

## Written evidence from Shirley Debono

I have been campaigning against the ipp sentence for over a decade and have been a Mackenzie friend to so many over the years. I try not to get emotionally attached but this is hard when you learn that the sentence has effected their mental health over the years. The loss of hope and no release date is torture to both the prisoner and their families. So much that they self harm or attempt suicide, some have become ill and passed away. Some transferred to mental hospitals. Some don't get the chance to be transferred to mental health hospitals and are transferred to A and B Cat high security prisons. Out of site out of mind. One mum (that I was in regular contact with) of a ipp prisoner has recently died. Her partner believes that the ipp sentence her son is serving had a big part in her death. She became ill through the worry of her son not getting the propa mental health care. So much so that he has been transferred to an A Cat prison. This ipp prisoner self harms and has mutilated his ears off. He attempts suicide. He should be transferred to A mental hospital or at least be transferred to a therapeutic community. He is just one of many failed by the system. So yes I believe the ipp sentence killed his mum and the family now believe that it is only a matter of time before their son/brother takes his own life.

Parole hearings cancelled last minute or adjourned for months on end because e.g. documents not provided or certain members of the panel can't make it. This exacerbates any anxiety or depression and other mental health issues that the ipp prisoner may suffer with. Contributing in many cases to worse self harm and even suicide.

Recalled ipp prisoners and their families do not cope with this situation at all. The fear that overcomes the ipp prisoner at the thought of going back into prison is unbearable. Their mental health hits rock bottom. They tend to go on the run to get their heads around the recall. In most cases they don't cope mentally on the run and have every intention of surrendering to the authorities.. They feel that it's the hardest thing for one to do, to hand themselves into indefinate detention all over again. The fear and anxiety that recall courses to both the ipp prisoner and the family is actually heart breaking and some family members have become very ill.

Being a campaigner I am in touch with families that also tell me of the mental illnesses the ipp sentence has caused them. You see even the families are serving the ipp sentence. We all feel trapped

The options to reduce the ipp population would be. To ensure all ipp are in the appropriate prisons to complete offender behaviour programmes. For those that probation can confirm have a loving decent family that want their loved one home, Then this must be recommended at the parole board hearing. This option should be grasped at the earliest opportunity. Then this would create more spaces for those ipp that have no family to go home to to be transferred to open conditions or approved premises. As we all know there is a shortage of spaces in open conditions and approved premises. This then would reduce the ipp prison population.

There must be back up to replace parole board members at very short notice. All to often panel member's walk out of a meeting or don't turn up. Or probation don't present evidence which parole has ask for months in advance. This is mentally damaging for an ipp that has worked really hard to progress to parole. This issue needs fixing. The only way to fix it is for

the person or person's responsible for the failure at the meeting to be held accountable and face a disciplinary hearing. These failings have to be taken seriously. There should be a set time for next parole to be set at one month after date of previous hearing . My opinion.. that is plenty time for the board to collect any missing evidence or files or whatever. These are people's lives and they deserve better than what they are getting

When ipp are seen to be making mistakes or unravelling so to speak, then in all cases every option has to be seen to be used by probation to avoid recall to prison in the first place. When lawyers prove that all options were not considered then probation must use one of the options not considered and the ipp released from custody within 21 days either back to their original status or if needed removed from prison and into approved premises

Ipp recalled for any offence that is under investigation and police take no further action, to be released within 7 days. Same for those that are charged with an offence and found not guilty in court, and same for those that are charged with an offence and the charges are dropped. This would help tremendously in keeping the ipp prison population down.

Current barriers preventing release are due to ipp prisoners being in a prison where no courses are available. The waiting list for courses are far to long and there is not enough therapeutic community wings for ipp to progress. The waiting list for a therapeutic community can be up to three years.

To resolve the barriers preventing release. Would be to open more therapeutic community wings. Transfer those ipp that have been transferred to A and B Cat prisons due to mental health to have priority to get onto the therapeutic community wings. Otherwise this will be a group of prisoners that may never get out. To ensure that every ipp prisoner has access to the offending behaviour programmes. At least these two options would be a step forward to helping to progress to release.

Backdating the change to ipp legislation.

Not to make change would be catastrophic for ipp and their families. The justice minister once said that to make change would show preference to a certain group of prisoners. I disagree. The Ipp sentence is the most cruel torturous sentence ever implemented that is why it was abolished. If there are no major changes then I'm afraid to say there will be even more suffering and pain. The MOJ has to seriously sit at the table and take the fair and safe options put before them and put ipp and their families out of misery. Either resentence them all or release them on a licence more suited to the crime they committed, ending the ipp sentence once and for all.

To many ipp are suffering from mental health issues because of the sentence. The sentence has coursed many to suffer ill health. The sentence has coursed many to self harm and take their own lives. To use the fair safe options for change which I mentioned above is the only way forward to make a dramatic difference .

Ipp managed in the community

What can I say. My son is a Released ipp prisoner

And I can honestly say there is no fair management in the community. Released ipp feel under threat of being recalled. They feel the fear of god has been put into them. The licence

conditions are draining and Ipp can't cope with the licence conditions. They are still prisoners on the outside and feel this is the stage where the ipp sentence really begins. .So once again the only way to fix this is for the secretary of state for justice to use the fair options for change. RESENTENCE IPP OR RELEASE IPP ON A LICENCE MORE SUITED TO THE CRIME THEY COMMITTED. Something has to change or more will go insane and more will die. More families members will have strokes and breakdowns and other illnesses due to their loved ones living an INDEFINATE SENTENCE WITH NO HOPE.

I submit my evidence.