

Parliamentary Inquiry into strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

Crime Inquiry 2014
Submission 035

Together Queensland Submission by Brisbane Correctional Centre members

Background

Any review of strategies to reduce and prevent criminal activity must also consider the important role Queensland Corrective Services plays in this endeavour.

According to the *Report on Government Services 2014*, Corrective services “aim to provide a safe, secure and humane custodial environment and an effective community corrections environment in which prisoners and offenders are effectively managed, commensurate with their needs and the risks they pose to the community. Additionally, corrective services aim to reduce the risk of re-offending by providing services and program interventions that address the causes of offending, maximise the chances of successful reintegration into the community and encourage offenders to adopt a law - abiding way of life.”¹ (emphasis added)

This submission calls on the inquiry to consider the negative impacts recent changes in Correctional Centres have had on the ability to achieve these goals.

Centre Profile

The current profile of Brisbane Correctional Centre is as follows:

Location: Wacol Station Rd Wacol

Current Centre Capacity:
560 Cells/572 Beds

Current Centre Population: 570 prisoners

Secure North:
Build Capacity: 300 Cells/312 Beds Current Population: 312

Detention Unit: 8 Cells not included on Centre Capacity as these prisoners still have beds within the centre whilst they are serving their period of detention

Secure South:
Build Capacity: 242 Cells/242 Beds Current Population: 240

Maximum Security Unit:

¹ Queensland Government. *Report on Government Services 2014*. Released 29 January 2014. Vol C, Chap 8 at 8.1. http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/132324/rogs-2014-volumec-chapter8.pdf

Build Capacity: 18 Cells/18 Beds

Current Population: 16

Changes introduced since March 2012

The following changes have been introduced in the centre:

- Reductions in prisoner out of cell time from 11 hours a day to 10 hours a day Prisoners are secured in their cells an hour earlier each day
- Prisoners being placed on mattresses on the floor of other prisoners cells (doubling up)
- Changes in industries - Due to the earlier lockaway there are less hours in the day to achieve the same outcomes from our industries
- Cuts to program staff - Due to the lack of program staff, programs offered to prisoners in this centre have severely been cut

Effect of changes on security within the centre and to the Queensland community

These changes have had the resulting effects on security:

- The impact on Custodial Correctional Officers and other staff members health, safety and well-being including incidents of assault. Please see attached documentation
- The impact on prisoner health, safety and well-being including incidents of assault. Please see attached documentation
- The impact and effectiveness of the Governments strategies on prisoner rehabilitation. The programs running currently are non-existent, please see attached documentation.

Conclusion:

Together members employed at the Brisbane Correctional Centre are of the opinion that the Queensland Government's strategy of the increasing incarceration of offenders and the overcrowding of the Centre has decreased the effectiveness of Prisoner rehabilitation and increased the likelihood of reoffending.

This along with the reduction in programs and prisoner employment has also significantly increased the level of serious incidents and assaults of prisoner on officer and prisoner on prisoner.

The impacts have serious and long-term implications for prisoners, staff and their families.

The impacts also have significant and cost effectiveness implications for the State and the local community as follows but not limited to:

- cost of sick leave and Workcover QLD premiums to the taxpayer when Custodial Correctional Officers are injured at work
- Medical costs associated with prisoner injury due to increase in assaults

- Cost of lengthening incarceration due to charges arising from offences of prisoners
- Cost of increase reoffending and return to incarceration due to the lack of rehabilitation programmes preparing prisoners to re-enter the community
- Cost to local businesses who longer have prison industry supplying goods and knock on effect to local employment
- Cost and risk to safety of the community due to increase in escapes and perimeter breaches

Recommendations

The Together members of Brisbane Correctional Centre recommend the following to the Committee for consideration:

- Reintroduce unlock time to 11 hours a day
- Reintroduce programs and other activities design to rehabilitate prisoners.