

COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD



VISION

Internationally recognised performance in corrections.

MISSION

Reducing re-offending through secure, safe and humane management of offenders.

As inmate numbers continued to increase, 2002/03 was a year of significant challenges for our staff. Clear progress was made in establishing an organisational framework for Throughcare, tightening security and developing a 'whole of government' approach to reducing re-offending.

In April 2003, John Hatzistergos was appointed Minister for Justice, replacing Richard Amery as the Department's ministerial head.

Managing a fluctuating inmate population

The average daily population of inmates in full time custody rose from 6,835 in 1998/99 to 7,854 in 2002/03, including a 2.4% increase on last year. These average figures hide a fluctuating population, with the daily average population falling to 7,736 and climbing to 8,062 in the highest week of the year.

At the same time, Community Offender Services faced a substantial increase in the number of reports (pre-sentence, post-sentence and pre-release) required for Sentencing and Releasing Authorities, while the total

number of new offenders registering with the Service increased by 6% from 2001/02.

The impact of the fluctuating inmate population has been to make forward planning and budgeting increasingly difficult. Constant fluctuations have a significant impact on inmate movements throughout the State to ensure the appropriate and secure accommodation of inmates. These movements are expensive and disruptive to programs and services. The expanded use of the bail video link has enabled the Department to mitigate these problems to a certain extent.

The Department was also challenged by a diverse and difficult to manage offender mix, complicated by a 12% increase in the percentage of remand inmates in custody, severely impacting resources and service provision. Remand inmates are some of the most resource intensive, despite many being in custody for only a few days, requiring screening, intense monitoring, moving to and from court, and security around family and legal visits.

The need to make accommodation constantly available for remand inmates has a direct impact on the availability of accommodation for sentenced inmates. While the Department has endeavoured to keep pace with the increase by acquiring additional accommodation, the complex inmate mix does not always coincide with bed availability. There is a constant requirement to juggle the particular needs of individual inmates, in terms of managing risk, placing them within appropriate visiting distances of family and friends and providing them with the optimum services, with the operational agreements for each centre.

Tightening security

Since the late 1990s, the Department has identified Security Threat Groups (STGs) who pose new risks to the safety of staff and inmates in correctional centres. The activities of these groups and the rivalries between them have resulted in violence, organised crime and increased tension, with correctional centre management having to avoid mixing rival group members.

To combat this rising issue, the STG Task Force was established in October 2002, commencing operations at the Malabar Security Unit at Long Bay. This Task Force profiles inmates for placement on the STG Program at Parklea and Goulburn, which is now running on a trial basis for 12 months. The program aims to isolate leaders, prevent STG control structures from developing, reduce rivalries and provide a pathway to reintegrate STG inmates into the mainstream correctional centre population.

Security has also been increased across the State with the redevelopment of electronic security within correctional facilities, a review of the investigations process and new searching processes giving officers increased powers to prevent contraband from entering centres.

Progressing with capital works

The inmate population is expected to increase to 9,000 by 2005 and, to meet this demand, the Department is constructing new correctional facilities at Kempsey, South Windsor and Wellington and extensions at Parklea to provide an additional 1,300 beds. It is also substantially upgrading a number of correctional centres, including building two new Long Bay facilities that opened in the last year: a 72-bed Intellectual Disability Unit; and transitional accommodation for women with mental health and drug and alcohol abuse issues.

The capital works program has progressed well, offering the potential for new facilities to come on line earlier than planned. Highlights included:

Parklea

In February 2003, the Department opened a \$20 million extension to the maximum security Parklea Correctional Centre. The extension, which will house up to 200 remand prisoners, takes inmate numbers at Parklea to 656.

New mid north coast facility

Construction of a 350-bed multi-classification correctional centre for male and female inmates at Kempsey made good progress. The project is due for completion in March 2004 and will eventually have a 150-bed extension to accommodate remand inmates.

New mid-western facility

During the year, the Premier announced that Wellington would be the site for the new mid-western correctional centre. The Department has made a valuable start towards developing a positive relationship with the local community, holding a public meeting to keep residents updated and meeting with the Shire Council and business leaders. This process is being aided by the Governor (elect) for the new correctional centre, Sue Wye, moving to Wellington.

Meeting the needs of female offenders

The number of female inmates has increased by more than 30% in the last five years, presenting additional challenges. The Department is committed to providing facilities, services, programs and a management approach that meet the particular needs of female offenders. This was formally recognised in the establishment of the Women's Facilities and Services Command in late 2002.

At the heart of the Department's approach to female inmates is the new Dillwynia correctional centre at South Windsor, which is well ahead of schedule. When this state-of-the-art facility opens in 2004, it will be a benchmark for female custodial practices in Australia, offering domestic-style accommodation for 200 women. Once Dillwynia has been commissioned, a major upgrade of the Mulawa correctional centre is planned to bring it in line with best practice.

A particular challenge facing the Department is to increase the number of female custodial officers, and our Custodial Recruitment Unit will place greater emphasis on this in the coming financial year.

Maintaining a duty of care

To maintain a duty of care, while absorbing these increasing pressures on staff and facilities and managing cost, the Department must align staffing structures within correctional centres to enable a new way of working. In 2002/03 a business plan was developed to move the Department towards this goal, and negotiations with unions have since commenced.

In future, there will be more flexibility, giving the Department the ability to move staff between divisions, and improved accountability for individual and collective performance.

Implementing Throughcare

The Department's ability to assess offender risks and needs and deliver programs that reduce re-offending

improved during the year with the introduction of E case management and a risk/needs assessment tool, the LSI-R, allowing more targeted and effective programming. These processes and tools are at the centre of the Department's strategy to improve offender management and reduce re-offending.

There have been particular developments in this regard in non-custodial areas. With the intention of identifying offenders most at risk of re-offending, during the year the Probation and Parole Service expanded the LSI-R to all its clients for use as the basis for all assessment and case planning. This standardised assessment process will improve the way the Service works and greatly support Throughcare.

Community Offender Services

To reflect the Throughcare principle, during the year the Department's community-based division was renamed from Probation and Parole to Community Offender Services (COS). The division is responsible for all the correctional activity that takes place outside the boundaries of an institution. A core priority in the coming year will be to improve cooperation and coordination between COS and Inmate and Custodial Services, making their support for offenders seamless in the post-release process and removing duplicate practices. This is likely to involve realigning regional boundaries between these operations.

Post-release support to reduce re-offending

Offenders have high rates of mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse. Part of the Department's custodial responsibility is to rehabilitate inmates and substantial resources are devoted to such treatments. However, if these programs are not continued post-release, the likelihood of recidivism significantly increases. One of the Department's priorities for the year was therefore to create links with Government and community agencies to ensure inmates receive post-release support with mental health and drug and alcohol abuse issues.

Reinforcing ethical standards

During the year, the new Probity and Performance Management Division helped to shape and support policy and procedure to reinforce the Department's ethical standards. The result is a slowly changing culture, with a high standard of probity being brought to bear on all practices.

The next step is to expand the Division's role to include performance management, at which stage it will assume responsibility for analysing management data and evaluating comparative operational performance.

Recognising Human Resources best practice

2002/03 brought difficult challenges in human resources management, including workplace reform to deliver better and more cost-efficient services, recruitment, learning and development and being able to effectively manage change. In responding to these needs, the Department won awards from Treasury Managed Funds for risk management, from the Department of Education and Training for Aboriginal employment and from Group Training NSW for Excellence in Training.

This year also saw the establishment of 'The Way Forward' Project to advance workplace reform in correctional centres. The Department plans to pilot these improved and more efficient work practices at the Dillwynia and Mid North Coast Correctional Centres in the coming year.

Academy Review

During the year, Professor Tim Rohl reviewed the Brush Farm Academy, making 26 recommendations, many of which the Department is already implementing. These changes include setting up a Board of Management to oversee the entire learning and staff development agenda, which will receive monthly reports from the Custodial and Non-Custodial Training Committees. The Academy achieved the highest rating for its curriculum by Australian standards and, with the improvements of

the Rohl Report, will play an ever-increasing role in the Department in the next financial year.

Decentralisation

In February 2003, Premier Carr announced that over 100 administrative jobs would move from Roden Cutler House to Goulburn as part of a major decentralisation for the Department. The relocation of so many staff will reinforce the Department's already strong links with Goulburn, which houses the High Risk Management Unit opened in 2001 within Goulburn Correctional Centre.

The staff of the Department can take pride in another year of fulfilling their increasingly diverse responsibilities. I want to thank all staff for their commitment and dedication in the last financial year. They have served the people of New South Wales well by contributing to community safety and properly discharging their duty of care to those entrusted to their custody or management.

Ron Woodham PSM

Commissioner

