

APPENDIX 3

Summary of committee sites visits related to the inquiry

This appendix contains summaries of the committee's visits to the West Kimberley Regional Prison (Western Australia) and the Barkly Work Camp (Northern Territory).

Site visit to West Kimberley Regional Prison

Introduction

During the committee's public hearings in the Kimberley region of Western Australia (WA), the committee travelled to the West Kimberley Regional Prison (WKRK) on 6 July 2018 to receive a tour of the facility, a briefing from staff members and learn more about the mental health services available at the prison. Senators Siewert, O'Neill and Pratt participated in the site visit.

Profile of the WKRK

WKRK is located approximately 7 kilometres outside of Derby, a small town on the north-west coast of WA. Derby has a population of approximately 3511 people, with 49.4 per cent of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.¹

The WKRK is considered a unique facility due to its design and operating philosophy which is premised upon Aboriginal cultures and values as far as is possible. The prison's philosophy includes recognition and acceptance of cultural, kinship, family and community responsibilities as well as spiritual connection to land.

Description of the facilities

The WKRK consists of numerous administration, facility and accommodation blocks which surround a central sports oval. The WKRK features two secure compounds, one which houses only women, and another which houses male prisoners who have recently been received into the prison or have a high security rating. The remaining accommodation blocks house men. The committee received a tour of the women's compound and one of the men's accommodation blocks.

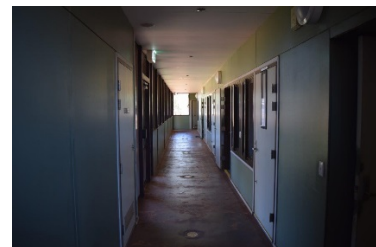
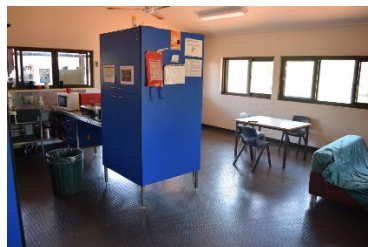
1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2016 Census QuickStats*, 'Derby (WA)', http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC50404 (accessed 4 September 2018).



The accommodation areas include several houses which each accommodate 8-11 prisoners on average, with a total capacity of approximately 223 prisoners. Prisoners are grouped according to their security rating as well as family ties and language where possible. The houses include a shared kitchen, living area and bathroom facilities, and 4-5 shared bedrooms. The houses are spread throughout a common outdoor space which features boab trees and native plants and grasses, mirroring the bushland which surrounds the WGRP.

Amongst other facilities, the WGRP also includes:

- Education and Program buildings;
- Workshop buildings;
- Main kitchen building;
- Spiritual Centre;
- Outdoor seating areas and recreation facilities;
- Health Centre (medical) building;
- Secure multi-purpose type building; and
- Administration area with staff offices.



Description of services provided

Following the tour, the committee received a briefing from staff including the Clinical Nurse Manager, Clinical Nurse Specialist Mental Health, and Transitional Manager regarding the mental health and other services provided at WGRP. The committee

heard that three of the biggest factors which contribute to prisoners re-offending were drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues and cognitive disability.

The WKRP has a doctor on site four days per week, a counsellor and a psychiatrist visits the facility for half a day every six weeks. A number of prisoners at WKRP receive mental health treatment including regular counselling, however, only prisoners in an acute state are seen by the visiting psychiatrist when necessary. The psychiatrist is also able to prescribe medication for a prisoner which is then administered by WKRP staff.

Staff explained that some prisoners have symptoms of psychosis when they arrive at the prison but that this is often as a result of drug use. Following approximately six weeks in the prison, symptoms improve as prisoners undergo detox and receive mental health treatment from staff. Staff reflected that for some prisoners, it is easier for them to find themselves in prison than receive mental health care in the community. At WKRP, prisoners receive treatment for their mental health issues, have an established routine, receive regular meals and are able to take a break from pressures in the community such as relationships or drug and alcohol addiction.

During the discussion, staff noted that a number of the prisoners' mental health illnesses related to a disability, such as an acquired brain injury or the effects of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, but that the interaction of mental health services and disability services was complex. In particular, staff advised there was confusion regarding the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Kimberley region and how prisoners eligible for the NDIS would access services once in the community.

In addition to the mental health services provided, the committee also heard about transition arrangements for prisoners returning to their communities. The committee heard about a number of difficulties staff face when making arrangements for prisoners including a lack of wrap-around support services, changing Centrelink requirements and barriers to opening a bank account for prisoners. Where appropriate, prisoners are referred to the Kimberley Mental Health and Drugs Service to assist with their transition back into their community and to continue the mental health treatment received in prison.

Impact of services on prisoners

The committee met with two prisoners who spoke about their experience with mental illness and mental health services both inside and outside of the prison. Each of the prisoners the committee spoke with felt that the mental health treatment they had received whilst at WKRP was more effective than the limited mental health services they had been able to access in their respective communities.

Each of the prisoners reflected on how their history of mental illness affected their behaviour and had contributed to their offending. The committee heard that after accessing the mental health services available at WKRP, the prisoners had developed strategies for how to modify their behaviour and improve their mental health.

The committee heard that cultural understanding was integral to the treatment the prisoners had received for their mental health. The Clinical Nurse Specialist Mental Health at WKRP is of Maori heritage. The prisoners explained they had been able to establish a relationship built on trust and culture with the Mental Health Nurse by each sharing aspects of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and Maori culture. This mutual understanding enabled staff to tailor mental health treatment to each prisoner and that the prisoners were more receptive to the counselling they received.

Both prisoners were confident that they would seek ongoing support for their mental health when they returned to their communities. The prisoners explained that it can take time to find the right mental health service for an individual but that it is important to persevere and take the time to build a relationship and establish trust with a health professional.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the committee, Senator Siewert thanked the prisoners and staff of the WKRP for speaking to the committee and facilitating their visit.

Site visit to Barkly Work Camp

Introduction

Before the committee's public hearing in Alice Springs on 10 July, the committee travelled to the Barkly Work Camp (BWC), Tennant Creek, to conduct a site visit of the facility.

The committee was greeted at the Tennant Creek airport by Kay Horsburgh, Officer in Charge and Chief Correctional Officer, and were provided with a briefing and tour of the BWC. Senators Siewert and O'Neill participated in the site visit.

Profile of the BWC

The BWC was opened in 2011 as a partnership between the Northern Territory Correctional Services and Tennant Creek and Barkly Region communities in conjunction with Native Title holders, the Patta Aboriginal Corporation.

The BWC is an open and low-security correctional facility for adult male prisoners, located less than 4 kilometres from the Tennant Creek town centre. It has a focus on rehabilitation and reparation instead of traditional forms of incarceration, giving prisoners opportunities to develop work readiness and life skills.

Originally built to house 50 prisoners, at time of the visit the BWC housed a total of 74 prisoners, with plans to expand capacity to 96 prisoners. The majority of prisoners who have transitioned through the BWC since its opening have been Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The BWC aims to accommodate prisoners who have family or community ties to the Barkly region. At the time of the committee's visit, around 50 per cent of the prisoner population had family or community ties to the Barkly region.

Description of the facilities

The BWC consists of several structures surrounding a central recreational yard, including:

- accommodation blocks for prisoners, each of which consists of an air-conditioned shared space with kitchenette facilities, adjoined by several shared bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms;
- an Elders' visiting centre;
- a covered visiting space;
- kitchen building;
- laundry building;
- training and equipment sheds;

- vegetable garden; and
- an administration area with staff offices and accommodation.



Programs at BWC

The BWC provides opportunities for prisoners to reintegrate back into the community and provide reparation to the community for their offending behaviour.

Prisoners participate in paid employment, via the Sentenced to a Job program, and voluntary employment, including reparation works for the Barkly Regional Council and not-for-profit organisations, such as regional rodeos and shows. For those prisoners participating in Sentenced to a Job, some of their wage goes towards board and lodging for their place at the camp and any fines they owe, while 5 per cent goes to Victims of Crime Northern Territory. The rest of their wage is held in trust until they are released, or can be paid to their family.

Some of the work readiness and life skills programs offered by BWC include: training in chain saws and small motors; construction 'White Card'; AFL umpiring; pre-tertiary certificates delivered through University of Southern Queensland; and driver education. Prisoners also participate in the local football league.

While the BWC does not provide specific mental health services for prisoners, it does facilitate a number of support programs for social and emotional wellbeing, including:

- a men's therapeutic life skills program, delivered by Relationships Australia;
- Codes 4 Life, delivered by Desert Knowledge Australia;

-
- a family violence program; and
 - a visiting Elders program.

Prisoners requiring mental health support, or complex medical support such as alcohol and other drugs programs, are transferred out of the BWC to receive those supports in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Impact of the BWC programs on prisoners

The committee met with prisoners living and working the BWC. Prisoners described some of the social issues in their communities and the behaviours which led to their arrest and imprisonment.

Staff at the facility told the committee that living conditions at home are difficult or bad for many prisoners, with many communities in the Barkly region facing significant issues with alcohol and violence, and that there is a good culture within the BWC of prisoners encouraging each other to 'keep the peace' as they understand that placement at BWC is a privilege.

The committee heard how prisoners at the BWC benefit from being closer to their communities and enjoy more frequent visits from their families, compared to when they were in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Prisoners who spoke with the committee explained that they hoped to use the skills they had learned in the BWC to find work in Tennant Creek, or in their home communities, once their sentences are served.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the committee, Senator Siewert thanked the prisoners and staff of the BWC for warmly hosting the committee's visit.

