problems. Don't know what, just thought I might try.
- D : OK, what would you like to work on or explore a bit?
- A : Drugs and always coming back to prison. Last time I was out 4 days,
  - didn't have the Methodone script, couldn't get one, broke into a chemist to get some drugs and back in. I didn't want to do that again. Now I'm in for 2 years, if I get parole.
- D : What supports do you have on the outside?
- A : Mum, but she's getting old. And my sister, but she's got five kids, and having another one and lives with Mum – it's pretty crowded.
  - And my girl – on and off – we've got a kid too. It's all sort of
  - hopeless.

## 2001      Inside: Therapy 2

- Scene: Counselling Room
- A :      Guess what? I borrowed – well – I took this book from the Library to read over the lockdown – called *These Fugitive Days*. I thought it'd be about crime. It was your husband's poetry book – and I really like it. I was going to give it back but its got me writing poetry again.

# 2004      Outside:First Book Launch

- Scene :Art Gallery Cafe in Sale, Gippsland, Victoria.
- Local people gathered for the launch of a Bridge publication about prison, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*. Patrick has a poem in it. He has been out of prison for 10 days and he comes to Sale on the train. He is living with his mother, sister and six children in Melbourne. He is very nervous but he manages to read his poem to the assembled crowd. He gets a good reception.
- D        :            How're you going?
- A        :            Good, good. It's hard. I'm so anxious, but it's good. On the Methodone. At Mum's, but it's noisy and I have to share a room with the boys. There's not much room. It's, pretty hard out here.

# 2005 Outside (just): Help

- Scene : My counselling office. I'm on the phone.
- A : I'm sorry but I need money. I'm desperate. I've got no Methodone, no script, 'til Monday. I'll have to do a job if you don't help. I've got to get something.
- *P hasn't had any money, has never asked for any. What do I do? Refuse and let him go back in or give him some money and hope he'll just get one hit then get back on the Methodone? All this races through my mind in seconds.*
- A : You don't have to. And I'm sorry to ask Bridge for this but I don't have anywhere else to turn.
- D : How much do you need?

# 2005-2008: Outside: Telephone Conversations

- A : My sister's dead. Murdered. By her partner. I'm helping Mum but DHS won't let me stay there because of my CRN.
- A : Living in a squat. It's OK. With Leanne. We're managing.
- A : I have to go back to court – pinched a cap – don't know why.
- A : I got off.
- A : I'm in trouble. Been reporting, then my sister, I missed two appointments - It's so bad.
- A : You don't really have to worry about the same things as me. I have to be careful (and suspicious) of everyone – every time I get in a car with a mate – is it stolen? There's just so many things to be careful of.

# 2007: Outside: Chance Meeting

- Scene : Three of us at a training workshop in Northcote. Walking down High Street during lunch break, a man stops us.
- A : Hello! What are you all doing here?
- D & Co: How're you going? What are you doing?
- A : OK – not bad. Off all the stuff. Still here

# 2008      Outside: Second book launch

- My book about the prison has been published. I decided to ask Patrick Aloyousos to launch it. It's a bit risky – he says yes, but , on the day, will he turn up? I arrange his train fare to Sale the day before, for himself and his girlfriend. I book a motel room, some of us take them out to tea at the pub that night. He looks healthy, a bit stressed as his sister's partner has just been sentenced for her death – manslaughter and not a very hefty sentence. His girlfriend is angry. Patrick is resigned.
- It won't bring her back he says.
- The launch is at 12 o'clock. At 12 o'clock there is no sighting of Patrick. The place is packed, the local TV and Newspaper are there. We ring Patrick – 'we're coming – had to meet another mate, John, he got out 4 days ago and he's come down too on the train. We're nearly there!'
- They arrive. The Launch goes well. Patrick is eloquent. It is a success. Patrick and his partner are still homeless, but living in a squat. They might get some money from her mother's estate and be able to buy a small place. Fantasy or fact – we're not sure. We don't probe too much.
- We put them back on the train. We hear later that John lasted three weeks before he was back inside. Patrick is still out

# Fear and Loathing in Pentridge: Andrew Bishop

- Young imprisoned
- Fear and loathing
- Hard men, hard stares
- Filthy cell, stench
- Dirty sheets, parasitic blankets.
- Tears, cold and alone.
- Heroin, cutdown syringe
- Shared, secreted
- Cold porridge.
- Bluestone, cold steel
- Violence, survival, shiv, blood.
- Royhpnol, senseless rage.
- More violence, more blood.
- Death.
- More heroin, numb,
- 25 years, familiar, comfortable.
- Regret, reflection.
- Middle aged,
- Imprisoned,
- Fear and loathing.

# 2009 Now....

- Now Patrick is trying to get work. He hasn't been successful yet, work places want to work with him for a month before they put him on. No-one else is expected to work for nothing for a month.
- Patrick and his partner are now living in a caravan in a cousin's backyard. It's not the best but it's more stable than it's been for a long time. My last conversation with Patrick, yesterday, he told me how he is staying outside. 'Basically I don't allow myself to commit a crime. I'm mindful of even sleeping in and making a bad impression on my nieces. I have changed the way I look at the world.'

# Never stop asking.....

- Many of our conversations have been fractured, they are not regular or frequent. At most I have glimpses into A's life. However, this is more than we often get into the world of prison, drug use, and homelessness. We need to use these glimpses to guide us and keep us working towards a more just society. A never fails, in our conversations, to ask how I am, how is my family and the people I work with. We must never stop asking how he is.
- Debra Smith, 20/6/09