



Food and Nutrition Inspection Reports – Adult Custodial Services in Tasmania 2020

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania has released findings from the latest inspection report into food and nutrition services provided throughout Tasmania’s adult custodial facilities.

Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock said that in August and September 2020, my staff completed unannounced inspections of all Tasmanian Adult Custodial Centres and assessed food and nutrition services against the suite of Food and Inspection Standards for adult prisoners.

“The inspection report indicated overall that provision of food and nutrition throughout

Tasmania's Prison Service (TPS) is of sufficient quality, quantity and variety to meet nutritional needs," he said.

"Generally speaking, menus across all sites have been developed in consultation with a qualified dietician and have been planned to ensure that high quality, nutritional and varied meals are provided to prisoners and detainees," said Mr Connock.

"Whilst all facilities fared reasonably well against inspection standards, there needs to be some fine tuning in regard to education and training, menu delivery and food choices that can aid in overall health, wellbeing and behaviour management for prisoners and detainees" he said.

"There was occasionally evidence among some in management and health support systems of a lack of recognition for the vital role of nutrition and education, the health benefits of good food and drink choices more widely and how these choices underpin physical and mental health," Mr Connock said.

"It is the wider influence of self-funded snacks from the canteen which often has a greater impact on the nutrition and thus cognitive health status of prisoners and detainees and good nutrition should be viewed from a much wider perspective than the workings of the kitchen alone," he said.

"The canteen system has a significant impact on the nutritional status of prisoners in Tasmanian adult custodial centres. Whilst there should be access to individual choice through canteen purchases, there is resistance in the canteen to review product selection to facilitate healthier choices which needs to be addressed," he said.

"An organisation-wide commitment to ensuring a focus on food and nutrition that can support better mental health and potentially improve behaviours is encouraged to assist this goal," said Mr Connock.

Mr Connock also outlined concerns that no-one engaged in food preparation and food handling is trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities.

"There appears to be a breakdown in processes facilitating prisoners' completion of food safety training and many of the prisoner workers in the kitchen had not completed this basic training" said Mr Connock.

“It is recommended that more attention to detail is given to food intolerances such as gluten free and individuals with true coeliac disease must be treated seriously along with adherence to specialty diets including vegetarian and halal,” he said.

Mr Connock said the ongoing engagement of an Accredited Practicing Dietician (APD) to provide education and individualised support to prisoners and detainees beyond the menu review process is also essential to improving overall health and nutrition across the TPS.

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