

SCREAMING WITHOUT WORDS?

Explaining Self-Injury among New South Wales Police Detainees

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

(signed) _____



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ABSTRACT

Self-harm has been researched for decades as a lead indicator of suicidal behaviour. However, obvious differences in methodology, and even the individuals engaging in self-harm versus suicide, are ignored. This study focuses on self-harm as a behaviour in which the individual inflicts sometimes intricate but non-fatal injuries to themselves.

External observations on the occurrence and prevalence of self-injury in the open community and special populations have continued to inform theory, treatment and management of this behaviour. Particularly, individuals in the forensic population have a higher incidence of self-injury than the open community. Findings from research in prisons have invoked changes in the architecture and culture of these institutions, to prevent and manage the behaviour and, hopefully, prevent instances of suicide.

Study on individuals in police custody has been limited, however findings suggest that self-injury in this environment differs from that in the open community, and even prisons. The current study examines the behaviours and explanations for self-harm by NSW Police detainees in 963 incidents identified through complaint files. This has been undertaken in an attempt to understand this behaviour, and determine the extent of differences found in the police custody environment. The reliability of external

observations in understanding this behaviour was also investigated through a survey of police officers.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASOC	Australian Standard Offence Classification
BOCSAR	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
C@TSI	Customer Assistance Tracking System- Intranet
CIS	Complaints Information System
COPS	Computerised Operational Policing System
DSH	Deliberate Self Harm
LAC	Local Area Command
NPCS	National Police Custody Survey
NSW	New South Wales
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SCIA	Special Command and Internal Affairs