

Sunday, 11 May 2025

Dear Minister and Commissioner,

We are writing to you to urge you to provide an unlimited number of free phone calls to nominated numbers from prisons across the state.

“How much does a phone call cost?” is a question that is rarely asked anymore. Most people have a phone plan that allows them to make unlimited phone calls at minimal cost. A flat, usually monthly rate is paid to have the constant ability to call whoever one wants for however long one wants.

However, inside prisons across this country, this is a very [live question](#). While the details differ from state to state and from prison to prison, we know that there are two key common factors: calls have a time limit and calls are [prohibitively expensive](#).

We acknowledge that Corrective Services’ current policy allows one free call per week, but for families, friends and loved ones on the outside as well as people who are incarcerated; urgent and immediate action must be taken to abolish the prohibitive costs of staying connected.

Maintaining relationships with loved ones is crucial for rehabilitation and reducing recriminalisation. Yet, our prison system continues to put up barriers between people inside prison and their communities — allowing telecommunications companies to profit at their expense.

Coming out of prison is a challenging time, but when relationships have been maintained, the person is more likely to be released into a situation which will support them to reintegrate into life on the outside. Family and community connections are powerful protective factors against a variety of adverse outcomes, such as recriminalisation, poor mental health, and social isolation.

The prison system should center rehabilitation and support people to “turn their life around”. Where there is an opportunity to contribute to supporting rehabilitation and promoting safe connections with family and community; the Department should absolutely get behind it.

We believe safety is paramount. We are aware of, and support, the continuation of the existing safe access arrangements employed by Corrective Services to keep victim survivors, and their children, safe and free from unwanted contact by a perpetrator of violence in

custody. The abolishment of costs for calls would not (and should not) erode the right to safety and protection.

Free calls for incarcerated people would allow parents inside to be able to [call their children](#) and say 'I love you' any time, and as many times as the child needs to hear it. Free calls for incarcerated people would allow cultural connection for First Nations People, for communities of colour and for the queer community. Free calls for incarcerated people would allow their children to jump on the phone and update them on school or music or sporting achievements. Free calls for incarcerated people are essential to ensuring the continuation of family support, community support and give folks the best chance at staying connected while inside. Free calls would have positive impacts on the wellbeing and mental health of those inside, and those outside who love them.

The financial burden placed on people inside and their loved ones outside is unacceptable and unjust, as well as counterproductive to reducing recriminalisation. The only stakeholders benefiting from the current situation are the telecommunications companies landing multi-million-dollar contracts to provide these extremely limited and poor-quality services, which are ultimately paid for with public money. If the cost of providing these services is so low that Telstra no longer collects a fee for the use of public pay-phones, why are people inside paying exorbitant prices for a worse service from the same provider?

**We call on the NSW Government to:**

1. Provide an unlimited number of free phone calls to nominated numbers from prisons across the state.
2. Increase the availability of devices to meet demand for connection. If availability is increased, there is no credible need for a time limit on calls.

Connection saves lives. No one should ever have to say “I would have called but I didn’t have the money.”

Sincerely,