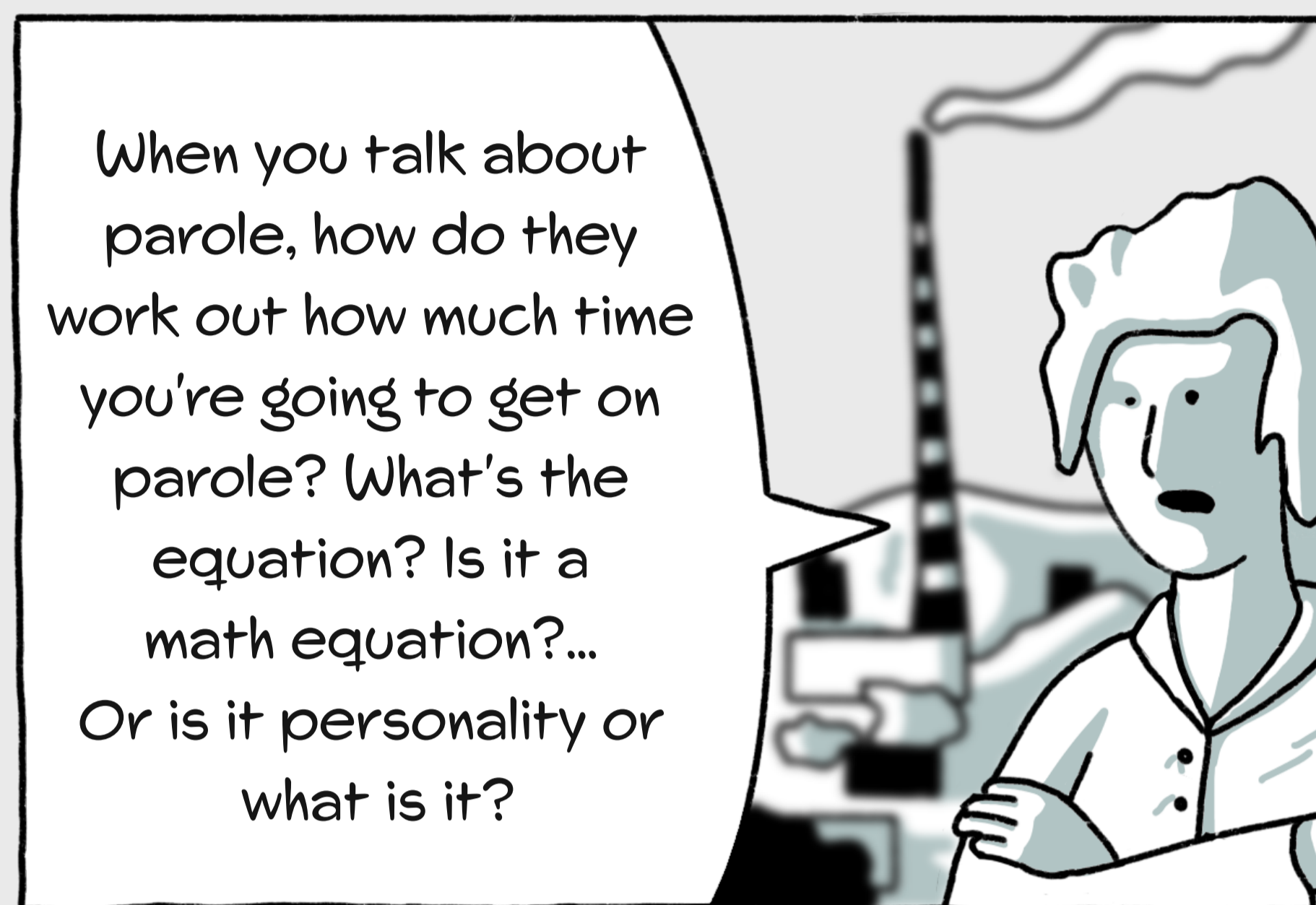


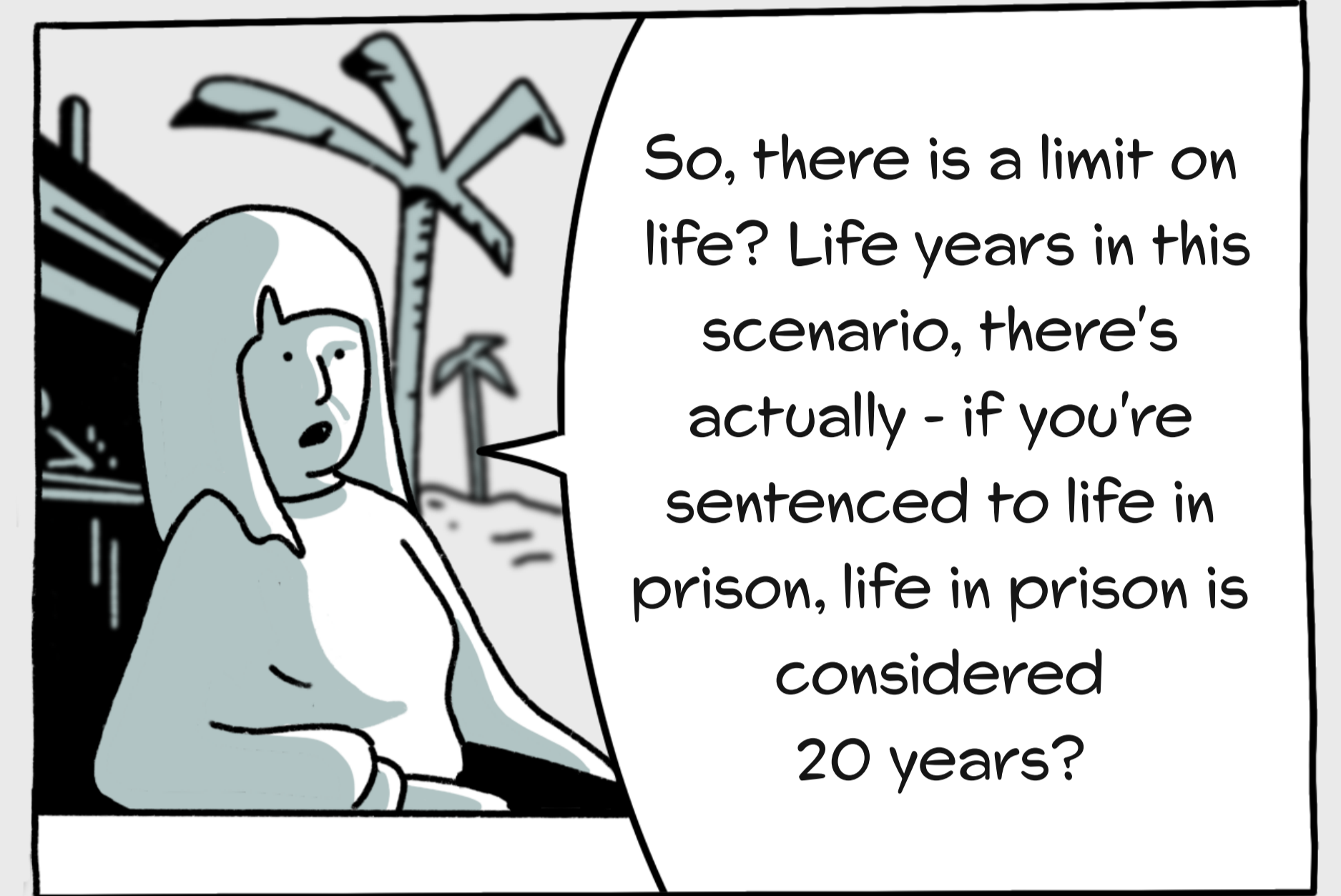
This research brief delves into what the Queensland public **know and think** about sentencing. It also reveals some **common misconceptions** and **knowledge gaps**.

1.

Most people tended to overestimate their sentencing knowledge when it came to defining topics like life sentence, probation and parole, and struggled when asked to articulate the correct meaning.



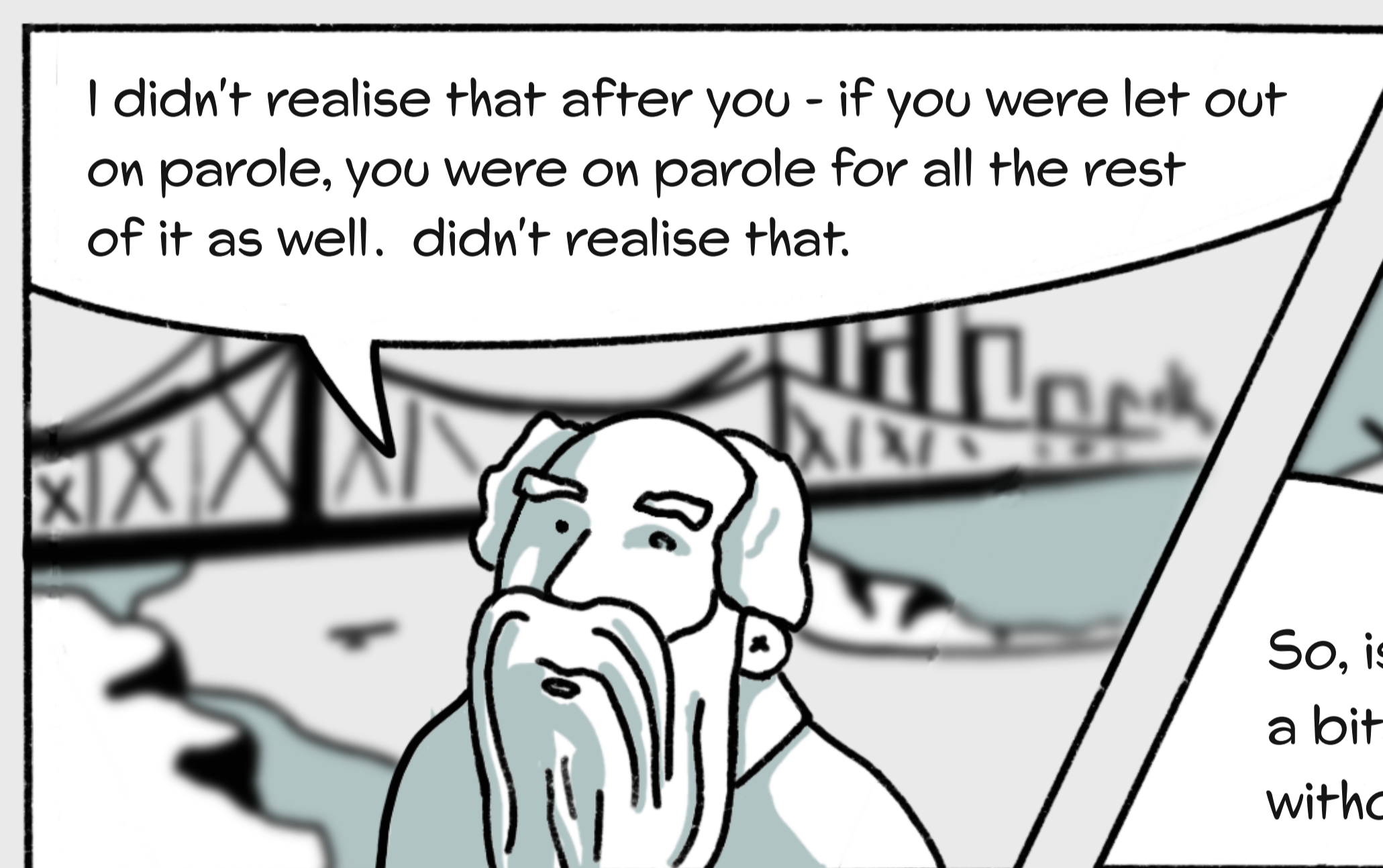
Male, Mount Isa, M1



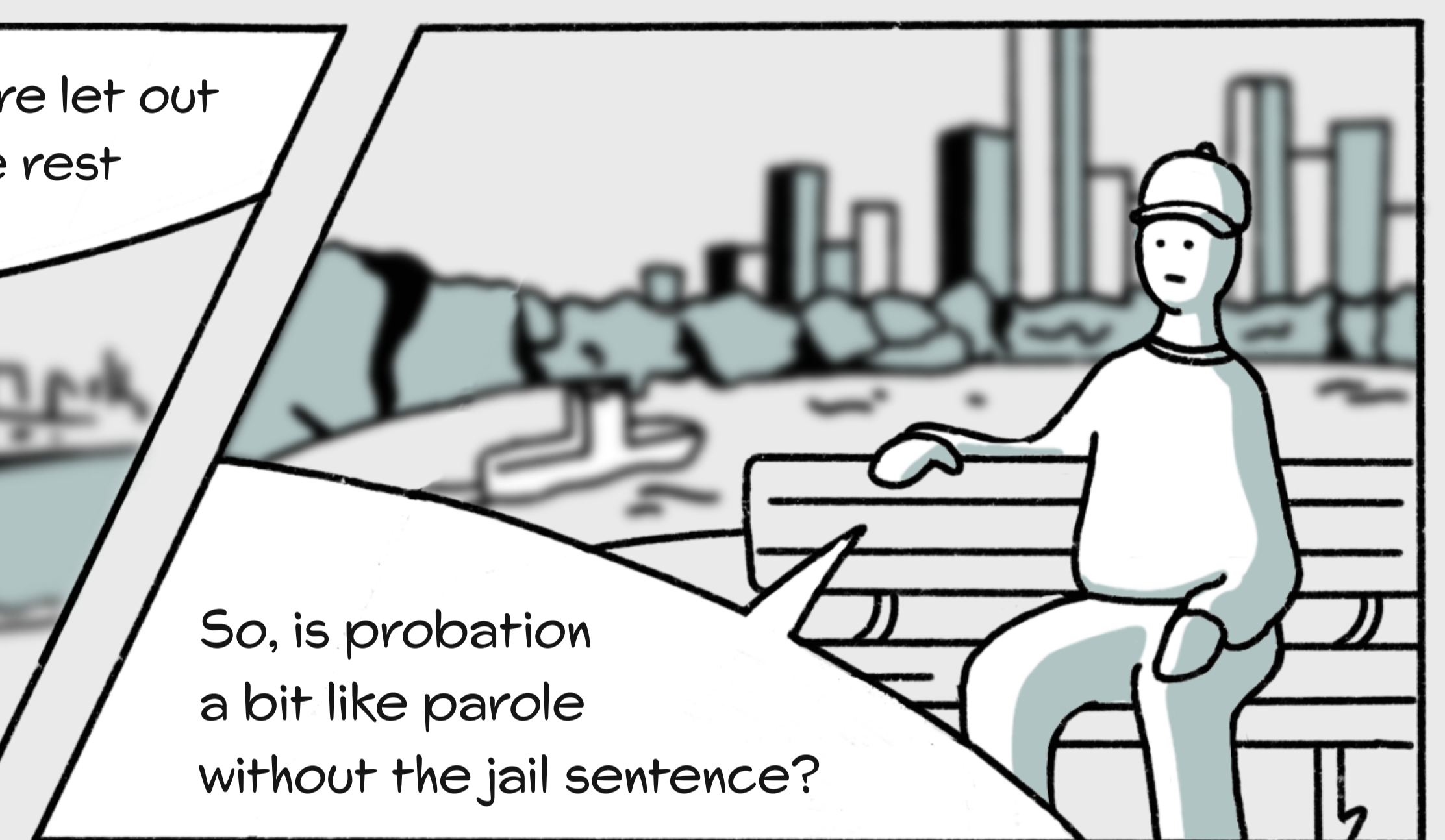
Female, Townsville, T5

2.

Many people misunderstand life sentence to mean 'in prison for a lifetime' and most couldn't explain the difference between parole and probation.



Male, Brisbane, B17



Male, Brisbane, B15

**We also tested** the public's '**sentencing outcomes**' knowledge by asking them to estimate imprisonment rates for burglary, murder and trafficking in dangerous drugs.

**Participants generally under-estimated** the proportion of offenders who get sentenced to **at least one day in prison** (the correct figures are 40-49% for burglary, 100% for murder and 70-79% for trafficking in dangerous drugs).

3.

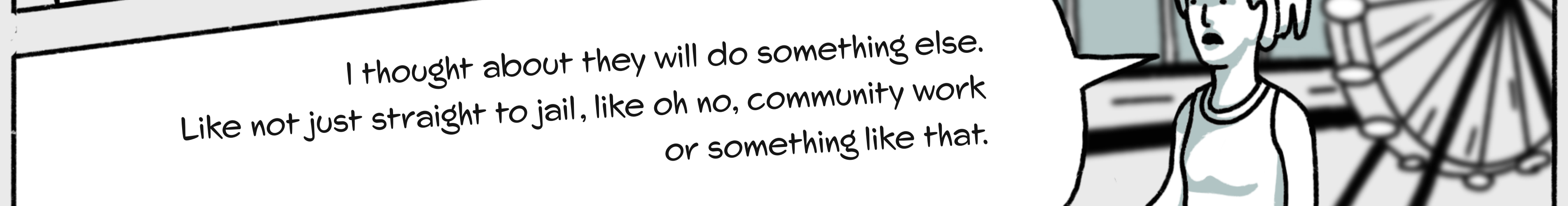
Some people thought this was because the media sensationalises crime.

Female, Brisbane, B31



4.

Others thought this was because courts preferred non-prison sentences



Female, Brisbane, B33



Female, Brisbane, B33

5.

When quizzed on length of prison sentence for these 3 offences, most people tend to underestimate how much time is spent in prison for burglary and murder yet overestimate prison time for trafficking in dangerous drugs.

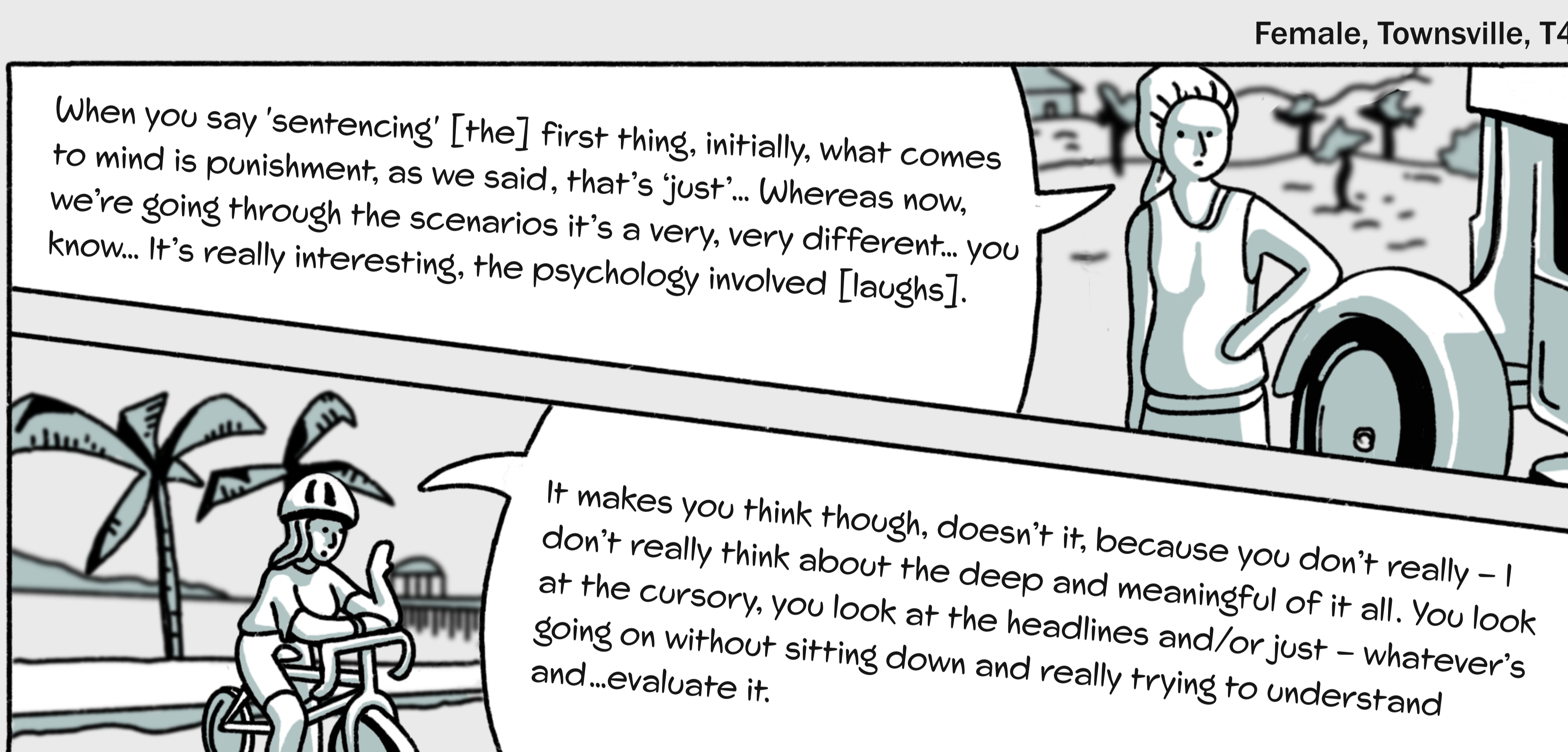


Female, Brisbane, B7

Male, Townsville, T18

6.

These discussions also uncovered a general confusion between murder and manslaughter and an incorrect assumption that drug traffickers are typically a 'king pin'.



Female, Townsville, T4

Male, Townsville, T12

7.

Participant's understanding generally changed throughout the focus group session as they learned more and discussed different scenarios.

## In summary

Improving the **community's understanding** of sentencing will **enhance confidence** in the criminal justice system and the courts.