

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS
AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIVE SERVICES**

Name: Ms Marie Koen

Telephone:

Date Received: 30/01/2006

Subject:

Summary

Legislative Council

General Purpose Standing Committee Number 3

from Marie Koen ,

Please note that both David & myself would be happy to appear in person, although it may be best to contact me, rather than David, as he has found this whole experience to be extremely distressing.

My submission relates to point 2, with reference to point A.

My comments relate to my experiences & observations as a visitor to MRRC Silverwater, where I was visiting my partner, Mr David Turbit. Mr Turbit's submission should be read first, as it explains why he was a high risk prisoner.

My first attempt to visit David was on Monday 30 May 2005. I had been advised by telephone by a staff member of the Department of Corrective Services about the procedures when visiting. As there was industrial action I was not able to actually visit David that day. I was initially told that I would not be able to put any money in David's account unless I had actually visited him first, but ultimately the goodwill of one of the officers meant that I could complete my registration as a visitor, thus enabling me to get a VIN number. It was only with a VIN number that I could put money in David's account, thus enabling him to make telephone calls & buy some extras in the weekly buy-up. This was an incredibly time-consuming and confusing exercise for me as I had received contradictory advice from several officers of the MRRC.

As disturbing as this experience was I was relieved that now David would be able to telephone me, although as the days went by without a phone call I became worried. As I had not received a message on my home, work or mobile voicemail I contacted a welfare officer (whom I unfortunately cannot identify) to request that she let David know that he now had money in his account & could now make phone calls. She attempted to dismiss me by telling me that David would already know this. When I asked how he would know she just repeated her assertion that he would know. I told her that I didn't think this was correct. She replied that it was, because "all the prisoners talk to each other".

Given that I had not made any other prisoner aware of the fact that I had even been to

the prison, much less that I had deposited money into David's account, I could not accept this.

The officer then reluctantly asked for David's details and agreed that she would pass the information on to him. I now know that she lied, as no such message was ever received by David. I found this attitude typical, and given that David was a high risk prisoner I find it an appalling failure in the welfare officer's duty of care to David.

As a visitor I found my contact with David to be very stressful and badly managed.

Although it is easy to book a visit by telephone, the actual physical procedures are very time-consuming. As I work full-time, Monday to Friday I booked all my weekday visits for 1.30pm, meaning that I only had to take a half day off work.

Although I was in the reception area and had taken a ticket before 1.30 for each visit, at no time did the visit start on time. On one occasion myself & one of David's friends were left sitting in the visiting area, with the other prisoners & their visitors, for half an hour. We questioned what was going on, but did not get an answer. We assumed that David was in a medical appointment, or something similar, but when David finally appeared he had no idea why the visit was delayed. When I got home that day there was a message on my voicemail from David saying "Well, looks like something else has gone wrong, no visit today." As the voicemail records the time that the call was made I know that I had actually been sitting in the visitors area for about half an hour when the call was made.

Comparing my situation with that of others that I saw in the reception and visiting areas I did not see any other visitor left for so long before their family member was brought out to them. No explanation was given at the time, so I am left to speculate that this was done to punish David by restricting his visits.