



Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Custodial Inspector Annual Report 2022-23

In its seventh year of operation, the Tasmanian Custodial Inspector tabled the 2022-23 Annual Report in the Tasmanian Parliament today highlighting that lockdowns continue to be the most significant issue facing people in detention in Tasmania.

Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock, said his office provides oversight of all aspects of adult and youth custodial centres in Tasmania with external scrutiny provided through onsite inspections, and the subsequent publication of reports detailing findings and recommendations, and regular monitoring of custodial centre systems and records.

Mr Connock noted that unfortunately, for adult prisoners, Tasmania is the worst jurisdiction in Australia for time out of cell.

“Lockdowns have far-reaching ramifications for the welfare of people in detention with significant impacts on mental and physical health, rehabilitation, and engagement with family and friends,” said Mr Connock.

“According to the Report on Government Services (RoGS) in 2021-2022 Tasmania has the worst total average out of cell hours of any state and territory in Australia at 7.7 hours per day,” he said.

“The Department of Justice has indicated in the past that Tasmania performs poorly against this indicator because of its significantly lower number of prisoners in ‘open prisons’, dragging its average out of cell hours down compared to interstate jurisdictions. The Australian Capital Territory has a smaller overall prison population than Tasmania, however, and performs better,” said Mr Connock.

“Maximum rated prisoners are the most severely impacted. Mainstream maximum prisoners had an average time out of cell over the 12 months of 3 hours a day. They should have been out 8.3 hours a day. Remandees in the new Southern Remand Centre, all of whom are awaiting trial or sentencing, had an average of 4.9 hours out of their cell but the aim was 9 hours. Unfortunately, these figures are unlikely to improve by the time the next RoGS is released at the beginning of 2024, based on my observations of current trends,” he said.

Mr Connock said that whilst lockdowns continue to be an ongoing problem in adult custodial centres, sadly this reporting year they have also become an issue in Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC).

“I have not previously observed lockdowns on a systemic level in youth detention in Tasmania and it is a disturbing precedent. Under inspection standards, young people should have a minimum ten hours out of bedroom each day, but this was rarely achieved,” he said.

Mr Connock said that the lockdown situation at AYDC has also come under examination by the United Nations Committee against Torture in its Concluding Observations on the sixth periodic report of Australia with respect to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It said on 5 December 2022:

The Committee is seriously concerned about:

(d) the practice of keeping children in solitary confinement, in particular at ... Ashley youth detention centre [sic] in Tasmania, which contravenes the Convention and the Nelson Mandela Rules;

Staffing shortages seem to be a major reason for the majority of lockdowns in both adult and youth custodial centres. Whilst there have been reports referring to the number of new staff being recruited by the TPS and AYDC, the problems appear to have persisted throughout the reporting year.

Inspections completed 2022/2023

Mr Connock said that the office has completed five inspections during the reporting period, three in adult custodial centres and two in AYDC including:

- Wellbeing – Adult Custodial Centres;
- Wellbeing – Youth Custodial Centre;
- Custody: Reception to Release – Adult Custodial Centres;
- Physical Healthcare and Substance Use Management – Adult Custodial Centres; and
- Physical Healthcare and Substance Use Management – Youth Custodial Centre.

Mr Connock said the outcomes of the Mental Healthcare inspections and the Physical Healthcare and Substance Use Management inspections for both adult and youth custodial centres will be combined into single healthcare reports for adult and youth.

“These inspections contained a number of similarities in findings, the most obvious being the impact of lockdowns. The healthcare reports from these inspections are expected to be released in late 2023,” said Mr Connock.

Growth in prison population

Mr Connock also reported that Tasmania’s prison population has grown significantly during the reporting year.

“According to TPS reports on 30 June 2023 there were 736 prisoners in Tasmania compared to 609 at the same time in 2022 (increase of 21%). In 2021-22 the average daily number of prisoners in Tasmania, according to RoGS, was 642 and it will no doubt be higher in 2022-23,” Mr Connock said.

“An increasing prison population places further burdens on already stretched services,” he said.

Dr Sonny Atherton, Statewide Specialty Director, Forensic Mental Health Service (FMHS), made a submission to the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee ‘B’ Inquiry into Tasmanian Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters on 31 March 2023.

He highlighted the impact, stating:

Despite a significant increase in the prison population in the recent decade, there has been no commensurate increase to already inadequate prison resources.

“The number of prisoners eligible for parole but still in custody due to a lack of suitable accommodation is one area, amongst many, that may be a contributing factor to the increase in the number of prisoners,” said Mr Connock.

“The growing prison population is likely to only worsen the lockdown situation,” he said.

[Full report - Custodial Inspector of Tasmania Annual Report 2022-23.](#)

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