

Media release

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Improvements in prison service welcomed

Custodial Inspector Richard Connock has welcomed changes made by the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) that he says will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of adults in custody across the state.

Mr Connock said it was pleasing to see that recommendations made in the [Adult Wellbeing Inspection Report 2024](#), which was deemed tabled in Parliament today, were already being implemented.

“As part of the report process, the Department of Justice was consulted prior to publication and invited to provide a response. It is pleasing to note that of the 18 recommendations I made in the report, the Department has supported 15, and in part supported the remaining three,” he said.

“In particular I note the introduction of pay increases for people in custody of 10% earlier this month. This is the first increase in many years. Canteen prices have also been reduced by 6% in recent times to make items more affordable.”

The pay increase equates to an extra \$1.50 a week for people receiving the base \$15 allowance through to an extra \$6.75 for people receiving the highest allowance of \$67.50. Allowances are calculated based on the person’s work, or willingness to work if none is available.

“Providing meaningful activity to people in custody contributes several positives to their wellbeing, including aiding rehabilitation and reducing violence and other negative behaviour,” Mr Connock said. “To encourage people in custody to take part in this activity, it is important they are appropriately remunerated for their work.

“The fact that people’s allowances had not increased for many years, and the rising cost of canteen items, were both highlighted in my 2024 report.

“While it is pleasing to see that the TPS has introduced these pay increases, I urge it to consider the rest of my recommendation on this matter, which includes addressing inequities in current allowances and that the amounts are based on skill, work environment, size of work area and hours worked.”

Mr Connock said that cultural support for Aboriginal people in custody was almost non-existent during the inspection, although he acknowledged TPS was aware this issue needs to be addressed.

“The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody is concerning and my inspection team noted that there is a serious lack of cultural support available to them,” he said.

“Reinstating access to cultural leave, which is risk assessed permission to temporarily leave prison to participate in cultural events, is one area that requires particular attention.

“Pleasingly, there have been some improvements with the engagement of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service to improve cultural and wellbeing support within the prison system.”

Mr Connock said his inspection team had concerns about the safety of the LGBTQIA+ community in prison, including reported incidents of bullying and violence towards individuals.

“Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are particularly vulnerable in prison environments,” he said. “Sadly, following the inspection, we observed evidence of two serious assaults on gay men by other people in custody occurring within the space of a month.

“While we also saw evidence that the TPS is modelling positive leadership, with a couple being able to share a cell and the bullying of a LGBTQIA+ person in custody being proactively addressed, it is important that this continues to be a focus to ensure the safety and welfare of the LGBTQIA+ community.”

Mr Connock said other improvements implemented since the 2017 Wellbeing Inspection Report included an increase in clothing provided upon reception, although more needed to be done to provide appropriate clothing for people in custody undertaking work, as well as recreational activities including exercise.

“One item that was repeatedly raised with my inspection team was footwear. We heard that the green prison issued shoes are poor quality and wear out quickly,” he said. “We were told on multiple occasions that they are extremely uncomfortable as they have no cushioning, and they don’t breathe well so they smell bad.

“These concerns were also raised in the 2017 inspection report, and at that time I recommended that robust and durable footwear be provided as standard prison issue, and that a secondary pair of footwear such as thongs also be provided.

“While initially supportive of this recommendation, the TPS advised prior to the 2024 inspections that the ‘recommendation was no longer supported’, and that ‘it was determined the footwear provided to people in custody was consistent to that supplied in other jurisdictions and considered sufficient’.

“It is disappointing to note the TPS has reneged on its commitment to make improvements to prison issue footwear, and I strongly urge it to reconsider. As such I have repeated this recommendation in the 2024 report.”

Mr Connock said people in custody had also reported that problems with laundry meant they didn’t have access to clean clothing on a daily basis.

“A number of problems with laundry were reported, including clothes not being cleaned at all, clothes being returned to people damp, and in one case clothing being left outside people’s cells as they were locked down, where it was left overnight and got damp and had to be rewashed,” he said.

“TPS needs to ensure that people in custody have daily access to clean clothes, whether through laundry being done seven days a week, or increasing the clothing allowance.”

Mr Connock also reiterated concerns raised in Custodial Inspector reports earlier this year about the [impact of lockdowns](#), along with the [inhumane treatment of people in dry cells](#).

“As I submit my final inspection report for the year, I strongly urge the State Government to act swiftly to improve these situations that not only affect people in custody, but also TPS staff and other people who work within the service,” he said.

“As an employer, the government has a duty of care to its staff, and as the body responsible for people in custody, it is essential that their basic human rights are upheld.”