



# Intractable

*Bernie Matthews*

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**Intractable** Bernie Matthews

***Intractable*** is a relentless and remarkable story of life on the inside of two of Australia's most brutal prison regimes - Grafton and Katingal - in the 70s.

In 1969 Bernie Matthews was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to 10 years. A serial escapee, prison authorities soon classified Matthews as an intractable prisoner and he was transferred to the Alcatraz of the NSW prison system at Grafton. There, life was a routine series of bashings and solitary confinement, and as the systematic brutality of Grafton became a political scandal, Matthews and other prisoners found themselves transferred to a fresh hell in 1975 - Katingal Special Security Unit inside Sydney's Long Bay Jail, Australia's first super-max prison.

A concrete bunker with no natural light or fresh air, Katingal replaced Grafton's bashings with sensory deprivation and psychological control. Suicide attempts and self-harm followed. One of the longest serving and surviving Katingal inmates, Matthews did not see daylight for two years, eight months.

***Intractable*** is not only a shocking story of what it's like to do time but also a history of one of the great political scandals of the 70s from a unique perspective (Katingal was pulled down this year). It's also the eye-opening story of a man who managed to turn his life around in the worst of Australia's prisons to become a writer and prison activist.



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