

10 years stolen by false accusations

For an insight into women`s prisons in NSW, the book *Ten Years* by Roseanne Catt, published by Macmillan in 2005, is an essential read.

The author of this revealing book was incarcerated for 10 years in NSW jails from 1991 to 2002 after being falsely charged with attempting to murder her husband. She was charged by a police officer described in the NSW Parliament as a ‘rogue detective’ who framed her and was the ‘architect of a conspiracy against her’.

This horrifying true story of corruption and brutality, both inside and outside jail, is told with raw frankness by a courageous woman who survived ordeals that would have destroyed the mind and body of most people placed in a similar situation.

Her description of life in various jails she was arbitrarily moved in and out of, is most distressing. She lived in filthy conditions and suffered cruel behaviour by all-powerful prison officials who, with some fine exceptions, treated their charges with contempt.

Roseanne`s determination to overcome the lies and deceptions of her husband along with the manipulation and malice of an apparently out-of-control police officer, plus those of the prison staff who made it easy for disturbed inmates to attack her, is inspiring. So also are her positive relationships with fellow prisoners, included some who were in dangerous stages of dysfunction and despair.

If ever there is a classical case of learning from negative examples, then all people involved in law-enforcement, corrective services or prison reform should study this book.

The injustices inflicted on Roseanne Catt were deep seated and long term. It took ongoing public outrage and eventually an 18-month judicial enquiry to reveal the truth and expose the police officer who hoodwinked the justice system to such an alarming extent that any semblance of justice was completely nullified.

How many guilty or innocent ones are today caught up in a system, where they are devoid of rehabilitation, and of hope?

– by CLA member, Keith McEwan, 15 Apr 08

Roseanne Catt’s website: <http://www.justice4roseanne.com/>

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