

**THE
RED
ROOM
COMPANY**

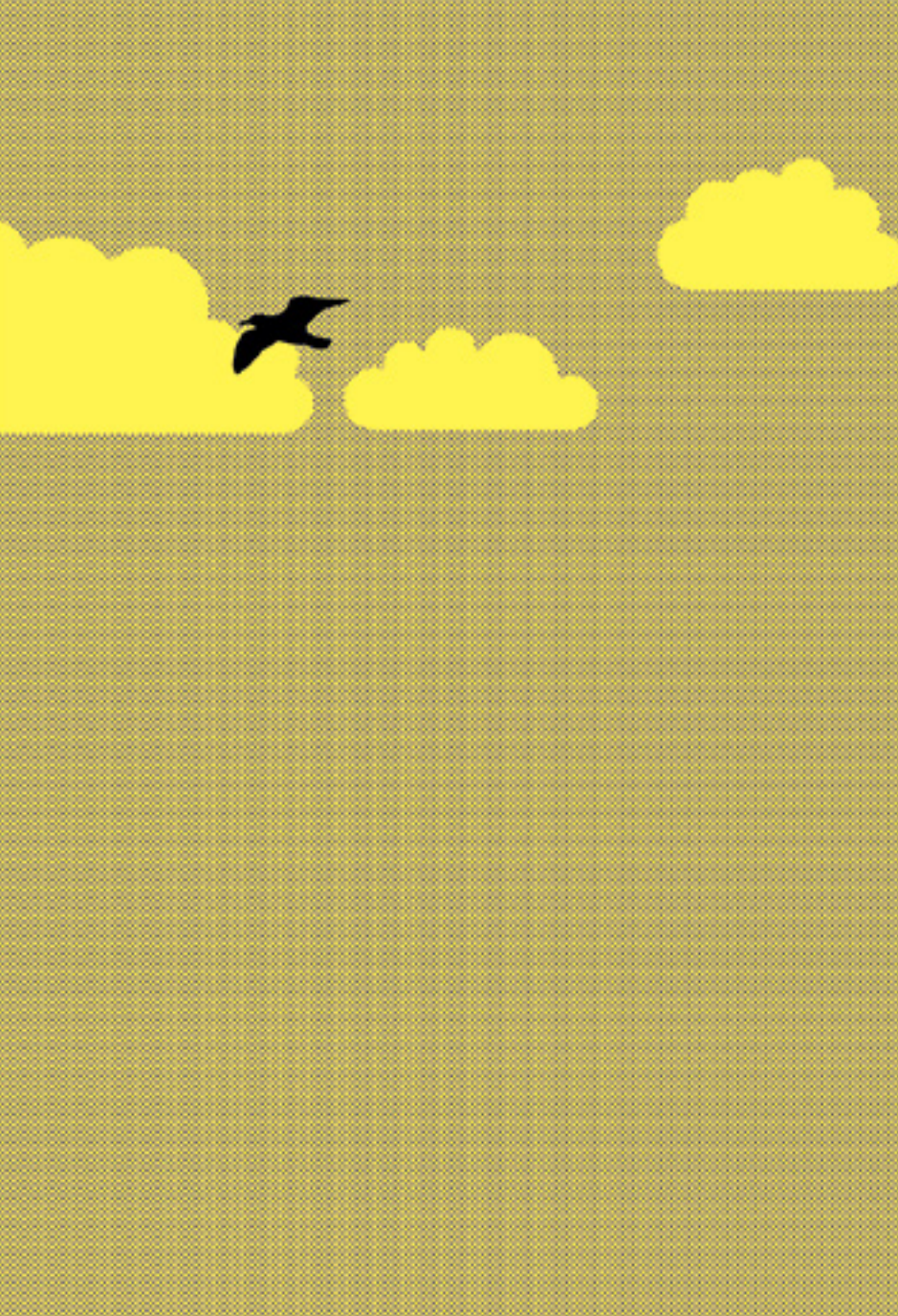
POETRY IN UNUSUAL
AND USEFUL WAYS



Unlocked Report

2010 - 2014

A creative literacy program



*If my hand had fallen into yours earlier, I might
still be holding you.
I'll always remember what you told me:
In order to build a castle, learn how to build a
house first.*

from 'The Pieces', a group poem by students at
John Mocony Correctional Centre

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Introducing Unlocked

"To me life has always been a poem"

Student, John Morony Correctional Centre

Unlocked invites poets and hip-hop artists into Correctional Centres to run intensive writing workshops with inmates to enhance literacy and cultivate positive self-expression. Created by The Red Room Company, in collaboration with Corrections NSW Audiovisual Unit and education staff, **Unlocked explores the social value of poetry, encouraging self-confidence and reflection for some of the most marginalised members of our community.** *Unlocked* works with students at every stage of the writing process, from initial experimentations, to editing, recording, performing and publishing their poems in a professional print anthology that shares the benefits of the program with family, community and the broader public.



Unlocked student illustrating poems, Balund-a, Tabulam

Piloted in Sydney in 2010, *Unlocked* is now ongoing, having delivered over **15 programs with more than 130 inmates in 10 locations across NSW.** *Unlocked* is endorsed by the corrective services community in NSW as a valuable and innovative literacy program. Given *Unlocked's* success, **our goal is to expand** with the required resources to train a diversity of poets and to reach more remote locations. **New funding is critical** to achieving this goal, ensuring the impacts of creative education continue to transform lives, especially for those who face the greatest barriers.



Student poem, Balund-a, Tabulam

“The Red Room Company has worked with Corrective Services NSW since 2010 to deliver ‘Unlocked’ at a number of correctional centres across the state. The workshops were a great success in engaging inmates and broadening their experience of poetry. The workshops provided a vehicle for the inmate participants to express their thoughts and feelings in a new form. The community poets conducting the workshops brought enthusiasm and provided inspiration for the developing ‘poets behind bars.’”

Anthony Becker, Principal, Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI), Corrective Services, NSW Department of Justice

Why Unlocked?

Many inmates have low literacy levels and have had negative experiences with formal education. Due to the massive over-representation of Indigenous communities in NSW prisons - **Aboriginal people represent 2% of the total population, but 25% of inmates** - *Unlocked* has a strong Indigenous focus. Recidivism amongst young Aboriginal prisoners (18-24) is significantly higher than average, and creative literacy programs like *Unlocked* can play a key role in reducing those rates by opening possibilities for self-exploration and expression.

“It makes you think you know, and get it all on pen and paper. To be able to express it, a pretty good feeling. It moved me, you know what I mean, that’s really what kept me here. It just made me realise it’s just another part of me. Just to share it with other people, it’s a blessing.”

Student, John Mooney Correctional Centre

International studies of creative education programs within the criminal justice system have been shown to reduce crime and recidivism. A study by the Arts Council UK suggests “arts interventions in criminal justice contexts are successful because they offer a non-traditional, non-institutional, social and emotional environment; and an opportunity to participate in a creative process that involves both structure and freedom” (Hughes, ‘Doing the Arts Justice’, 2005).

“Prison education should be about changing people’s perceptions of the boundaries of possibility, and offering inmates an opportunity to reframe their sense of themselves and their place in the world. The “Unlocked” writing workshops create a learning environment that is encouraging and unthreatening.”

Rob Osborne, formerly Manager of the Audiovisual Production Unit at Corrective Services NSW

The Red Room Company believes in the power of poetry to positively transform lives as it encourages and illuminates new ways of experiencing our world. That's why each *Unlocked* program provides inmates with the creative and critical tools needed to reflect, express and share their experiences through poetry in a supportive environment.



Unlocked students with poet Lionel Fogarty at Balund-a

Our approach

“There is not black and white, right or wrong. The psychology used and enthusiasm of Johanna + Gareth and body languages employed to get the messages across is almost beyond belief. Your innate ability to be magnanimous is extraordinary.”

Student, Mannus Correctional Centre

Each *Unlocked* program is tailored to support the learning needs of participants, providing opportunities to create, reflect and build confidence in sharing past experiences and hopes for the future. We carefully select poets to suit the needs of each group and devise activities to make poetry accessible to all. We also experiment with translation and Indigenous languages to give everyone a voice.

Students are often encouraged to illustrate their poems, and there is a strong element of performance in the workshops as students all rehearse and record their poems, often with their own music. These outcomes are shared via internal audio-visual networks in Correctional Centres as well as in collaboration with national community radio programs like *Jailbreak*.



Student poem, Mannus Correctional Centre

At the end of each program we publish a new *Unlocked* print anthology, making copies available to inmates, their family, friends, the community, and to other correctional centres. The anthologies also include recordings of students and, when funds allow, anthologies are launched with a return visit and public performance at the centre. We have produced a total of 12 *Unlocked* anthologies, showcasing the work of 139 inmates.

"When I called out at 3pm for the girls to collect their first published book of poetry, Kirsty, Jade, Virginia, Christine, and several friends came racing into my office in less than 3 minutes. The smiles, excitement, and noise was just wonderful to see and hear. I gave each of them copies. They had left my office for only one minute and three more inmates - who I had not seen before - were at my door asking for a copy of 'them poems everyone has got.'"

Noreen Pang, Work Place Communications
Teacher, Dillwynia Correctional Centre

Since 2010 we have delivered **15 *Unlocked* programs** at the following NSW Correctional Centres:



- Balund-a, Tabulam
- Cobham Remand Centre, Cobham
- Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre, Parklea
- Dillwynia Correctional Centre, South Windsor
- Dawn de Loas, Silverwater
- John Morony Correctional Centre, South Windsor
- Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, Kempsey
- Mannus Correctional Centre, Tumbarumba
- Oolong House, Nowra
- South Coast Correctional Centre, Nowra

Unlocked provides poets with professional employment opportunities. Led by Artistic Director Johanna Featherstone, *Unlocked* workshops encourage poets of all styles to develop their skills, gain valuable teaching experience, and sustain their practice while positively transforming the lives of others. In order to sustainably expand *Unlocked* in remote locations, new funding is needed to develop a range of program models and to train a diversity of poets to deliver the program.

“The transformative nature of the Unlocked workshops, along with the student’s generosity, enthusiasm and willingness to take risks has made this project some of the most satisfying teaching I’ve had the privilege to be involved in.”

Dr. Gareth Jenkins, Poet, *Unlocked*

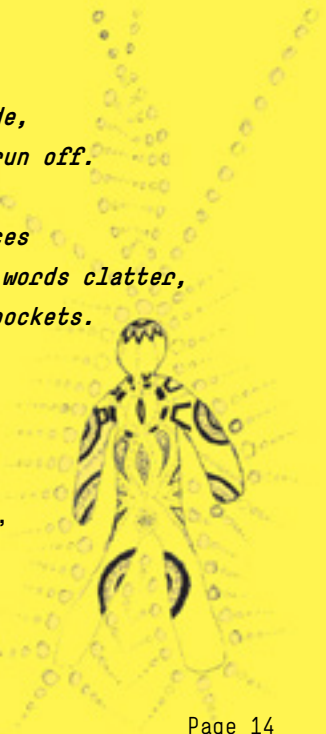
So Much Distance

*His sky a double-base cloudscape
playing rain;
wet channels cut in clay strike him:
how important a water tank,
echoes of that red wheel barrow.*

*He rolls hay-bale spirals,
tends horse-hair scrub
wild flowers arching hillside,
no razor wire for rain to run off.*

*His voice, unbroken by fences
is dismantled by distance. words clatter,
familiar stones piling in pockets.
The phones are down.
It will soon be Christmas.*

Dr. Gareth Jenkins, Poet,
Mannus Correctional Centre



Supporters

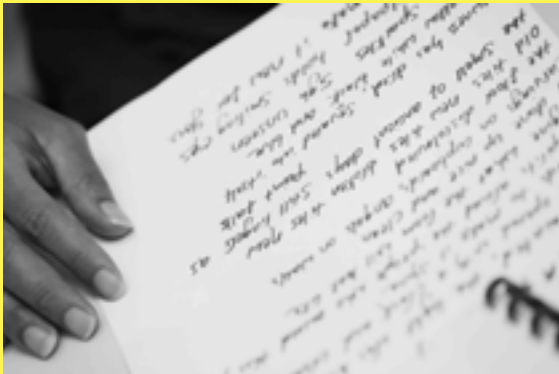
We are proud of *Unlocked's* achievements and grateful for the generosity and foresight of those who have made this transformative program possible. *Unlocked* supporters have included The Thyne Reid Foundation, The Australia Council's Community Partnerships, The Department of Industry, Arts NSW and the generous support of individuals, especially Anne Kantor and Bret Walker SC.

In delivering *Unlocked* we are greatly assisted by our partners within the centres, the teachers and staff who work with us to run the programs and to promote the outcomes within the Department of Corrective Services.

Unlocking the future

*No more drinking and fighting cause you
will only end up back in jail. Try to be a
better person and be good 2 your family
And loved ones. And think about your health
Because you're not getting any younger.
Be Kind. Take Care.
30-year old Ant.*

from 'To Ant in the Future',
Student, John Morony Correctional Centre



The scope of *Unlocked* is limited only by our funding. Given *Unlocked's* success, **our goals are to expand with the required resources to train a diversity of poets and increase access in remote locations.**

The program requires an intensive model of implementation and at present we are only resourced to deliver *Unlocked* in a limited number of correctional centres in NSW. We are also reliant on volunteer coordination of the program.

New funding is critical to achieve our goals, ensuring the impacts of creative education continue to transform lives in some of Australia's most marginalised communities. We are seeking supporters to help grow our programs and for strategic investment over the long term to ensure the program realises its greatest potential.

How your donation can help:

- Support a part-time *Unlocked* project manager so we are not reliant on volunteers **\$12,000**
- Expand delivery of *Unlocked* in regional and remote communities **\$25,000**
[per centre]
- Professional development for culturally and linguistically diverse poets **\$3,000**
- Achieve accreditation of *Unlocked* to integrate our resources into the curriculum **\$5,000**
- Enable impact evaluation of *Unlocked* with Griffith University **\$6,000**
- Create and distribute an *Unlocked* documentary to promote awareness and support for the program **\$30,000**

To discuss how your support can unlock potential

contact our Executive Director

Dr. Tamryn Bennett

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Contact Us

The Red Room Company is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to creating unusual and useful poetry projects that positively transform experiences through poetry.

Find out more about *Unlocked*.

Donate or support us.

The Red Room Company
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Donations of \$2 or more to The Red Room Company in Australia are tax deductible for Australian tax-payers.

Aboriginal Man



The love we have is deep inside
the feeling of peace has been pushed
aside.

Deep inside an aboriginal man living in a
raped tortured land.

An ancient soul, a cosmic flow, the cosmic
known since long ago.

Disconnected from ego we stand our ground
we connect to the love that's all around.

The feeling of **love** like the bird and the tree
the stars and the planets the rivers and the sea.

Comfort we find in the grass we lay
the forests and the rivers where our children play.

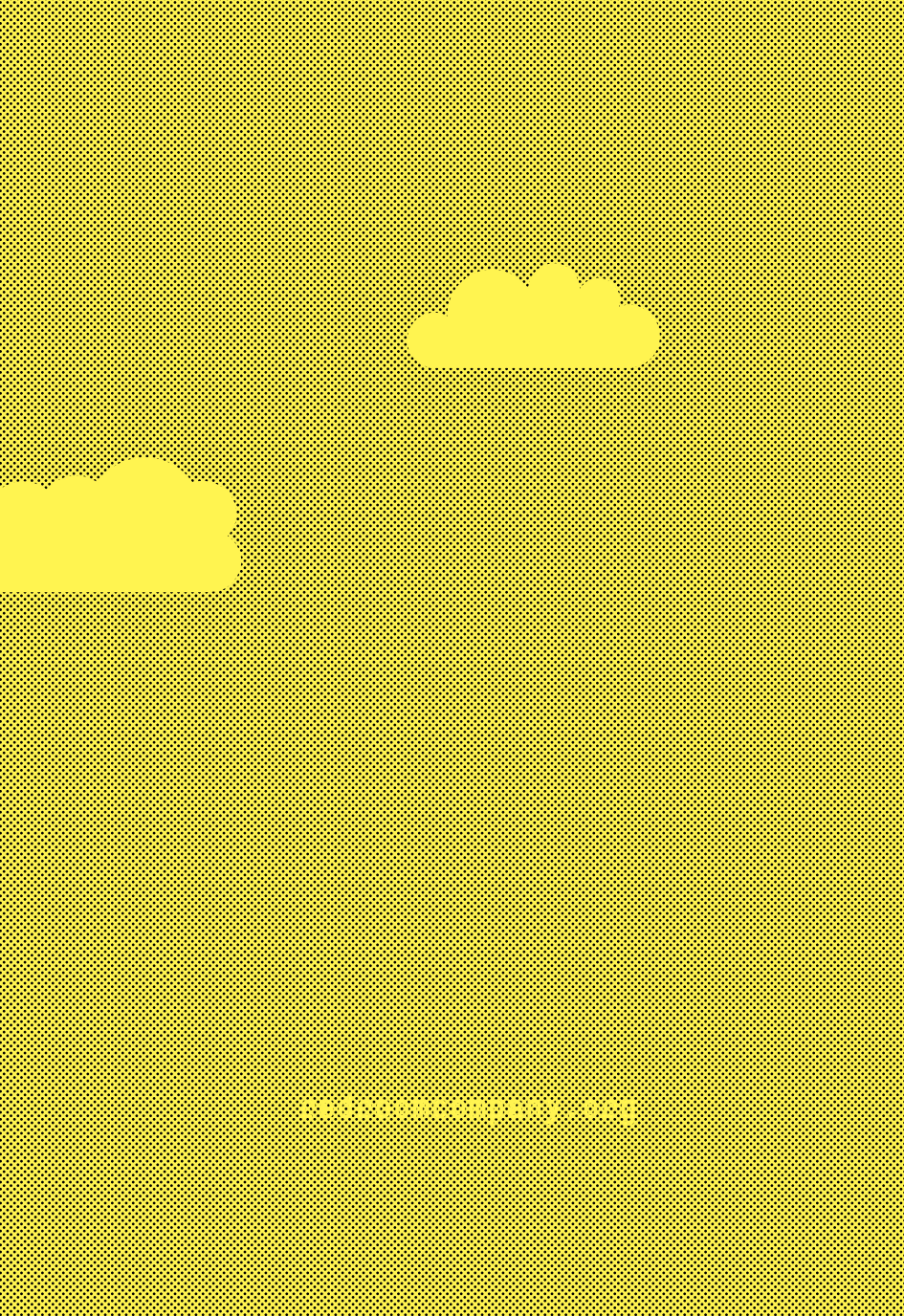
Our spiritual instinct sets us free
Corporate monkeys is what they want us to be
pushed to conform by a hatefull government.

Societys way wasnt built for the love of it.
Tainted souls control our lives, fueled by greed
along with a false smile.

If only they accepted the way we live
to live with the land to dance and sing.
torn from our culture torn from our lingo
distant from our nature, blocked from cosmic flow.







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