

So "The ACT prison is maxed out"(June 27,p1). There is little satisfaction in claiming "we told you so". In 1999 Families and Friends argued before an Assembly committee that the case for expanded prison facilities represented by the proposed new prison had not been made out and that the development of an effective evidence-based drug treatment strategy should be a condition for the establishment of an ACT prison

The official projection was that a 300 bed capacity would be adequate for between 20 and 30 years. In 2008, the late Professor David Biles challenged that assumption at a forum sponsored by Christians for an Ethical Society. All it would take would be a slight change in the "extraordinarily low rate of sentencing to prison by ACT courts". Simon Corbell, the Attorney General speaking at the same forum dismissed that fear.

So, we have a prison intended to be big enough until between 2028 and 2038 bursting at the seams in 2017!

If there is one thing clear, it is that we wouldn't be in the human and financial fix we are in today if 20 years ago ex-pharmacist and Liberal Chief Minister Kate Carnell had had her way. She was blocked from permitting heroin prescription, an intervention that Swiss criminologists have described as being "without doubt one of the most effective crime prevention measures ever assessed."

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