

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

Crime Inquiry 2014
Submission 041

Together Queensland Submission by
ESCORT SECURITY BRANCH (ESB) 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 ESCORT SECURITY BRANCH is as follows:

Location: WACOL

Sections: Queensland Courts, the Princess Alexandra Hospital Security Unit (PAHSU and Escort Security Branch (responsible for the transport of prisoners to above locations and between correctional centres any other outside of secure facility appointments).

Changes introduced since March 2012

The following changes have been introduced in the 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

- Reductions in level of security for prisoner escorts outside of centres with respect to escorts exacerbated by an increase in higher security classifications of prisoners.
- Insufficient staffing reducing the ability to conduct escorts in a timely fashion.
- Ageing prison population as resulted in more complex medical needs of prisoners that are beyond the limited services provided by PAHSU.

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

These changes have had the resulting effects on security:

- Made escorting prisoners a high risk event given that staff have insufficient resources to counter threats.
- A negative impact on prisoner health, safety and well-being and increases in overtime and beds in public hospitals

Conclusion

Together members employed at the Escort Security Branch 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 reoffending. It has also affective the safe and secure transport of prisoners while they are outside of a centre.

This along with the reduction in programmes and 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 and risk to safety of the community due to increase in escapes and perimeter breaches

Recommendations

The Together members of Escort Security Branch recommend the following to the Committee for consideration:

- That external escort be armed to prevent the threat of external persons assisting in the escape of prisoners.