



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania Lockdowns Review 2021

The use of lockdowns in Tasmania's prison system has come under heightened scrutiny with a new report issued today by Tasmania's Custodial Inspector.

Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock has taken aim at the lack of adherence to basic human right principles within Tasmania's prison system in his latest report Lockdowns Review 2021 detailing that prisoners are not being afforded their basic rights of one hour out of cell per day.

Mr Connock outlined that part of the function of the Custodial Inspector, in addition to mandatory inspections, is to also report to the Minister on any particular issues or general matter if it is in the public interest to do so.

"Given the alarming regularity of lockdowns occurring within the Tasmanian Prison Service (TPS), as identified in previous inspection reports by my Office, I felt the prevalence and cause of lockdowns required further attention and review," he said.

"The most concerning aspect identified is time spent out of cell, particularly that of open air, by each prisoner," he said.

"The basic human right of prisoners is the provision of at least one hour per day out of cell, as per the *Corrections Act 1997*."

"Whilst it is acknowledged that TPS has good intentions to deliver this allocation, the reality is that all too often options to provide this level have been exhausted and the minimum one hour is not delivered in contravention of the *Correction Act 1997*, human rights and inspection standards," Mr Connock said.

"Unfortunately, this has been the case for my entire tenure as Inspector and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency," he said.

Mr Connock acknowledged that lockdowns are sometimes necessary and unavoidable in the correctional environment, particularly when they result from staff shortages or security concerns.

“Primarily lockdowns affect the time prisoners are able to spend out of cell but, as highlighted in previous inspection and annual reports, the effects are far more wide ranging,” he said.

Mr Connock reported that the majority of lockdowns occur in Risdon Prison Complex (RDC) maximum security units with staff shortages the key driver (approximately one third of all lockdowns across facilities in December 2020 were due to staffing issues).

“The purpose of the Lockdowns Review 2021 is for TPS to focus its attention on reducing the overall number of lockdowns which in turn will assist and increase out of cell hours for prisoners,” he said.

“On a positive note, TPS recently implemented new processes to obtain more accurate data for reporting out of cell hours (OOCH) which will significantly assist with achieving this goal and prisoner management,” said Mr Connock.

“There has also been a definite shift by TPS management to increase time out of cells however regardless of the increase, the daily weighted average is still significantly lower than other jurisdictions and does not meet current KPI’s, which for secure facilities is nine hours and 16.5 hours for open facilities,’ he said.

Mr Connock also highlighted that record management continues to be an issue within the TPS creating obstacles to obtain accurate information.

“It should also be noted that the review proved difficult to undertake for a number of reasons including lack of reliable data recording lockdowns across TPS facilities and lack of consistent procedures for the recording of lockdowns up until recently,” he said.

“I am hopeful that the outcomes from this report provide some strong guidance towards rectifying the current ratios and that basic human rights can be afforded and achieved within Tasmania’s prison system,” he said.

Office of the Custodial Inspector Lockdowns Review 2021 ([link](#))
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Media enquiries:

Natalie Geard 0407 862 135
contact@nataliegeard.com