



The Digital Divide: Access to digital technology for people in custody



ISBN: 978-0-9942293-9-7

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Contents

Insp	ector	's overview	Ì	
Exec	cutive	summary	iii	
	Back	groundground	iii	
	Key I	Findings	iii	
	Conc	lusion	V	
Reco	omme	ndations	vi	
1	Peop	le in custody have limited access to computers	1	
	1.1	WA provides less access to computers than other states	1	
	1.2	Variation between facilities causes inequity	5	
2	Education is driving digital technology access in custody			
	2.1	Access to digital technology is coordinated in adult education	8	
	2.2	Young people in custody have inadequate access to digital technology	9	
	2.3	Privately run facilities vary in access	10	
3	Acce	ss to digital technology for legal purposes is inadequate	12	
	3.1	Legal professionals face restrictions in providing services to clients	13	
4	The l	Department is missing opportunities	15	
	4.1 for v	Video communication is widely used for court appearances but not enoug		
	4.2	Privately operated facilities make good use of self-service kiosks	17	
	4.3 custo	WA has not attempted secure internet and intranet access for people in ody	19	
App	endix	A: Department of Justice response to recommendations	21	
		B: Access to digital technology for people in custody by facility (informatio by the facilities)		
App	endix	C: Previous inspection recommendations about video communication	30	
App	endix	D: Methodology	31	
Арр	endix	E: Bibliography	32	

Inspector's overview

Despite a falling crime rate, the number of people in prison keeps rising. One of the drivers is the high number of people who return to prison after release. It is logical, therefore, to focus on reintegrating people from custody back into the community.

Smart use of technology can help achieve this in many ways. It can increase people's opportunities to stay in contact with family and friends while in custody, making reintegration less confronting. With the right technology, access to legal, health and government services in custody can be increased. Web based systems and other technologies offer opportunities to increase program and education services in the custodial environment.

Unfortunately, Western Australia has not taken a coordinated or strategic approach to using digital technology to improve these services. We are lagging behind other states and some of our regional neighbours.

We understand the fiscal pressures facing government. We also understand that expanding digital technology will have costs. However, smart investment can lead to efficiencies and long term savings. In order to do this, there needs to be a commitment from the Department of Justice to look for opportunities and implement improvements where practical. This review shows that it is likely to be some time before there is substantial improvement for people in custody.

The Department's response to the report draws heavily on its information communication technology (ICT) transformation project. This project is underpinned by state government policy aimed at modernising ICT to reduce infrastructure duplication and to harness whole of government buying power for ICT services.

However, the focus of this project is largely on improving ICT for staff. The only mention of ICT for people in custody is in relation to the prisoner telephone system and offender education services. While these improvements will be welcome it is a narrow focus. The roadmap provided to us has no references to matters such as in-cell technology, determining the number of computers needed for the prison population, or increasing video technology for visits for people in custody – which were our recommendations.

Obviously, I support the Department's efforts to improve the use of ICT for staff, monitoring, and surveillance purposes. But I am concerned that improvements in access to digital technology for people in custody will be slow or sidelined. We live in the digital age, and controlled access to ICT will be an increasingly necessary and powerful tool for rehabilitation.

If smart investment in technology for people in custody is to be improved in Western Australia, planning needs to start now. Clear goals need to be set, and risks and mitigation strategies need to be identified and documented. I hope this report will give impetus to such planning.

One area which illustrates the current problems is the ability of people in custody to access legal documents and other records. These days, the majority of legal practice is electronic, not paper-based. People in custody have the right to view such material in order to prepare their case or discuss a plea. Lawyers told us that, in their view, the Department's policy about lawyers taking laptops into official visits areas, to share information with clients is both restrictive and inconsistently applied. I am pleased to report that, after discussions with us, the Department agreed to reassess its policy, and committed to ensuring consistency at different prisons.

However, I would have expected to have found evidence of regular discussions between the Department and the legal profession on how best to manage communications and risks, and greater use of technologies such as Skype. I would also have expected lawyer/client communications to be part of comprehensive ICT planning. That does not appear to be the case on the evidence provided to us. In part, that may reflect the fact that prisons and courts used to be run by separate government departments. The new Department of Justice is now responsible for both. I hope this will lead to improved coordination and policy development.

Neil Morgan

12 February 2018

Executive summary

Background

Since the early 1980s there have been rapid and profound technological changes in society. Digital technology has become an integral part of our lives. We use swipe-card technology and mobile phones to pay for items and services. We conduct social and economic transactions via email, web-based, or social media platforms. And we continue to adapt our homes, workplaces, and learning environments as technology advances.

Most people in custody are already socially and economically disadvantaged. Often they have lower socioeconomic status, poor health, high unemployment and low levels of education (Murphy, 2012). As society moves towards digitised learning and working environments, the digital, social, and communication divide between people in custody and the outside world increases. This results in further exclusion of those who are already socially excluded.

In recent years, the Department of Justice (formerly the Department of Corrective Services) has embraced technologies such as electronic monitoring of offenders, surveillance and scanning equipment, and computerised case management and reporting. Using such technologies can improve efficiency and service outcomes. However, people in custody have gained little from advances in digital technology, resulting in digital inequalities and a widening digital divide.

Key Findings

Access to digital technology for people in custody in Western Australia is poor

Compared with other Australian jurisdictions Western Australia has poor access to computers and in-cell devices. On average there is only one computer accessible for every 15 people held in custody.

There is considerable variation between facilities based on how each chooses to prioritise access. This fails to account for the needs of the prison population. For example, facilities with the largest numbers of people on remand have the poorest access to digital technology even though they are unconvicted and need more access to electronic legal information and computers.

The Department has not taken a coordinated or strategic approach to assessing the level of need and requirements for computer access for people in custody.

Adult education is driving digital technology access but is not extending into youth education

Almost all the computers available to people in custody are for education purposes. Most adult prisons provide some degree of access to computers, ereaders, and interactive whiteboards for education purposes.

The Department's Education and Vocational Training Unit (EVTU) provides guidance and governance for the use of digital technology to enhance learning in adult prisons. A dedicated staff member maintains and upgrades equipment and provides technical support when needed.

However, young people in Banksia Hill do not benefit from the coordination provided through EVTU. The Department has neglected the obvious need for computers in youth education. Our July 2017 inspection found little progress¹ despite the Department having:

- funds allocated to fix the situation since 2015
- documented plans since early 2017
- assigned responsibility to the Knowledge and Information Technology directorate to implement the plans (DCS, 2017a; DCS, 2017b).

Legal services are restricted due to poor digital technology access

People in custody can only access electronic legal information and prepare for their court appearances using computers in libraries or common areas, or a very limited number of in-cell laptops.

Policy stipulates that at least one computer is to be made available for this purpose in each prison library. But there is no guidance on how many computers should be available based on the prison population.

There is no centralised person or role who is responsible for maintaining, upgrading, or supporting these computers. This results in considerable variance between facilities.

Legal practitioners reported difficulties in showing electronic evidence to clients in custody. They said clients often do not see electronic material until they reach court. This can reduce the options for early pleas and extend time in custody.

The Department is missing opportunities to use digital technology to increase social contact and improve the digital literacy of people in custody

The Department uses video links for court appearances, bringing significant financial savings in court custody and transport costs. But it makes little use of

During an OICS visit in December 2017, we found the computers were operational. Correspondence from the Department, claims this occurred on 10 July 2017 which was not consistent with what we found during our Inspection.

video communication technology to facilitate social contact with people outside custody or in other facilities.

Privately-run facilities use self-service kiosks to allow people in custody to manage appointments, accounts, and order canteen items. This reduces the administrative burden on custodial officers, improves the digital literacy of people in custody, and promotes personal responsibility. These systems have been a success but have not yet been introduced in the state's public facilities.

Conclusion

Western Australia has not given sufficient priority to the development of digital technology for people in custody.

There is no centralised coordination or strategy. As a result, progress has been ad hoc and opportunities have been missed. We have fallen behind other states and territories.

Access to digital technology for education purposes has driven some innovation, but this has been inconsistent.

Access to digital technology for legal purposes has not kept up with changes in the community and the courts. The gap is widening, and this has the potential to cause unnecessary pressure in the justice system.

Recommendations

		Page
1	Identify and manage the risks associated with in-cell technology, with the intent to expand the availability of in-cell computer access.	3
2	Establish a model to determine the appropriate ratio of computers to prison population, which accounts for the needs of the prison cohort, and increase the number of computers where needed.	5
3	Implement the plan to update digital technology at Banksia Hill.	10
4	Identify a centralised person/role with responsibility for maintaining, upgrading, and supporting library computers.	12
5	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with key legal bodies to ensure electronic legal material can be viewed by people in custody.	14
6	Implement a whole of department solution to increase video communication for official, social, and inter-prison visits.	17

1 People in custody have limited access to computers

1.1 WA provides less access to computers than other states

In Western Australia, there is a ratio of approximately 15 people in custody for each computer in adult prisons. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory all have greater access.²

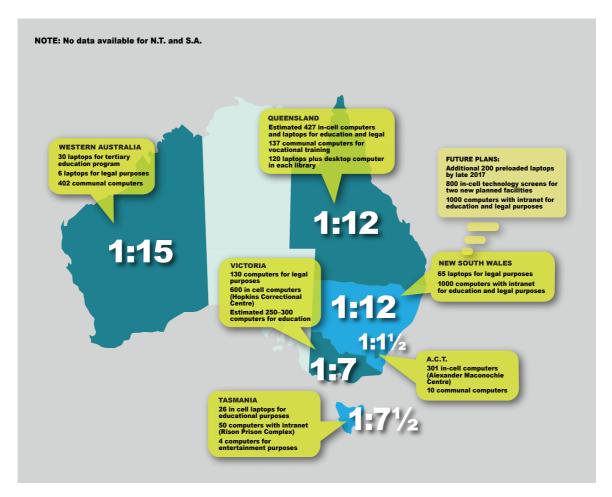


Figure 1
Computers available for people in custody in Australia

Access to in-cell technology is particularly low in Western Australia. In-cell technology includes in-cell fixed devices, desktop computers, and portable devices such as laptops or tablets. These allow people in custody to expand their access to educational and legal resources. This can reduce competition with other activities during the day, enabling people to balance work and study commitments in custody. Access to in-cell technology also means users are unaffected by opening hours, staff unavailability, or lockdowns.

² Information from the Northern Territory and South Australia was not available.

There are only 36 computers which can be used in cells in Western Australia. Thirty of these have been provided by the University of Southern Queensland to be used solely as part of a pilot educational program.

The other six are specially configured laptops which can be issued to people in custody for legal purposes. For security reasons none of these computers are able to access the internet.

Access to in-cell computers fell significantly in Western Australia in 2009 when the privilege of owning and accessing an in-cell computer was removed. At the time there were 167 computers owned by people in custody, with specific configuration requirements which included preventing the computer from accessing the internet. The reasons for the wholesale removal of computers, cited by the Department at the time, included security breaches and the cost of auditing and managing the computers (DCS, 2009).

Despite citing security risks as one of the reasons for removing access to these computers the Department did not document the risks associated with having incell access to computers. Nor did they consider options for managing the risks beyond the blanket removal of the computers.

In the year leading up to the wholesale removal, only 12 computers were confiscated due to security breaches. This was a small number compared to the number of computers in use.

Fabre and Zymaris have identified the following risks in allowing people in custody access to digital technology, and how these risks could be managed (Fabre & Zymaris, 2016).

Table 1Access to digital technology for people in custody: risk management

Security Risks	Risk Management
Improvised weapons and self-harm	Computers should be configured to ensure minimum cable lengths and have light weight or non removable peripherals
Concealment of contraband in computer hardware	Physical checks, all-in-one, or transparent computer chassis, tamper-evident seals
Digital contraband (e.g. violent or pornographic images or typed notes)	Software and storage restrictions, modifications to hardware such as sealing USB ports
Unidentified printed documents	All printed documents need to provide user details including name and date/time of printing
Clandestine communication (e.g. unauthorised communications with protected persons, victims, witnesses, media, or criminal associates)	Restricted storage requirements (no shared document storage areas) and email restrictions including key word or key phrase filtering

Accessing, sharing, or storing unauthorised material	Designing and maintaining secure systems which restrict and control access, sharing, and storage of information
Breaches of access to private, confidential, or privileged material	Physical and electronic surveillance and monitoring, including random and targeted auditing of assets and systems, and logging of all system activity
Rogue media/ devices (e.g. any storage device which is portable and outside staff control including CD's, DVD's, USB's)	Secure data, programs and complete operating systems (e.g. computers configured to deny use of any removable storage device and to actively alert staff of such attempts)
Malicious software and denial of service attacks	Computer system must prevent installation or running unapproved software and system storage quotas must be implemented
Uncontrolled access and data storage	Automated and predefined system curfews, networked, server based storage which can be locked down and inspected

Other jurisdictions in Australia are managing the risks associated with access to computers by people in custody. Correctional agencies in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory have comprehensive policies which govern access to computers by people in custody. These policies include information on:

- eligibility criteria
- principles of use
- approval processes
- system configurations
- penalties for misuse
- supervision, monitoring, and auditing requirements.

Recommendation

Identify and manage the risks associated with in-cell technology, with the intent to expand the availability of in-cell computer access.

Six computers were available for people in custody to use for legal purposes. As of 29 May 2017 none were in use. The reason for the lack of demand is unknown, but it may be due to difficulties with the application process, or a lack of awareness of their availability.

In the seven years since the removal of individually owned in-cell computers:

• only 15 formal written applications for a departmental legal laptop were submitted by people in custody

- an additional three people submitted correspondence requesting the use of a legal laptop but failed to complete or submit the required application forms
- of the 18 people requesting a departmental legal laptop, only nine were approved for issue
- of those not approved, security concerns were cited in four cases and the remaining applications were denied due to not meeting the strict eligibility criteria.

These laptops have been specially configured for use in custody and are owned by the Department. Despite the laptops being departmental property, the policy for access is contained in Policy Directive 42 which governs prisoner property (DCS, 2013).

Technology in practice

The Alexander Maconochie Centre in the Australian Capital Territory had computers installed in all cells and accommodation blocks. Residents can be approved to access email, Internet, and the Legal Education and Resource Network, which is an online educational and legal resource (ACT Government, 2017). Other jurisdictions including: Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania also have in-cell technology or allow computers in cells, although restrictions apply based on the level and type of need.

1.2 Variation between facilities causes inequity

There is no policy or guidance that outlines how many computers are needed at each facility. However, policy does stipulate that there should be at least one computer available for legal preparation within each facility's library (DCS, 2014).

There is considerable variation in access to computers between facilities. Broome Regional Prison has no computers available for a prison population of approximately 60 people. Presumably this is due to the fact that it also has no library and no education. However, this just compounds disadvantage.

The Department does not appear to have given consideration to the increased need to access computers when on remand. People remanded in custody are expected to participate in their own defence by viewing evidence and other materials. They may also need to prepare written submissions to the court or undertake basic legal research.

The largest male remand populations are at Hakea Prison and Casuarina Prison. The largest female remand population is at Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility. These three facilities had the poorest access to computers apart from Broome, which also has a high proportion of remand prisoners.

The best access to computers was in some of the minimum-security pre-release and reintegration facilities. Pardelup Prison Farm, Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women, Wandoo Reintegration Facility, and Karnet Prison Farm all had ratios of less than 10 people for each computer. Access at Wooroloo Prison Farm was not as good.

Appendix B provides a summary of access to digital technology in each facility.

Recommendation

Establish a model to determine the appropriate ratio of computers to prison population, which accounts for the needs of the prison cohort, and increase the number of computers where needed.

Access to computers for young people in custody at Banksia Hill Detention Centre was significantly better than the adult estate. There were approximately two young people for every computer within the facility³. However, there were issues with the quality of this equipment (see section 2.2).

³ Additional computers have been added in the latter half of 2017.

Table 2Ratio of people in custody per computer (ranked lowest to highest)

Facility	2016/2017 Daily average population*	Remand population **	% remand	Total computers	Ratio of people in custody per computer
Pardelup Prison Farm	81	0	NA	16	5
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women	90	0	NA	16	6
Wandoo Reintegration Facility	75	0	NA	12	6
Roebourne Regional Prison	174	73	41.9%	26	7
Karnet Prison Farm	347	0	NA	38	9
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison	165	48	29.1%	19	9
West Kimberley Regional Prison	208	45	21.6%	20	10
Bunbury Regional Prison	334	54	16.2%	29	12
Bandyup Women's Prison	319	127	39.8%	22	15
Wooroloo Prison Farm	380	0	NA	26	15
Greenough Regional Prison	321	86	26.8%	20	16
Albany Regional Prison	443	105	23.7%	22	20
Acacia Prison	1462	0	NA	60	24
Casuarina Prison	947	404	42.6%	36	26
Hakea Prison	1012	861	85.1%	35	29
Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility	162	96	59.2%	5	32
Broome Regional Prison	58	25	43.1%	0	NA
+ Department-issued la	ptops			36	
Total Adult	6489	1877	28.9%	438	15
Banksia Hill Detention Centre	142	72	50.7%	57	2
Total Juvenile	142	72	50.7%	57	2

^{*}Source: DCS Business Intelligence and Reporting, ** Refers to all unsentenced prisoners (mainly comprised of remand, however, may include other status types such as appeal, extradition, deportation, arrest, in transit, or at large)

The demand for access to computers by people in custody is not known or measured by the Department.

Acacia Prison (a privately run prison) is able to assess level of demand for access to legal computers to some extent because its prisoners must make bookings to use the legal library computers. In the 12 months from August 2016 to July 2017, there was an average of 180 bookings per month to use the legal computers. Acacia is a medium-security facility which holds nearly 1,500 sentenced males. As there are no people remanded at the facility, the demand for access to legal computers presumably stems from outstanding court or appeal matters, parole plans, or family/civil legal matters. Demand in remand prisons would be higher.

2 Education is driving digital technology access in custody

Digital technology has the potential to engage more people in learning, as well as expand the range of subjects and levels of education available. Young people, in particular, are more likely to engage with learning if it is online and interactive. It can also be used to provide better support for people with learning disabilities, low literacy levels, and English as a second language (Champion & Edgar, 2013).

Adult custodial facilities use computers, e-readers, and interactive whiteboards for education purposes. Most (76%) of the computers available to people in custody are education computers.

There are 67 e-readers in the public metropolitan prisons and Albany Regional Prison. These were introduced to increase the ability for self-paced learning. E-readers are loaded with academic reading material allowing higher level students to learn at their own pace and from within their cell. These e-readers have had mixed success as they are only targeted at a small part of the prison population for a specific purpose. Without an e-reader students would be provided with printed copies of material.

Interactive whiteboards enable classes to live stream the internet which can enhance and expand program delivery. Online content such as forums, TED talks, and training can be extended into the classroom.

West Kimberley, Eastern Goldfields, Roebourne, and Casuarina have access to story creation software which allows Aboriginal people in custody to create animated videos in their own language. Through this, a library of resources of stories and information is created in language for others to access. Information on mental health, alcohol and drug use, money management, and potentially prison policy can be created.

A pilot project allowing a small number of people in custody to study using in-cell laptops is also being run in conjunction with the University of Southern Queensland. Students use modified laptops supplied by the university which are preloaded with study material to complete courses. As stated earlier, 30 laptops were available for this purpose.

2.1 Access to digital technology is coordinated in adult education

The EVTU coordinates access to digital technology across adult public facilities for educational purposes. The Unit provides technical expertise, guidance, and governance for using digital technology.

Education campus managers are responsible for managing resources in education centres within each publicly run adult facility. Upgrades, maintenance,

and technical support are provided centrally by the EVTU through an Information Systems Officer.

Information Technology Guidelines govern the usage of all education centre computers. The guidelines include:

- maintenance arrangements
- agreements for people in custody to adhere to in order to access computers
- what the computers can be used for (i.e. study, educational games under supervision, preparation of a parole plan in exceptional circumstances)
- how data is to be stored
- software access and licensing (DCS & ASETS, 2017).

EVTU has also developed specific guidelines for the use of the computers supplied by the University of Southern Queensland and e-readers.

EVTU manages the risk of accessing digital technology, including adding a photograph of the person in custody onto e-readers to allow staff to easily identify the authorised user of the device. All e-readers and the university laptops have tracking sheets, serial numbers, and logs. The laptops are also loaded with software which detects misuse of the device.

2.2 Young people in custody have inadequate access to digital technology

Education at Banksia Hill Detention Centre is not part of EVTU. It therefore does not have the support and guidance available to adult prisons.

In April 2017 we visited Banksia Hill and observed that the education centre computers had not been maintained. Many of the computers were outdated and neglected. Some were not even working or had reduced functionality.

An internal audit in 2016 had found that nearly half the computers were not working and some contained digital contraband such as movies, music, and illegal software (DCS, 2016).

In 2015 the budget for education in Banksia Hill was merged with the budget of the main facility. Prior to this an Education Principal was responsible for managing a separate budget.

The Department of Justice receives funds from the Department of Education to provide education services to young people in custody. Due to the expiration of a Memorandum of Understanding, funds in 2013 and 2014 were not transferred to Justice at that time. The Department of Education funding for 2013, 2014, and 2015 (totalling \$225,000) was eventually paid in 2015 as a lump sum.

It was acknowledged at the time that digital technology had been neglected and the backdated funds were intended to be used for upgrades.

In January 2017 the Department created a plan to refresh the technology available to young people at Banksia Hill. It said it would:

- establish a standalone education network for the facility
- provide centralised administration and file sharing services through a dedicated server
- refresh and repurpose 135 corporate computers which were due for replacement to use across the education network
- provide 43 laptops to be allocated to students at the teacher's discretion
- provide new printers and interactive whiteboards
- provide a dedicated intranet service to allow learning resources to be accessed by young people.

The plan was for Banksia Hill staff to be trained to provide basic support to the infrastructure. Technical support was to be provided by the Knowledge and Information Technology directorate in head office. This team is also responsible for implementing the project to address the issues at Banksia Hill. Any further support would be provided through private contractors.

However, despite the years of neglect, and despite having funds since 2015 and a plan since early 2017, our inspection of the Centre in July 2017 found minimal progress. While new computer equipment had arrived, it had not been set up or networked.

Recommendation

Implement the plan to update digital technology at Banksia Hill.

2.3 Privately run facilities vary in access

Education in privately run prisons is not provided by, or supported by the EVTU, and they do not need to adhere to the standard guidance provided to the public prisons. Access differs depending on the private provider.

Serco runs Acacia Prison and Wandoo Reintegration Facility. Both facilities purchase and maintain computer equipment through the Serco IT Helpdesk. The Helpdesk provides technical support. On-site technicians are available to assist with issues which cannot be resolved remotely by the Helpdesk. The computers available to people in custody at Acacia and Wandoo are relatively new and in good condition.

Acacia Prison had a comprehensive local order governing the access and use of computers by people in custody, including:

- eligibility and criteria to use the computer rooms
- the approval process to access computers
- computer room security
- monitoring of use
- software and data storage requirements (Serco, 2016a).

Wandoo Reintegration Facility does not have a policy governing access and use of computers by people in custody. However, it does have a Director's Rule which governs resident access to internet-based education (Serco, 2016b).

Sodexo commenced operation of Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility in December 2016. Every prison takes time to bed in, and Melaleuca has been no exception. However, even by the time of our review, education services at Melaleuca remained extremely limited. The facility was still awaiting approval to become a Registered Training Organisation and was not offering a full suite of education programs.

Melaleuca does not have an education centre. However, computers located in the unit program rooms were available for educational purposes. Computer access, maintenance, and updating of computers were the responsibility of the head of business management.

Prior to taking over the facility, Sodexo had developed a range of policies and procedures including those governing access to computers. However, once the contract commenced, it was apparent many of these policies were not appropriate for the operating environment and are therefore being reviewed. The policy governing access to computers was to be reviewed along with the others.

3 Access to digital technology for legal purposes is inadequate

People in custody often face outstanding criminal law matters or legal issues associated with being in custody. These include defending charges, questions of sentencing, accessing bail, victim compensation, sentence calculations, parole, and the threat of deportation. They may well also have other civil and family law issues, including housing, tax or business-related matters, access to children, restraining orders, and compensation for any injuries or abuse they suffered before incarceration.

People in custody must access electronic legal information and prepare for court appearances using computers in libraries or common areas, or the very limited number of in-cell laptops. Unlike education computers, there is no centralised person or role who is responsible for the maintaining, upgrading, and supporting library computers.

Recommendation

Identify a centralised person/role with responsibility for maintaining, upgrading, and supporting library computers.

Section 5 of Policy Directive 21 about library services states that:

- at least one computer is available in each prison library for the purpose of legal preparation and that these computers should provide access to current Australian legislation (via TimeBase) and appropriate word processing software
- TimeBase is to be updated quarterly
- up-to-date information is to be provided to prisoners from the Legal Aid Website (this is not intended to be direct access as the policy also stipulates there is to be no internet access from these computers) (DCS, 2014).

Access to electronic legal material is via library computers. At best it is restricted to library opening hours. Further restrictions occur when, due to overcrowding, different cohorts have access at restricted, rostered times, or when parts of the prison are locked down as a result of incidents or short-staffing.

Each facility is responsible for providing the resources for access. There are substantial differences between facilities in terms of numbers of computers, operating systems, and types and age of hardware and software.

With the exception of Acacia Prison (16 computers) all other facilities have six or fewer working library computers which can be accessed for legal purposes.

The low number of computers, the growing prison population, and restrictions on accessing prison libraries means that accessing computers for legal purposes can be difficult for people in custody. Supply has not kept up with demand.

3.1 Legal professionals face restrictions in providing services to clients

Understandably legal practitioners are restricted from taking laptops, external media devices, and electronic legal material into facilities without prior approval. However, there are inconsistencies in obtaining approval, or using facility supplied devices. This leaves lawyers and paralegals unable to show accused people electronic legal material in a number of facilities.

People facing criminal charges need to view evidence and other materials if they are to be able to enter an informed plea or participate in their own defence. Disclosure in major crime cases is now served in electronic formats, usually by USB or CD-ROMs. Some of this can only be viewed in electronic form, such as video recordings of incidents and interviews.

The small number of computers available in legal libraries, and limited in-cell access to computers, makes it difficult for people in custody to access electronic materials in preparation for their defence. Legal practitioners must therefore show accused persons evidence against them in the official visits areas of prisons.

Policy Directive 26 deals with search procedures for facility visitors, including legal professionals visiting their clients. It outlines what visitors can take into custodial settings. Legal visitors are permitted to take laptop computers into prisons providing all external peripheral devices and removable media are removed (DCS, 2015).

However, the policy also states that laptops brought into a prison may not be used to display video or other photographic media, except with the approval of the prison superintendent. In turn the superintendent must get advice from the Director Security and Response Services of the Department.

Legal professionals told us that the process to gain this approval was inconsistent, both between facilities, and between staff at the same facility. They said that if they were stopped from bringing in a laptop or digital media, the officers at the gate were often unable to provide any further information about how to seek approval.

The two main privately operated prisons, Acacia Prison, and Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility, had local forms regarding authorisation to allow restricted items such as laptops into the prison. However, there was no standard form or process available to legal practitioners to gain approval in other facilities.

An alternative is for facilities to provide devices which can be used to display material for clients. However, some facilities do not provide working devices, or the devices do not have the capacity to accept external material.

The result is that lawyers may be unable to show their clients electronic material. Clients are therefore unable to view the evidence against them until they have been taken to court, just before their court appearance. They may not have enough time to make a sound decision about what plea to enter. This can cause delays to court proceedings and unnecessarily extend time in custody.

The Department has been made well aware of the concerns of legal practitioners in correspondence. Amendments were made to the policy in January 2016 but we were informed that lawyers continue to experience issues in taking laptops and electronic legal material into some facilities.

Despite the matters being raised in further correspondence by the legal profession, the Department has not satisfactorily resolved the issues.

Recommendation

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with key legal bodies to ensure electronic legal material can be viewed by people in custody.

4 The Department is missing opportunities

The Department has embraced the use of digital technology in some areas with great success. However, it has missed opportunities to use this technology in other areas.

One reason for this is that there is no central approach to identify the digital technology needs of people in custody across the entire estate, or how these needs could be met. Individual prison facilities are left to set their own priorities and determine how to achieve them.

This results in a disjointed approach across the prison estate. There have been some trials to gain an understanding of how the technology can be used and what will be required for a more thorough roll out. However, they stalled before statewide improvements could be realised.

4.1 Video communication is widely used for court appearances but not enough for visits

Video communication technology allows people to see and hear each other in real time from different locations, and reduces the need for travel. The Department uses a variety of video communication technologies, including dedicated land lines for video links and internet-based technologies, like Skype.

The Department uses this technology for:

- court appearances
- official visits, including appointed prison visitors and visiting justices, lawyers, police officers and representatives of government agencies (e.g. social services, immigration, and child protection)
- social visits particularly in situations where the person in custody is a long way from their family and social network
- inter-prison visits between family members who are incarcerated in different facilities
- specialist health consultations.

Court appearances

Court appearances via video links is well established and extensively used. It results in significant financial savings in terms of court custody and transport costs (OICS, 2012). Most video communication from custody is for this purpose.

Official visits

Video communication is also sometimes used by lawyers to consult with their clients. This saves travel time for the legal professionals. In some cases it provides additional privacy where the alternative is holding a consultation in a communal visits area.

However, the use of this technology is limited. Legal professionals identified several reasons for this:

- incompatible video communication systems (e.g. video link equipment at Wooroloo and Acacia is not compatible with the video link system used by Legal Aid)
- poor quality connections when using internet-based technology such as Skype
- competing priorities (court proceedings take precedence over legal visits via Video link).

There is also some use of video communication for other official visits, such as linking in with government agencies. However, the Department does not have reliable information as to how often the technology is used for this purpose.

Social visits

Social visits using video communication would offer an important opportunity for people in custody to contact families and other social supports, particularly where people are held a long way from their support. Such situations occur when people have family in remote locations, interstate, or overseas.

Video communication would also be a valuable tool where family and friends are unable to attend a prison due to injury, illness or age.

Unlike the use of video communication for courts, there is no system wide coordination of the use of this technology for social visits. Each facility operates independently, sets their own priority for its use, and determines its own method for providing the technology to their facility.

Hakea has dedicated cabling to enable Skype which has been successful. Other facilities have attempted to obtain internet-based video communication through wireless technology but the results have been mixed. Pardelup uses this approach and is currently running an average of 55 social visits via a wireless network each week, but it does experience intermittent connection difficulties.

Other facilities have found the service to be very unreliable, particularly in areas where the 3G and 4G mobile broadband internet has poor coverage.

The Department has attempted to provide a centralised approach to providing this technology to all prisons. The Knowledge and Information Technology Directorate completed a pilot project at Bunbury Regional Prison in 2016. It ran Skype by using existing network cables to support an independent internet connection. The pilot resulted in substantial costs, but inconsistent results and an unstable service.

The poor results, as well as issues created through the merge with the former Department of the Attorney General, mean that the pilot will not be rolled out further in its current form.

Our reports over the last 15 years have made repeated recommendations to increase the use of video communication for social purposes. Each time the recommendation has been supported at least in principal, but progress has been slow and inconsistent (see Appendix C).

Inter-prison visits

The Department uses video communication technology for inter-prison visits. This allows a person in custody to receive video visits from someone who is confined in another prison. This is particularly important for the young people at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

Data on the use of video communication for inter-prison visits was not recorded accurately or consistently. However, the data that was available indicated there were 88 successful inter-prison video visits in the 2016-17 financial year. Twenty of these were from Banksia Hill.

While face-to-face contact between family members is preferable, video communication technology offers significant cost savings and security benefits. Increased use of this technology could allow for more frequent inter-prison contact.

Recommendation

Implement a whole of department solution to increase video communication for official, social, and inter-prison visits.

4.2 Privately operated facilities make good use of self-service kiosks

Self-service kiosks have been implemented in the privately-run prisons of Acacia, Wandoo, and Melaleuca. The kiosks are placed in communal locations. The kiosks enable people to:

- access their accounts
- make menu selections
- view visit bookings
- order canteen items
- make inquiries
- book appointments.

The use of these kiosks improves digital literacy for people in custody as they mimic community facilities such as ATMs, and self-service devices in government departments such as the Department of Human Services or the Department of Transport. They also enable people in custody to take personal responsibility for their day-to-day activities, particularly important for those returning to the community after a period of prolonged imprisonment.

Kiosks also create efficiencies for prisons by streamlining the management of people in custody through electronic appointments, canteen ordering, and inquiries. This can free up time presently spent by officers processing requests and dealing with paper-based forms.

The Department has recently introduced Information Kiosks to assist with transitional services in the public prisons. These kiosks provide preloaded offline content designed to assist people with planning for release. Topics included:

- obtaining accommodation
- obtaining documentation, such as birth certificates and drivers licences
- addressing fines
- accessing community drug and alcohol services.

While these kiosks provide additional access to information, they are not as sophisticated as the kiosks in the private facilities. They do not allow two-way interactions such as bookings, inquiries or electronic messaging.

Technology in practice

Correctional agencies within the United States use touch screen kiosk technology to provide extensive offline legal databases and resources. This allowed users to navigate comprehensive legal content which was updated regularly (LexisNexis). Correctional authorities in the United States claim legal content provided through these kiosks is cheaper than purchasing law books and other legal materials. The kiosks were paid for by money spent by people in custody through their canteens (Hannah, 2004).

4.3 WA has not attempted secure internet and intranet access for people in custody

People in custody in Western Australia have no direct internet access. In some cases, education or library staff will access the internet on behalf of a prisoner to assist with educational or legal requirements.

Offline educational content is often loaded onto computers for people in custody to access. However, access is on an individual basis and the process is inefficient.

A single upload point would ensure legal, educational, and transitional materials are uploaded frequently and efficiently. People in custody would benefit from having more timely, up-to-date and consistent information. This would also improve departmental efficiency by only having to upload information once.

There would also be security benefits for the Department. Information use could be monitored electronically, and staff members downloading information would no longer have to make an assessment about its appropriateness.

The recently-opened Eastern Regional Goldfields Prison (EGRP) was designed and built for the 21st Century, allowing for in-cell technology and a secure cellular network. High-speed data cables were installed within each cell, future proofing the prison for the provision of in-cell technology.

The Department has not proceeded with the installation of in-cell terminals or devices at EGRP, despite the infrastructure already being in place. It has therefore missed the opportunity to test in-cell technology and to make an informed cost/benefit assessment.

Internet and intranet access can improve communication for people in custody by providing email, secure messaging, or video communication internal or external to the prison. This can improve the ability to communicate with prison staff, legal professionals, service providers, external agencies, and approved social contacts.

The use of secure email to communicate with people in custody may also offer an efficient alternative to traditional mail, particularly for urgent legal matters. The potential risks of providing this type of access can be mitigated through auditing capabilities, remote monitoring, secure data storage, and key word and key phrase filtering.

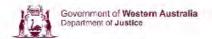
Technology in practice

The Australian Capital Territory permits direct internet access for people in custody. Access is restricted to specific whitelisted websites, including education sites, to enable detainees to complete tertiary studies via correspondence (ACT Government, 2017).

Corrective Services New South Wales has a secure offender computer network connecting correctional centres across the state to a central server. The Offender Access Computer Network has up to 2,000 recycled computers available for people in custody to use (CS NSW, 2017). This network provides access to education programs, online assessments, and a range of software packages and programs to support participation in education and distance learning, as well as other departmental resources. A Legal Information Portal is also available on the Network. This provides plain English legal resources, a number of chapters from the Law Handbook, fact sheets, and a standalone version of the Legal Aid New South Wales website (Becker, 2011).

Several prisons in Victoria provide prisoner intranet portals available through a specially designed server and desktop system known as 'PrisonPC'. These systems have been delivered through Public Private Partnerships to facilities including Marngoneet Correctional Centre, Hopkins Correctional Centre, and the Metropolitan Remand Centre in Victoria. They provide direct access to library, educational, and legal services, as well as recreational content. (Cyber IT Solutions PrisonPC)

Appendix A: Department of Justice response to recommendations



Response to the review:

The Digital Divide: access to digital technology for people in custody

The Department of Justice welcomes the findings of the review titled 'The Digital Divide: Access to digital technology for people in custody', conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS).

The Department has considered the report and noted a level of acceptance against the six recommendations. The findings of your review have coincided with the Department's strategic project to transform information and communication technology (ICT).

Through this project the Department is developing an ICT Transformation Roadmap (the Roadmap) that will outline ICT transformation activities to support a digital justice environment that is integrated and delivers improved services to clients. The cornerstone of the Roadmap is the Digital WA Strategy and adoption of GovNext ICT services.

The transformation of the Department from an Owner Operator of ICT Services to a Consumer will enable the Department to access the benefits of scale that can be delivered by GovNext and cloud service providers. This will transform the total cost of ownership for ICT and the delivery of ICT services. It represents an opportunity to transform the Department's business, improve ICT reliability and reduce the risk profile of ICT across the Department.

Appendix A contains a number of comments for your attention and consideration.

Page 2 of 6

Response to Recommendations

1 Identify and manage the risks associated with in-cell technology, with the intent to expand the availability of in-cell computer access.

Response:

The Department is investigating expanding the availability of computer access to prisoners. This includes identification of risks and opportunities with both in-cell technologies and unit level computer clusters. The Department's ICT Transformation Program will introduce operational efficiencies, scalability, reliability and availability; addressing prisoner technology needs.

Responsible Person: Chief Information Officer
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2018
Level of Acceptance; Supported in Principle

2 Establish a model to determine the appropriate ratio of computers to prison population, which accounts for the needs of the prison cohort, and increase the number of computers where needed.

Response:

The number of computers and related technologies should be based on business need rather than a fixed ratio. The Department's ICT Transformation Program is aligned with the Digital WA Strategy and aims to continuously innovate using different technologies as they become available.

Responsible Person: N/A
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported

3 Implement the plan to update digital technology at Banksia Hill.

Response:

The plan to update digital technology for education purposes has been implemented.

Responsible Person: Assistant Director Technology Systems

Proposed Completion Date: Completed Level of Acceptance: Supported

Page 3 of 6

Recommendation 3: During our inspection of Banksia Hill in 19-26 July we found new computers had been purchased but were not set up. A visit to the facility in December showed that these computers were now operational.

4 Identify a centralised person/role with responsibility for maintaining, upgrading, and supporting library computers.

Response:

Centralised IT support for the Legal Libraries is already provided by the Knowledge Information and Technology directorate. This centralised support is provided over the phone or via email. Additionally, upgrades to the legal library software occur on a monthly basis.

Responsible Person: Assistant Director Technology Systems

Proposed Completion Date: Completed Level of Acceptance: Supported

5 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with key legal bodies to ensure electronic legal material can be viewed by people in custody.

Response:

The Department does not consider that a Memorandum of Understanding is the appropriate mechanism. However, we will assess the current policy (Policy Directive 26) and ensure it is consistently applied across the estate. Senior management compliance checks will be put in place, including random checks by the Monitoring and Compliance branch. We will also engage further with the legal profession to discuss opportunities for improvement.

Responsible Person: N/A
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported

6 Implement a whole of department solution to increase video communication for official, social, and inter-prison visits.

Response:

The Department is introducing an ICT Transformation Program which articulates the roadmap for transition to GovNext and other consumption based technology solutions. The ICT Transformation Program will enable business transformation by leveraging new functionality, including implementation of increased bandwidth. Increased use of video conferencing for multiple purposes is included on the roadmap. The timing for implementation for each facility is dependent on infrastructure, operating models and availability of bandwidth.

Responsible Person: Chief Information Officer Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2019

Level of Acceptance: Supported

Appendix B: Access to digital technology for people in custody by facility (information provided by the facilities)

Facility Summary of Access

Acacia Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 1462

Communal computers

Library: 16

Education: 37

Video communication

Legal: 30 per week

Social: 70 per week

Other: 7

Approximately 30 self-service Kiosks are available across the facility. These allow people in custody to access their accounts, order canteen items, book appointments, and make inquiries.

Albany Regional

Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 443

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 1 Legal: 5 per week
Education: 20 Social: 8 per week

Other: 1

Education centre had 22 e-readers, a tablet for graphic design and an interactive whiteboard. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Bandyup Women's Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 319

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 3 Legal: 35 per week
Education: 18 Social: 10 per week

Other: 1

Ten university supplied laptops available for students participating in the University of Southern Queensland *Making the Connection* project. Education centre had 13 e-readers, an interactive whiteboard, a CD burner, and a camera. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Banksia Hill Detention Centre

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 142

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 1 Legal: 35 per week
Education: 56 Social: 10 per week

Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 90

Communal computers Video communication

Library: 6 Legal: approximately 2 per month

Education: 5 Social: minimal

Other: 5

Education centre had five e-readers, an interactive whiteboard, and one laptop available for students. As part of the Prisoner Employment Program, some residents had supervised access to computers, the internet, and mobile phones for job search and work preparation purposes. Boronia also had limited use of the 'email-a-prisoner' service.

Broome Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 58

Communal computers Video communication Library: 0 Legal: 10-15 per week

Education: 0 Social: minimal (as requested)

Bunbury Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 334

Communal computers

Library: 5

Education: 23

Video communication

Legal: 20-25 per week

Social: 7 per week

Other: 1

Education centre had two digital cameras, an interactive whiteboard, and one laptop available. Participants seeking employment through the Prisoner Employment Program had supervised and limited access to internet and email to assist with seeking jobs. Education participants had supervised access to university campus computers for their studies. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Casuarina Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 947

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 3 Legal: 10 per week
Education: 27 Social: 1 per week

Other: 6

Ten university supplied laptops available for students participating in the *Making the Connection* project. Education centre had 10 e-readers, an interactive whiteboard, a CD burner, and the audiovisual platform iTalk which enables students to produce animated films in English or indigenous languages. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 165

Communal computers Video communication

Library: 2 Legal: Nil

Education: 15 Social: 1 per month

Other: 2

Education centre had five laptops, six interactive whiteboards, CD burner, digital camera, and iTalk audiovisual platform. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Greenough Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 321

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 0 Legal: 33 per week
Education: 18 Social: 2 per week

Other: 2 (legal)

Education centre had one university supplied laptop, an interactive whiteboard, and a CD burner. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Hakea Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 1012

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 5 Legal: 45 per week
Education: 30 Social: 9 per week

Education centre had four e-readers, a laptop, an interactive whiteboard, a CD burner, two sound recorders, four microphones, and three projectors. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Karnet Prison Farm

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 347

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 5 Legal: 0 visits per week
Education: 24 Social: 2-3 per month

Other: 9

Education centre had eight e-readers, an interactive whiteboard, recording devices, and one laptop available. Prisoner Employment Program participants were able to use computers and access the internet and email for job-seeking activities. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 162

Communal computers Video communication Library: 0 Legal 12 per week:

Education: 5 Social: 0

Five self-service kiosks were available across the facility. These allow people in custody to access their accounts, order canteen items, book appointments, and make inquiries.

Pardelup Prison Farm

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 81

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 2 Legal: 2 per month
Education: 7 Social: 55 per week

Other: 7

Education centre had a laptop, an interactive whiteboard, and a CD burner. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Roebourne Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 174

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 1 Legal: 35-40 per week

Education: 24 Social: 0

Other: 1

Education centre had three interactive whiteboards, a laptop, a CD burner, and the audiovisual platform iTalk which enables students to produce animated films in English or indigenous languages. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Wandoo Reintegration Facility

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 75

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 2 Legal: 1 per week
Education: 10 Social: 4 per week

Self-service kiosks are available across the facility. These allow people in custody to access their accounts, order canteen items, book appointments, and make inquiries. Email-a-prisoner service was also available for residents with approximately eight emails received per week.

West Kimberley Regional Prison

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 208

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 2 Legal: 30 per week
Education: 17 Social: 2 per week

Other: 1

Education centre had two laptops, an interactive whiteboard, three CD burners, and the audiovisual platform iTalk which enables students to produce animated films in English or indigenous languages. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Wooroloo Prison Farm

2016-2017 Daily Average Population: 380

Communal computers Video communication
Library: 2 Legal: 12per week
Education: 24 Social: 3 per week

Other: 3

Education centre had five e-readers, two laptops, two cameras, two CD burners, and two electronic projectors. An Information Kiosk for prisoner employment and transitional services was also available.

Appendix C: Previous inspection recommendations about video communication

Report title	Report Date	Reference
Report of an Announced Inspection of Bandyup Women's Prison, Report 13	June 2002	Recommendation 19 (p.113)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Acacia Prison, Report 19	March 2003	Recommendation 21 (p.97)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Broome Regional Prison, Report 27	March 2005	Recommendation 12 (p.109)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Bandyup Women's Prison, Report 36	June 2006	Recommendations 8 & 9 (pp.90 & 94)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm, Report 47	October 2007	Recommendation 14 (p.45)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Acacia Prison, Report 53	June 2008	Recommendation 12 (p.75)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Wooroloo Prison Farm, Report 61	September 2009	Recommendation 6 (p.42)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Hakea Prison, Report 63	April 2010	Recommendation 10 (p.79)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Greenough Regional Prison, Report 66	June 2010	Recommendation 8 (p.47)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Rangeview Remand Centre, Report 69	October 2010	Recommendation 16 (p.67)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Broome Regional Prison, Report 77	March 2012	Recommendation 15 (p.68)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women, Report 79	July 2012	Recommendation 13 (p.53)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Wooroloo Prison Farm, Report 80	August 2012	Recommendation 11 (p.46)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Hakea Prison, Report 81	November 2012	Recommendation 20 (p.107)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Acacia Prison, Report 90	June 2014	Recommendation 19 (p.85)
Female Prisons in Western Australia and the Greenough Women's Precinct, Report 91	July 2014	Recommendation 13 (p. 62)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison, Report 92	August 2014	Recommendation 11 (p.63)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Wooroloo Prison Farm, Report 101	October 2015	Recommendation 5 (p.45)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Hakea Prison, Report 102	April 2016	Recommendation 7 (p. 89)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Acacia Prison, Report 104	June 2016	Recommendation 11 (p.89)
Report of an Announced Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm, Report 105	August 2016	Recommendation 3 (p.59)

Appendix D: Methodology

Self-completion questionnaires were sent to each facility requesting details of the digital technology available for people in custody. This included the number of computers available within libraries and education centres, in-cell access, and use of video conferencing.

We examined various departmental policy documents, as well as complaints data and prisoner applications for departmental computers. Incident and security reports concerning misuse of computers by people in custody were examined to identify risks associated with access to computers.

We engaged with various external stakeholders including the University of Southern Queensland and legal practitioners from Legal Aid Western Australia and The Law Society of Western Australia. We also liaised with correctional agencies in other jurisdictions, including Corrective Services New South Wales, Corrections Victoria, and Queensland Corrective Services to conduct a crossjurisdictional analysis of digital technology access for people in custody.

We conducted site visits to a number of facilities between February and July 2017. During these visits we observed the types of technology available for people in custody and spoke to people about their experiences in accessing digital technology while in custody. Discussions were held with local staff working in prison libraries and education centres.

Finally, meetings were held with staff from the Department, including the Director of the Education and Vocational Training Unit, the Director Operating Standards and Procedures, and the Assistant Director Technology Systems.

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