

Recommendations

Rec. No.	Topic	Section	Page	Recommendation	Basis of Recommendation	Serco Response	Proposed Completion Date
1	Governance	2.5: Human Resources	5 / 67	Review staffing levels and implement recommended changes to ensure there are adequate staff numbers for the safe operation of the prison.	Throughout the inspection we heard concerns from most staff groups about low staffing levels. The frequency and consistency of these was enough to indicate that a problem existed. Cross deployment of staff from their rostered areas was a frequent complaint from custodial staff. We were told that this was the policy at Acacia to make sure the prison remained open with as much routine activity going ahead as possible. We support this position, providing that the safety of staff and prisoners is not compromised. We were also given examples of when the daily roster for custodial staff fell well short of the allocated numbers despite staff being called in on overtime. With around 105 staff required for the day shift, there were two examples given to us where there were only 68 staff at work on one day and 89 staff on the other. On both occasions staff on overtime had been called in but not all the vacancies could be filled. We were also told of significant shortages on night shifts. In one example given, with staff booking off sick or undertaking required hospital sits, the number of staff in the prison had been as low as four officers. This presents an unacceptable risk should there be a need to unlock a prisoner or conduct an emergency hospital escort. Again, we were told that there was overtime available for staff to cover such shortfalls, but often there were not enough staff willing to do overtime to cover absences.	Disagree. Acacia Prison staffing levels are maintained in accordance with the requirements set out in the 2020 Acacia Prison Services Agreement. Acacia management's aim is to fill all posts as per roster. We note at time of writing that an ITC was in training and a further ITC in recruitment. Since this report these two courses have graduated and Serco is recruiting a further course to commence in September 2022.	31-Jan-23
2	Early Days in Custody	3.3: Property	8 / 67	Review physical storage capacity and practice and implement recommended changes to safely and securely store prisoner property while eliminating work health and safety risks for staff.	Acacia's property store was part of the prison's original build, which became operational in 2001. It was originally designed to accommodate property for 750 prisoners (OICS, 2003). However, successive expansions have increased the prison's population to around 1,500, double what the property store was designed for. The Acacia property store is located within the reception building and there are administration buildings and the medical centre on either side. Therefore, its footprint is restricted, allowing little to no room for expansion. Extra shelving and a mezzanine level have been added over the years, along with a hydraulic WAV-lift to ensure safe access to the higher-level storage racks. However, the store is so full of property that the WAV-lift could no longer safely manoeuvre among the racks. Property boxes and other containers on the floor made for cramped conditions, providing significant trip and fall hazards. We have raised concerns as far back as 2011 about the health and safety risks to those staff working in Acacia's property store (OICS, 2011). Like many prisons in the state, Acacia's population growth has not been met by a corresponding increase in support infrastructure. Sea containers offer a short-term solution, but the storage of such significant amounts of prisoner property requires a long-term, multi-faceted approach. Consideration needs to be given to both physical storage methods and a review of property practices.	Partially Agree. It is requested that the State addresses this matter with its other facilities. Acacia Prison complies with the COPP; however, despite requests to other facilities to assist with this matter the site continues to receive prisoners with excess property from transferring facilities. Further, Lifer prisoners are allowed additional property which further exacerbates the matter. Acacia Prison will seek to work with the State toward developing a solution to this ongoing issue.	TBC
3	Duty of Care	4.2: Protection Prisoners	15 / 67	The Department should exempt Serco from their contractual requirement to complete fortnightly reviews of protection alerts.	The Department's contract with Serco still requires them to complete fortnightly reviews of protection alerts. Under COPP 4.10 more detailed risk-based reviews of protection alerts are required to be completed on a six-monthly basis (DOJ, 2021). The switch to six monthly reviews reflects the Department's understanding that fortnightly reviews are difficult to achieve with the current protection population and often lack the detail required for them to have any effective meaning. However, to comply with their contractual requirements, Serco intends on completing both fortnightly and six-monthly reviews. The latter will comprise of more detailed risk-based assessments using the MDC, and less detailed reviews will occur fortnightly by custodial officers. This contractual requirement defeats the intent of the COPP and is an ineffective use of staff time. Furthermore, this is inconsistent with the Departments expectations in protection units in Hakea and Casuarina.	Response required from the State. Item added to Contract Management Meeting Agenda for meeting of 4 August 2022	TBC
4	Duty of Care	4.2: Protection Prisoners	16 / 67	Acacia should ensure that there are Peer Support Workers in every block throughout the prison.	A lack of resident peer support workers in India Block may also affect the ARMS process. At Acacia, the peer support prisoners are responsible for interviewing prisoners currently under ARMS monitoring. If an India Block resident feels uncomfortable opening up to a Juliet Block peer support worker, this may negatively impact the quality of information used to assess that prisoner's emotional state. Pre-existing relationships may make such conversations easier. Just prior to our inspection, interviews were conducted with several India Block prisoners as potential candidates to become peer support workers. However, a review into the peer support program had recommended that Juliet and India Blocks should only have four peer support workers in total. As they were already at that quota, they were unable to employ any of the interviewed candidates. Irrespective of the process, Peer Support workers in both protection blocks should be maintained. Peer Support practices and numbers should be reviewed to allow for Peer Support workers in not just India block but all blocks throughout the prison.	Disagree. Acacia Prison Peer Support Workers have access to all residential areas and it is not a requirement for Peer Support Workers to only provide assistance in the residential area within which they reside. The focus should be, and is, on identifying prisoners with the correct aptitude, rather than appointing prisoners to this role for the sake of meeting quotas. Essentially, the most appropriate and effective PSW's are the prisoners who make their way into self-care etc.	Completed
5	Duty of Care	4.5: Bullying and Violence Reduction	21 / 67	Acacia should: • Review the existing policy to manage perpetrators and victims of bullying and standover to ensure that it meets the requirements contained in COPP 10.6 Anti Bullying • Implement the revised policy and regularly review its effectiveness to ensure the policy requirements are being met.	On paper, Acacia had a policy to manage perpetrators and victims of bullying and standover. But we could not find evidence that items such as the offender or victim registers were being used. Therefore, prisoners engaged in bullying and standover may not be monitored or aided to alter their behaviours. As mentioned above [see 4.2], the violence reduction and anti-bullying programs were not currently operating at Acacia.	Partially Agree. Acacia Prison agrees it was not fully compliant with the requirements as set out in COPP 10.6. However, it suggested that the TOMS alert function very effectively operates as a register of offenders and victims. Acacia Prison has commenced a review into the organisational structure for specialist accommodation and functions. The structure includes a strategy which will be allocated to the Safer Custody portfolio. It is expected that the outcome from this will improve Acacia Prison's alignment to COPP 10.6.	30-Sep-22

6	Daily Life	6.3: Family and Community Contact	28 / 67	Recommend the internal visits creche service for visiting children.	Acacia has two creches, one external to the prison in the Visits Support Centre, and another within the internal visits centre. However, to the displeasure of prisoners and staff alike, the internal creche was no longer operating. Two childcare workers from Moorditch Gurloonga Association supervise the external creche which, following COVID-19 closures, had reopened a few months prior to our visit. But only seven children had accessed the service in that time. Staff advised they had little to do. We were told the external creche was only used in exceptional circumstances, such as a child's name being left off the visits list, or an order being in place restricting the child from seeing a prisoner. We were informed most people wanted their children to attend the visit, not sit outside the prison in child care.	Disagree. This service was discontinued in line with instructions received from the State's COVID Taskforce and will be reinstated now that restrictions have eased.	30 Sep 2022 (subject to covid restrictions)
7	Daily Life	6.8: Clothing and Bedding	33 / 67	Staff should conduct regular health and hygiene inspections of cells and record and action any health and hygiene issues including replacement, repair or cleaning of mattresses and pillows.	We found that prisoners were receiving the bedding items they were entitled to. However, the inspection of mattresses was not happening. We observed prisoners in some units taking their mattresses out of cells and applying talcum powder. We were told this was to cover the smell caused by age, over-use and lack of regular cleaning.	Agree. Acacia Prison acknowledges that regular health and hygiene checks did not receive as much attention as expected. This is primarily attributable to COVID-19 and the impact on the daily regime brought about by isolation requirements applicable to both prisoners and staff. Toward addressing this issue, a Back-to-Basics program has been developed and launched. The focus of this program is on maintaining fundamental health and hygiene practices.	Completed
8	Health and Support	7.4: Peer Support Workers and PRAG	46 / 67	The prison should review the appropriateness of the role of the PSW's within the PRAG process and implement recommended changes.	We were concerned to hear of a practice involving PSWs being asked to see prisoners on ARMS or SAMS and then write up notes for PRAG. These notes were recorded in books which were then passed on to administrative PSWs for unsupervised entry on a computer. These notes are then read out during PRAG. We also heard notebooks from protection PSWs are handed to staff to be given to the administrative PSWs, and on occasion these had been misplaced. We were told that the rationale for this was that at-risk prisoners may be more open to a friendly face. As noted above most PSWs reside in two units, so that argument has an obvious flaw. In most state-run prisons this type of task rests with the PSO or perhaps the AVS officer, certainly not prisoners. It may be the case that this type of information is fed to the PSO who may use that to support their own observations.	Disagree. The primary objective of the Peer Support Strategy is to allow for peer-to-peer support. It is well known that prisoners are more likely to communicate with fellow prisoners who provide greater understanding due to shared, lived experience. This provides for improved information gathering, compared to expecting prisoners to share information with a staff member wearing a uniform, thereby representing an authoritative figure. Further, multiple inputs allow Acacia Prison to better manage prisoners considered at risk. Acacia Prison does not directly utilize reports made by Peer Support Workers; however, the information provided by Peer Support Workers is captured and communicated by the Peer Support Officers during Multi-Disciplinary Team PRAG meetings. Peer Support Workers are provided training and instruction on how to control their messaging to prisoners. With respect to Gatekeeper Suicide Awareness training, the State is currently unable to provide this training to neither staff nor prisoners, despite the need to do so being included in the ARMS Manual.	Completed less Gatekeeper training
9	Health and Support	7.4: Peer Support Workers and PRAG	46 / 67	Acacia should ensure there are sufficient PSOs to adequately supervise PSWs and there is equitable representation of PSWs in each block and unit.	The PSO was responsible for ensuring that PSW's received adequate and appropriate training to fulfil their role. Yet only one team member had undertaken Gatekeeper Suicide Awareness training. PSW's informed us they used to meet regularly with PSO's to discuss caseloads, clients and other issues. Further to this, they had previously received supervision from PSW in relation to their role, and to assist with any vicarious trauma or compassion burden they might be holding. But this had ceased.	Agree. At the time of the inspection, Acacia Prison employed one Peer Support Officer who was on leave at that time. Subsequently, Acacia Prison has employed a second Peer Support Officer. With respect to equitable representation of Peer Support Workers in residential areas, please refer Acacia Prison's response to Recommendation Number 4.	Completed
10	Security	8.1: Procedural Security	48 / 67	Ensure there is consistency in the management of prisoners and in operational practices of both shifts	Custodial staff rosters at Acacia operate on a two-shift basis; A Shift and B Shift. Contrasting management styles between the two shifts has been an issue at Acacia for many years. This inspection was no different with prisoners again complaining of differences in management styles between the two shifts. Prisoners also said that one shift was more engaging with prisoners than the other. Prisoners told us they just wanted consistency in staff responses and actions, so they know where they stand and how they are expected to behave.	Partially Agree. Both custodial shifts operate to the same processes and procedures, overseen by a consistent operational management team. Notwithstanding this, different staff can apply rules in different ways. The Back-to-Basics program (refer Recommendation Number 7) will assist toward addressing this perception, as will cross-pollination between the two shifts. Acacia Prison will continue its ongoing efforts in this space.	Completed
11	Rehabilitation and Reparation	9.1: Release Preparation	52 / 67	Implement an effective screening process that leads to a proactive offer of assistance to all eligible prisoners.	The system relies on prisoners to initiate a request for help in preparing their parole or release plan, to attend a program, or to seek assistance or referral to a service provider. Many prisoners are motivated to do so, but others are less so. We encountered one Aboriginal man who told us he had done his own parole plan without talking to anyone and had not participated in any of these programs or services. He could not remember being approached by anyone offering him help. He anticipated he would get a positive parole decision, but this has since been denied. Parole denials are complex decisions, but this prisoner may have benefited from a coordinated approach by staff earlier in the process, even if it was to manage his expectations around the likelihood of parole success.	Partially Agree. All prisoners are involved in their case planning through the MAP or IMP and are pointed towards programs and education. Notwithstanding the significant RSN and Serco reintegration support available at Acacia, there is opportunity to clarify prompting prisoners for such support	30-Sep-22

12	Rehabilitation and Reparation	9.2: Education	53 / 67	Serco actively seek and employ an Aboriginal education worker.	Our 2018 inspection recommended appointment of an Aboriginal education worker (OICS, 2019) which was supported in principle by Serco. A positive development has been that Acacia now has an Education Facilitator, who happens to be an Aboriginal person. There are two separate things that the Aboriginal Education Facilitator does, she attends Education unit planning meetings where she has input in to strategy (delivery methodology, culturally responsive content, etc). She is also on the Aboriginal Services Committee.	Agree. Acacia Prison employs and Educator who is Aboriginal, but not an Aboriginal Educator. The latter requires specific qualifications and there is a desperate shortage of appropriately qualified people. Acacia Prison is continuing its efforts to recruit and appoint an Aboriginal Educator and is pursuing numerous avenues toward doing so.	31-Dec-22
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