FACT SHEET: Mobile phone jamming at Lithgow Correctional Centre

Why is Corrective Services NSW using mobile phone jamming technology at Lithgow Correctional Centre?

It is a crime for a NSW correctional centre inmate to possess a mobile phone. Visitors are also prohibited from bringing mobile phones into a centre.

Contraband mobile phones pose a threat to correctional centre security and community safety, as they can be used by inmates to facilitate crimes in the community.

Mobile phone possession by inmates is a growing problem internationally. Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) uses a combination of measures to stop mobile phones entering and circulating within correctional centres.

Physical security at correctional centres includes x-ray and other scanning equipment. Specialist search teams, including trained mobile phone sniffer dogs, conduct frequent searches of visitors, vehicles and items entering correctional centres, as well as inmates’ cells and common areas. These measures are supported by strong intelligence gathering about potential mobile phone smuggling.

Mobile phone jamming technology has enhanced these measures. Effective mobile phone jamming makes inmates’ efforts to obtain and use contraband phones worthless.

Following a trial of the jamming technology at Lithgow Correctional Centre, CSNSW has been granted an exemption from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to use, operate, possess or supply mobile phone jamming devices at the centre. Refer to the Radiocommunications (Use by Corrective Services NSW of PMTS Jamming Devices at Lithgow Correctional Centre) Exemption Determination 2018.

Will CSNSW’s jamming of mobile phones affect my mobile phone service?

CSNSW and its engineers have worked hard to select equipment that will only jam signals within the confines of Lithgow Correctional Centre. The five year trial has shown that mobile phone networks outside the correctional complex (for example, the Great Western Highway) have not been affected by the equipment.

CSNSW has displayed signs at Lithgow Correctional Centre to notify visitors that a mobile phone jamming device is being used in the centre.

Mobile phones are not permitted inside the correctional centre. However, while on the correctional complex (for example, the visitor carpark), in the unlikely event you need to call Triple Zero (000) using your mobile phone and are unable to get a connection, see correctional centre staff at the main visitors’ entrance for assistance.
How will the phone jamming be monitored to ensure my mobile phone is unaffected?

CSNSW will continue to work closely with mobile phone carriers and the ACMA to ensure that the mobile phone jamming technology does not affect mobile phone services outside of the correctional complex.

All parties agree that the jamming technology must not affect the public’s mobile phone service.

There are comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure that the use of the jamming technology is appropriately monitored and assessed.

What should I do if my mobile phone does not work while the jamming device is being used by CSNSW?

There may be many reasons for your mobile phone not working. Contact your mobile phone service provider in the first instance. Your provider is best placed to determine the reason your service is not working. In the unlikely event that a fault is determined to be caused by the jammer, your mobile phone service provider will contact CSNSW. CSNSW will then immediately investigate and try to resolve any issues.

Are there any health risks associated with the use of the mobile phone jammer?

No. All the jamming equipment must comply with the electromagnetic radiation requirements at Part 3 of the *Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Apparatus Licence) Determination 2015*.

This means that staff and inmates at the centre and people working in buildings near the jamming equipment can be assured that the radio frequency exposure levels will be at a safe level.

Will any other devices be affected by the use of the jammer?

No. The equipment is designed to jam mobile phone signals only. Other wireless devices such as two-way radios, pagers, television reception and alarm systems should not be affected.

When will CSNSW start using the mobile phone jamming technology?

A trial has been in place since 24 September 2013. The exemption to use and operate the mobile phone jamming devices at Lithgow Correctional Centre commenced on 1 November 2018.

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