

APPENDIX 4

Summary of committee site visits related to the inquiry

This appendix contains summaries of the committee's visits to the Bennett Brook Disability Justice Centre (WA), the Darwin Correctional Precinct (NT) and the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (NT).

Site visit to the Bennett Brook Disability Justice Centre

Introduction

Following the committee's public hearing in Perth on 19 September 2016, the committee travelled to the Bennett Brook Disability Justice Centre (DJC) in the Swan region of Perth to conduct a site visit. The committee was welcomed to the DJC and provided with a tour by Ms Myra Parry, Manager of Disability Justice Services and staff of the DJC. Senators Siewert, Duniam, Pratt and Dodson participated in the site visit.

Until late last year, one of the reasons that people subject to forensic orders were being indefinitely detained in WA prisons was the lack of a 'declared place' or a DJC—a secure alternative to prison where therapeutic and other support services can be provided. This has now been partially rectified with the construction of the state's first declared place, a ten bed facility. The DJC is operated by the WA Disability Services Commission (DSC).

Description of the facility

This purpose-built secure facility consists of a ring of buildings built around a central courtyard with paths, basketball court, vegetables gardens and shared social spaces including a firepit. The buildings surrounding this area consist of:

- apartments where the residents live,
- a common amenities area with kitchen, laundry, lounge room, games facilities and computers;
- a workshop with woodworking tools; and
- an administrative area with observation rooms, meeting rooms, medical rooms and staff offices.



Figure 1.1: An aerial view of the DJC at Caversham showing the buildings situated around a central courtyard

Placements in the facility

Placements in the DJC are limited to people with cognitive impairments subject to custody or forensic orders. Placement can only be recommended by the Mentally Impaired Accused Review Board (MIARB). Residents are selected on the basis that they will be suitable to transition to live in the community. Similarly, any leave of absence or separation from the DJC can only be approved by the MIARB.

Support provided in the DJC and pathways to the community

DJC staff and external private service providers support residents to live independent, positive and purposeful lives in the centre and in the community on leave of absence. Leaves of absence are an opportunity for residents to spend extended periods of time living in the community. Residents are transitioned to independently live and manage their own home (e.g. cooking meals, washing, cleaning) and engage in social activities with positive friends and acquaintances. A staged and supported transition back to the community ensures that this transition to the community is sustainable for that individual in the longer term.



Figure 1.2: View across the central courtyard area to the administrative and activities buildings within the DJC

Progress so far

Since the DJC's opening late last year, two residents have successfully transitioned back into the community; two residents currently live in the DJC; and three prospective residents are being considered for placement. In evidence to the committee, the DSC suggested that the centre will be close to full capacity by the end of this year. During the tour, committee members were able to meet with two current residents. DJC staff noted that there had been a vast improvement in the social interactions and functioning of the residents since moving to live in the DJC.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the committee, Senator Siewert thanked the residents and staff of the DJC and the WA Disability Services Commission for warmly hosting the committee's visit.

Site visit to the Darwin Correctional Precinct

Introduction

Following the committee's public hearing in Darwin on 25 October 2016, the committee travelled to the Darwin Correctional Precinct (DCP) south of Darwin to conduct a site visit of the Complex Behaviour Unit (CBU) and the Step-Down Cottages. These facilities were recently opened in September 2015.

The committee were welcomed to the DCP and provided with a briefing and tour by Mr Bill Carroll (Superintendent-DCP) and staff of the DCP. The committee were also welcomed to the step-down cottages by Mr Michael Pearce and residents of the cottages. The committee were provided with a short briefing and tour of the facility.

Senators Siewert, Duniam, Polley and McCarthy participated in the site visit.

At the time of the visit, there were thirteen people on custodial supervision orders (forensic orders) housed in the CBU, with four people having been transitioned to the step-down cottages.

Complex Behaviour Unit

The CBU currently accommodates male and female offenders placed on a custodial supervision order or prisoners with severe disabilities. A range of therapeutic treatment options, life skills, rehabilitation and recreational options which are tailored to individual needs are provided in the CBU with the aim of providing a transition pathway to supported living in the community. The facility provides a range of low, medium and high dependency male and female accommodation, although the low security part of this centre is not able to be staffed at this time due to a lack of dedicated funding.¹ Staff at the CBU provide reports to the Supreme Court for a person's annual review. Staff will also develop and implement transition and treatment plans for people subject to custodial supervision orders in the CBU.

The CBU is housed in a corrections environment (different to the WA Bennett Brook Disability Justice Centre which is operated by the WA Disability Services Commission) and is operated by the NT Department of Corrections with support from the NT Department of Health. The CBU is led by a Clinical Manager as opposed to a corrections officer to ensure that the CBU is primarily focused on therapeutic outcomes rather than feeling like a jail. A Senior Corrections Officer and a number of Corrections Officers support the Clinical Manager and a range of professional medical and disability staff to operate the CBU. These Corrections Officers have volunteered to work in the CBU, and seek to fulfil a wide range of disability support services in addition to their standard corrective officer duties. DCP described a 'partnership between Corrective Officers and professional staff'. DCP also acknowledged that the CBU is still only new and developing new operating procedures and continually working to improve and optimise performance of the CBU.

¹ The step-down cottages provide an intermediate form of accommodated support between a secure location such as a prison, and living in the community with no restrictions and limited supports.

Transition to the Step-Down Cottages

Transition to the 'step-down' cottages from the CBU is an option for those who demonstrate improved behaviour in accordance with their treatment and transition plan and whom are also deemed a low risk to the community. The Step-Down Cottages are operated by the Department of Health (Office of Disability).

The step-down cottages are located on the grounds of the DCP; however sit outside the DCP wall. The cottages are centred around a courtyard with an administrative building which includes communal areas, kitchen and laundry; a three bedroom residence for new residents and those requiring extra support to reside with staff; and three individual units. There is capacity for six residents with four currently living there. The objective of the step-down cottages is to provide a supported accommodation model that allows a person to learn or re-establish a range of life skills before potentially being transitioned into the community into a supported living arrangement.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the committee, Senator Siewert thanked the residents and staff of the CBU and the step-down cottages for warmly hosting the committee's visit.

Site visit to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre

Introduction

The morning after its Alice Springs public hearing on 27 October 2016, the committee travelled to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (ASCC), 20 minutes' drive south-west of Alice Springs. The committee were welcomed to the ASCC and provided with a briefing and tour by Mr Stephen Rosier (Superintendent-ASCC) and staff of the ASCC. The committee was provided with a short briefing and tour of the facility.

At the conclusion of this visit, the committee drove to the Secure Care Facility (SCF), a facility operated by the Department of Health (Office of Disability). The SCF operates as a supported and secure step-down facility which supports people who have transitioned from the ASCC on custodial supervision orders. The committee were welcomed by Mr David Bosanko (Senior Clinician—Forensic Mental Health Service (Office of Disability)), and staff and residents of the SCF. The committee were provided with a short briefing and tour of the facility.

At the time of the visit, there were two people on custodial supervision orders (forensic orders) housed in the ASCC in G Block (John Bens Unit). G Block is a section of the ASCC repurposed to house people on custodial supervision orders.

Seven people are currently being supported by the SCF. Six of those people live permanently in the SCF after being transitioned from the ASCC. One of the people living in G-Block visits the SCF three to five times a week on day trips as part of his transition plan. Four of the people living in the SCF are being prepared to transition into supported accommodation in the community.

Senators Siewert, Duniam, Polley and McCarthy participated in the site visit.

Alice Springs Correctional Centre – G Block (John Bens Unit)

The John Bens Unit (Unit) is a repurposed part of the maximum security wing (G-block) of the ASCC, designed to cater for people on custodial supervision orders. The Unit is sectioned off from the rest of the maximum security prisoners as a means to protect vulnerable people on custodial supervision orders from bullying and being taken advantage of. ASCC works with the Office of Disability to provide reports for annual reviews of any custodial supervision order to the Supreme Court.

People placed in the Unit are provided with a transition and treatment plan developed and coordinated by ASCC in conjunction with the Office of Disability, the Adult Guardian and medical professionals. This report may be commented on by the Supreme Court at the annual review; however, the development and on-going review of these plans can commence prior to the review and continue to occur over the rest of the year without input or oversight by the Supreme Court. Typically, these plans will have five stages whereby a person is progressively given greater freedoms, introduced to the SCF (a few hours then expanding to day trips) and a gradual removal of correctional officer in the presence of positive behaviours. ASCC and SCF utilise opposing behavioural approaches and philosophies reflective of the underlying purpose of each department—ASCC is more disciplinary—"you do this; you lose that"; whereas the SCF focuses on rewards—"you can have whatever you want if you

display good behaviour". ASCC noted the vast improvement in specific individual's behaviour with this approach, with a noticeable decrease in violent behaviour, and improved impulse control and understanding of consequences that flow from actions. An example of positive behavioural change is that if good behaviour is displayed when travelling to and from day visits at the SCF, then this will result in future visits to the SCF. Positive behaviour results in progression through the stages and can ultimately result in complete transfer to the SCF from the ASCC; likewise regressive behaviour results in demotion through the stages within the plan.



Figure 1.1: A view of an outside courtyard within the SCF

Transition to the Secure Care Facility

The Secure Care Facility (SCF) is located adjacent to the ASCC and is operated by the Office of Disability. The SCF provides secure, supported accommodation for people subject to custodial supervision orders. As noted previously, transition to the SCF commences once a person has a transition and treatment plan in place. Subject to certain criteria being met, primarily management of violent behaviours, a person may commence being introduced to the SCF. Depending on the level of cognitive functioning, the starting point for transition may range from a person being shown photos of the facility and told a story about it to spending a few hours in the SCF, then extending to day trips. Transition is conducted at a pace commensurate with the person's capacity to process changes in their physical and social environment. Subject to the transition process being successful, a person could be expected to move into and live in the SCF. It is expected that people can, over time, then be expected to move into and live in supported accommodation in the community.

Despite being a secure facility, the SCF is a home-like environment, with televisions, computer access, communal areas (outdoor and indoor), kitchen and private individual rooms. Access to vehicles and the capacity to undertake chaperoned community visits is provided on a daily basis. Freedom of movement is generally not constrained. Disability Support Workers (DSW) provide day-to-day support in the SCF at a ratio of two workers to one patient. DSW work closely with patients to meet the objectives of their plans; whilst access to medical professionals is also provided. Mr Bosanko noted that when patients have transitioned back to the community, oftentimes, DSWs have volunteered to transfer to support the person in the community.



Figure 1.2: A typical room and ensuite bathroom within the SCF



Figure 1.3: The communal kitchen within the SCF

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the committee, Senator Siewert thanked the residents and staff of both the ASCC and the SCF for warmly hosting the committee's visit.