



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2019-2020
Supplementary Questions

Portfolio Committee No. 5– Legal Affairs

COUNTER TERRORISM AND CORRECTIONS

Hearing: Wednesday 4 March 2020

Answers due by: Friday 2nd April 2020

ANSWERS

CORRECTIONS

Questions from Mr David Shoebridge MLC

Prison officer training and complaints

1. Regarding prison officer shifts you have advised that in publicly operated prisons “If all other options have been exhausted and in emergency situations, staff may work beyond 16 hours continuously until they can be relieved” – how many occasions did officers work more than 16 hours in the last year?

Answer

I am advised:

In the twelve month period to 12 March 2020, there were 65 instances of officers working greater than 16 consecutive hours in NSW.

Private prisons

2. How much of the infrastructure expenditure in the last financial year was expended for private prisons?

Answer

I am advised:

In 2018/19, the Prison Bed Capacity Program incurred \$183,280,000 in expenditure in relation to the privately operated prisons.

3. What is the total cost per prisoner day in the private prisons in NSW?

Answer

I am advised:

The Report on Government Services 2020 provides information on the cost per prisoner per day in 2018/19.

4. What is the total cost per prisoner day in the public prisons in NSW?

Answer

I am advised:

The Report on Government Services 2020 provides information on the cost per prisoner per day in 2018/19.

5. How many inmates are currently in private prisons in NSW?

Answer

I am advised:

As at 1 March 2020, 1,981 inmates were held in the privately operated correctional centres in NSW.

6. Of these how many are on remand?

Answer

I am advised:

As at 1 March 2020, 884 of the 1,981 inmates held in the privately operated correctional centres in NSW were on remand.

7. How many inmates are currently in public prisons in NSW?

Answer

I am advised:

As at 1 March 2020, 12,095 inmates were held in publicly managed correctional centres in NSW.

8. Of these how many are on remand?

Answer

I am advised:

As at 1 March 2020, 4,086 inmates held in publicly managed correctional centres in NSW were on remand.

Women in prison with children

9. What data is collected on the amount of visits mothers get with their dependent children with a view to providing assistance and programs where needed?

Answer

I am advised:

CSNSW collects data on women with dependent children and this data is self-reported on reception using the CSNSW Intake Screening Questionnaire. Similarly, CSNSW collects data on the number of visits to women offenders as well as data on program eligibility and participation. However, the provision of programs and services for women offenders is not determined solely on the amount of visits to an offender. Rather, eligibility and participation in programs is based on an overall assessment of risk and suitability. For example, participation in The Mother and Children's Program at Emu Plains Correctional Centre is recommended by the Mothers and Children's Program Committee considering the health and wellbeing of children, the mother's circumstances and advice from Family and Community Services.

Double up cells

10. How many cells and which kinds are over capacity?

Answer

I am advised:

There are currently 1,136 cells currently operating over capacity. This includes:

- 931 designed single cells operating as two out cells
- 183 designed two out cells operating as three out cells
- 22 designed two out cells operating as four out cells.

Prisons and COVID-19

11. What plans are in place for protecting inmates and prison officers from exposure to COVID-19?

Answer

I am advised:

CSNSW is working closely with the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (Justice Health) to minimise risks for staff as well as inmates. The focus is on protecting staff and managing risk to ensure that CSNSW maintains safe and secure operations within all work locations. Regularly updated advice to CSNSW staff has focussed on:

- managing visits and risk of entry of the virus to correctional centres;
- the importance of personal hygiene;
- circumstances and need for self-isolation; leave arrangements; and
- when personal protection equipment is needed.

Guidance and advice on all health related issues in NSW publicly operated correctional centres remain the responsibility of Justice Health. Justice Health has pandemic action plans that set out key responses to any outbreak of COVID-19 in custodial environments. The NSW Health website is used for the most up-to-date and accurate information about COVID-19, including direction on who needs to self-isolate, symptoms and spread trends.

12. How vulnerable are prisons to outbreaks?

Answer

I am advised:

The closed nature and security requirements of custodial environments present challenges in mitigating risk associated with exposure of the prison population to COVID-19. CSNSW is working closely with Justice Health to raise awareness and address areas of risk and implement precautionary measures that minimise the risk of transmission and ensure a consistent approach across all correctional centres.

13. Are there plans to suspend visits to inmates to protect from outbreaks?

Answer

I am advised:

As of 16 March 2020, social visits to all correctional centres have been suspended. This is a temporary measure to reduce the risk of coronavirus entering the NSW prison system. Prior to this decision, restrictions based on NSW Health advice were applied to all visitors: family and friends; legal professionals; service providers; and contractors.

14. What alternative arrangements will be put in place to ensure inmates continue to have meaningful contact with their families?

Answer

I am advised:

CSNSW will develop new processes and procedures for screening visitors before resuming visits. CSNSW is examining alternative ways to have visits that minimise the risk of transmission such as greater use of technology instead of person to person contact.

15. Will isolation of infected prisoners be possible?

Answer

I am advised:

Decisions on how to manage inmates who have contracted COVID-19 will be made in conjunction with Justice Health. These decisions will be made having regard to inmate and staff welfare together with the safety and security of the correctional centre. Local factors and infrastructure will inform decisions.

16. Will this primarily involve lock down procedures?

Answer

I am advised:

Decisions on managing inmates will be made on a case by case basis.

17. What plans are there to ensure inmates can still have time out of cells even if outbreaks occur in prisons?

Answer

I am advised:

CSNSW recognises the importance of out of cell time. Operational decisions are informed by local conditions and made on a case by case basis.

18. What enforcement of hygiene procedures is anticipated?

Answer

I am advised:

Inmates are regularly reminded of the importance of effective hygiene routines. CSNSW liaise with Inmate Development Committees to reinforce these messages. Justice Health consistently promote and publish hygiene and safety messages across correctional centres.

19. How many cases would it take for prison hospital facilities to be over capacity?

Answer

I am advised:

Matters relating to medical and health issues are the responsibility of Justice Health, which is part of NSW Health.

20. What plans are currently in place to deal with this?

Answer

I am advised:

Matters relating to medical and health issues are the responsibility of Justice Health, which is part of NSW Health.

21. Given the experience in China showed prison officers incompletely reported their contact history and that this caused outbreaks that affected hundreds of inmates and officers, what additional directions and protections have you provided to prison officers?

Answer

I am advised:

CSNSW has provided clear advice to staff about the importance of and need to declare recent overseas travel history to high risk and other countries. CSNSW has established a dedicated Command Post to coordinate this response. The Command post has representatives from all CSNSW branches as well as key areas such as Human Resources and Information Technology. This will provide a single source of information for all CSNSW staff.

22. The Italian experience showed that the tension of reduced family visits and the knowledge of inmates greater vulnerability to viruses caused riots in multiple facilities, what steps are you taking to ensure inmates have the appropriate support, information and protection to guard against unrest?

Answer

I am advised:

Visits by family and friends are highly valued by inmates. Governors of correctional centres will ensure the reason behind the decision to temporarily suspend social visits is communicated to inmates and will work with Inmate Development Committees. Governors and Managers of Security at NSW correctional centres will continuously monitor inmate populations.