

Inspector of
Custodial Services

Inspector of Custodial Services

Inspection of South Coast
Correctional Centre 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The Inspector of Custodial Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this report.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Inspector of Custodial Services

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Inspector's overview

In June 2022, we announced the inspection of three regional correctional centres: Wellington Correctional Centre (CC), South Coast CC, and Mid North Coast CC. We inspected these large regional centres as part of one series of inspections as they are a similar age and original build. They all perform a similar function as the remand and reception centres for their local region and all hold a high percentage and number of Aboriginal people.

This series of inspections commenced in November 2022 with the inspection of Wellington CC and ended seven months later, in May 2023, with the inspection of Mid North Coast CC. South Coast CC was inspected in February 2023.

I made the decision to publish the reports on the inspections of Wellington CC and Mid North Coast CC ahead of the publication of the South Coast CC inspection report. The report on the inspection of Wellington CC was tabled in June 2024 and the report on the inspection of Mid North Coast CC was tabled in December 2024. These two correctional centres both have a small women's unit attached to the main centre, hold a higher percentage and number of Aboriginal people, are further away from the greater Sydney area, and until early 2023, operated under an industrial arrangement that was different to other correctional centres and created different employment conditions for staff.

After the completion of the on-site component of an inspection, we discuss the issues identified during the inspection with the centre management. These discussions are particularly important as they allow local management to address any immediate concerns, especially given that the report writing phase of the inspection can take some time due to the need to source various data and documents to comprehensively examine issues and to ensure due process. This was the case following the inspection of South Coast CC.

We returned to South Coast CC in June 2024 to examine the progress of the issues identified and discussed at the end of the 2023 inspection. Where relevant, updates on the progress (or lack thereof) of those issues have been provided in this report.

Throughout this series of inspections, we identified several recurring issues and themes. Some have been observed in all of the recent inspections our office has undertaken and, therefore, are not exclusive to these three centres. As highlighted in the recommendations in all three reports, Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) needs to make systemic changes to address these issues.

They include:

- inmate disciplinary processes and the way correctional centre offences are adjudicated and penalised
- the high cost of phone calls
- short time out of cells as a result of frequent lockdowns, primarily caused by staff shortages
- difficulties in retaining psychologists
- issues relating to inmate clothing and bedding
- handling of inmate mail
- limited access to libraries.

We acknowledge that work has been started to address some of these issues and continue to monitor the progress as we undertake future inspections.

Other issues, while not solely limited to these three centres, were particularly of concern due to the population these centres hold, their functions, and their geographical locations. They are highlighted below.

Conditions and treatment of Aboriginal inmates

It is well established that Aboriginal people are overrepresented within the correctional environment. In December 2024, 32.3% of the prison population in NSW was Aboriginal.¹ This percentage has increased from 30.4% in December 2023² and 29.1% in December 2022.³

All three correctional centres that were part of this series of inspections accommodated a large number of Aboriginal people. At the time of the inspection, 56% of people in custody at Wellington CC were Aboriginal. This percentage was 43% for Mid North Coast CC and 30% for South Coast CC.

We identified several issues in relation to the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people in all three centres and made several recommendations in line with the principles outlined in our inspection standards for Aboriginal people.⁴

A significant number of Aboriginal inmates held at the centres we inspected were held off Country. There were few targeted programs and activities available to this group, and wellbeing measures (such as access to community Elders, Aboriginal mentors, and accessible cultural spaces) needed to be improved. There was a need for enhancing staff understanding of Aboriginal culture and improving cultural competency across the board to improve the treatment of this population.

Further, inadequate resources were allocated to Aboriginal health. Difficulties in recruiting for roles such as Aboriginal health workers resulted in extended periods during which no health professional was employed at these centres to focus on health promotion and Aboriginal inmates' access to culturally safe services that met their needs.

Conditions and treatment of remand inmates

All three centres are the remand and reception centres for their local region. At the time of the inspection, Mid North Coast CC had the highest number of remand inmates (45%), followed by Wellington CC (25%), and South Coast CC (12%). All three centres provided limited services for this population. A lack of access to work, education, and remand programs also meant remand inmates often experienced the highest number of lockdowns.

None of the centres provided enough opportunities for remand inmates to access visits twice a week, as is required under the regulations. In some of the centres, like Mid North Coast CC, this population also struggled with timely access to their legal representatives and legal resources.

Employment and treatment of unemployed inmates

Creating prisoner employment is one of CSNSW's strengths. All three centres viewed themselves as 'working jails' and all appeared to provide an adequate number of jobs on paper. However, we found the reality on the ground different during our inspections as many employment areas and business units provided a much lower number of employment opportunities than their stated capacity. This gap was especially noticeable in the areas of community projects and work release.

Often inmate workers and non-workers were placed in separate accommodation pods. It was reported that this was primarily to better facilitate inmate movement to employment areas and to streamline their management. However, we observed that the accommodation pods holding unemployed inmates were locked down more frequently and provided fewer activities and services. As there was not usually any distinction made between the inmates who refused to work and those who were on remand and were not required to work, this placement partly contributed to inferior custodial conditions and a lower number of services for remand inmates. This translated to unconvicted people often living in more impoverished conditions than their convicted counterparts.

1 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *NSW Custody Statistics: Quarterly Update December 2024* (February 2025).

2 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *NSW Custody Statistics: Quarterly Update December 2023* (February 2024).

3 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, *NSW Custody Statistics: Quarterly Update December 2022* (February 2023).

4 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Aboriginal people in custody in New South Wales* (March 2025).

Conditions and treatment of female inmates

As women remain a minority within the NSW correctional system, they are often held in small sections of correctional centres that are not designed for them and are not administered with their gender-specific needs in mind. Wellington CC and Mid North Coast CC both accommodated women in their smallest accommodation areas.

Female inmates at Wellington CC were arguably the most disadvantaged group in this centre. They had almost no access to education, no access to remand, criminogenic or offence-based programs, and had very limited work opportunities. It was disappointing to see such little progress had been made since our *Women on Remand* report was tabled in February 2020.⁵ For that report, we examined the conditions of women on remand in four correctional centres, including Wellington CC.

While women at Mid North Coast CC had better employment opportunities as well as access to some meaningful activities, they faced important challenges. Half of the women accommodated at this centre were on remand and were significantly disadvantaged. Most women on remand at Mid North Coast CC were not from the local area and had been transferred away from their families and children to this centre even though it provided them with little to no programs or services. There were also significant gaps in the provision of welfare support to all women in this centre.

Programs and education

All three centres provided various criminogenic and wellbeing programs and all had a High Intensity Program Unit (HIPU). Across these three centres, we observed a significant difference in the number of programs and the functioning of HIPUs. Even within one correctional centre, there was a noticeable difference in the number of programs offered to inmates based on the accommodation area they were residing in.

Educational opportunities were low across the board. In NSW, only four correctional centres have an Intensive Learning Centre (ILC). Wellington CC, Mid North Coast CC, and South Coast CC are three of those four correctional centres. The ILCs are an important and rare resource as they are the only education area that still employ teachers to deliver education. However, this resource was not being used properly in any of the centres at the time of inspection. Only one of the ILCs (one of the two ILCs in South Coast CC) had a participation rate over 50%. The lowest participation rate was in Wellington CC; it only had three students at the time of our inspection, despite having a capacity for 20 students.⁶

The reporting and oversight arrangement, whereby Corrective Services Industries is responsible for both education and industries, is problematic and we believe has resulted in the prioritisation of functioning of industries over education. Although CSNSW disagrees with this assessment,⁷ we note CSNSW has recently announced a review of education services. We welcome this review.

Visits

During our inspections, we noted that all three centres provided a limited number of in-person visits. Those visits were usually held one day a week (with the exception of Wellington CC that organised in-person visits on both weekend days). In-person visits in all centres lasted an hour. We understand this continues to be the case. We note that before the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated visit restrictions, correctional centres arranged more frequent in-person visits and minimum security inmates could access longer visits. It is important that correctional centres return visits to pre-pandemic conditions as much as possible.

While the centres also facilitated virtual visits, inmates often had to choose between a virtual and an in-person visit and could not have both in one week. The *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* requires that unconvicted inmates have access to at least two visits a week (this can

5 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020).

6 During a visit to Wellington CC in March 2025, the ILC in this centre was operating at a greater capacity.

7 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 6.

be in-person or virtual). The arrangements we observed were unlikely to comply with the regulation. We support the continuation of virtual visits, particularly for inmates on remand and for those serving their sentence in a regional location, some distance away from their home and family.

Health

The health issues we observed were primarily centre-specific. However, the issue of inadequate resources allocated to Aboriginal health, mentioned earlier, was observed in all three centres.

All three centres had satellite clinics which were not used to their full potential at the time of the inspection. We believe that proper utilisation of these clinical spaces could, to some extent, address the issue of access to inmates by health staff, which was of concern in all centres. We note that since the inspections, progress has been made on using those clinics to support provision of healthcare to inmates.

Finally, I acknowledge the management and staff of South Coast CC for their cooperation with the inspection team and great assistance provided prior, during, and following the inspection.

Fiona Rafter
Inspector of Custodial Services NSW
November 2025

Glossary of terms and acronyms

Aboriginal	'Aboriginal' when used in this report is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
APO	Assessment and planning officer
AVL	Audio visual link
CC	Correctional Centre
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CMU	Case management unit
COPP	Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
CSI	Corrective Services Industries
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW
CSSL	Corrective Services Support Line
EQUIPS	Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed programs
ESC	Education services coordinator
HIPU	High Intensity Program Unit
HISOP	High Intensity Sex Offender Program
IAT	Immediate action team
ICS	Inspector of Custodial Services
ICS Act	<i>Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012</i>
ICS Standards	<i>Inspector of Custodial Services' Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales</i>
IDC	Inmate development committee
ILC	Intensive Learning Centre
JH&FMHN	Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LOP	Local Operating Procedure
MOSP	Manager of offender services and programs
OIMS	Offender integrated management system
OS&P	Offender services and programs
PRLA	Protection Limited Association
PRLC	Pre-Release Leave Committee
PRNA	Protection Non-Association
RIT	Risk intervention team
RUSH	Real Understanding of Self-Help
SAPO	Services and programs officer
SAPTL	Services and programs team leader
SMAP	Special Management Area Placement
SOG	Security operations group
SORC	Serious Offenders Review Council

SSIP	Short Sentence Intensive Program
VOR	Variation of routine
VOTP	Violent Offender Therapeutic Program
VTP	Vocational training program
WPT	Workplace training

Executive Summary

South Coast Correctional Centre (CC) is a large multi-classification correctional centre for men. It has five accommodation areas (sectors), including a stand-alone minimum security area located outside the secure perimeter of the main centre. South Coast CC holds mainstream and protection inmates of all security classifications and while initially it was envisaged that it would also accommodate female inmates, it has not. This centre acts as an important remand and reception centre for the south coast of NSW.

South Coast CC opened in 2010 as a 600-bed correctional centre. Its capacity significantly increased through the addition of a 200-bed minimum security area in August 2018 and a 160-bed maximum security area in June 2019. At the end of 2022, the 160-bed maximum security accommodation area (Sector 4) closed and the majority of its inmates were transferred to other correctional centres across NSW. This area remained closed during our inspection in February 2023 and therefore this report does not contain observations on the operation of Sector 4. However, the impacts of the closure of this area on other accommodation areas and on the operation of the centre are discussed.

In June 2024, we visited South Coast CC to observe the progress of some of the recommendations we had relayed to the centre management at the end of our 2023 inspection. We have provided some updates in this report on the issues that have improved as well as those that have not. The visit in June 2024 also gave us an opportunity to observe the operation of Sector 4 which had by then become operational again.

We acknowledge that when we inspected South Coast CC in 2023, there were still many practices in place aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in NSW custodial centres. Those measures impacted the staffing levels and availability of some of the services at South Coast CC.

South Coast CC had been experiencing staffing shortages prior to our 2023 inspection. This resulted in frequent lockdowns and reduced time out of cell for inmates. The closure of Sector 4 appeared to have addressed this issue to some extent and the lockdowns became less frequent. However, this closure was a temporary measure as it was always envisaged that Sector 4 would re-open. We also noted a high rate of absenteeism which resulted in a significant budget overspend, as South Coast CC relied on overtime payments to fill vacancies and maintain the operation of the centre.

We found the majority of staff at South Coast CC to be professional and respectful in their interactions with inmates and with each other and most teams worked well together. However, we observed and received reports about unsatisfactory professional conduct by some staff at various levels of seniority. We note that these issues are always discussed at the conclusion of our inspections, but they need to be highlighted given their adverse impacts on the culture of a correctional centre as a workplace as well as on inmate wellbeing.

Data shows that at the time of the inspection and in the months leading up to it, 30% of the population of South Coast CC were Aboriginal. It was of significant concern to us that the majority of this population (more than 70%) were held off Country. For many Aboriginal people being away from Country carries significant cultural and emotional weight and can have direct negative consequences on their wellbeing. We have made a recommendation to Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) to review the inmate placement process to ensure Aboriginal inmates, to the extent possible, remain on Country.

While South Coast CC provided some programs and educational courses for Aboriginal people, including the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program and Aboriginal Cultural Arts, the support for this group needed to be significantly strengthened to make up for the isolation and loss of connection to land and ancestors which result from being held off Country. At the time of the inspection, no community Elder was engaged by the centre to regularly visit Aboriginal inmates and South Coast CC did not have an Aboriginal mentor position. Further, at that time, the centre had only one Yarning Circle in the stand-alone minimum security section which could not be readily accessed by inmates in that accommodation area or any other sectors. It was, therefore, pleasing to see additional Yarning Circles in Sectors 2 and 3 when we returned to South Coast CC in June 2024. We

understand a Yarning Circle has now been installed in Sector 4 and plans are underway to install one in Sector 1.⁸ CSNSW also advises that a local Aboriginal Elder now attends the centre and runs some of the Aboriginal programs.⁹

Similar to many other correctional centres,¹⁰ there were several issues in the way that South Coast CC staff adjudicated and penalised breaches of correctional centre regulations by inmates. One of those issues was the disproportionate and mostly incorrect use of the charge of 'failing to comply with correctional centre routine', which often resulted in inmates being charged with two or more offences as a result of one incident. We also identified several instances of application of disproportionate penalties in response to more minor breaches; for example, withdrawing access to buy-ups for a long period of time or locking people in cells for wearing a hat. We have made recommendations to address those issues and ensure compliance with policy and legislation. We note that CSNSW is currently in the process of conducting a significant body of work in relation to reviewing inmate disciplinary processes.¹¹

It was positive to see that South Coast CC delivered a wide variety of criminogenic and therapeutic programs. However, the lack of space for the delivery of programs in some accommodation areas and issues with access to inmates in some others, limited the great potential of those programs.

Availability of employment opportunities varied greatly across accommodation areas, with minimum security inmates most disadvantaged. This was of concern, given this population is often at the final stages of their sentences and engagement in employment can provide them with valuable skills to increase their employability upon release. We believe this shows a lack of strategic thinking around the allocation of opportunities, where the needs of the industries are often prioritised over the rehabilitation of inmates. This issue is not specific to South Coast CC and has been observed across the correctional system.

Only four correctional centres across NSW have an Intensive Learning Centre (ILC), the only area that still employs teachers to deliver education. South Coast CC is one of those four centres and the only one that has two ILCs (one in Sector 1 and one in Sector 5). This is a significant resource that needs to be recognised for its potential.

When we undertook this series of inspections, we inspected three out of four correctional centres with an ILC (Wellington CC, Mid North Coast CC, and South Coast CC). We believe South Coast CC was using this important resource better than Wellington CC and Mid North Coast CC. However, some of the decisions around allocation of resources hindered the full potential of those learning centres. The ILC in Sector 1 had been moved from its original purpose-built location which was repurposed to provide offices for staff. The new location of the ILC was in an area where there was already significant competition over space. This move not only negatively affected the resources and learning (and teaching) experiences in the ILC, it also negatively affected the delivery of other programs and services in Sector 1. It made us question if the centre fully recognised the importance of this resource and its role in reducing recidivism. We have made a recommendation to use the purpose-built ILC for its original purpose.

At the time of the inspection, South Coast CC provided access to in-person social visits on one day a week. Virtual visits were also being facilitated one day a week. Virtual visits were planned and facilitated well and while the number of tablets allocated to some of the accommodation areas was inadequate, this issue was being addressed.

During the inspection, we observed the in-person social visits which overall functioned well. However, we were concerned about the inadequate number of visits places that had been allocated to minimum security inmates in Sector 5. While this accommodation area had the capacity to hold up to 200 inmates, only 16 people could receive visitors on any given week. Inmates in this area were also the only group who were strip searched after the completion of an in-person visit. At the conclusion

8 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

9 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

10 NSW Ombudsman, *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres: A special report under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974* (Report, August 2024).

11 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

of the inspection, we raised the issue of inadequate number of places for in-person visits in Sector 5 with the governor of South Coast CC. We were advised that following our inspection the number of places was increased significantly.

During the inspection, we observed the processes relating to inmate reception and release. The reception process was efficient and staff worked well with newly arrived inmates, ensuring their privacy and wellbeing. However, we noted that the induction booklets needed to be updated.

We also identified a few issues in relation to the release of inmates. Some of those issues were specific to South Coast CC, for example minimum security inmates who lived in the stand-alone minimum security area were being released from the maximum security area. However, some other issues are system-wide. We have observed in most of our inspections that the process of releasing inmates from correctional centres is not dignified. Inmates are often released from the vehicle sally port with their belongings handed to them in a plastic bag. More needs to be done to enhance the process of release from custody across the system. We recommend that CSNSW provide guidelines to all correctional centres to ensure inmates are released from custody in a dignified manner.

We identified several issues that primarily affected one group of inmates or inmates in one accommodation area. While the closure of Sector 4 reduced the extent of short staffing at South Coast CC, it created new challenges for the operation of the centre. Sector 4 was an accommodation area for maximum security protection inmates. When that sector closed, it was decided that some of the inmates accommodated there would remain at South Coast CC. This was mainly to ensure the vital industries linked to this sector continued to operate.

Sector 4 inmates who remained at South Coast CC were moved to the E pod in Sector 1. This pod was Sector 1's accommodation area for inmates who had requested protection because of issues with other inmates in Sector 1. Moving Sector 4 inmates to E pod resulted in the co-location of two separate cohorts of protection inmates and led to a rise in the number of incidents of violence in this pod. It also resulted in E pod reaching capacity, becoming unable to accommodate any more Sector 1 inmates who sought protection. The only other alternative for those inmates was placement in protective custody in G pod, a multipurpose unit in Sector 1 that accommodated inmates in segregated custody, those who could not associate with any other inmates, and others who needed to be accommodated separately from the general population. This increase in the number of inmates in G pod limited the capacity of this pod to perform its designated function and complicated the operation of the centre.

One of the major issues of concern identified in this inspection was the management of minimum security inmates at South Coast CC. These inmates were placed in two accommodation areas: protection minimum security inmates were in Sector 3 and mainstream minimum security inmates were in Sector 5. At the time of the inspection, they comprised half of the population of South Coast CC.

Protection inmates in Sector 3 were accommodated in an area where the infrastructure and the operational routine were not in line with the standards for minimum security accommodation. The infrastructure was restrictive, with internal fencing separating the pods and significantly reducing the freedom of movement within the accommodation area. Common areas lacked basic furniture and there was no opportunity for self-catering. Maintenance in Sector 3 was poor.

Inmates in Sector 3 were being managed according to the same operational routine that was used for maximum security inmates, providing them with only six and a half hours of time out of cell during normal operating days. This was four hours less than the daily average for minimum security custodial settings in NSW. Unlike many minimum security inmates, inmates in Sector 3 were locked into their cells at lock-in time and did not have access to the common area of their units (including to the showers) afterwards.

The limited time out of cell in Sector 3 affected service providers' access to the inmates in this accommodation area and reduced the number of programs and educational courses available to them. These inmates also had very few opportunities to work. Sector 3 had one CSI business unit (a

textiles workshop) and more than half of the inmates in this accommodation area were unemployed at the time of the inspection. Overall, Sector 3 was unsuitable for accommodating a minimum security population. CSNSW has proposed that a centre review is undertaken to review staff deployment as well as the centre's operating routine to ensure safe staff numbers, inmate safety, full centre operations, and workload distribution.¹²

Sector 5 was a stand-alone minimum security accommodation area, with appropriate infrastructure and operational routine for minimum security inmates. Sector 5 had a High Intensity Program Unit (HIPU) which was achieving its purpose. In addition to a number of other programs, it was also delivering the Violent Offender Therapeutic Program (VOTP). This sector had one of the highest numbers of educational opportunities which were also diverse. However, the employment opportunities were scant with half of the population unemployed at the time of the inspection.

The main issue affecting the inmates in Sector 5 was the management regime which was not aligned with contemporary correctional practice. While the main objectives of minimum security areas should be deinstitutionalisation of inmates and their preparation for release into the community, this sector focused primarily on control and discipline. Inmates in Sector 5 had to follow a strict set of rules and most aspects of their daily life was controlled by rigid instructions. If they did not follow those rules, they were charged with correctional centre offences. We were concerned that this style of management reduced the positive impacts of rehabilitation services that were available to inmates in Sector 5. We have made a recommendation that Sector 5 should operate according to contemporary correctional practice to prepare inmates for reintegration into society.

Finally, this report includes an assessment of health services provided at South Coast CC. South Coast CC had three health centres in Sectors 1, 4, and 5. At the time of the inspection, due to the closure of Sector 4, the health centre in that accommodation area ceased most of its operations despite remaining fully equipped. The operational health centres (in Sectors 1 and 5) were functioning reasonably well and health staff and correctional staff worked collaboratively together.

We observed the main health centre in Sector 1 to be very busy as it was providing services to the majority of inmates who had various security and protection designations, and their movements needed to be carefully managed. The staffing level in this health centre was inadequate in our opinion. This negatively affected the prompt delivery of healthcare and resulted in long waiting times. While the closure of Sector 4 and redeployment of some of its health staff to the main health centre alleviated staff shortages to some extent, this was a temporary solution. We believe a more permanent solution is needed to improve the staffing level of the main health centre and recommend that Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JH&FMHN) reviews the staffing level at the health centres in South Coast CC.

In June 2025, JH&FMHN advised that since the inspection, there has been a permanent increase of 0.5 nursing FTE in the South Coast CC health centre and that a further increase in staffing was not feasible within current budget and statewide resourcing needs.¹³

The delivery of dental care was particularly problematic in South Coast CC, with long waiting times even for inmates who required urgent assessment and care. South Coast CC was providing a number of allied health care services, and the level of mental health services was broadly appropriate.

The main health centre had seven camera assessment cells, and it was positive to see that the centre ensured those cells were prioritised for the placement of inmates on a risk intervention team (RIT) management plan who needed to be placed in an observation cell. However, when those cells were full, inmates on a RIT management plan were housed in G pod.

South Coast CC had two psychology teams: one team delivered therapeutic programs such as VOTP and the other team delivered psychology services to inmates in all accommodation areas. Compared to many correctional centres across the state, South Coast CC could be seen as having higher resources (provided by both CSNSW and JH&FMHN) to respond to the mental health needs of

¹² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹³ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 19 June 2025.

inmates. However, we note that South Coast CC was also receiving a much higher number of inmates who required mental health support. This meant almost all the resources allocated to this centre were being utilised to respond to high priority and urgent cases.

Lastly, and as mentioned in our previous reports, more needs to be done across the correctional system to recruit and retain psychologists. There remain significant differences between the remuneration offered to the psychologists who are employed by CSNSW and those who work in other government agencies. This issue continues to cause ongoing staff shortages, disrupts provision of care, and results in the loss of experienced staff who can respond effectively to the complex needs of a vulnerable population. This issue requires attention.

Recommendations

The Inspector recommends:

1. Corrective Services NSW reviews inmate placement processes to ensure Aboriginal inmates, to the extent possible, remain on Country.
2. Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre conducts the inmate disciplinary process in line with policy and legislation.
3. Corrective Services NSW completes a review of the building allocated to South Coast Correctional Centre's security operations group, and ensures it is fit for purpose for the team's current and future requirements.
4. [REDACTED] ¹⁴
5. Corrective Services NSW obtains legal advice on its ability to penalise inmates by not paying the base rate allowance.
6. Corrective Services NSW increases access to education for all inmates (sentenced and unsentenced) at South Coast Correctional Centre.
7. Corrective Services NSW introduces an Aboriginal identified position to the case management unit of South Coast Correctional Centre.
8. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of days South Coast Correctional Centre facilitates in-person visits.
9. Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre procedures for body scanning inmates who receive in-person visits is compliant with policy.
10. [REDACTED] ¹⁵
11. Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre regularly reviews its induction material, including the local inmate handbook, to ensure information provided is accessible, current, and correct.
12. Corrective Services NSW ensures sufficient staff at South Coast Correctional Centre are trained to use the body scanners.
13. Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre's local operating procedure on the use of body scanners complies with the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures and the updated operating procedure is followed.
14. Corrective Services NSW provides guidelines to all correctional centres to ensure inmates are released from custody in a dignified manner.
15. Corrective Services NSW establishes an alternative option for the release of minimum security inmates in Sector 5 that does not include taking them back to the main part of the prison.
16. Corrective Services NSW ensures inmates working in the reception areas of correctional centres do not have access to other inmates' property or confidential information.

¹⁴ Redacted in accordance with section 15(3) of the ICS Act.

¹⁵ Redacted in accordance with section 15(3) of the ICS Act.

17. Corrective Services NSW reviews the decision to remove the Protection Limited Association placement option.
18. Corrective Services NSW reviews the correctional system's capacity to accommodate 'Protection Non-Association' inmates.
19. Corrective Services NSW uses the purpose-built Intensive Learning Centre in Sector 1 of South Coast Correctional Centre for its original purpose.
20. Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre improves access to the oval for inmates in Sector 1 of this correctional centre.
21. Corrective Services NSW ensures libraries in South Coast Correctional Centre are operational and accessible to remand and sentenced inmates.
22. Corrective Services NSW ensures the signage in Sector 2 of South Coast Correctional Centre is changed to reflect that this is an accommodation area for male inmates.
23. Corrective Services NSW amends the infrastructure and amenities of Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre to ensure they are in line with the standards of minimum security accommodation.
24. Corrective Services NSW increases time out of cell for inmates in Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre.
25. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of employment opportunities in Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre.
26. Corrective Services NSW ensures Sector 5 of South Coast Correctional Centre is operating according to contemporary correctional practices to prepare inmates for re-entry into the community.
27. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of employment opportunities in Sector 5 of South Coast Correctional Centre and ensures they are filled.
28. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of work release opportunities provided at South Coast Correctional Centre.
29. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of inmates who participate in community projects at South Coast Correctional Centre and ensures this team is adequately resourced.
30. Corrective Services NSW explores options to address the structural constraints that prevent the use of two rooms in South Coast Correctional Centre main health centre with patients. This should be done in consultation with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network.
31. Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network reviews the staffing level at South Coast Correctional Centre's health centres and ensures it is sufficient for the needs of the patients at this correctional centre.
32. Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network increases access to dental care for patients at South Coast Correctional Centre.
33. Corrective Services NSW reviews pay scales for psychologists to assist with attraction and retention of those staff.
34. This report is made public immediately upon being tabled in NSW Parliament, in accordance with section 16(2) of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012*.

South Coast correctional centre profile

Location

South Coast Correctional Centre (CC) is located on the land of the Yuin people. It is in Nowra in the south coast region of New South Wales, approximately 168km south of Sydney.

History

In November 2010, South Coast CC opened as a 600-bed multi-classification correctional centre for men and women. In August 2018, a 200-bed minimum security section was added to the correctional centre complex. This section is outside of the main prison and operates as a standalone minimum security accommodation area with its own gatehouse. Less than a year later, in June 2019, the operational capacity of South Coast CC was further increased by the opening of a new 160-bed maximum security section.¹⁶ These additions were part of Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) \$3.8 billion Better Prisons infrastructure program.¹⁷ To date women have never been accommodated at South Coast CC.

South Coast Correctional Centre when it opened in 2010¹⁸



Function

South Coast CC is a multi-classification correctional centre that has always accommodated male inmates. It is an important reception and remand centre for the south coast of NSW and holds sentenced inmates as well as people on remand.

South Coast CC has five accommodation areas (sectors). At the time of the inspection, one of those accommodation areas (Sector 4) was closed. This report does not include observations on the operation of Sector 4.

16 Corrective Services NSW, 'CSNSW history: 21st century' (Web Page, 6 September 2023) <<https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/about-us/csnsw-history/21st-century.html>>.

17 Corrective Services NSW, 'Better Prisons' (Web Page, 20 October 2025) <<https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/correctional-centres/better-prisons.html>>.

18 NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice, *Annual Report 2010-11* (Report, 2010-11) 99.

Sector 1 of South Coast CC is the largest accommodation area and holds sentenced and remand inmates who are classified as medium and maximum security.

South Coast CC accommodates a significant number of inmates assessed as Special Management Area Placement (SMAP).¹⁹ SMAP inmates with a medium security classification are placed in Sector 2 and those with a minimum security classification are placed in Sector 3.

‘Normal discipline’ (mainstream) inmates²⁰ with a minimum security classification are held in Sector 5. The majority of inmates in Sectors 2, 3, and 5 are sentenced.

Capacity

South Coast CC’s maximum operational capacity is 929 inmates housed across five sectors. As Sector 4 was temporarily closed at the time of the inspection, the centre was operating with reduced capacity at that time.

Table 1: South Coast CC capacity²¹

Sector	Classification	Capacity
One	Maximum	352
Two	Medium ²²	63
Three	Minimum	154
Four	Maximum	160
Five	Minimum	200

Previous inspections by the Inspector of Custodial Services

South Coast CC was previously inspected by the Inspector of Custodial Services in May 2018 as part of a thematic inspection focusing on the programs, employment and educational opportunities available across correctional centres in NSW.²³ We note that at the time of the previous inspection, the additional accommodation areas (Sectors 4 and 5) were still under construction.

Inspection dates

Pre-inspection liaison visit: 18 January 2023

Inspection: 6-10 February 2023²⁴

Post-inspection liaison visit: 6 June 2024

19 A Special Management Area (SMAP) is a designated area for those inmates assessed as being vulnerable or at risk from other inmates in a normal discipline area of a correctional centre. SMAP inmates should have their status reviewed once every 12 months to ensure this placement remains relevant. See Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 3.3 Special management area placement* (version 1.5, 14 August 2024).

20 ‘Normal discipline’ (or ‘mainstream’ as referred to in this report) refers to inmates who neither require protection, nor are subject to a segregation or separation order.

21 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 1 December 2022.

22 Please note the designation of Sector 2 varied in different documents provided to us by South Coast Correctional Centre. The centre’s management plan considers this area as a medium security accommodation area while other documents referred to it as a minimum security accommodation area.

23 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020).

24 While part of the team observed the in-person visits on Sunday 5 February 2023, the full inspection commenced on 6 February 2023.

Inspection process

The office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) was established by the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012* (the ICS Act) in October 2013. The mandate of the office is to provide independent scrutiny of the conditions, treatment, and outcomes for people in custody, and to promote excellence in staff professional practice. The Inspector is required to inspect each adult custodial centre at least once every five years and report on each such inspection to the NSW Parliament with relevant advice and recommendations.²⁵

Inspection provides independent information gathering and analysis concerning what is working well and which areas require improvement. The inspection of South Coast CC focused on:

- custodial conditions, including safety and security
- treatment, care and wellbeing of inmates, including privacy
- programs, education, employment and preparation for release
- resources and systems, including staffing and management.

The on-site phase of the inspection took place between 5 and 10 February 2023. The inspection team consisted of the Inspector, two principal inspection and research officers, two senior inspection and research officers, and an Aboriginal inspection and liaison officer. A health consultant with expertise and a clinical background in custodial health joined the team.

Prior to the inspection, in January 2023, we conducted a liaison visit to South Coast CC to inform our planning. We also received documents and data from South Coast CC, CSNSW, the Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics branch of CSNSW, and Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JH&FMHN). In order to understand the main issues of concern for inmates at South Coast CC, we asked the NSW Ombudsman for complaint data related to this centre and also reviewed the reports from the Official Visitors appointed to South Coast CC.

In June 2024, we undertook a post-inspection liaison visit to South Coast CC to examine the progress made on the issues identified during the 2023 inspection.

During the inspection, we observed a range of processes and areas of South Coast CC and collected documentation. We held discussions with management as well as a number of custodial and non-custodial staff. The inspection team also spoke to inmates, including delegates from South Coast CC's inmate development committees. The health consultant engaged with health staff and observed the areas where health services were provided. Areas used for the quarantining or isolation of patients with COVID-19 and clinical processes associated with the management of COVID-19 were also observed.

It is acknowledged that inspections capture a snapshot in time, with understanding and observations limited by time spent on site. It should be noted that inspections of custodial facilities that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic were impacted by ICS staff and centre staff being unavailable at short notice due to illness, centre lockdowns due to COVID-19 outbreaks, and changes to routines and practices to prevent or mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Consequently, some interviews that would usually occur in person, took place virtually either before or after the on-site inspection. The length of time on site and the ability to observe all functions of a centre could also be impacted, often at short notice. Information obtained on site was complemented by additional data obtained post inspection from South Coast CC, various branches of CSNSW, and JH&FMHN.

At the conclusion of each on-site inspection, we hold a debrief with the governor of the centre. This provides an opportunity for local management to address any immediate concerns and to be aware of the initial findings of the inspection as well as likely medium to longer term recommendations.

25 *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012* s 6.

The inspection considered sensitive information and methodologies. In accordance with section 15 of the ICS Act, information that could prejudice the security, discipline, or good order of any custodial centre, identify or allow the identification of a person who is or was detained at a youth justice centre or in custody in a juvenile correctional centre, or identify or allow the identification of a custodial centre staff member, has been removed in the public interest.

On 19 May 2025, a draft report was provided to CSNSW and JH&FMHN in accordance with section 14(2) of the ICS Act. Submissions were received from JH&FMHN within the requested one month timeframe. Submissions from CSNSW were received on 26 August 2025.

In accordance with section 14(1) of the ICS Act, the Inspector provided the Hon Anoulack Chanthivong MP with the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the draft report. In accordance with section 14(3)(b) of the ICS Act, each submission and the Minister's response were considered before the finalisation of the report for tabling.

1 Inmate profile

1.1 Population

On 6 February 2023, the first day of our inspection, South Coast CC held 666 men.²⁶

CSNSW provided more detailed data on the inmate population of South Coast CC as of 31 October 2022. This data is presented below and gives a breakdown of the population by legal status, age, cultural background, and security classifications.

According to this dataset, on 31 October 2022, South Coast CC held 772 men.²⁷

1.1.1 Legal status and charges

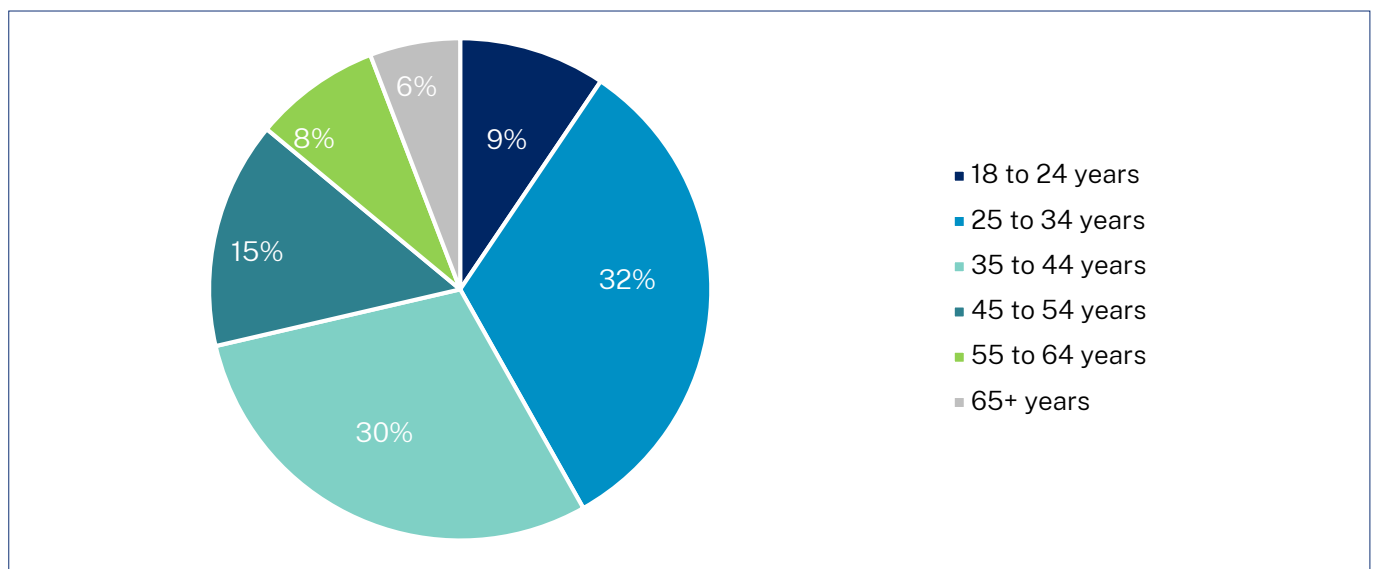
As of 31 October 2022, 103 inmates were on remand, 636 were sentenced, and 33 were appealing their sentences. The average time on remand for South Coast CC inmates was 276 days, with the longest period on remand being 2,866 days.

Acts intended to cause injury was the most serious offence or charge for 165 inmates, followed by offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations (94 inmates), illicit drug offences (74 inmates), homicide and related offences (51 inmates), and unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter (34 inmates).²⁸

1.1.2 Age and cultural background

South Coast CC had a young inmate population, as indicated in Figure 1. As of 31 October 2022, approximately 40% of the population was aged 34 or under.²⁹

Figure 1: Age distribution of inmates at South Coast CC- October 2022



At the end of October 2022 as well as on the first day of our inspection, about a third of the population of South Coast CC (28%) were Aboriginal people.³⁰

Most inmates were born in Australia (77.2%) and 88.3% spoke English at home. The majority of inmates identified their cultural background as Australian (70.2%). The next largest cultural

²⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

²⁷ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

²⁸ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

²⁹ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

³⁰ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

backgrounds identified were Arab (5.6%), Polynesian (4.1%) and Southern European (2.7%).³¹

The largest religious group was Christian (9.8%), followed by Catholic (9.2%), Muslim (7%), and Anglican/Church of England (5.3%). Almost half of the inmates (46.9%) had no preferred religion.³²

1.1.3 Security classifications

As at 31 October 2022, the largest group of inmates at South Coast CC were those with a minimum security classification (45%). This was followed by medium (B) security classification inmates (25.5%), and maximum (A2) security classification inmates (24%). There were also 32 inmates (4%) with an 'escape risk' classification (E1 or E2), and the remainder had no classification (not yet classified).³³

Approximately 40% of the population were SMAP inmates. The Serious Offenders Review Council (SORC)³⁴ managed 69 inmates (8.9% of the population) and the Pre-Release Leave Committee (PRLC)³⁵ managed 181 inmates (23.4% of the population). South Coast CC also held five people with Extreme High Security³⁶ and seven people with High Security designations. The centre held 35 people who were Immigration Release Notification inmates.³⁷

31 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

32 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

33 Inmate security classifications and risk designations are defined in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cls 12, 14–15.

34 SORC provides advice and makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW regarding the security classification, placement, and program participation of 'serious offenders'. See *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* s 197. A 'serious offender' is defined in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* s 3 and includes an offender serving a life sentence, an offender who must serve at least 12 years in custody or someone who is required to be managed as a serious offender due to a decision of the sentencing court, the State Parole Authority, or the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW.

35 The PRLC is the division of the Serious Offenders Review Council that manages 'public interest inmates'. A public interest inmate includes one who is serving a custodial sentence for an offence which is the subject of wide public interest or that is specified in the policy; see: Corrective Services NSW, *Inmate Classification and Placement: Serious Offenders Review Council (SORC) and Subcommittee Managed Inmates* (version 2.6, 8 April 2022) 17–18.

36 The Commissioner may designate an inmate as High Security, Extreme High Security, Extreme High Risk Restricted or National Security Interest. This applies to inmates who are considered to constitute a danger (or extreme danger) to other people, or a threat (or extreme threat) to good order or security, and there is a risk that the inmate may engage in, or incite others to engage in, activities that are considered a serious threat to the peace or good order of a prison; see: Corrective Services NSW, *Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement* (version 2.1, 24 October 2021) 11.

37 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

2 Centre-wide issues and observations

2.1 Staffing

South Coast CC had a staffing profile of 358 full-time equivalent (FTE), as outlined in Table 2.³⁸ At the time of the inspection, the centre reported that it was fully staffed. This was despite the high number of staff on workers compensation and sick leave, with South Coast CC reporting a budget overspend of \$1.8 million largely due to payments for staff overtime.

According to CSNSW, in August 2025, South Coast CC's overtime bill climbed to \$2.65 million. This was largely attributed to the cessation of reimbursement for hospital escorts,³⁹ as well as high numbers of staff on workers compensation and sick leave.⁴⁰ In August 2025, a total of 30 staff at South Coast CC were on workers compensation and four staff were suspended. Reportedly, this, combined with absences due to illness and other types of leave, continues to present challenges for staffing and resources at South Coast CC.⁴¹

When we inspected South Coast CC, the centre reported that it no longer had access to a casual pool of staff as those staff had been appointed to permanent positions. This meant the centre could not draw on resources outside of its staffing profile and offering overtime was the only solution to address short staffing. In August 2025, CSNSW advised that South Coast CC now has seven casual staff and a group of recruits are currently receiving training to commence as casual correctional officers.⁴²

At the time of the inspection, Sector 4 of South Coast CC which had the capacity to accommodate 160 inmates, was temporarily closed. This allowed for the deployment of Sector 4 staff to other sectors and addressed some of the issues arising from short staffing at South Coast CC. Consequently, the centre was experiencing fewer lockdowns (which were happening frequently prior to the closure of Sector 4). When an area is locked down inmates are confined to their cells, with limited access to exercise, recreation, programs, or education. When we visited South Coast CC in June 2024, Sector 4 was once again operational and has remained in operation.

Overall, the majority of staff at South Coast CC interacted with inmates professionally and with respect. There was also a very good level of cooperation with our team to facilitate the inspection and to ensure we had access to all the necessary information and documents.

However, we directly observed and received reports about unsatisfactory professional conduct by some staff at various levels of seniority. They included (but regrettably were not limited to) an instance when a staff member used a derogatory term when talking about inmates with Pacific Island heritage and another instance when we observed unprofessional conduct during the release of an inmate when an officer told the inmate that they would see him the following week when he would be back in custody. These were reported to centre management at the conclusion of the inspection and addressed by the Governor.⁴³ We encourage South Coast CC and CSNSW to continue to identify conduct that is inconsistent with the rehabilitative objectives of the correctional system and address it through targeted training, including cultural safety training.

In our report on the inspection of Wellington CC, we highlighted the importance of providing local training in regional areas. This was primarily based on the feedback received from many correctional

38 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 1 December 2022. We note that all sentence management/administration functions are now performed in clusters and are no longer attributable to a single correctional centre. South Coast CC is now part of the Southern cluster and shares sentence administration resources with Cooma CC, Goulburn CC (including High Risk Management Unit), Junee CC, and Mannus CC. As this is a new development, this resource is still reflected in table 2 but has been marked with an asterisk (*).

39 According to Corrective Services NSW, from 1 July 2024, individual centres are responsible for the costs associated with a medical escort when the centre staff facilitate the escort. Prior to this date, these costs were borne by Medical Escort Unit (MEU) to better understand the impact of such costs on the system. Corrective Services NSW maintains that when the MEU takes over an escort, the MEU still pays the associated employee-related expenses. (information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 28 August 2025).

40 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

41 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

42 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

43 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

officers who identified attending primary training in Sydney as a potential deterrent for prospective employees in regional areas.⁴⁴

It was, therefore, pleasing to see this was not an issue at South Coast CC as there was a large training facility outside the secure perimeter of this centre, which was used for providing training to custodial officers. In addition to space for classes, this facility had an accommodation area for people who travelled from other regional areas. When we visited the facility, a training session was in progress. We encourage CSNSW to utilise and increase such spaces in as many regional areas as possible.

Regional training facility outside South Coast CC



44 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Wellington Correctional Centre 2022* (Report, 2024) 18.

Table 2: Staffing profile of South Coast CC

Area	Position	Approved FTE
Custodial	Governor	1
	Manager of security	1
	Functional managers	10
	Senior correctional officers	39
	Correctional officers	164
Corrective Services Industries (CSI)	Operations manager	1
	Manager of industries	2
	Manager of business units	5
	Senior overseers	10
	Overseers	32
	Administration clerks	3
Offender services and programs (OS&P)	Manager of offender services and programs (MOSP)	2
	Senior services and programs officer	4
	Services and programs officer (SAPO)	24
	Senior psychologist	2
	Psychologist	9
Case management unit (CMU)	Senior case management officer	3
	Case management officer	11
Administration	Senior business manager	1
	Finance and administration manager	1
	Senior finance manager	-
	Clerk grade 3/4	3
	Clerk grade 1/2	5
	General scale clerks	3
Education	Education services coordinators	2
	Assessment and planning officers	3
	Correctional education officer	1
	Literacy/numeracy teachers	4
Classification	Classification coordinator	1
	Classification and placement officers	2
Scheduling (Rosters)	Clerk grade 3/4	4
Sentence administration*	Clerk grade 5/6	2
	Clerk grade 3/4	3
Total		358

2.2 Aboriginal inmates

In the months prior to and at the time of the inspection, the percentage of Aboriginal inmates at South Coast CC remained consistently at around 30%. While this section of the report focuses on some of the issues that specifically affected this group, the experiences of Aboriginal inmates have been considered in our analysis of all aspects of South Coast CC's operation and is reflected throughout this report.

At the time of our inspection, around 3.4% of staff working at South Coast CC identified as Aboriginal. According to the data we received, 4.7% of correctional officers and none of the senior correctional officers were Aboriginal. The OS&P and community corrections teams had a higher percentage of Aboriginal staff, at 4.2% and 8.3% respectively.⁴⁵

Most Aboriginal inmates who spoke to us reported that they were held off Country.⁴⁶ Many had a strong attachment to their Country and highlighted the adverse relationship between being held off Country and mental wellbeing. An analysis of the last known postcodes of Aboriginal inmates who were at South Coast CC on 6 February 2023 (the first day of the inspection) supported these reports, as it showed 72% of this population was off Country.⁴⁷

The *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia* highlight that the placement of inmates can influence their rehabilitation and wellbeing. These principles suggest that, where practicable, Aboriginal people should be placed in a location proximate to their family and community.⁴⁸ Similarly, the ICS Standards emphasise the importance of placement of inmates close to their families and highlight the particular consideration that should be given to 'the placement of Aboriginal people who retain a strong attachment to their Country'.⁴⁹

South Coast CC had a High Intensity Program Unit (HIPU) and continued to receive inmates who were being transferred to complete programs offered at this unit. This most likely contributed to the transfer of Aboriginal inmates to South Coast CC, away from their family and community, as programs pathway has been the main determinant of placement. While criminogenic programs are one of CSNSW's key tools for reducing recidivism, these programs should be offered in a way that ensures the wellbeing of inmates. This is particularly pertinent when it comes to the placement of Aboriginal inmates, given their connection to the land and Country. We also note that in many centres we inspected, inmates who had been transferred to complete the HIPU, often waited a significant period of time to commence the program. This was primarily the result of staff deficiencies that delayed the completion of the previous round of HIPU.⁵⁰ The delay in commencement of the HIPU meant Aboriginal inmates were held off Country for much longer.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW reviews inmate placement processes to ensure Aboriginal inmates, to the extent possible, remain on Country.

When Aboriginal inmates are held off Country, it is important that they are provided with appropriate support, through provision of targeted programs and activities and through the involvement of Aboriginal Elders and mentors.

In 2022, South Coast CC delivered the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program 10 times, providing an opportunity for 127 inmates to participate, with 41% of participants completing the program. In the first half of 2023, this program was delivered twice. In total, 19 inmates participated in this program and 15 completed it.⁵¹ South Coast CC also delivered a cultural wellbeing program, which included beading, arts and crafts. Further, 58 inmates (primarily from Sectors 1 and 5) completed a part-

45 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

46 The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies defines the term 'Country' as a 'term used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity' (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Welcome to Country* (Web Page, undated) <<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country>>).

47 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 3 April 2023.

48 Corrective Services Administrators' Council, *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia* (2018) 5.1.5.

49 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standard 13.3.

50 See for example: Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 80.

51 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 9 October 2023.

qualification in Aboriginal Cultural Arts in 2022.⁵² We understood that the course was approved to be delivered again in 2023.

Regrettably, we found little evidence that community Elders were engaged by the centre to visit Aboriginal inmates regularly and the centre did not have an Aboriginal mentor position. CSNSW advises that a local Aboriginal Elder now attends the centre and runs some of the Aboriginal programs. Reportedly, local Elders attended a community consultative meeting where discussions were held to support the Elders to attend the centre on a regular basis.⁵³

Inmates at South Coast CC, including Aboriginal inmates, could purchase paint, canvases, and other arts supplies as part of the monthly activities buy-up. They had to pay between \$3.65 to \$4.65 for a canvas and \$4 for a 75ml tube of paint. Most Aboriginal inmates found the cost prohibitive. For many Aboriginal people, art is a fundamental part of the way of life and cultural expression. Being able to practice and express culture should not be contingent on an Aboriginal inmate's access to financial resources.

Aboriginal people in custody should have access to a reasonable quantity of art supplies free of charge. Lack of access to such supplies was not an issue limited to South Coast CC and was observed across all the centres we visited as part of this series of inspections. As mentioned previously, CSNSW should provide reasonable funding for provision of art supplies for Aboriginal inmates and ensure the funding is commensurate with the number of Aboriginal inmates held in a correctional centre.⁵⁴ It was positive to see that South Coast CC made efforts to safely keep the inmate artworks, which they could take home upon release. We confirmed this was occurring when we observed the release process of an Aboriginal inmate.

At the time of the inspection, the only accommodation area that had a Yarning Circle was Sector 5. The Yarning Circle was located in the education area of this sector, which was separated from the accommodation areas by a secure gate. We understood that inmates could not attend this area for the sole purpose of accessing the Yarning Circle and could only be there if they had an appointment or a class. This was disappointing as the Yarning Circle was well-designed and well-maintained, yet inaccessible. We also heard that some of the inmates were involved in painting the space and were disappointed that they could see the space they helped create from behind the gate but could not use it.

At that time, we were informed of the plans to install additional Yarning Circles in other accommodation areas of South Coast CC. In a subsequent visit to the centre in June 2024, we observed new Yarning Circles in Sectors 2 and 3. However, as the living areas in these sectors were separated from other parts of the sector by a fence, we were unclear how easily accessible those Yarning Circles were. We note that in June 2024, we revisited the Yarning Circle in Sector 5 and observed that it remained inaccessible.

According to CSNSW, as of August 2025, all accommodation areas of South Coast CC except for Sector 1 have a Yarning Circle. The Yarning Circle in Sector 1 is in the process of being built. It was also reported that inmates now have access to these cultural spaces when Aboriginal Elders attend the centre. CSNSW undertook to review inmate's access to the Yarning Circles.⁵⁵

52 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

53 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

54 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 25.

55 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

Yarning Circle in the education area of Sector 5



2.3 Safety and security

Different types of security measures – physical, procedural and dynamic⁵⁶ – need to be balanced to ensure that correctional centres are safe and secure.

To assess those security measures, in our inspection of South Coast CC, we:

- looked at the infrastructure of the centre
- reviewed incident reports and statistics relating to the use of force, assaults, fights, and discovery of contraband
- reviewed disciplinary breaches
- reviewed selected closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage
- spoke to relevant staff
- observed the interactions between officers and inmates as well as the centre's approach to procedural security.

⁵⁶ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its Handbook on Dynamic Security and Prison Intelligence (December 2015) defines those security measures: Physical security is a fundamental aspect of prison security which includes the architecture of the prison buildings and physical aids to security such as locks, cameras, alarm systems (internal and external), and x-ray machines. Procedural security is a clearly understood set of procedures that describe how and when staff should perform certain security-related tasks, such as CCTV monitoring, searches, and inmate counts and movements. According to this handbook while physical and procedural security arrangements are essential, they are not sufficient in themselves. Security also depends on an alert group of staff who interact with, and know the prisoners, and are aware of what is happening in the prison. This concept is often described as dynamic security and is strengthened by positive staff-prisoner relationships, a sense of wellbeing among prisoners, and their engagement in constructive and purposeful activities.

2.3.1 Inmate discipline

Table 3 below provides the most common breaches of correctional centre regulations by inmates at South Coast CC in 2022.

Table 3: Most common breaches in South Coast CC in 2022⁵⁷

Breaches from January to December 2022	Number
Charges against good order	599
Fighting or assault	162
Property damage	152
Abusive behaviour	124
Drug charges	109

In addition to the above data, we requested a more detailed set of data for the month of February 2023 and analysed it to better understand the details of the breaches of correctional centre regulations at South Coast CC, as well as the adjudication process and the associated penalties.

In February 2023, South Coast CC recorded 113 misconduct-related incidents and in 110 cases inmates were found to be guilty. In response to these incidents, 141 charges were laid. The top five charges were: failing to comply with correctional centre routine (34), physical aggression (assault, fighting, or throwing an article) (18), disobeying directions (15), possession of drugs or drug implements (13), and property offences (property damage or stealing) (9).⁵⁸

We note that in five incidents inmates were charged with the ‘avoiding correctional centre routine’ offence. In defining this offence, section 43 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* (CAS regulation) provides that ‘an inmate must not pretend to be ill or injured for the purpose of avoiding the inmate’s obligations under the Act and this Regulation’. In four of these five cases, the conduct of the inmates did not correspond with this definition. While two of the incorrect charges were dismissed by the senior managers who heard the charges, the other two remained.

It was positive to see that in the month of February 2023, the majority of charges were heard promptly by the senior management. We observed that, overall, there was consistency in who heard the charges in each sector. However, the level of oversight varied amongst the sectors. For example, as mentioned above, some staff laid incorrect charges in response to certain incidents in different sectors. Those incidents were fairly similar; however, the senior management in one sector dismissed the incorrect charges while in another sector those charges remained unchanged.

As the figures above show the charge of ‘failing to comply with correctional centre routine’ was used disproportionately at South Coast CC. The incident reports we examined showed a lack of understanding by some staff of this charge and when it could be laid. Section 39 of the CAS regulation provides that complying with correctional centre routine means ‘an inmate must comply with the hours of work and general routine for the correctional centre or part of the correctional centre in which the inmate is detained’. There were some cases where an inmate’s conduct showed non-compliance with the hours of work or formal routine of the centre and therefore this charge was reasonable. However, in multiple cases, this was not the case.

Of most concern was that on many occasions this charge was added to another charge. This meant inmates were charged with two or more offences as a result of one incident. They included multiple cases of inmates being charged with both ‘failing to comply with correctional centre routine’ and ‘disobeying a direction’⁵⁹ for wearing a hat or a white singlet or instances when inmates were charged with both ‘failing to attend muster’ and ‘failing to comply with correctional centre routine’ as a result of missing a muster.

⁵⁷ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 3 April 2023.

⁵⁸ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 18 April and 10 May 2023.

⁵⁹ This charge is being referred to as ‘charges against good order’ in the data provided by CSNSW and presented in table 3.

This issue is not unique to South Coast CC and was identified in our previous inspections, including the inspection of Cessnock CC⁶⁰ and Mid North Coast CC.⁶¹ It was also highlighted as a key finding of the NSW Ombudsman following an own motion investigation into the administration of the NSW inmate disciplinary system. In relation to this issue, the NSW Ombudsman observed that

Inmates are regularly being charged under general 'catch-all' offences – typically a 'failure to comply with correctional centre routine' or a 'disobey direction' – instead of a charge that specifically matches the reported misconduct. The offence of 'failure to comply with correctional centre routine' is regularly misused as it is only applicable where an inmate has failed to comply with the hours of work or with the formally determined general routine for the centre as set by the governor under CAS Regulation cl 37.⁶²

The NSW Ombudsman also highlighted advice from Senior Counsel that laying multiple charges for one conduct can circumvent the limitations under section 53 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* (the CAS Act) to impose only one penalty for an offence.⁶³ In the examples provided above, this means an inmate who does not attend a muster cannot be charged with both 'failing to attend muster' and 'failing to comply with correctional centre routine'.

The universality of these findings shows a systemic gap in knowledge and a lack of guidance for staff on how to select the right charges in response to offences in custody. This needs to be remedied as soon as possible to ensure the inmate discipline process is in line with policy and legislation.

We were also concerned to see that a large number of inmates were being charged and penalised for wearing a hat or for not making their beds. This was not only the case in the maximum security area but also in the minimum security sector, where the focus should be on reintegration and deinstitutionalisation of inmates in preparation for their release. We could not find any mention of the requirement for inmates to not wear a hat in the accommodation common areas in the inmate induction booklet. The only reference was that hats could not be worn during musters. The majority of the inmates who were charged for this conduct were penalised with seven, 14, or 28 days off buy-up. One man was locked in cell for two days because he wore a hat in the common area. These penalties are disproportionate to the conduct, and we do not consider them reasonable or lawful.

We were also greatly concerned to read in at least three incident reports that inmates were told that our inspection team would be checking the cameras 'looking out for inmates wearing a hat inside the wing'. This either shows a lack of understanding by staff of the role of our office or an attempt to force compliance by misrepresenting the reason for our inspection. Both of these are unacceptable.

At South Coast CC, withdrawing access to buy-ups was the most common penalty issued for breaches of correctional centre regulations. In half of the cases (57 out of 113 incidents), the penalty of 'off buy-up' was issued to inmates and this withdrawal of privilege lasted between seven to 56 days. Often in addition to the loss of buy-ups, inmates lost access to contact visits. An analysis of February 2023 disciplinary breaches shows that loss of contact visit was used in response to 27 incidents (with or without the loss of other privileges).

We note that the *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures* (COPP) recognises contact with family and friends as 'an integral and effective management tool' and therefore provides that inmates' contact visits and access to telephones 'should only be withdrawn as a last resort'.⁶⁴ This was not the case in South Coast CC. Further, while withdrawing access to buy-ups is a lawful punishment, we caution against the excessive use of this penalty as it can increase the risk of standover. Other common penalties issued in this period were confinement to cell (21 cases) and reprimand and caution (7 cases).⁶⁵

60 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Shortland Correctional Centre and Cessnock Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 90.

61 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 32.

62 NSW Ombudsman, *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres: A special report under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974* (Report, August 2024) 4.

63 NSW Ombudsman, *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres: A special report under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974* (Report, August 2024) 49.

64 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 14.1 Inmate discipline* (version 1.2, 9 August 2024) 15.

65 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 18 April and 10 May 2023.

In November 2024, in the response to our Mid North Coast CC inspection report, where we also identified issues with the inmate disciplinary process, CSNSW advised that a remediation plan was being developed to improve the inmate disciplinary process and committed to undertake substantive systemic reform following internal review of legislation, policy and practice.⁶⁶ CSNSW has confirmed that ‘a significant body of work in relation to reviewing inmate disciplinary processes’ continues to be in progress. CSNSW expects that this review will inform future training content which will cover all relevant aspects of the inmate disciplinary process.⁶⁷ We welcome these developments and continue to monitor this matter closely.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre conducts the inmate disciplinary process in line with policy and legislation.

2.3.2 Assaults and fights

From 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, there were three inmate assaults on staff at South Coast CC: two in February 2022 and one in March 2022. In the same period, there were 123 inmate-on-inmate assaults, with the highest number of assaults (20) in October 2022 and the lowest number (three) in November 2021.⁶⁸

In preparation for the inspection, we requested and reviewed comprehensive reports concerning violent incidents in a three-month period close to our inspection date. The reports showed that from 1 September 2022 to 1 December 2022, there was one assault on staff and 22 inmate-on-inmate assaults. There were also 17 incidents of inmates fighting. Most of the assaults were not witnessed by staff when they occurred but were identified later due to the victims having visible injuries or inmates disclosing that they had been assaulted.⁶⁹

2.3.3 Response to incidents

South Coast CC had an immediate action team (IAT) with 25 officers. The number of staff assigned to each shift was appropriate; however, we note that only two members of the IAT were female. We encourage South Coast CC to increase the gender diversity within this team.

The security operations group (SOG) provided additional support for incident response and search operations, when needed. In the 12 months leading to the inspection, the team also became responsible for facilitating training for custodial officers in the southern region of NSW.

We visited the SOG building during the inspection. It was positive to see that the team had access to live footage of all CCTV cameras which they could view prior to responding to incidents. While we observed the building to be of appropriate size for the number of SOG staff at that time, it was not suitable to accommodate a growing team and to store their equipment.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW completes a review of the building allocated to South Coast Correctional Centre’s security operations group, and ensures it is fit for purpose for the team’s current and future requirements.

Between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022, force was used 49 times at South Coast CC. The highest number of monthly incidents was reported in October 2022, when force was used nine times.⁷⁰

While we were on site, force was used to respond to two incidents. This included the deployment of chemical munitions to respond to a fight between two inmates. We requested and reviewed records, including all CCTV and body-worn camera footage, related to those incidents. Additionally, we requested the records related to the last incident that was referred by the management of South Coast CC to the Use of Force Committee. Our review of these records showed that, overall,

66 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 34.

67 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

68 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

69 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

70 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

staff responded professionally to the incidents and the use of force was proportionate to risk. The reports submitted to management after the incidents had all the necessary details. When senior staff reviewed the reports on the use of force and identified gaps in practice, local remedial actions were proposed.

2.3.4 Drugs and contraband

We also requested from South Coast CC the detailed incident reports concerning contraband finds in the period of 1 September to 1 December 2022. In that period, contraband was found on 54 occasions. In at least five of those occasions, multiple contraband items were found in one search. Gaol-made weapons were the most common contraband discovered in that period (20 out of 54 incidents). The second highest number of contraband items found in that period were tattoo equipment (11 out of 54 incidents). In that period and based on the documents provided to us by the centre, drugs were found on four occasions (all buprenorphine). Documents indicate that at least on seven occasions, drugs paraphernalia, primarily syringes, were found.⁷⁴

2.4 Rehabilitation

South Coast CC delivered several criminogenic and therapeutic programs as well as educational opportunities for inmates. They included the full suite of Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed (EQUIPS) programs, the Violent Offender Therapeutic Program (VOTP), and courses offered in two Intensive Learning Centres (ILCs). However, as we will explain in this section, several factors restricted the reach of these programs and the number of inmates who could benefit from them. Educational opportunities were not equally distributed across the centre and some groups of inmates had far fewer employment opportunities than others.

2.4.1 Programs

Table 4 provides the list of programs that CSNSW reported were delivered at South Coast CC in 2022. We note that this information does not include the High Intensity Sex Offender Program (HISOP). However, based on the information provided by South Coast CC and our conversations during the inspection, we understood this program was delivered in 2022 as a 9-month pilot.

South Coast CC had an education and programs space in Sector 1, a programs building in Sector 3, and a HPU in Sector 5. At the time of our inspection, a new building in Sector 1 was under construction where the centre planned to deliver the Short Sentence Intensive Program (SSIP). When we visited South Coast CC in June 2024, this building was complete but as SSIP was no longer being offered,⁷⁵ the centre was delivering some of the EQUIPS programs from this location. It is hoped that the addition of this programs space has addressed some of the issues discussed in this section.

Building in Sector 1- under construction (2023)



Building in Sector 1- completed (2024)



At the time of the inspection, two OS&P teams operated at the centre. One team was responsible for the delivery of programs in Sectors 1 and 4. It had one MOSP, two services and programs team leaders (SAPTLs), and 12 SAPOs. The second team was responsible for the delivery of programs in Sectors 2, 3, and 5. It had one MOSP, two SAPTLs, and 12 SAPOs. It was positive to see that this team had an Aboriginal identified SAPO position and had recruited a suitable candidate a few months prior to the inspection. This team was divided into two smaller teams, each with one SAPTL and six SAPOs. One of these teams focused on the delivery of HPU programs in Sector 5 and the other one focused on the delivery of non-HPU programs in Sectors 2, 3, and 5.

⁷⁵ On 17 October 2024, the Deputy Commissioner of Strategy and Governance officially approved the closure of the SSIP and the development of a new strategy for individuals serving short sentences. The “SSIP buildings” at Cessnock and South Coast Correctional Centres were directed to continue to be utilised for the purposes of delivering services and programs aimed at reducing reoffending. (Director, Offender Transformation Memorandum – 09/2024).

Table 4: Programs delivered by CSNSW at South Coast CC in 2022⁷⁶

Program name	Number of programs	Participants	Inmates completing programs	Completion rate
HIPU	N/A	84	65	77%
SSIP	N/A	122	38	31%
CONNECT (excluding those who participated as part of a HIPU or SSIP)	2	13	5	38%
CONNECT (as part of HIPU)	7	73	67	92%
CONNECT (as part of SSIP)	6	53	38	72%
Rolling CONNECT	0	0	0	N/A
EQUIPS Foundation ⁷⁷	13	129	114	88%
EQUIPS Addiction ⁷⁸	11	87	70	80%
EQUIPS Aggression ⁷⁹	11	92	82	89%
EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence ⁸⁰	5	47	42	89%
Rolling EQUIPS	1	47	31	66%
Real Understanding of Self-Help (RUSH) (delivered outside of the HIPU or SSIP)	4	32	22	69%
Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening (delivered outside of the HIPU or SSIP)	10	127	51	40%
VOTP ⁸¹	N/A	9	9	100%

We observed that, in most sectors, successful delivery of programs was impeded by the limited availability of space. As mentioned, Sector 1 had an education and programs space which was called 'J block'. There were six multipurpose rooms in this area, each with a capacity of eight to 12 people. J block also had two art rooms, a library, two computer rooms, and six interview rooms. The interview rooms were not used for the delivery of programs but were used by non-custodial staff for interviews with inmates. While this appeared to be a reasonable space for the population of Sector 1, an internal rule that restricted the total number of inmates in J block to 45 people at any one time, significantly limited the use of this area and created competition over the available space.

J block was shared between nine disciplines. One of those disciplines was Sector 1 ILC that had access to two of the six multipurpose rooms. When South Coast CC opened, it had a purpose-built ILC inside the secure perimeter of the centre which was meant to be used for inmates in Sector 1. We visited that space in May 2018 when we undertook a thematic inspection focusing on the delivery of programs, employment, and education. However, the original ILC was later converted to a staff building and as a result, the ILC was moved to the J block, adding to the number of disciplines that were competing for the space.

⁷⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 15 September 2023 and 9 October 2023.

⁷⁷ Seven of these EQUIPS Foundation programs were delivered outside of HIPU and SSIP, with a total of 61 participants and 74% completion rate.

⁷⁸ The majority of EQUIPS Addiction programs were delivered as part of the SSIP and the HIPU. Three EQUIPS Addiction programs were offered outside of HIPU and SSIP, with a total of 26 participants and 65% completion rate.

⁷⁹ The majority of EQUIPS Aggression programs were delivered as part of the SSIP and the HIPU. Four EQUIPS Aggression programs were offered outside of HIPU and SSIP, with a total of 36 participants and 81% completion rate.

⁸⁰ The majority of EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence programs were delivered as part of the SSIP and the HIPU. One EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence program was offered outside of HIPU and SSIP, with 6 participants and 83% completion rate.

⁸¹ According to CSNSW: "VOTP programs differ significantly from the other programs [...]; both in their design and delivery. With the VOTP data, since an individual may be a participant for more than 18 months, the formula that defines a participant as combined completers and non-completers may be misleading. An individual may be neither a completer nor a non-completer but a participant continuing past the end date of each time period".

Education and programs space (J block)- Sector 1



Sector 2 had only one group room which needed to be shared by everyone who was delivering a service or a program for inmates in this sector. This significantly reduced the number of programs that were available to inmates in this sector.

The programs space in Sector 3 was appropriate. The sector had its own programs building with three group rooms. Education and psychology teams also used that building.

At the time of the inspection, Sector 5 did not have a group room for the delivery of non-HIPU programs and those programs were delivered from the HIPU building. According to CSNSW, a private room is now available for the delivery of non-HIPU programs.⁸² As mentioned, South Coast CC was delivering VOTP to inmates in Sector 5. This program was run by one of the psychology teams mainly from the library in the education precinct of Sector 5 as there was no dedicated space for the delivery of this program. This was not a good learning environment due to a lack of privacy. The foot traffic and movement in the education precinct were high and there were frequent announcements through the intercom that could be heard from the library.

Using the library as a program space also inhibited other inmates' access to it. This was particularly a challenge when the psychology team ran the VOTP sessions in the afternoons as this was the only time that inmates could access the library in Sector 5. While reportedly HIPU was at times being used as an alternative space for the delivery of VOTP, the rooms in the HIPU building were not considered appropriate for this purpose as they were too small.

It was positive to see that every inmate who participated in VOTP in 2022 completed this program. The team that delivered this program had a staff profile of five psychologists.⁸³ These staff ideally needed to be a specialist psychologist. However, South Coast CC was facing challenges in recruiting for these positions and at the time of the inspection, three of the psychology positions were vacant. The length of time it takes CSNSW to finalise recruitment was identified as one of the main barriers.

While the remuneration for specialist psychologists was in line with longer-serving psychologists and senior psychologists in the community, a specialist psychologist is required to have a postgraduate degree in a specialist area, specialist knowledge, and experience.⁸⁴ To be able to attract new recruits and retain the current staff who work in these roles, CSNSW needs to ensure the remuneration it offers is in line with the level of expertise it requires.

We understood that as a result of difficulties with recruiting psychologists, the team at South Coast CC recruited program practitioners instead. However, those practitioners could not undertake all the required work, including assessments and some of the reporting at the end of the programs.

82 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

83 This team is separate from the team that provides psychology services. Further information about the latter will be provided in section 7.2 (psychology services).

84 See *Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award*.

2.4.2 Employment

The business units operating at South Coast CC at the time of the inspection were:

- Furniture (two workshops)
- Food Services
- Rations (two business units: decanting and packing)
- Facilities maintenance
- Laundry (internal and external)
- Textiles

Inmates could also work in internal service industries, such as internal and external grounds maintenance, hygiene, and recycling. A small number of inmates from Sector 5 were able to participate in community projects.

The number of employment opportunities available to inmates varied by sector, with minimum security inmates who lived in Sectors 3 and 5 having the lowest rate of employment. During the inspection, these two sectors accommodated more than half of the population of South Coast CC. The lack of sufficient employment for such a large population was in contrast to how South Coast CC viewed itself, which was a 'working jail'.

Some of the employment opportunities, such as those offered in the furniture and textiles business units, were meaningful and engaging and helped people develop new skills. Inmates reported enjoying the work as the output was quality products. Conversely, work in some other business units was mundane and provided little opportunities for skills development. For example, inmates who worked in rations business units in Sectors 1 and 2 prepared rations packs for internal and external customers. This work included putting sugar, tea, cereal, and other supplies in small packs throughout the day. This offered very few opportunities for gaining new skills which could improve employability upon release. The repetitive and menial nature of the job could also lead to boredom and tension amongst the workers.

Staff acknowledged that it was much easier to motivate people to work and to remain engaged when the employment was meaningful. However, South Coast CC was limited in reassigning interested inmates to a different business unit as specific pods or sectors were often assigned to a specific business unit and if an inmate wished to change their employment, they needed to change their housing location too.

We were advised that inmates who refused to work were dismissed from work and charged with the offence of 'failing to comply with correctional centre routine'. They would receive a new offer of work after 14 days which was usually in the same workplace due to limited opportunity for changing industries. An analysis of the breaches of the correctional centre regulations in February 2023 showed that in that month three inmates were charged as they refused to work. Two were charged with 'failing to comply with correctional centre routine' and one was charged with 'disobeying directions'.

All three inmates received the penalty of 14 days off buy-up. One also lost access to contact visits for the same period of time. Concerningly, one of the three inmates also lost access to 'yard money', the weekly payment paid to unemployed inmates. Section 53 of the CAS Act permits as the penalty the 'cancellation of any right to receive payments under section 7 for up to 14 days, but to the extent only to which those payments are additional to the payments made at the base rate to inmates generally or to inmates of a class to which the inmate belongs'. We do not believe this allows for the cancellation of the base rate payments that an unemployed inmate receives. We note that CSNSW maintains that this penalty, which is based on CSI policy, is 'consistent with the legislative provisions'.⁸⁵ We recommend CSNSW obtain legal advice on its ability to penalise inmates by not paying the base rate allowance. This allowance is paid to assist inmates to make telephone calls and buy basic toiletries.

85 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

We observed that remand inmates had very few employment opportunities. While inmates on remand are not required to work, the ICS standards and CSNSW policy encourage availability of work for remandees who express a desire to work.⁸⁶ Several remand inmates expressed to us their desire to work and were disappointed by the lack of available opportunities.

We encourage CSNSW to increase the number of employment opportunities at South Coast CC for remand inmates, especially as this centre acts as an important remand and reception centre for the south coast of NSW. We note, however, that this should be done with full consideration of the needs of remand inmates. They should be given a real choice and should be able to decline to work without facing adverse consequences. Further, the engagement of remand inmates in work needs to be properly balanced against their need to have enough time to work with their legal representatives and prepare for their court appearances.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW obtains legal advice on its ability to penalise inmates by not paying the base rate allowance.

2.4.3 Education

South Coast CC had two education teams. One team provided services to inmates in Sectors 1 and 2 and had one education services coordinator (ESC) and two assessment and planning officers (APO). The other team provided services to inmates in Sectors 3 and 5 and had one ESC and one APO.

The centre had two ILCs. One was in J block of Sector 1, having been moved there from its original purpose-built space. We found that it had limited resources. The second ILC was in Sector 5 and had appropriate resources. Each ILC had the capacity for 20 students. South Coast CC had the highest rate of ILC participation compared to other correctional centres we visited in this series of inspections.⁸⁷ However, at the time of the inspection, there was a stark contrast between the number of students at the ILCs in Sector 1 and Sector 5. At that time, six or seven inmates were participating in Sector 1 ILC, while 22 inmates were studying at the ILC in Sector 5.

Table 5: Education and training offered at South Coast CC from January to June 2023⁸⁸

Program type	Enrolment
Foundational Skills Program (various levels, inclusive of LLN and Digital Literacy)	202
Vocational training program (VTP) ⁸⁹ – Cleaning Operations	32
VTP-Painting	31
VTP-Construction	12
Workplace training (WPT) ⁹⁰ -First Aid	50
WPT – Forklift	12
WPT-Food safety	11
WPT -White Card	7

Educational opportunities provided at South Coast CC for both sentenced and unsentenced inmates were limited. Data provided by South Coast CC showed that in the period between 1 November 2021 and 30 October 2022, those opportunities were mainly limited to Foundation Skills Programs (which consists of Digital Literacy and Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN)). No inmates in Sectors 1, 2, 3, and 5 participated in a traineeship and the vocational training opportunities provided to the

⁸⁶ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standard 5.2; Corrective Services Industries, *Inmate Incentive Allowance Framework* (5 February 2024) 11.

⁸⁷ Centres inspected in this series were Wellington Correctional Centre, South Coast Correctional Centre, and Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. When we inspected Wellington Correctional Centre, its ILC had only three students. At the time of the inspection, Mid North Coast Correctional Centre's ILC had 17 students.

⁸⁸ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 December 2023.

⁸⁹ Corrective Services NSW defines Vocational Training Program (VTP) as programs that aim to develop skills and allow inmates to attain recognised trade qualifications.

⁹⁰ Corrective Services NSW defines Workplace Training or Licences (WPT) as associated programs which include the use of a functional licence.

inmates in most of these accommodation areas (except for Sector 5) were limited.⁹¹

South Coast CC had working relationships with a few training providers. While compared to other correctional centres we inspected in this series of inspections, South Coast CC had fewer issues with the availability of trainers (most likely due to its proximity to Sydney), delivery of some of the courses was still affected by a lack of access to trainers.

Data obtained from CSNSW showed that between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, no students commenced distance education at South Coast CC.⁹² Documents provided by South Coast CC referred to a number of inmates who were engaged in distance education in the period between 1 November 2021 and 31 October 2022. Those inmates were in Sectors 3, 4, and 5 and were doing courses in fine arts, business, and the Tertiary Preparation Program.⁹³ We understood these inmates had commenced their studies in other correctional centres and were supported to continue when they were transferred to South Coast CC.

During the inspection, we saw an inmate who was learning design software. This was a positive initiative that provided that inmate with employable skills. However, often the real potential of such initiatives is not realised as they are limited in their reach and are usually dependent on one staff member who creates and oversees the program. South Coast CC is commended for supporting this program but should work on expanding such opportunities.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases access to education for all inmates (sentenced and unsentenced) at South Coast Correctional Centre.

2.4.4 Case planning and management

Across correctional centres in NSW, case management units (CMUs) are responsible for providing case management to all inmates serving custodial sentences of three months or more. Case management consists of assessment, case planning, and support. Staff have 28 days to complete an assessment. Case plans need to be developed and approved within 42 days of sentencing. They include a range of interventions (such as programs, work, and education) which target each inmate's identified needs and causes of their offending. Case plans are not prepared for inmates on remand.

At the time of the inspection, the CMU in South Coast CC had three senior case management officers and 11 case management officers. This was in line with the approved staffing profile of the team. None of those positions were identified Aboriginal positions and none of the staff at the CMU identified as Aboriginal at the time of the inspection. South Coast CC continued to have a large number of Aboriginal inmates. In the months prior to the inspection and in the week of the inspection, around 30% of the inmates at South Coast CC were Aboriginal. As the primary focus of staff in the CMU is on identifying inmates' needs and the interventions that could address them, we believe it is important that the CMU has at least one Aboriginal identified position.

We observed the CMU to be working well. The case managers had a good level of access to inmates and good working relationships with different groups of non-custodial staff, including with the OS&P, education, psychology, and Community Corrections teams.

Based on the information provided by CSNSW, of 772 inmates held at South Coast CC on 31 October 2022, 135 were not eligible for a case plan as they were either on remand or serving sentences of less than three months. Of the remaining 637 eligible inmates, 522 (or 82%) had a current case plan. The rest (18%) did not have a case plan, although it was likely that some of the inmates in this group were still within the 42-day window that the CMU had to develop a case plan.⁹⁴

91 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

92 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 December 2023.

93 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

94 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

The monthly movement of inmates to and from South Coast CC was high. This meant the CMU needed to continually complete case plans for newly arrived inmates without having enough time to focus on the interventions they had identified for other inmates. In many instances inmates would leave South Coast CC for another centre shortly after the completion of their case plans.

We refer back to the discussions in the reports published after our inspection of Wellington CC⁹⁵ and Mid North Coast CC,⁹⁶ where we recommended that the case management key performance indicators (KPIs) measure outcome and quality of work rather than solely the output and the amount of work that was done. We note CSNSW's advice in March 2024 that it was transitioning to such KPIs, and they would be introduced in 2024. This is still outstanding.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW introduces an Aboriginal identified position to the case management unit of South Coast Correctional Centre.

2.5 Contact with family and friends

Inmates in NSW correctional centres can maintain contact with their family and friends by telephone, mail, in-person visits, or virtual visits.

2.5.1 In-person visits

At the time of the inspection and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some restrictions on in-person social visits remained in place. All visitors were required to undertake a rapid antigen test before a visit and all inmates and all visitors aged five years and over needed to wear a face mask. Consumption of food and drink and use of children's play areas during visits were once again permitted but remained at the discretion of local management.⁹⁷ A few days prior to our inspection, a new Commissioner's Instruction was published which removed the requirement for inmates to be triple vaccinated against COVID-19 to receive in-person visits.⁹⁸

We note that a number of restrictions which applied to in-person visits at the time of the inspection continue at the time of writing this report. They include limiting the in-person social visits to one hour in duration (noting that the governor of a centre has the discretion to grant extended visits) and limiting the maximum number of visitors per inmate to six, including children of any age. The maximum number of adult visitors remains limited to four people.⁹⁹

Previously, in-person visits at South Coast CC were held on both Saturdays and Sundays. However, when in-person visits were suspended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and then resumed, they were reduced to one day a week only, which was on Sundays. This remains the case at the time of writing.

When we inspected South Coast CC in February 2023, all inmates across all security classifications had access to only one hour of in-person visits. This continues to be the case. It is important that correctional centres return visits to pre-pandemic conditions as much as possible. Increasing the number of days remand inmates can receive in-person visits is necessary to comply with regulations. Allowing minimum security inmates to have access to extended visits is important to prepare those inmates for release and return to the community.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases the number of days South Coast Correctional Centre facilitates in-person visits.

At the time of the inspection, in-person social visits at South Coast CC were conducted in two rooms in the main visits area. Minimum security inmates in Sector 5 used the visits area in that sector. Both

95 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Wellington Correctional Centre 2022* (Report, 2024) 28.

96 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 42.

97 On 27 March 2023, the requirement for visitors to undertake a rapid antigen test before a visit was removed. On 3 September 2023, the requirement for the visitors to wear face masks was removed. For a timeline of restrictions on in-person social visits in adult custody (Report, 2023) 28-29.

98 Commissioner's Instruction 2023/04.

99 Based on the Commissioner's Instruction issued on 3 September 2023 (Commissioner's Instruction 2023/14).

rooms in the main visits area had fixed stools and tables while the Sector 5 visits area had a more relaxed environment with chairs and tables that could be moved and an indoor play area for children.

Large visits room in the main visits area



Small visits room in the main visits area



Sector 5 visits area



All visits areas were operating at reduced capacity. The large room of the main visits area accommodated up to 30 inmates and their visitors and the small room accommodated up to eight inmates and their visitors. It was of concern to see that Sector 5 visits area only accommodated four inmates and their visitors in each session. The in-person visits in Sector 5 were conducted across four sessions, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. That meant in an accommodation area with capacity for 200 people, only 16 inmates could have visitors on any given week. This was far below the capacity of the visits room in this accommodation area.

A review of the visits data for the period of 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023 showed that on most days (and the entire month of February) all visit sessions for inmates in Sector 5 were fully booked. During the inspection, several inmates in Sector 5 spoke about their difficulty in receiving in-person visits due to the limited number of available places. The inadequate number of available places for in-person visits in Sector 5 was discussed with the governor of South Coast CC and we were advised that following our inspection the number of places was increased significantly.

We observed the in-person visits during the inspection. All visitors had to undertake a rapid antigen test and if negative, they could proceed to the main gatehouse screening area where they were registered by the correctional officers on duty. Visitors to inmates in Sector 5 were also processed at the main gatehouse. Visitors needed to provide proof of identity and South Coast CC did not accept NSW digital driver licences at that time. We saw this as an issue that could restrict access, especially as this restriction was not communicated to visitors until they reached the centre (via a poster at the

main gatehouse). Shortly after the inspection, a Deputy Commissioner's Memorandum was issued which advised that CSNSW would accept digital licences as a valid form of identification. This ensured consistency of practice across all NSW correctional centres.

We observed the staff facilitating the visits to be professional and courteous and some of the regular visitors who spoke to us reported that they were usually treated well. It was positive to see that if a visitor could not make it to their in-person session due to legitimate reasons, they were given the option of having the visit that day via a tablet even though tablet visits were usually on Saturdays.

Inmates and their visitors could purchase food and drinks from the vending machines in the visits areas and it was positive to see that inmates were able to wear prison clothing to visits instead of overalls. It is important that in-person visits are accessible for people who do not have access to a privately owned vehicle. On Sundays, a public bus stops at South Coast CC in the morning and afternoon. When we observed the in-person visits, we were pleased to see that some visitors were arriving by bus, with the bus stop located just outside the entrance of the centre.

At the time of the inspection, South Coast CC had operational body scanners in the gatehouse for the visitors and in the visits area for inmates. Staff were observed to be confident using the scanners and interpreting the images. It is in part because South Coast CC was one of the early adopters of body scanners.

Inmates in Sectors 1,2, and 3 were body scanned before and after a contact visit. We note that this practice is not supported by the COPP and contradicted South Coast CC's own Local Operating Procedure (LOP), both of which provide that inmates should be body scanned in circumstances when strip searching is routine, such as 'after a contact visit'.¹⁰⁰ Inmates in Sector 5 were strip searched after the completion of contact visits.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre procedures for body scanning inmates who receive in-person visits is compliant with policy.

101

2.5.2 Virtual visits

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, for much of 2020 and 2021, in-person social visits to inmates in NSW correctional centres were either stopped entirely or were significantly restricted. Consequently, CSNSW increased the availability of virtual visits via audio visual link (AVL) or tablets.

Similar to all other correctional centres we visited recently, the introduction of virtual visits was positively received by inmates at South Coast CC. We heard this was particularly beneficial for the inmates whose family lived a long distance from South Coast CC or were overseas, as well as for those with young children who might not be comfortable visiting a correctional centre.

Inmates of all classifications at South Coast CC could have virtual social visits on Saturdays. The first visit started at 9am and the last visit for most sectors ended at 2.05pm. There were seven sessions planned for this time period. The planning was done well, as 35 minutes was allocated to each session and there was an additional 10-minute break between sessions. This ensured virtual visits lasted for at least 30 minutes as per the CAS regulations. Inmates in Sector 5 had access to an additional session from 2.15pm to 2.50pm.

In the first two months of 2023, South Coast CC organised an average of 170 video visits per week. Inmates in Sector 1 had access to 14 tablets (one of which was set aside for those in G pod). They could use the non-contact visit booths and the visits area to connect with their visitors via tablets. Two tablets were allocated to inmates in Sector 2, five tablets to those in Sector 3, and six tablets to inmates in Sector 5.

¹⁰⁰ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 17.5 Body scanning* (version 1.9, 17 July 2025) 12.

¹⁰¹ The recommendation has been partially redacted in accordance with section 15(3) of the ICS Act. We note that this recommendation is in line with previous recommendations the ICS has made. See, for example: Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Kirkconnell Correctional Centre* (Report, 2024) 8 and Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Geoffrey Pearce Correctional Centre 2022* (Report, 2024) 6.

The number of tablets allocated to inmates in Sector 2 was insufficient. While this accommodation area is the smallest in South Coast CC, allocation of two tablets was unlikely to meet the demand for video visits in this sector. We noted that this issue was repeatedly raised at Sector 2's inmate development committee (IDC) meetings.

We acknowledge that visits data for the period of 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023 showed a degree of flexibility employed by staff at South Coast CC where at times an extra tablet was allocated to inmates in Sector 2 for one session. However, we saw a need for the permanent addition of more tablets to Sector 2 to address the inmates' need to stay in contact with family and friends. During the inspection we were advised that two extra tablets had been approved for Sector 2 and understand they were delivered to this accommodation area following the inspection.¹⁰² CSNSW has also acknowledged the need for a review to enhance visits in Sector 2.¹⁰³

2.5.3 Inmate tablets and phone calls

Tablets enable inmates to access pre-approved entertainment content (free and paid) and visit some pre-approved government agency websites such as Legal Aid. They also allow inmates to make phone calls to family and friends from the privacy of their cells.

Inmates at South Coast CC first gained access to tablets 18 months prior to our inspection so those devices had become a part of the centre routine by the time we inspected this centre. Inmates received their tablet when they were locked in their cells in the afternoon and had to return it the next morning. All inmates who spoke to us about tablets considered their addition a positive development and particularly appreciated the opportunity to use their tablets to make phone calls. We were also pleased to hear about upcoming plans to enable inmates to complete forms (for example request forms) via tablets.

While inmate tablets make calling family and friends easier and reduce the competition over communal telephones, they do not address the main barrier currently associated with staying in contact with one's social support. This barrier, as we explained in detail in our reports following the inspection of Wellington CC¹⁰⁴ and Mid North Coast CC,¹⁰⁵ is the high cost of making phone calls. We have made recommendations previously, urging CSNSW to seek measures to reduce this cost and to make phone calls more accessible to all inmates across NSW. We welcome CSNSW's response that it is 'currently working with the service provider to implement a contract variation that delivers cost savings to inmates'.¹⁰⁶

Inmates had access to free-to-air TV channels via an application on their tablets that cost \$2.53 per month. However, the tablets were not available during the day and had limitations in terms of battery life and reception. Inmates could purchase a 34cm (14 inch) digital TV for \$290.

South Coast CC also had a TV rental scheme. Inmates paid \$5 per week to rent a TV and signed an agreement that they would pay the full replacement cost of the TV and the aerial cable if either of these were damaged. Information provided by South Coast CC suggested that the centre had a sufficient number of televisions. However, 17 inmates in Sector 5 were on a waitlist to rent a TV and the centre was considering whether additional televisions needed to be purchased to reduce the waitlist. Many inmates who spoke to us, particularly those who were unable to access employment, found the cost of purchasing or renting a TV prohibitive.

¹⁰² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁰³ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Wellington Correctional Centre 2022* (Report, 2024) 34.

¹⁰⁵ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 52-53.

¹⁰⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

2.5.4 Inmate mail

As explained in several of our reports,¹⁰⁷ amendments made to the CAS regulation in mid-2020 and subsequently to the COPP, significantly changed the way inmate mail is handled in NSW correctional centres. These amendments require that all non-privileged mail (including cards and children's drawings) that do not contain prohibited goods, be photocopied in colour. These copies can be provided to inmates, while the original mail is destroyed. Photographs can be issued to inmates if they are not tampered with and are not prohibited goods or otherwise inappropriate to issue to the inmate.¹⁰⁸

During the inspection as well as in our post-inspection visit to South Coast CC in June 2024, we received feedback relating to the handling of mail that was similar to the complaints we received in all of our recent inspections. They included complaints that the photocopied mail was often of poor quality and/or incomplete.

We highlight the recommendations made in our previous reports that CSNSW ensure the lawfulness of destroying original inmate mail and that this practice nonetheless ceases. Where there is no evidence of contraband, original mail should be placed in an inmate's property.¹⁰⁹

2.6 Court appearances and access to legal representatives and resources

South Coast CC had a relatively new and purpose-built AVL building in Sector 1 which was staffed by three officers. It had six AVL suites for court appearances and two AVL suites for legal and professional appointments. We understood that depending on demand, those suites could be used interchangeably. There were also four phone lines that could be used for phone calls with legal representatives in that building. Some issues were reported in relation to the soundproofing of the suites. We observed that despite efforts to ensure the suites were soundproof, some noise from the front desk or holding cells could still be heard in the suites. Staff reported that they were trying to mitigate this issue by placing inmates with long court hearings in the suites furthest away from the front of the building, where the desk and holding cells were located.

G pod in Sector 1 that housed inmates who were subject to a segregated custody direction or were unable to mix with other inmates and were designated 'Protection Non-Association' (PRNA), had its own AVL suite. This was positive as it meant those inmates were not required to move to the AVL building. Sector 5 had two AVL suites, one for court appearances and one for legal and professional appointments. It did not have any holding cells.

The AVL building in Sector 1 had nine holding cells, some of which were large and could hold a maximum of eight inmates. 'Normal discipline' (mainstream) and SMAP (protection) inmates were held in the holding cells on opposite sides to ensure their separation.

Inmates who needed to appear before a court were moved to the AVL area and placed in holding cells at 9am. They were held there until confirmation was received from either the court or the inmate's lawyer that the inmate was no longer required. Those with a professional or a legal call/ AVL meeting were moved to the AVL building 30 minutes prior to their scheduled appointment and would leave as soon as the meeting ended.

At the time of the inspection, South Coast CC reported a high number of daily AVL appointments, averaging at around 60 appointments per day. When we visited South Coast CC again in June 2024, the centre was organising around 70 to 80 appointments a day¹¹⁰ as the number of remand

¹⁰⁷ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the response to COVID-19 in NSW custody* (Report, 2023) 86-88; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Silverwater Women's and Dillwynia Correctional Centres* (Report, 2023) 85-86; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Wellington Correctional Centre 2022* (Report, 2024) 34-35.

¹⁰⁸ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 8.1 Inmate Mail* (version 1.13, 17 July 2025) 5.

¹⁰⁹ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the response to COVID-19 in NSW custody* (Report, 2023) 15 and Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Silverwater Women's and Dillwynia Correctional Centres* (Report, 2023) 15.

¹¹⁰ On 14 June 2024, South Coast Correctional Centre reported that in the two-week period of 27 May 2024 to 7 June 2024, they organised 780 appointments (230 Court appearances and 550 professional appointments).

inmates had significantly increased. In June 2024, Sector 4 was once again operational and supplied three additional AVL suites to the centre (one for court appearances and two for professional appointments). We inquired how long the lawyers needed to wait to secure an AVL appointment with their clients. South Coast CC reported that if the lawyers were willing to speak to their clients by phone, the appointment could be arranged in one day. However, 'longer appointments could take a few days'.¹¹¹

Inmates on remand and inmates who are appealing their sentences must be provided with access to up-to-date Australian legislation and sentencing information. This is ordinarily provided through the CSNSW Legal Info Portal, a secure internal CSNSW website which is available on networked 'green' computers.

Inmates should also have access to computers that are not networked ('blue' or 'red' computers) to view their legal material supplied on a removable storage device by their legal representative. This is the preferred method of supplying inmates with legal material as there are privacy concerns around inmates storing or reading paper documents in their cells. Inmates should also be able to access non-networked computers to prepare legal documentation.¹¹²

It was positive to see that South Coast CC provided facilities for accessing legal resources and documents. There were eight 'green computers' in the AVL building that inmates could book and use. Pleasingly, there was also a safe where the legal material supplied on a removable storage device could be kept. However, some logistical issues were reported in relation to accessing both networked and non-networked computers as they were in different locations. This was particularly important for the inmates who were representing themselves as they needed both types of computers to do legal research and prepare legal documentation.

2.7 Prisoner advocacy and complaints

2.7.1 Complaint mechanisms

At the time of the inspection, inmates at South Coast CC who wanted to raise an enquiry or complaint that could not be resolved locally, had access to the Corrective Services Support Line (CSSL), a free telephone support service for inmates in all correctional centres in NSW. Inmates could also access a number of external agencies via the free telephone call system, including the NSW Ombudsman, the Health Care Complaints Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), Legal Aid NSW, and Aboriginal Legal Service.

South Coast CC has Official Visitors who visit the centre on a regular basis to assist with the resolution of complaints at a local level. Official Visitors are independent monitors who regularly attend correctional centres to take inquiries and complaints from inmates and monitor the conditions of prisons and treatment of inmates.

The Official Visitor Program is managed by the ICS and the Official Visitors report every six months to the Inspector of Custodial Services and the Minister for Corrections. In 2022-2023, four Official Visitors were appointed to South Coast CC. This included an Aboriginal Official Visitor.

Prior to the inspection and to understand the main issues of concern for inmates at South Coast CC, we reviewed the reports from the Official Visitors for the six months to 31 December 2022. Daily routine of the centre (particularly the negative impacts of frequent lockdowns on daily routines), significant wait times to access some medical services, unfair treatment, and issues related to property were the main issues of concern. This was in line with the main complaints received by the NSW Ombudsman. In the year 2022, the highest number of complaints received by the NSW Ombudsman in relation to South Coast CC related to the daily routine of the centre, followed by unfair discipline and issues related to property.

111 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 14 June 2024.

112 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 20.8 Inmate access to legal resources* (version 1.2, 4 November 2021).

2.7.2 Inmate development committee

Each correctional centre is required to establish a staff-inmate forum at which inmates can draw attention to issues of concern before they become the source of complaints. IDCs provide such forums. They allow inmates to raise with the centre management, via nominated inmate representatives, issues of concern regarding services, programs, and activities.¹¹³

South Coast CC had separate monthly IDCs for each sector which were held relatively regularly. We were unable to observe an IDC meeting during the inspection. However, we met with the IDC delegates of all sectors and reviewed the minutes of the meetings that were held from June to November 2022. They suggested the meetings were well-attended by senior management, including often by the governor of the centre. Agendas were distributed prior to the meetings and the minutes provided were clear.

In Sector 1, pods A, B, C, and D were each represented by one delegate, one of whom was Aboriginal. F pod (which housed new reception inmates and some of the remand inmates), and E pod (which housed SMAP inmates) did not have a delegate, and it was unclear to us how the inmates in these accommodation areas raised their concerns and requests. Sector 2 had two delegates, one of whom was Aboriginal. Sector 3 had two delegates, and in Sector 5 each of the four accommodation areas had one delegate. Sector 5 had an additional delegate who was an Aboriginal delegate.

We understood that the delegates needed to first submit the issues and requests raised by the inmates they represented to the functional manager in charge of their sector. The functional managers then made the final decision about the issues that needed to be discussed in the IDC. We received mixed feedback about this approach. Some delegates found it useful as they believed it removed the need to discuss the issues that could be addressed at the local level by the functional manager and made sure the IDC meetings were productive. Other delegates, however, saw it as an arbitrary process that resulted in reasonable requests being dismissed, neither addressed at the local level nor discussed at the IDC meeting. It is likely that both viewpoints were valid as the effectiveness of this process ultimately depended on the individual functional managers and how they worked with the delegates.

There were also reports that some of the IDC meetings were short and rushed and had a 'tick a box' approach where most requests were dismissed or delegated back to the functional manager of the accommodation area. We observed that in some accommodation areas, these issues had eroded trust in the effectiveness of the IDCs.

2.8 Reception and release

South Coast CC receives new inmate receptions, inmates transferred from other correctional centres, and inmates transiting between correctional centres. In the 12 months to February 2023, South Coast CC received 160 new inmate receptions and 1,665 inmates who were transferred from other correctional centres (an average of approximately 13 and 139 inmates per month, respectively). During the same period, 839 inmates were released from the centre, an average of approximately 70 releases per month.¹¹⁴

2.8.1 Reception and induction

Reception

During the inspection, we observed the reception process and saw the arrival of inmates to South Coast CC. We found the staff working in the reception area to be efficient and confident in performing their tasks. The inmates were treated well and even though the area was busy, with new inmates arriving and some inmates waiting for a transfer to another correctional centre, the interactions were calm, and the procedures were followed in an orderly manner.

¹¹³ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 9.8 Inmate Development Committee* (version 1.2, 12 March 2020) 4.

¹¹⁴ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Movements Report* (December 2022 and December 2023).

On the day we observed the reception process, the transport vehicle arrived at South Coast CC shortly after 2pm. All newly received inmates were temperature checked by a nurse as they disembarked the vehicle. They were then searched by a metal detector and seen by two custodial officers who conducted initial screening interviews with each inmate before placing them in a holding cell. SMAP inmates were placed in single holding cells while other inmates were placed together. Inmates were told about the disciplinary rules upon reception, which was positive. However, in our opinion, they were not given sufficient time to read the relevant forms they needed to sign.

All incoming inmates were searched using the body scanner. During this process, one inmate was found to have contraband secreted internally and was moved to a dry cell. After all incoming inmates were searched, they were seen by a nurse for health screening. This screening was completed in a room that had privacy. Inmates were then given their linen, cutlery, and their lunch and dinner. They did not receive any clothing and did not have access to their property tubs. We understood they would receive those the day after arrival. This meant that apart from the clothes they were wearing, inmates had no fresh clothes that they could change into after an often long journey to South Coast CC.

Induction process

CSNSW's guidelines highlight the importance of induction for new reception inmates, stating that it can help inmates adapt to being in custody by providing information about the overall correctional system and the specific correctional centre they reside at. Induction should occur within 96 hours of an inmate entering the correctional centre and being screened.

Inmates who are not newly incarcerated but have been transferred from one correctional centre to another, should attend an orientation meeting. This meeting does not cover all the information that is included in the induction (for example, the information about the overall correctional system) and is not time-sensitive. Instead, it focuses on the local information about a specific correctional centre. Both induction and orientation sessions are delivered by the OS&P staff.¹¹⁵

We were unable to observe an induction session during the inspection. However, we reviewed the induction booklets that South Coast CC had provided us prior to the inspection. While South Coast CC had a LOP on reception procedures, this did not cover induction and there was no separate LOP on induction. The OS&P, however, provided us with documents detailing the induction process for new reception and transferred inmates which appeared to be in line with CSNSW's guidelines explained above.

South Coast CC provided us with a copy of the CSNSW handbook for male inmates (2019 edition) and a local information booklet (2021 edition) that it reported were provided to inmates at induction. The local information booklet was comprehensive but some of its information was outdated. This included the information about when in-person and video visit happened. There was also no mention of inmate tablets.

It is important that the information in these handbooks remains correct and up to date, as it can assist inmates in navigating life in a correctional centre. We acknowledge that frequent changes in a correctional centre's operation and routines can make it difficult to keep handbooks current. However, inmates should be able to rely on the local inmate handbook as a reliable, accurate, and up to date information source.

It was positive to see that Sector 3 had an additional information booklet that provided information about the sector-specific details such as the days inmate could submit various forms or wash their clothes and linen. The booklet provided up to date information about contact visits. We are unclear if other sectors had similar booklets.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre regularly reviews its induction material, including the local inmate handbook, to ensure information provided is accessible, current, and correct.

¹¹⁵ Corrective Services NSW, 'Reception, Screening, Induction & Orientation' (Web Page, undated, internal).

2.8.2 Searching

South Coast CC had body scanners in the reception room, visits area (for inmates who had in-person visits), and the gatehouse (for visitors). All body scanners were operational at the time of the inspection. The centre had 41 custodial officers who were trained and had active licences to use the body scanners. This equated to 19% of South Coast CC's custodial staff, which was insufficient.

We identified a number of issues relating to the use of body scanners at South Coast CC. As mentioned before, inmates who were receiving in-person visits were scanned twice: before and after the visit. This was not in line with CSNSW's policy on body scanning. Further, while the inmates arriving at South Coast CC were searched using a body scanner in the reception area, all inmates who were being transferred out of South Coast CC were strip searched. This was even though those inmates were in the same reception area as the incoming inmates, where a body scanner and staff who could operate the scanner were available.

South Coast CC had a LOP on body scanners which was not fully compliant with the COPP. The COPP states that

...inmates will be body scanned in circumstance where strip searching is routine, such as:

- **on reception:** on arrival from court, another correctional centre or from any other place where the inmate may have come into contact with the public or inmates from another correctional centre
- **on departure:** on arrival or on departure from a medical escort
- **after a contact visit:** after an in-person contact visit (where inmates are routinely body-scanned after contact visits, they may be permitted to wear standard correctional centre clothing during the visit, instead of overalls).

Inmates may also be body scanned as an alternative to a strip search in circumstances such as:

- before confinement to cell
- before placement in an assessment cell
- when suspected of carrying contraband.

Inmates may also be scanned prior to or following work at the discretion of the operating staff. Scanning under these circumstances should be limited to twice daily.¹¹⁶

When listing the circumstances for body scanning, South Coast CC's LOP omitted the reference to body scanning inmates upon departure from the centre and did not include the fundamental principle highlighted in the COPP that body scanners 'are to be used as an alternative to strip searching wherever practicable'.¹¹⁷ This led to the examples highlighted in the COPP (such as body scanning inmates on reception, after a contact visit, or before confinement to cell) being represented as the only circumstances under which inmates should be body scanned. This local procedure needs to be updated to make it clear that body scanning should always be the preferred option when it comes to searching inmates (wherever practicable), not just in certain circumstances.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures sufficient staff at South Coast Correctional Centre are trained to use the body scanners.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre's local operating procedure on the use of body scanners complies with the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures and the updated operating procedure is followed.

¹¹⁶ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 17.5 Body scanning* (version 1.9, 17 July 2025) 12.

¹¹⁷ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 17.5 Body scanning* (version 1.9, 17 July 2025) 5.

2.8.3 Clothing and bedding

We inspected the reception area of South Coast CC, where the clothing and bedding supplies were stored and noted that it was adequately stocked. However, a number of inmates who spoke to us reported that they did not receive their prescribed allocation of clothing or that the clothing given to them were in poor condition. We observed several inmates who were wearing worn out clothes, for example t-shirts with several holes in them. Further, as mentioned, the incoming inmates did not receive any clothing upon reception.

We acknowledge that since the inspection, the COPP has been updated and now provides clearer instructions about the clothing provided to inmates when they are transferred from one correctional centre to another. The COPP now states that ‘apart from the set of clothing the inmate wears on the day of transfer, all gaol issue clothing and linen remains at the sending centre for re-issue or disposal’.¹¹⁸ The COPP also provides for a minimum allocation of clothing to be issued at initial reception into custody and requires this quantity to be maintained throughout an inmate’s sentence.¹¹⁹ This makes it clear the receiving centre should provide clothing to a transferred inmate.

2.8.4 Release from custody

We observed the release of two minimum security inmates from custody. Both inmates were residing in Sector 5; however, they were walked to Sector 1’s reception area for release. This was of concern to us and one of the inmates was visibly distressed at being taken to the maximum security part of the prison. We raised this issue at the end of the inspection and were informed this was due to a lack of reception area in Sector 5 and insufficient storage space for the property of all inmates housed there. As a result, Sector 5 inmate property was stored in the main part of the prison and those inmates needed to be released from that location. While acknowledging this challenge, we find the current procedure problematic and encourage South Coast CC to find an alternative option for the release of minimum security inmates.

When the two inmates arrived in the reception area, one was placed in a holding cell while the correctional officer prepared the other inmate for release. It was positive to hear that the inmate had already been seen by a JH&FMHN nurse and was given his discharge medication.

We were pleased to see that the required paperwork had been organised ahead of time. However, the paperwork was also signed by the officer ahead of time which should not happen. This is because the signature by the custodial staff confirms that an inmate has received their property, including valuables and money held in their prisoner trust account. It also confirms that the inmate’s signature is witnessed by the custodial officer. These pre-release procedures happen with the inmate present and the forms should not be signed in advance. CSNSW advises that a directive has been sent out that should address this issue.¹²⁰

The staff member preparing the inmate for the release was courteous and professional. After the inmate changed into his own clothes and received his property including valuables, the custodial officer also read through the conditions of his parole for him. It was, therefore, disappointing to then observe some unprofessional remarks from another officer just before the inmate was released, indicating that the inmate would be incarcerated again. We shared our observations with South Coast CC’s governor at the end of the inspection and were advised that this had also been noted by the senior staff on duty and the officer in charge had been counselled and reminded of the professional behaviour expected.

It was unsatisfactory to see that the inmate’s belongings were provided to him in a plastic bag, and he was discharged through the vehicle sally port. Inmates should not be released through a vehicle entrance. This issue is not unique to South Coast CC and was identified in a number of other

118 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 1.5 Issuing correctional centre clothing and linen* (version 1.4, 22 June 2023) 7.

119 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 1.5 Issuing correctional centre clothing and linen* (version 1.4, 22 June 2023) 4.

120 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

inspections, including in the inspection of Mid North Coast CC.¹²¹ CSNSW should put in place clear guidelines to ensure inmates are released from custody in a dignified manner.

South Coast CC employed a few inmates to work in the reception area as 'sweepers'. Their main role was to clean the area, but they often assisted the custodial staff with other tasks, for example they opened the property of incoming inmates. When we were observing the release process, we noticed that the conversations with the inmate due to be released (where private information is discussed) was occurring within the hearing distance of the 'sweepers', creating privacy issues. Those inmate workers also had access to inmate transfer forms which contain confidential and personal information of inmates such as the prison they came from and their status (SMAP or mainstream). This should not happen.

An inmates belongings placed in a plastic bag ahead of his release



Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW provides guidelines to all correctional centres to ensure inmates are released from custody in a dignified manner.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW establishes an alternative option for the release of minimum security inmates in Sector 5 that does not include taking them back to the main part of the prison.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures inmates working in the reception areas of correctional centres do not have access to other inmates' property or confidential information.

¹²¹ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 59.

3 Sector 1 (maximum and medium security)

On 6 February 2023, the first day of our inspection, 264 men were held in Sector 1 of South Coast CC. Of those, 178 men were sentenced, 74 were on remand, and 12 were appealing their sentences. Around 35% of the inmates in this sector were Aboriginal.

Sector 1 was designed for inmates with a maximum security classification. However, at the time of the inspection, just over half (52%) of the inmates in this sector were classified as maximum security. At that time, around 46% of the inmates in this sector had a medium security classification. They included 83 sentenced inmates, 20 unsentenced inmates, and 18 inmates who were classified as E2 (a classification assigned to medium security inmates who commit an escape offence).¹²² We note that we saw no difference between the management regimes for maximum and medium security inmates, including no difference in the length of time they spent out of their cells.

There were also two minimum security inmates, three unclassified inmates, and two inmates with a life sentence accommodated in Sector 1.¹²³ According to CSNSW, minimum security inmates with a C1 security classification can at times be housed in Sector 1 until a bed is available in the minimum security accommodation areas. CSNSW advises that inmates with a C2 or C3 security classifications are not housed in Sector 1 (except for those placed in G pod on a segregation order or as a PRNA inmate).¹²⁴

3.1 Custody

3.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 1 was the largest accommodation area of South Coast CC and could hold up to 352 inmates across seven accommodation pods (A to G). Two of the pods, E and F, were split into two sides and each side had its own yard and common area. The rest of the pods were not split and had a larger front yard and a common area for all the inmates who shared the pod.

Table 6: Sector 1 pods¹²⁵

Pod	Capacity	Population
A	58	Mainstream remand inmates, unemployed
B	58	Mainstream sentenced inmates, employed
C	58	Mainstream sentenced inmates, employed
D	58	Mainstream sentenced inmates, employed
E	60	SMAP inmates, employed
F	60	F1 accommodated new reception inmates who needed to spend seven days in quarantine. F2 accommodated mainstream remand inmates. These inmates were unemployed.
G	28 ¹²⁶	Multipurpose unit

All pods in Sector 1 accommodated inmates across two levels. All cells had a shower, a toilet, a sink, and shelving and were either single occupancy or were shared by two inmates.

The infrastructure of Sector 1 was modern, and we found the common areas and yards clean and well-maintained. Sector 1 had a large area that accommodated the industries and an education and programs space (J block).

¹²² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

¹²³ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

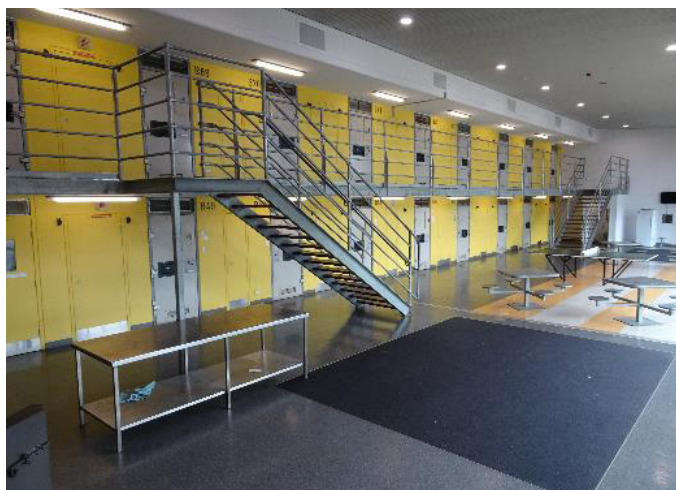
¹²⁴ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹²⁵ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

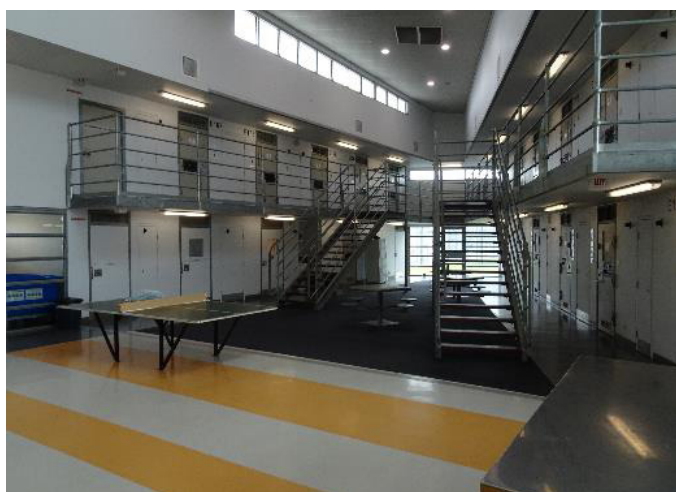
¹²⁶ The number of inmates who could be accommodated in G pod is not counted towards the total capacity of the sector.

We also saw a small makeshift officer's station outside the secure fencing that surrounded the pods. This station faced the yards of pods A to D and allowed the officer posted there to monitor the yards as well as the inmate movements. We found the structure of the officer's station to be rudimentary which did little more than provide the officers with shelter from the sun. We discussed this issue at the end of our inspection and were pleased to see during our visit to South Coast CC in June 2024 that this station had been upgraded to a small demountable building that provided more amenities for the staff.

Pod accommodation and common area (non-split) Pod yard (non-split)



Pod accommodation and common area (split) Pod yard (split)



3.1.2 Time out of cell

Sector 1 had the same structured day on weekdays and weekends. The rolling let-go commenced between 8.15am and 8.30am and the lock-in procedure commenced at 3pm. This provided around six and a half hours of time out of cell on normal operating days. We understood that inmate workers in E pod were let out of their cells and escorted to their workplace earlier, at around 8am. This was to reduce the chance of contact with other inmates on the way to work, given the SMAP status of the inmates in E pod at that time.

To determine inmates' access to time out of cell, we often look at the incidents of lockdown in a certain time period to find out the number of days an accommodation area did not operate according to its normal operating schedule. We asked South Coast CC for incident reports relating to lockdowns in the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 November 2022.

When reporting the incidents of lockdown, South Coast CC grouped several sectors and accommodation areas into 'cohorts' and reported the cohorts that were locked down on any given

day. 'Cohort 1' was particularly large and included all the pods of Sector 1 except for G pod, as well as Sectors 2, 3, and 4 (which was operating in the period for which we have lockdown data). 'Cohort 2' only included Sector 5, given its separate operational routine. 'Cohort 3' included Sector 1's G pod as well the cells in the health centre. While some of the lockdown incident reports provided further information about the specific pods or sectors that were affected, most did not. This made it difficult to determine, based on these reports, exactly which sector was locked down on a specific day.

What was clear, however, was that in the period of 1 September 2022 to 31 November 2022, the number of full-day and part-day lockdowns was very high. In that period, 'cohort 1' experienced 24 full-day and 11 part-day lockdowns. September 2022 was a particularly challenging time for maintaining the normal operation of the centre, with 14 of the full-day and six of the part-day lockdowns which affected 'cohort 1' taking place in that month. Staff shortage was the main reason reported for these lockdowns.¹²⁷ We note that a month after this report period, Sector 4 temporarily closed. This resulted in the deployment of staff working in that sector to other accommodation areas, which addressed some of the short staffing issues. However, the closure of Sector 4 was a temporary measure.

Of significant concern was the number of lockdowns that affected G pod. Inmates in this accommodation area were in individual cells and had access to their cell's rear yard from 9.30am to 2pm on normal operating days. We understood that when G pod was subject to a variation of routine (VOR), access to the rear yards was determined by the reason for that VOR. A VOR due to staff shortages would result in the loss of yard access for the entire day. However, if the VOR was implemented for reasons such as staff training, meeting, or search operations, where the operational staffing level of the pod was not reduced for the entire day, inmates were still able to access the yard when the staff were available.

In the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 November 2022, G pod was locked down 34 times. On only four occasions, the pod was locked down due to temporary unavailability of staff (which meant inmates could be provided with some access to the yard). On all other occasions, inmates remained in their cells for the entire day. On several occasions, G pod was locked down for consecutive days, at times for up to five days. This is unacceptable, especially considering the already restrictive nature of custody in G pod. We highlight the requirements in the legislation and the COPP that all inmates, except for those confined to cells due to a penalty imposed for a correctional centre offence, must be provided with access to open air for a minimum of two hours per day.¹²⁸

During the inspection, we observed the rolling let-go and lock-in procedures in Sector 1. They were relatively efficient although the let-go process was slow. On the day we observed the let-go process, the first group of inmates (those living in E pod who were not already at work) were let out of their cells at 8.15am. When the last group of inmates (those living in F2 pod) were let out of their cells, it was close to 9am. The lock-in process was efficient. We also found the officers who performed the let-go and lock-in procedures to be professional and courteous to all inmates and to each other.

3.1.3 Placement

In recent years, E pod in Sector 1 had been primarily used as an accommodation area for inmates in this sector who requested protection due to association issues or owing debts to other inmates. However, when Sector 4 of South Coast CC closed at the end of 2022, it was decided that some of the inmates in Sector 4 would remain at South Coast CC. They were moved to E pod. Those inmates, like the majority of people in Sector 4, were SMAP inmates with sexual offending histories.

This led to the placement of SMAP inmates who were in the sex offender cohort with those who were not, in one accommodation pod without appropriate measures to ensure their separation. This was problematic and we heard about increasing incidents of violence, intimidation, and standover in E pod. The lack of consideration of the diversity within the SMAP cohort is an issue that we have observed across the system, including during our inspection of Mid North Coast CC.

¹²⁷ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹²⁸ *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cl 53(1); Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 6.11 Daily Exercise and Time out of Cell* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 4.

Previously, Protection Limited Association (PRLA) designation provided an alternative placement option for people requiring protection. It limited the association of various groups of protection inmates as a PRLA inmate could only associate with other PRLA inmates. Inmates who had sexual offending histories often had a PRLA designation. However, this designation was removed in October 2020 and inmates previously held under this designation, started being managed as SMAP inmates (or as PRNA inmates if they could not associate with any other inmates).

In our reports following the inspection of Mid North Coast CC and Shortland CC, we highlighted our observations that the removal of the PRLA designation was not being managed appropriately by CSNSW and the co-location of various groups of protection inmates had increased the risk of serious assault and standover. We reiterate the recommendation in those reports that CSNSW should review the decision to remove the PRLA designation.¹²⁹

Additionally, the transfer of Sector 4 inmates to E pod resulted in this pod reaching capacity. South Coast CC was no longer able to use this accommodation area for Sector 1 inmates who were seeking protection. This meant those inmates had no other alternative than to be placed in protective custody in G pod, increasing the burden on this busy accommodation area.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW reviews the decision to remove the Protection Limited Association placement option.

3.1.4 Segregation and protective custody

G pod in Sector 1 primarily housed inmates who were separated from the general inmate population as they were subject to segregated or protective custody. An inmate is placed on a segregated custody direction for the protection and safety of others when there is no other reasonable way to manage the risks they may pose to the safety and security of the correctional centre.¹³⁰ A governor may direct an inmate to be placed in protective custody if there is a threat to the personal safety of the inmate that cannot be managed in any other way (including by placing an association alert in the system or placing the inmate in a SMAP area).¹³¹ These inmates are categorised as PRNA inmates.

At the time of the inspection, G pod was also used for inmates who were subject to a section 78A order¹³² as well as for those on a risk intervention team (RIT) management plan who needed to be placed in an observation cell. However, for the placement of the latter group, the beds in the main health centre were prioritised. At the time of the inspection, no inmate on a RIT management plan was in G pod. When we visited South Coast CC again in June 2024, G pod was holding some inmates on a RIT.

G Pod had 28 cells, 10 more cells than the last time we inspected South Coast CC.¹³³ The pod was divided into three sections, two of those sections had 10 cells and the section in the middle had eight cells. Ten of the 28 cells in G pod were under camera surveillance. Each cell had a toilet, a sink, shelving, a shower and a small rear yard. Inmates also had access to a tablet (unless there were restrictions) and a TV. We also saw a bookshelf containing a diverse range of books in the area.

We observed G Pod to be clean and with good lighting. The pod had its own AVL suite, and a nurse visited daily to issue medication and check the inmates. These were positive measures as they reduced the need for moving the people in G pod across the centre to access healthcare and to use the AVL facilities.

¹²⁹ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 87. Also see Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Shortland Correctional Centre and Cessnock Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 30.

¹³⁰ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 3.4 Segregation* (version 1.6, 14 August 2024) 1.

¹³¹ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 3.2 Protective custody* (version 1.7, 14 August 2024) 1.

¹³² A Deputy Commissioner's Memorandum issued on 19 December 2024 (Deputy Commissioner Memorandum 2024/52), advised that for some time, section 78A *Separation and Other Variations in Conditions of Custody of Inmates* had been used in error, as this section serves to clarify other powers within legislation and on its own does not give the power to separate inmates. The Memorandum directed all correctional centres to no longer utilise section 78A for the separation of inmates and review any inmates separated under this section by 31 January 2025 and consider their case for separation against criteria for segregation and protection.

¹³³ For the report of that inspection, please see: Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020).

A cell in G Pod



When we inspected G pod, the names of all the people in the unit, their respective orders, and the date of their expiry were written on a board which could be easily viewed and checked by the officers. The interactions between staff and inmates were positive and professional. However, we were disappointed to hear that G Pod was referred to by staff as ‘the pound’. This term is unprofessional, and staff should stop using it.

On the day we visited G pod, it had no vacant beds. South Coast CC had a large number of PRNA inmates who could only be placed in G pod, some of them on a long term basis. This number was higher than the number of cells that the centre had set aside for these inmates in G pod and therefore limited its capacity to safely accommodate inmates subject to other orders. As explained in the previous section, the re-purposing of E pod had added to the number of PRNA inmates in G pod.

We heard that on some occasions, when G pod is full, inmates had to be placed in the cells in the main health centre, which is not how those beds should be used. This also restricted the health centre’s capacity to accommodate newly received inmates for observation and consequently South Coast CC’s capacity to receive those inmates.

As more people with links to organised criminal networks enter custody, the demand for PRNA placement will only increase. This is due to conflicts between rival outlaw motorcycle gangs or organised criminal networks and at times due to conflicts within a criminal network. This needs to be carefully considered in any future planning to ensure correctional centres still maintain suitable infrastructure and enough capacity to continue their daily operations, as well as to ensure the safety of the people they are accommodating. In our opinion, at the time we visited South Coast CC, it was struggling to cope with the demand for PRNA beds. In August 2025, CSNSW advised that it was undertaking a review of protective custody options.¹³⁴

During the inspection, we also observed the weekly segregation review. All the relevant stakeholders were present at the meeting. Prior to the meeting the details of all inmates in G pod, their respective orders, and a brief explanation of their background were provided to the participants in the meeting. While these measures are positive, the reviews appeared to be done ‘on the papers’ and without any involvement of the inmates. There were a lot of discussions at this meeting but ultimately no change was made to the placement of any of the inmates.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW reviews the correctional system’s capacity to accommodate ‘Protection Non-Association’ inmates.

¹³⁴ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

3.2 Rehabilitation

3.2.1 Programs

We were pleased to see that South Coast CC provided a variety of criminogenic programs for inmates in Sector 1. However, as explained in section 2.4.1, a lack of space in this sector limited the delivery of those programs.

Based on the information provided by South Coast CC, in the month of October 2022, in Sector 1 the OS&P team delivered EQUIPS Foundation, EQUIPS Aggression, EQUIPS Addiction, CONNECT, NEXUS, and the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program.¹³⁵

In the month of February 2023, when we inspected South Coast CC, this team delivered EQUIPS Foundation, EQUIPS Addiction, EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence, CONNECT, and the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program.¹³⁶

Even though around 30% of the inmates in Sector 1 were on remand, the documents provided to us did not suggest that any remand programs were being delivered in South Coast CC. Aboriginal inmates on remand could attend the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program. However, this was only available for this group one day per week. Remand inmates who were not Aboriginal (63% of the remand population) and therefore ineligible for this program, did not participate in any programs.

We note that in referring to programs for remand inmates, we do not refer to criminogenic rehabilitation programs as they target sentenced prisoners. Remand inmates can participate in remand programs that focus on issues such as substance use and domestic violence.

In August 2025, CSNSW advised 'Offender Transformation [team]'s advice to correctional centres has been that whenever a centre manages remand populations then they can facilitate remand programs (Remand DV, Remand Addictions, Connect, ACS [Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program]). The scheduling and facilitation of those is managed by the centre and subject to staffing resources and access'.¹³⁷ Considering CSNSW manages NSW's correctional centres, we ultimately see this as an area that requires CSNSW's oversight. CSNSW is encouraged to provide support and resources to the centres and monitor their allocation to ensure remand inmates have access to remand programs.

3.2.2 Employment

Sector 1 of South Coast CC had the capacity to provide 189 jobs for inmates: 42 jobs across the 'service industries' (for example internal grounds maintenance and centre hygiene), and 147 jobs across the CSI business units.¹³⁸ In Sector 1, sentenced inmates in each pod were assigned to one or two specific business units.

One of the industries that employed a significant number of people was the furniture business unit. This unit was divided into two workshops which manufactured various types of timber-based products for internal and external customers. Inmates in B pod worked in one of the workshops and inmates in C pod worked in another. As mentioned before, the furniture business unit provided inmates with employable skills and offered meaningful work.

Even though the information provided to us prior to the inspection stated that each of the furniture workshops could employ up to 45 inmates, we were informed during the inspection that the maximum capacity of each workshop at that time was around 25 to 28 inmates. In the week of the inspection, only 15 inmates from B pod were working in one of the workshops and 28 inmates from C pod were employed in the other. No inmate from other accommodation pods was employed in those work areas.

¹³⁵ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹³⁶ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 3 April 2023.

¹³⁷ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹³⁸ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

When inmates are selected to work in a certain business unit primarily based on where they live, there is a higher chance of misalignment between the needs of a business unit and the profile of inmate workers. We understood this was sometimes the case at South Coast CC. It was reported that the pods linked to the furniture workshops often housed inmates with short sentences. That meant those inmates would leave shortly after receiving training and becoming ready to perform job-related tasks. While it was positive that inmates did have an opportunity to undergo training and gain some skills in an industry like furniture manufacturing, South Coast CC is encouraged to review the current assignment of accommodation areas to industries to ensure there is a right balance between the needs of the industries and availability of meaningful employment opportunities for inmates. CSNSW believes 'the infrastructure of the centre prohibits this occurring'.¹³⁹

Another major employer of Sector 1 inmates was the rations business unit which prepared 'ration packs' for CSNSW. As we explained before, this business unit provided very few opportunities for skills development. The inmates who worked in this area were from D pod. This business unit could employ up to 45 inmates and it was almost full at the time of the inspection.

Some of the industries essential to the operation of the centre were in Sector 4. They included an internal laundry where inmates' clothing and linen were being laundered and the centre kitchen where the meals for inmates were being prepared and reheated. The kitchen also produced some food items and primary components for meals that they sent to other correctional centres. When Sector 4 closed those business units needed to remain operational. This was the contributing factor to keeping some of the Sector 4 inmates, who were then moved to E pod and continued working in Sector 4 industries.

The internal laundry had the capacity to employ up to 15 inmates and had nine inmate workers at the time of our inspection. The kitchen could employ up to 45 people and had 29 workers at that time. This was not considered a sufficient number to operate that business unit.

As explained in section 2.4.2, while there were sufficient employment opportunities for sentenced inmates in Sector 1, remand inmates in this accommodation area had very few employment opportunities. In A and F pods where remand inmates were placed, there were only a handful of opportunities to work as cleaners or in facilities maintenance.

Furniture workshop in Sector 1



Sector 4 kitchen (workplace for inmates in E pod)



3.2.3 Education

Education opportunities available in Sector 1 were limited and the inmate participation rate was low. In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, LLN and Digital Literacy courses were delivered relatively regularly by an external trainer. An average of six or seven students participated in each of those courses every month. We note that we did not receive the completion rate data for this period, so it is unclear how many students completed those courses. LLN and Digital Literacy

139 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

courses were not delivered from November 2021 to January 2022. This was primarily due to the measures put in place at that time to reduce the spread of COVID-19.¹⁴⁰

The documents provided to us by South Coast CC indicated that a traineeship could be provided to inmates working in the furniture workshop, but this did not happen in the period we examined. A number of inmates in Sector 1 had the opportunity to complete a part-qualification in the Aboriginal Cultural Arts in 2022. This was reported as vocational training and was the only vocational training that was delivered regularly in Sector 1. In addition, in March 2022, 11 inmates in Sector 1 completed vocational training in cleaning operations.

ILCs provide full-time education for inmates and aim 'to reduce an inmate's risk of reoffending through educational achievement, as measured by the attainment of nationally accredited certificates.'¹⁴¹ South Coast CC is one of only four correctional centres in NSW that has ILCs. As mentioned, since our previous inspection in 2018, the original purpose-built ILC inside the secure perimeter of Sector 1 has been repurposed to provide offices for staff.

This change undermines the original purpose of this learning centre. When the ILC was in its purpose-built building, inmates and teachers had their own area as well as access to resources such as smart boards and built-in projectors. When the Sector 1 ILC was moved to J block, there was competition over the scarce space in that area and the audio visual resources were no longer available, making the teaching process fully paper-based. Audio visual aids are important tools that can enhance the learning experience and motivate the students to remain engaged.

In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, an average of 10 students attended the ILC even though this learning centre had capacity for 20 students.¹⁴² Sector 1 ILC students were placed in D pod and were paid for their participation.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW uses the purpose-built Intensive Learning Centre in Sector 1 of South Coast Correctional Centre for its original purpose.

3.3 Care and wellbeing

In Sector 1, industry overseers also worked as supervising staff in pods B, C, and D. On weekdays, these staff escorted the inmates to workplaces in the morning and supervised them during work. This meant that no staff were available to supervise the pods during the day. As a result, inmates who were not working were locked in the front yard from morning until the return of inmate workers and staff later in the afternoon. There was no access to the pods during this period.

Inmates found this difficult to manage due to the prolonged period of time they remained in the yard and the need to use limited shared amenities like toilets. We understood that if an inmate was not working due to illness, they were also unable to remain in their cells and had to remain in the yard until close to lock-in time when other workers and staff returned to the pod. CSNSW advises that a full review of South Coast CC is due to be carried out to change the staffing across the centre. CSNSW expects that as a result of this review, the overseers will be moved away from the management of the pods and replaced by custodial staff for this role. We welcome this and will continue to monitor the development.¹⁴³

3.3.1 Access to purposeful activities

Sector 1 had a spacious oval with an undercover area for exercise and a large green space for running, walking, or team sports. We observed the sporting equipment in the undercover area to be old and rusty.

Access to the oval was poor due to frequent sector lockdowns and staff shortages which often

140 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

141 Corrective Services NSW, *Fact Sheet 10: Education* (April 2018) 1.

142 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

143 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

resulted in the activities post not being filled. When inmates did have access to the oval, no structured activities were being organised. A lack of access to the oval and structured activities can contribute to boredom and inactivity and can subsequently compromise inmates' wellbeing.¹⁴⁴ We note that over the years and while inspecting various correctional centres, we observed and raised the issue of poor access to the ovals and repeatedly recommended that CSNSW address this issue.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures South Coast Correctional Centre improves access to the oval for inmates in Sector 1 of this correctional centre.

Once a week, a yoga and mindfulness class was organised in J block of Sector 1. South Coast CC also facilitated a Narcotics Anonymous group meeting once a week in this area. Both of these programs were facilitated virtually.

The information provided to us about the activities in J block suggested that these programs were only available to sentenced inmates in B, C, and D pods. We are unclear as to why that was the case as these programs are quite suitable for the remand population and provide this population with a purposeful activity at least once a week, especially considering this population's lack of access to employment and education.

Oval in Sector 1



3.3.2 Library

As mentioned, South Coast CC was last inspected as part of ICS's thematic inspection that focused on programs, employment, and educational opportunities across eight correctional centres. An issue that was shared amongst all those centres was poor access to correctional centre libraries. The libraries were observed to be disorganised, locked and unattended, and located in places where inmates could not access without a correctional officer. As a result, we recommended that CSNSW address the access issue and ensure libraries operate according to standard library practice.¹⁴⁵

It was, therefore, disappointing to see in this inspection that inmates still had limited access to the libraries. The access was particularly limited in Sector 1. In this sector, the library was in J block where there was a limit on the number of people. This meant inmates who were participating in education and programs were far more likely to access the library than others.

This was particularly of concern as inmates on remand had almost no opportunity to participate in any of the programs and activities provided in J block and therefore had very limited access to this area and to the library. It is especially important for remand inmates to access libraries as they provide them with access to legal resources and information.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures libraries in South Coast Correctional Centre are operational and accessible to remand and sentenced inmates.

¹⁴⁴ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Full House: The growth of the inmate population in NSW* (Report, 2015) 58.

¹⁴⁵ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020) 82.

4 Sector 2 (medium and minimum security)

On 6 February 2023, the first day of our inspection, 53 men were held in Sector 2 of South Coast CC. The vast majority (85%) of them were sentenced. Two people were on remand and six were appealing their sentences. Around 19% of the inmates in this sector were Aboriginal.¹⁴⁶

Documents provided to us by South Coast CC varied in their description of Sector 2. South Coast CC's management plan described Sector 2 as an accommodation area that housed inmates with a medium security classification. However, a recent document that outlined South Coast CC's capacity referred to Sector 2 as a minimum security accommodation area. Overall, it appeared that the designation of this sector changed based on the operational needs and population of the centre even though its infrastructure and operational routine were not in line with the standards of a minimum security accommodation area.

At the time of the inspection, Sector 2 was considered a medium security area.¹⁴⁷ Despite this designation, on 6 February 2023, only 56% of the inmates in this sector were classified as medium security and the rest were minimum security (10 people had a C1 security classification and 13 people had a C2 security classification). Sector 2 was being used to accommodate SMAP inmates.¹⁴⁸

4.1 Custody

4.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 2 was the smallest accommodation area of South Coast CC and could hold up to 63 inmates across two accommodation pods (W1 and W2). One of the pods had a maximum capacity of 31 and the other pod could accommodate up to 32 people. The two pods and their adjoining front yards were separated from each other by internal fencing. A multipurpose building was located outside the accommodation areas and was separated from them by a fence. This building housed the satellite clinic, ration packing business unit, and a group/program room.

Each pod of Sector 2 had two levels, and each level had a number of cells, arranged along a corridor, which were either single occupancy or shared by two inmates. Inmates in each pod shared a common area and a kitchen. The kitchen had a fridge, a microwave, and a kettle but was not equipped for self-catering. There was a small TV in the common room. Each pod had a yard with exercise equipment.

The infrastructure of Sector 2 was modern, and we found the common areas and yards clean and well-maintained. The interior of the accommodation areas in Sector 2 was sparsely fitted out, with no seating apart from one metal table and bench near the kitchen. During the day, inmates who were unable to participate in programs or employment spent a long period of time without access to their cells and insufficient seating in the common areas presented a challenge for them. As mentioned, Sector 2 regularly accommodated a large number of (or at times entirely) minimum security inmates. Most minimum security accommodation areas we have visited have basic lounges or sofas in their common areas. South Coast CC is encouraged to add appropriate amenities such as seating to the common areas in Sector 2.

When South Coast CC opened in 2010, it was envisaged that the centre was going to accommodate women in Sector 2. However, this did not eventuate and women were never accommodated at South Coast CC. Despite this, we observed signage that had not been updated since the opening, as they were still identifying Sector 2 as women's accommodation. At the end of the inspection, we discussed this issue and recommended a change to the signage to reflect the current status of this accommodation area. This had not been addressed when we visited South Coast CC again in June 2024.

¹⁴⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

¹⁴⁷ We note that when we visited South Coast Correctional Centre again in June 2024, this accommodation area was being used as a minimum security area.

¹⁴⁸ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024. We note this data showed that three of 53 inmates in Sector 2 at the time of the inspection did not have a SMAP status.

W2 pod view from W1 pod's yard



Accommodation common area- Sector 2



Women's accommodation sign in Sector 2¹⁴⁹



Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures the signage in Sector 2 of South Coast Correctional Centre is changed to reflect that this is an accommodation area for male inmates.

4.1.2 Time out of cell

The structured day in Sector 2 was similar to Sector 1. On weekdays and weekends, the rolling let-go commenced after the 8am staff parade and the lock-in procedure commenced between 2.45pm and 3pm. This provided around six and a half hours of time out of cell on normal operating days.

As explained in section 3.1.2, it was difficult to determine based on the information provided by South Coast CC which accommodation sector was locked down on any specific day. However, we note that Sector 2 was part of the group of accommodation areas that in the 3-month period of September to November 2022, were locked down 24 times for a full day and 11 times for part of a day.

¹⁴⁹ Please note this photo was taken during the visit in June 2024.

4.2 Rehabilitation

4.2.1 Programs

Insufficient space negatively affected the availability of programs in Sector 2. The only available space for the delivery of programs and services was one group room in the multipurpose building in Sector 2. This room needed to be shared by various stakeholders, including the OS&P team that delivered the criminogenic and other programs, education providers, the psychologists, and the chaplain.

When we inspected South Coast CC, it was reported that a nine-month pilot program of HISOP had been successfully completed in 2022. HISOP is ‘a prison-based residential therapy program for men who have sexually abused adults and/or children.’¹⁵⁰ It is provided in a group format, with groups usually consisting of 8 to 10 inmates and is facilitated by one or two psychologists. Individuals accepted into this the program can expect to remain in the program for approximately 7 to 11 months.¹⁵¹ While the possibility of running the program again in 2023 was discussed, CSNSW has advised that this program was only facilitated once at South Coast CC.¹⁵²

The OS&P team had access to the group room on Mondays and Fridays from where they delivered EQUIPS Foundation and RUSH programs. The team primarily delivered programs on Mondays and reported they focused on one program at a time. In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, 21 inmates in Sector 2 completed the RUSH program and 11 inmates completed EQUIPS Foundation.¹⁵³

4.2.2 Employment

Sector 2 of South Coast CC had the capacity to provide up to 57 jobs for inmates: 23 jobs across the ‘service industries’ and 34 jobs across the CSI business units.¹⁵⁴ Overall, the number of employment opportunities for inmates in Sector 2 was high and most positions were filled at the time of our inspection. This was positive although few of the available opportunities equipped inmates with employable skills.

The jobs related to ‘service industries’ included 10 positions in ‘general services’ (including maintenance and cleaning) and one Aboriginal inmate delegate position. At the time of the inspection, all of these positions were filled. Twelve of the 23 positions across the ‘service industries’ were for inmates who participated in HISOP. This program had been completed when we inspected South Coast CC and was not delivered again.

The majority of employment opportunities provided by CSI in Sector 2 were in the rations business unit which was attached to this sector. This business unit was focused on transferring products (such as ground coffee and corn flakes) from bulk to sachets. It serviced the centre and completed work for an external customer. The business unit could employ up to 30 inmates and was full at the time of our inspection. It was positive that this work kept inmates occupied and provided some income, but the work did not provide any opportunity for skills development.

Up to four inmates could also work in facilities maintenance. At the time of the inspection, five Sector 2 inmates were assisting in the construction of the (then) SSIP building in Sector 1.

¹⁵⁰ Corrective Services NSW, *Compendium of Offender Behaviour Change Programs* (2021) 92.

¹⁵¹ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁵² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁵³ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁵⁴ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

4.2.3 Education

Amongst all the accommodation sectors in South Coast CC, Sector 2 provided the fewest number of education opportunities. In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, only Digital Literacy was delivered in this sector, with two to five students participating in this course each month. No traineeships or vocational training opportunities were available to inmates in Sector 2 during this period.¹⁵⁵

We refer back to the recommendation we made in section 2.4.3 that CSNSW should increase access to education across all sectors of South Coast CC. Given the significantly low number of educational opportunities provided to inmates in Sector 2, particular attention should be given to this sector when implementing this recommendation.

4.3 Care and wellbeing

Inmates in Sector 2 who were not engaged in employment or programs had access to the yard and the common area of their pods during the day. Apart from access to some exercise equipment in the yard, no other activities were available to this cohort. From 1pm until the lock-in time, inmates could also access their cells.

Several people who spoke to us expressed their interest in participating in supported peer groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. However, these opportunities were not available to the inmates in Sector 2. Reportedly this was because South Coast CC did not have the facilities to run these programs virtually in this accommodation area.

According to the CSNSW, the number of inmates in Sector 2 who have 'addiction' listed as a program need is not high enough to justify the installation of Webex facilities (to allow for the virtual facilitation of meetings like Alcoholic or Narcotics Anonymous). However, if the number of inmates is sufficient, EQUIPS Addiction can be scheduled. CSNSW also advised that

In the meantime, these inmates are often provided with In-Cell activity booklets that offer support in addressing addiction-related topics. These materials allow inmates to engage with the content at their own pace. If they have any questions or wish to discuss the material further, they are encouraged to speak with their Services & Programs Officer.¹⁵⁶

Sector 2 did not have a library. Inmates could access the limited number of books that were available on the shelves in the multipurpose building's group room.

¹⁵⁵ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁵⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

5 Sector 3 (minimum security)

On 6 February 2023, the first day of our inspection, 144 men were held in Sector 3 of South Coast CC. The vast majority (91%) of them were sentenced. One person was on remand and 12 people were appealing their sentences. Around 24% of the inmates in this sector were Aboriginal.¹⁵⁷

All of the inmates in Sector 3 were classified as minimum security, with almost all having a security classification of C1 or C2.¹⁵⁸ Sector 3 was being used to accommodate SMAP inmates, although we note that at the time of the inspection, eight people did not have this status.¹⁵⁹

5.1 Custody

5.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 3 could house a maximum of 154 inmates across four accommodation pods (M1 to M4). Three of the pods had the capacity to hold up to 38 inmates, while the fourth pod could house a maximum of 40 inmates. We understood that Sector 3 usually operated at close to its full operational capacity.

Similar to Sector 2, Each of the accommodation pods in Sector 3 had two floors. Each floor had two units (right and left units) and each unit could house up to 10 inmates primarily in cells that were shared by two people. However, there were a few single occupancy cells in each pod. While there was a toilet in each cell, showers were located outside the cells and were shared. Some of the single occupancy cells were accessible. They were wider and had guard rails in their bathrooms. Inmates in each unit shared a common area and a small kitchen, which were similar to Sector 2, with the same amenities.

We observed that each pod was surrounded by internal fencing which limited access to the outside area and recreational equipment. One of the pods had a basketball court, one had a tennis court, and the remaining two had access to stationary exercise equipment. If an inmate expressed interest in using facilities inaccessible from their pod, their only option was to move pods. Sector 3 had its own programs building which provided sufficient room for delivering programs. The building had three rooms and one of them could also be used by the chaplains.

While the infrastructure of Sector 3 was modern, it was not suitable for accommodating a minimum security population. Sector 3 was located within the main secure perimeter of South Coast CC and the internal fencing created a restrictive environment that was not in line with the standards for minimum security accommodation areas. We were informed that initially this accommodation area was projected to house medium security inmates and as a result amendments were made to its infrastructure; however, medium security inmates were never managed there.

The common areas in the accommodation pods lacked basic furniture such as basic lounges or sofas and there was only one chair provided in each cell, even though most cells were shared by two inmates. Inmate did not have an opportunity to self-cater. Minimum security accommodation areas should provide opportunities for at least some inmates to develop essential independent living skills through self-catering arrangements.

We also observed that the maintenance of Sector 3 was poor, for example window louvres in the inmate accommodation area were broken and the TV in the common area of one unit was not working. It was reported that maintenance requests were not actioned promptly and most of the issues we observed had been outstanding for a long period of time.

We believe this was in part due to difficulties in reporting maintenance issues as request forms were not readily accessible and were usually only available in the officer's station. We observed that inmates had to walk to the fence, stand there to be seen by an officer, report the reason why they

¹⁵⁷ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

¹⁵⁸ One person had a C3 security classification.

¹⁵⁹ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

needed to go to the office, wait for the officer to open the padlock, go to the officer's station, get a form, and then fill it out. If they needed to take the form to their accommodation area to complete, they then needed to repeat this process again to submit the form for consideration. This was a very restrictive process for minimum security inmates who are often granted more freedom of movement and did not correspond with the idea of reducing institutionalisation in preparation for release.

A pod's outside area with exercise equipment



A unit's kitchen- Sector 3



Internal fencing in Sector 3



Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW amends the infrastructure and amenities of Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre to ensure they are in line with the standards of minimum security accommodation.

5.1.2 Time out of cell

Sector 3 operated the same daily routine as Sectors 1 and 2 as staff in this sector worked eight-hour shifts. Even though inmates in Sector 3 were classified as minimum security, they had access to just over six and a half hours of time out of cell. This was four hours less than the daily average for minimum security custodial settings in NSW, which is already the lowest daily average in Australia.¹⁶⁰

In most minimum security accommodation areas, inmates are locked in their units (and not in their cells) at lock-in time, maintaining their access to the common areas of the unit. This was not the case in Sector 3. Inmates in this accommodation area were locked in their cells at 3pm, with no access to their unit's common areas and amenities, including the showers. As a result, there was a high demand for the showers from around 2pm, when workers returned to the accommodation area, to 3pm, when the sector was locked in.

¹⁶⁰ Productivity Commission, Australian Government, *Report on Government Services 2025* (Report, February 2025) Table 8A.13.

Conversely, Sector 5 of South Coast CC, which accommodated mainstream minimum security inmates, ran on a separate operational routine which provided 10 hours of time out of cell. Inmates in this sector maintained their access to the common areas of their accommodation units after lock-in.

The limited time out of cell in Sector 3 negatively affected the delivery of programs, education, and health services as access to inmates was limited. For example, facilitators had to conclude classes by 1.30pm to ensure inmates were back in their accommodation area to prepare for lock-in. Again, this was not the case in the nearby Sector 5 where inmates were accessible until at least 3.30pm or 4pm. We repeatedly heard from medium security inmates in Sector 2 that the restrictive infrastructure and operational routine of Sector 3 did not provide them with any real incentive to work towards progression to minimum security classification.

According to CSNSW, the review of the centre that is proposed to be undertaken will look at staff deployment as well as the centre's operating routine 'to ensure safe staff numbers, inmate safety, full centre operations and even workload distribution'.¹⁶¹ We encourage CSNSW to pay particular attention to the current time out of cell in Sector 3 and work towards bringing it in line with other minimum security accommodation areas, including Sector 5 in South Coast CC.

As explained in sections 3.1.2 and 4.1.2, the data provided by South Coast CC grouped Sectors 1, 2, 3, and 4 in one cohort and reported the number of days that the cohort was locked down. It was, therefore, not possible to determine the number of days each specific sector was locked down. Regardless, Sector 3 was part of a group of accommodation areas that experienced a high number of lockdowns in the period of September to November 2022, limiting time out of cell in this sector even further.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases time out of cell for inmates in Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre.

5.2 Rehabilitation

5.2.1 Programs

Sector 3 had a programs building with three rooms which we believed provided appropriate space for the delivery of programs. However, we note that this space was also utilised by education and psychology teams as well as the chaplain and this limited its availability for program delivery.¹⁶² The number of programs provided in Sector 3 was limited. This was in part due to limited access to the inmates in this accommodation area. Further, as mentioned, a team of one SAPTL and six SAPOs were tasked with the delivery of non-HIPU programs to three different accommodation areas (Sectors 2, 3, and 5). This did not provide sufficient resources to properly focus on the varied needs of inmates in these sectors.

We note that following the inspection and in early 2024, a redesign of Services and Programs was implemented across NSW correctional centres. This impacted psychologists and staff working in programs, classification and placement, and case management teams. This changed the resources within the various teams in South Coast CC that delivered programs and services. According to CSNSW, the team that currently provides programs to Sectors 2, 3, and 5 does so on a rotating basis, with each accommodation area receiving two programs per year. This reportedly means 10 weeks of EQUIPS programs are delivered in each accommodation area. CSNSW believes that with the current staffing numbers, the team will not be able to deliver more EQUIPS programs.¹⁶³

We continue to monitor the impact of this redesign on resources and the objective of meeting the rehabilitation needs of inmates in our subsequent inspections and liaison visits.

In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, seven inmates in Sector 3 completed the CONNECT program, seven inmates completed EQUIPS Foundation, nine inmates completed EQUIPS

¹⁶¹ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁶² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁶³ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

Addiction, and nine completed EQUIPS Aggression.¹⁶⁴ While in that period a variety of programs was offered, the number of inmates who participated in and completed each program was low for an accommodation area that usually holds close to 150 inmates. CSNSW advises that there can be a variety of reasons for the low completion rate, including security reasons and releases. Reportedly, as of 2025, the program completion rate across South Coast CC is at 80.5%.¹⁶⁵

At the time of the inspection, we were informed that the OS&P team was running a RUSH program in Sector 3. This program was being delivered two days a week for four hours each day.

Programs building in Sector 3



5.2.2 Employment

Sector 3 provided the lowest number of employment opportunities amongst all accommodation areas of South Coast CC. A textiles workshop located within the sector provided the majority of the jobs in this sector and could employ up to 45 people.

Data provided by South Coast CC indicated that in addition to the textiles workshop, up to six people could be employed in facilities maintenance. There were also 12 jobs across ‘service industries’ (primarily under ‘general services’).¹⁶⁶ Even if all of those positions were filled (which was not the case during the inspection), they could provide employment for less than half of the population of Sector 3.

The textiles workshop produced prison greens and completed work for external customers (including producing surgical gowns and cushion upholstery). The workshop was large and had a range of equipment in good condition. We observed the communication between inmates and staff to be positive and inmate workers reported they enjoyed the work and appreciated learning and developing new skills.

¹⁶⁴ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

Low employment in Sector 3 meant few inmates were given an opportunity to learn a new skill and earn some money which could assist them with the cost of personal telephone calls and purchase of items through the buy-up system. Further, combined with the relatively low number of programs and educational courses, this sector failed to provide the inmates with adequate rehabilitation opportunities and purposeful activities.

Many of the inmates in Sector 3 who spoke to us, complained of idleness and boredom throughout the day. We noted that there was even a waitlist for working in the textiles workshop. Inmates on that list could be called to work if other workers were away, but this did not provide a sustainable employment option.

Textiles workshop in Sector 3¹⁶⁷



Upholstered cushions made in textiles workshop



Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases the number of employment opportunities in Sector 3 of South Coast Correctional Centre.

5.2.3 Education

In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, LLN and Digital Literacy courses were delivered regularly¹⁶⁸ in Sector 3 by an external trainer. The number of inmates who participated in the Digital Literacy course was low, with a maximum of five inmates participating every month. This was reportedly because the room where this course could be delivered had only five computers. The number of participants in the LLN course was slightly higher, with an average of eight students per month.¹⁶⁹

In this period, no traineeship was offered to the inmates in Sector 3. However, there were some opportunities to participate in vocational training. Those opportunities were:

- a business course, offered in March and October 2022, and completed by 20 inmates
- Aboriginal Cultural Arts, offered in May 2022 and completed by nine inmates
- painting and decorating, offered in September 2022 and completed by 10 inmates
- cleaning operations, offered in October 2022 and completed by nine inmates.

Despite having a textiles workshop, no traineeship or vocational training were offered to the inmates who worked at this business unit. This was attributed to the difficulties in finding relevant training and a registered training organisation that could deliver that training.

We note that compared to Sector 5 which also accommodated minimum security inmates, the educational opportunities provided in Sector 3 were more limited. This was the case both during the

¹⁶⁷ Please note this photo was taken during the visit in June 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Except for the period of November 2021 to January 2022, when access to the centre by external providers was limited due to measures put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

¹⁶⁹ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022 and in the months following our inspection. During the inspection, we were provided with information on planned courses for Sectors 3 and 5. The education team had proposed to run 24 courses until June 2023. Of those, only eight were assigned to Sector 3 and only one of those eight courses (a first aid course) had a commencement date and was confirmed.

Sector 3's daily routine negatively affected the delivery of educational courses. We understood that inmates in this accommodation area were accessible from 9.30am and as mentioned before, classes needed to be finalised by 1.30pm. This made engaging TAFE NSW difficult as it required a minimum teaching period of six hours per day. It is unlikely that Sector 3 can provide more educational courses for inmates in this accommodation area if the daily routine remains unchanged. This is disappointing as a minimum security area should facilitate better access to education than what was available to Sector 3 inmates during our inspection.

Limited employment opportunities in Sector 3 also contributed to the low number of training courses. The main employment in this sector was textiles and, as mentioned, securing a training course related to textiles had proven to be difficult. We were pleased to see in our June 2024 visit to South Coast CC that the education team had managed to work through this challenge by offering a warehouse management course to the inmates who worked in the textiles workshop. When we visited South Coast CC, a number of inmates were undertaking this course which was delivered by TAFE NSW.

It was also reported that while the programs building had appropriate space for the delivery of programs, its infrastructure did not often suit the needs of training facilitators. It was identified that the rooms were too small for a reasonable size class and that meant when trainers were secured, only a small number of inmates could benefit from the opportunity to participate in a course.

5.3 Care and wellbeing

The limited number of rehabilitation services (work, programs, and education) in Sector 3 meant many of the inmates in this sector had ample free time and reported feeling bored and frustrated. This could have been remedied to some extent by providing purposeful and structured activities for this population. Regrettably, those activities were not offered. Further, the restrictive infrastructure of Sector 3 and the internal fencing limited inmates access to the outdoor area and exercise equipment.

Sector 3 had a small library which was open from 9.30am to 2.30pm and was shared amongst the pods, with each pod having access to it one day a week from Monday to Thursday and alternating access on Fridays.

We understood that inmates were unable to receive books by mail from their families. While this might be due to security issues, no alternative was offered to the inmates who were interested in reading a book that they could not find in the library. If libraries, especially smaller libraries like those in Sectors 2 and 3, had been functioning properly and had assigned librarians, inmates could have requested books through the libraries. This was not an option during our inspection.

Considering the limited number of activities available to the inmates in Sector 3, South Coast CC needs to provide inmates with ways to pass time in a meaningful way. Access to books that the inmates are interested in and are appropriate, is one suitable option.

Similar to Sector 2, inmates in Sector 3 did not have a chance to participate in supported peer groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.

6 Sector 5 (minimum security)

On 6 February 2023, the first day of our inspection, 195 men were held in Sector 5 of South Coast CC. The vast majority of the population (94%) was sentenced. No one in Sector 5 was on remand and 12 people were appealing their sentences. Around 24% of the inmates in this sector were Aboriginal.¹⁷⁰

All of the inmates in Sector 5 were classified as minimum security. The majority had a security classification of C1 or C2 and less than 5% of the population was classified as C3. Sector 5 was being used to accommodate 'normal discipline' (mainstream) inmates.¹⁷¹

6.1 Custody

6.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 5 was a stand-alone minimum security area, located just outside of the main secure perimeter of South Coast CC. It had a separate gatehouse and visits area.

Entrance to Sector 5



Sector 5 could house a up to 200 minimum security inmates across four accommodation pods (called pods 5 to 8). The sector was divided by an internal fence into two sides, each accommodating two pods. Each pod was divided into four wings (A to D), each of which had a maximum capacity of 11 to 13 people. At the time of our inspection, most inmates were placed in single occupancy cells. Bathrooms were located outside of the cells and were shared by people who resided in a wing.

Inmates in each wing shared a common area and a kitchen which was equipped with a kettle, a microwave, and a fridge but lacked other basic appliances. Inmates, therefore, did not have an opportunity to self-cater. As noted in reference to Sector 3, the other minimum security accommodation in South Coast CC, CSNSW should ensure that inmates in minimum security accommodation areas have access to properly equipped kitchens and perishable buy-ups to develop independent living skills such as self-catering, prior to release.

Inmates in each pod had access to the grounds, exercise equipment, and walking tracks which many were using when we inspected Sector 5. We observed the exercise equipment to be in an overall good condition; however, some required maintenance and did not appear to be in a safe working condition.

Sector 5 had its own health centre, a HIPU, and an ILC. We found the accommodation areas and facilities to be in very good condition. Sector 5 is a relatively new addition to South Coast CC. It was completed in 2018 and therefore, was modern and well-maintained.

¹⁷⁰ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

¹⁷¹ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 October 2024.

View of one of the pods from the grounds



Kitchen in one of the wings- Sector 5



6.1.2 Time out of cell

Sector 5 operated on a separate routine to the rest of South Coast CC. On weekdays and weekends, inmates were released from their cells at around 7am and inmates were locked into their wings (and not their cells) at 5pm. This routine provided inmates with 10 hours of time out of cell which was in line with the daily average for minimum security custodial settings in NSW.

Inmates in Sector 5 experienced fewer lockdowns compared to other accommodation areas. In the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 November 2022, they were locked down nine times for a full day, although we note that on three of those nine occasions, only some of the inmates were locked down. Inmates in Sector 5 also experienced four part-day lockdowns. Similar to other sectors, September 2022 was the most challenging time for maintaining the normal operational routine of this sector. Staff shortages primarily contributed to these lockdowns.¹⁷²

6.1.3 Management regime

Minimum security correctional centres (or accommodation areas) often hold inmates who are at the final stage of their sentences. These settings should provide opportunities to deinstitutionalise inmates and prepare them for reintegration into the community. As ICS Standards provide, minimum security custodial settings should provide an environment where increased levels of trust replace the high level of institutional control found in the closed security correctional centres.¹⁷³ This provides an opportunity to test a prisoner's capacity to respond to increasing trust, rather than moving them straight from a high security environment to freedom.

While the infrastructure and routine of Sector 5 were appropriate for a minimum security environment and inmates in this sector had access to programs and education, the management regime was not aligned with contemporary correctional practices. Inmates in this accommodation area had to follow a strict set of rules and most aspects of their daily functions were controlled by rigid instructions, including how they made their beds. Inmates who did not follow those rules were charged with correctional centre offences, mainly with 'failing to comply with correctional centre routine'.

We accept that if an inmate's behaviour put the security of the centre and safety of themselves and others at risk, they may need to be charged with a correctional centre offence. However, this is not reflected in the practice of charging minimum security inmates with correctional centre offences for not following a strict and at times arbitrary set of rules unsuitable for a minimum security environment. We highlight NSW Ombudsman's observations that 'a finding of guilt for a correctional centre offence has ramifications for an inmate beyond the immediate penalty. Findings may have an

¹⁷² Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁷³ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) 129.

impact on decisions made about an inmate's placement, classification and parole.¹⁷⁴

Further, we were concerned that this style of management could reverse the positive impacts of rehabilitation services that were available to inmates in Sector 5 as it reduced the opportunities where they could make choices and exercise some agency. We reiterate that the main objectives of minimum security custodial settings should be deinstitutionalisation of inmates and their reintegration into the communities. They need to be allowed to have control over some aspects of their lives in prison which do not pose a risk to the safety and security of themselves and others, so they can function in society upon release. This did not appear to be the main objective of Sector 5 at the time of the inspection, rather the management regime was focused on control and discipline.

We also observed a lack of effort by the staff in this accommodation area to engage with inmates. A notice was displayed on the window of the officer's station directing inmates not to approach the window for inquiries between the hours of 10am to 2pm 'unless it's an emergency'. While we acknowledge that staff have competing work obligations, staff in Sector 5 need to increase their engagement with inmates. This also enhances dynamic security which is of greater importance in a minimum security accommodation area where some of the physical security measures are reduced.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensures Sector 5 of South Coast Correctional Centre is operating according to contemporary correctional practices to prepare inmates for re-entry into the community.

6.2 Rehabilitation

6.2.1 Programs

Sector 5 had a HIPU which in the year 2022 delivered programs to 84 participants, 77% of whom completed the full hours.¹⁷⁵ The OS&P HIPU team, which comprised of a SAPTL and six SAPOs, was based in the HIPU building and delivered the EQUIPS suite of programs (EQUIPS Foundation, EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence, EQUIPS Addiction, and EQUIPS Aggression) as well as CONNECT. TRIP, a group program that targets serious and/or repeat high risk driving offenders, was also offered to eligible participants. It was positive to see that the HIPU was achieving its objectives at South Coast CC.

Further, a few non-HIPU programs were also delivered in Sector 5. In the period of 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, six inmates who were not part of the HIPU, completed EQUIPS Foundation, nine inmates completed EQUIPS Addiction, and nine inmates completed RUSH.¹⁷⁶ NEXUS was also delivered in Sector 5. As mentioned in section 2.4.1., those programs had to be delivered from the HIPU building as Sector 5 did not have a group room outside of this building. We understood that one room in the HIPU building was set aside for the delivery of non-HIPU programs.

VOTP was being delivered in Sector 5. This program was not delivered by the OS&P teams but (as required) by one of the psychology teams. As mentioned before, while the program was successful and had a 100% completion rate, the lack of availability of appropriate space for the delivery of this program was the main issue of concern.

6.2.2 Employment

People in custody should have access to a range of productive employment opportunities in order to use their time constructively and to acquire and develop skills that could increase their employability upon release.¹⁷⁷ This is especially important in a minimum security setting, where many inmates are preparing for release into the community.

While on paper Sector 5 had the capacity to provide up to 168 jobs across various employment areas,

174 NSW Ombudsman, *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres: A special report under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974* (Report, August 2024) 9.

175 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 15 September 2023 and 9 October 2023.

176 Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

177 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) 125-127.

this was not reflected on the ground. When we inspected South Coast CC, most employment areas did not offer the number of jobs that was envisaged in the Sector 5 employment profile and some did not operate at all. This significantly reduced the number of available jobs in this sector and as a result only half of the population in this accommodation area was employed (noting that this number included those inmates who were participating in the HIPU or ILC).

Table 7: Sector 5 potential employment profile¹⁷⁸

Employment area	Capacity
Aboriginal delegate	1
Clerk	1
External store	3
Food services (satellite kitchen)	15
Grounds maintenance/Centre hygiene	15
ILC	20
HIPU	32
Recycling	15
Work release	5
Community Projects/External grounds maintenance	15
Facilities maintenance	16
External laundry	30

We note that 52 of 168 positions in the employment profile related to the payments for inmates who participated in the HIPU or ILC and did not represent a job opportunity. It is important that inmates who participate in intensive learning activities such as those provided in the HIPUs or ILCs (and therefore cannot work full-time) are not financially disadvantaged. We do not highlight this as a criticism of this undertaking but rather in order to present the true capacity of an accommodation area, in this case Sector 5, to provide jobs for inmates.

The only employment area that was working at full capacity at the time of the inspection was the external laundry. It employed 30 inmates over two shifts and provided services to external clients. The satellite kitchen was closed when we inspected South Coast CC and the number of inmates who worked in recycling, facilities maintenance, and grounds maintenance was much lower than what was outlined in the employment profile.

Regrettably, when we inspected South Coast CC, it did not have any inmates on work release. On the last full day of the inspection, one inmate reportedly participated in a job interview with an external employer in preparation for work release. We acknowledge that the work release program faced challenges as it was suspended across NSW for lengthy periods during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a Commissioner's Instruction had allowed the resumption of this program since 16 March 2022¹⁷⁹ (almost a year before our inspection), and yet the case we were informed of was the first instance of a South Coast CC inmate being supported to participate in work release since this program resumed. We note that during the previous inspection of South Coast CC in 2018, we identified the lack of opportunities for work release at South Coast CC as an issue of concern.¹⁸⁰

We were also concerned that even if the work release program was fully operational, only a maximum of five people could participate in the program. This was very low considering that Sector 5 could accommodate up to 200 people. Given the great potential of the work release program to provide inmates with real-world employment experience and opportunities that may continue following their

¹⁷⁸ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Commissioner's Instruction 2022/12.

¹⁸⁰ During 2018, of a total of 589 inmates across NSW who undertook work release, only six were living in South Coast Correctional Centre. However, when we inspected the centre in May 2018, even those work release opportunities were no longer available. (See Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020) 66).

release, South Coast CC needs to increase the number of places in this program and ensure they are filled. We discussed this issue at the conclusion of our inspection with South Coast CC management who reported they were working on supporting more inmates to participate in the work release program. It was, therefore, pleasing to see that in June 2024, eight inmates were participating in this program. We encourage South Coast CC to continue its efforts to expand this work release program.

South Coast CC facilitated inmates engagement in community projects. Inmates employed within the community projects team had only recently been able to leave the centre to do external work, after being restricted to the centre for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. At the time of the inspection, the team was doing work for the local council and some other local organisations. This was positive and there were great efforts within the team to ensure the time was used constructively and to create opportunities for learning skills and work ethics.

However, the community projects team was not properly resourced for the work it needed to deliver. We understood that the supervision of the community projects and the external and internal grounds maintenance was all done by one staff member, significantly limiting their capacity. In addition, limited transport capacity restricted the number of inmates who could take part in community projects. Even though the employment profile allowed for the employment of 15 inmates in the community projects, only six inmates were participating in this program at the time of the inspection.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases the number of employment opportunities in Sector 5 of South Coast Correctional Centre and ensures they are filled.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases the number of work release opportunities provided at South Coast Correctional Centre.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increases the number of inmates who participate in community projects at South Coast Correctional Centre and ensures this team is adequately resourced.

6.2.3 Education

Sector 5 had a dedicated education precinct where the ILC and the library were located. An interview room, a computer classroom, and Sector 5's Yarning Circle were also located in this area. We observed the education precinct to be well-kept with lots of activity. However, this area was separated from the accommodation areas by a secure gate and therefore was not readily accessible to inmates. Only those inmates who were attending a class or had an appointment that needed to take place in the interview room could be in the precinct. This restricted access to the library and the Yarning Circle.

Education precinct in Sector 5



The number of educational opportunities provided in Sector 5 was higher than Sector 3, the other minimum security accommodation area in South Coast CC. While in the period of 1 November 2021 to

31 October 2022, no LLN course was delivered in Sector 5, the Digital Literacy course was delivered regularly. This course was delivered in the computer classroom which had a sufficient number of computers. On average eight inmates participated in the Digital Literacy course every month.¹⁸¹

In this period, several vocational and workplace training opportunities were provided in Sector 5. They were:

- food safety, offered in December 2021 and September 2022, and completed by 11 inmates
- Aboriginal Cultural Arts, offered in February, May, and October 2022, and completed by 30 inmates
- first aid, offered in February 2022 and completed by 10 inmates
- commercial painting, offered in March 2022 and completed by 10 inmates
- test and tag, offered in April and June 2022, and completed by 19 inmates
- white card, offered in April 2022 and completed by four inmates.

In addition, in May 2022, a 'pilot program in Aboriginal design' was provided in Sector 5 and was reportedly completed by four inmates.

No traineeship opportunities were offered to inmates in Sector 5. This was attributed to the restrictive eligibility criteria to participate in a traineeship, including the length of sentence remaining, citizenship status, and the core skill assessment results.

During the inspection, the education team discussed with us the courses they had planned to deliver in Sector 5 until June 2023. Sixteen courses had been proposed for this sector, six of which had a commencement date and were hoped to be delivered. They included Aboriginal Cultural Arts, first aid, commercial painting, welding, and cleaning operations. The education team hoped that providing these courses to unemployed inmates could help them gain some skills prior to their release.

As mentioned, Sector 5 had an ILC. This was established in August 2018 when Sector 5 was added to the South Coast CC complex. Unlike the ILC in Sector 1, it had appropriate space and resources. Similar to the ILC in Sector 1, this learning centre had a capacity for 20 students. During the inspection we heard positive feedback from Sector 5 inmates who had participated in the ILC, including several inmates who spoke to us about learning to read by attending the ILC.

At the time of the inspection and despite the nominal capacity of 20 inmates, 22 people were studying at the ILC in Sector 5. However, we note that an examination of participation numbers in the period leading up to the inspection (1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022) showed that the average participation rate was just under 10 students a month. We observed that the number of participants had risen in the last three months of that period.¹⁸²

While the number of participants in the ILC may fluctuate, regular and consistent inmate participation in the ILC is positive and we encourage South Coast CC to maintain focus on providing education for minimum security inmates.

¹⁸¹ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

¹⁸² Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

ILC class in Sector 5



6.3 Care and wellbeing

Sector 5 had its own library. It was located in the education precinct and was large and well-stocked. An inmate librarian worked at the library during the operating hours. However, the hours of access were restrictive as the library was only open from 2.30pm to 3.30pm during the week.

The COPP provides that

Inmates should be able to visit the library every week for periods sufficiently long enough to:

- select and check out materials
- ask reference questions
- order interlibrary loan items
- read materials that do not circulate
- use computers
- participate in cultural activities organised by the library.¹⁸³

183 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 8.4 Inmate libraries* (version 1.3, 21 August 2023) 9.

One hour of daily operation in a minimum security accommodation area with the capacity for up to 200 inmates was not long enough. South Coast CC is urged to increase Sector 5 library's operating hours. We remind CSNSW and South Coast CC that the recommendation made in section 3.3.2 refers to improving access to all libraries across South Coast CC. CSNSW advises that since the inspection, inmate access to the library has increased. A librarian remains employed in that area.¹⁸⁴

At the time of the inspection, a weekly Narcotics Anonymous meeting was facilitated virtually, and we understood that an inmate-led Alcoholics Anonymous meeting was taking place in person every week.

Sector 5 library



184 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 August 2025.

7 Health Services

7.1 Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health services

A multidisciplinary team with nursing staff provided health services to patients¹⁸⁵ at South Coast CC. At the time of the inspection, the team operated from two health centres located in Sectors 1 and 5.

The main health centre was in Sector 1 and operated from 6.30am to 9.30pm, seven days a week. The health centre in Sector 5 operated from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week. Together, they had four consulting rooms, two treatment rooms, two telehealth facilities, and four patient waiting areas. The main health centre also had a dental suite and a radiology suite.¹⁸⁶

There were four 'medical cells' in the main health centre. A 'medical cell' is a cell with little to no soft furnishings that is near the health centre to allow better access to a patient by JH&FMHN staff to conduct observations and to provide clinical care. The main health centre also had seven camera assessment cells that were being used for patients on a RIT whose management plan required them to be moved to an observation/assessment cell.¹⁸⁷

South Coast CC had a health centre in Sector 4 which ceased most of its operations when this accommodation area was temporarily closed at the end of 2022. While it remained fully equipped, this health centre was only being used for administration of medications at the time of our inspection.

Treatment room in the main health centre in Sector 1



We inspected the health centres in Sectors 1 and 5 and found them to be functioning reasonably well. The main health centre was very busy during the inspection and provided services to the inmates in Sectors 1, 2, and 3. When Sector 4 closed, some of the SMAP inmates in that accommodation area were moved to Sector 1. This meant that at the time of the inspection, the main health centre was providing services to mainstream and SMAP inmates of all security classifications. This presented challenges to the effective functioning of the health centre as the movement of these inmates needed to be carefully managed to ensure their separation and safety.

At the local level, CSNSW and JH&FMHN had an effective working relationship. The teams had worked together to identify the correctional officers with the right skill set who could work at the health centre and ensured they were regularly assigned to that area. This, to a great extent, assisted in working through the issues associated with providing care to multiple cohorts of patients and

185 Health staff working in correctional centres describe people in custody receiving health services as patients rather than inmates. Consistent with this, the report will also use this terminology in the context of those receiving health services.

186 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

187 The RIT management plan may require inmates to be moved to an observation cell or remain in their own cell with further safeguards in place such as being housed with another (selected) inmate and/or being monitored more frequently.

facilitated patient flow. A daily 'safety huddle'¹⁸⁸ between CSNSW and JH&FMHN staff was a good local initiative that provided an opportunity to identify issues arising from managing the complex patient cohort and to discuss strategies.

The poor design of some areas of the main health centre adversely impacted the available clinical space. The health centre had six rooms that could be used with patients and were consistently fully booked. However, there were two additional rooms that could not be utilised with patients due to some security concerns that had been identified. This added further pressure on the health centre. Reportedly, lack of clinical space at times resulted in turning away patients with scheduled telehealth appointments. We understand that the identified issues remain unaddressed reportedly due to the building's structural constraints. According to JH&FMHN, until those issues are addressed, the rooms cannot be used with patients. JH&FMHN advises that the rooms have been re-purposed for staff use which it believes supports care delivery and coordination. One of the rooms is currently being used as a clinical education/simulation room, and the other for conducting confidential multidisciplinary team meetings or online mandatory training.¹⁸⁹

If CSNSW can address the current structural constraints that prevent the use of these rooms with patients, some of the pressure on the main health centre of South Coast CC and its operations can be alleviated.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW explores options to address the structural constraints that prevent the use of two rooms in South Coast Correctional Centre main health centre with patients. This should be done in consultation with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network.

South Coast CC had two satellite clinics in Sectors 2 and 3, which were not being used to their full potential at the time of the inspection. They had no telehealth facilities and were mainly used for administering medications. We also observed a lack of clarity about the activities that could potentially be undertaken in those clinics as it seemed some security concerns had limited the potential scope of services.

At the time of the inspection, South Coast CC did not have sufficient health staff to make the satellite clinics fully operational. However, the staff were supportive of doing so if there were available resources. Given that Sectors 2 and 3 managed SMAP inmates who needed to be separated from mainstream inmates in Sector 1, effective use of the satellite clinics could also reduce the challenges associated with various cohorts of patients requiring access to one health centre.

In June 2025, JH&FMHN advised that the satellite clinics in Sectors 2 and 3 recently commenced daily use and have telehealth capability. JH&FMHN confirmed that these clinics are being used to support access to all patients, including SMAP inmates whose management had impacted patient flow in the main health centre. We understood that CSNSW addressed the security concerns that limited the scope of service in the satellite clinics and this contributed to the expanded use of these clinics.¹⁹⁰

According to JH&FMHN, in May 2025, a five-day per week primary health clinic commenced in the satellite health clinic in Sector 2 and expanded to a daily clinic on 7 June 2025. The clinic provides drop-in style appointments from 9.30am to 10.30am and treatment and monitoring of diabetic patients from 10.30am to 12pm. In Sector 3, two nursing staff deliver a daily primary care clinic in the satellite health clinic from 9am to 12pm.¹⁹¹ The progress in this area is welcome and we commend JH&FMHN and CSNSW for achieving this.

188 A safety huddles is a brief and focused exchange of information about potential or existing safety risks which may affect patients, staff and any person accessing the healthcare environment (Clinical Excellence Commission, *Safety Huddles: Information for clinicians & health professionals* (Report, October 2017)).

189 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 19 June 2025.

190 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 19 June 2025.

191 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 19 June 2025.

7.1.1 Staffing and scope of service

The health centres at South Coast CC were funded for a total of 29.5 full-time employees, with 15.1 FTE allocated to the main health centre and 7.2 FTE to the health centre in Sector 5. The teams comprised of nursing and administration staff, with each centre having a full-time nursing unit manager.

The staffing level at the main health centre had been insufficient. This negatively affected the prompt delivery of healthcare and resulted in long waiting time. Data provided by JH&FMHN shows that from 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, 16% of the patients triaged as priority 1 (need to be seen within one to three days) and 30% of the patients triaged as priority 2 (need to be seen within three to 14 days) were not seen within the recommended wait time.¹⁹²

It was reported that the team working at the main health centre had lost a number of staff in the months prior to the inspection. The insufficient number of staff and the busy nature of the health centre made it a challenging area for new staff to work in and there were concerns that the team did not have enough staff to prevent burnout. We note that 7.2 FTE had also been allocated to Sector 4 which closed just over a month prior to our inspection. This meant some of the JH&FMHN staff assigned to Sector 4 were redeployed to the main health centre which improved its staffing level, for example an extra nurse joined the evening shift. However, the closure of Sector 4 was temporary and a more permanent solution is needed to improve the staffing level at the main health centre.

In June 2025, JH&FMHN advised that since the inspection, there has been a permanent increase of 0.5 nursing FTE in the South Coast CC health centre, and that a further increase in FTE is not feasible within the current budget and statewide resourcing needs.

Recommendation: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network reviews the staffing level at South Coast Correctional Centre's health centres and ensures it is sufficient for the needs of the patients at this correctional centre.

An in-person general practitioner (GP) clinic was being delivered in the main health centre 16 hours a week. In Sector 5, GP services were available eight hours per fortnight, supplemented by an additional eight hours per fortnight of telehealth. However, the waiting list data indicated that this level of GP service was not sufficient for inmates at South Coast CC. As at 2 December 2022, half of the patients who were triaged as priority 2 category (semi-urgent) were waiting between 16 to 90 days to see a GP, much longer than the recommended wait time of three to 14 days for this category. No patient was triaged as priority 1 (urgent) at that time.¹⁹³

One of the main complaints we received regarding the provision of healthcare at South Coast CC was in relation to dental care. Inmates reported long wait times to see a dentist even when their matter was urgent. Data provided to us shows that 40 hours of oral healthcare was scheduled to be delivered at South Coast CC every month. These hours were scheduled to be delivered in a one-week block and across five clinics. Inmates from all sectors were to receive oral care at the main health centre, where there was a dental suite. In the last six months of 2022, these services were largely delivered, with JH&FMHN providing 224 of the contracted 240 hours of oral healthcare.

However, analysis of the wait list data shows that allocation of 40 hours per month was clearly insufficient and did not address the needs of patients at South Coast CC. In the period from 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, 90% of patients who were in Sectors 1, 2, and 3 and needed to be assessed for oral healthcare were seen outside of the recommended waiting time. Almost all of them were in the first two priority categories.¹⁹⁴ In the same period, 91% of patients in those accommodation areas who needed dental treatment and were in the first priority category and 60% of those in the second priority category were seen outside of the recommended waiting time.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

¹⁹³ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

¹⁹⁴ Oral health priority categories for assessment are 3a (need to be seen within one week), 3b (need to be seen within one month), 3c (need to be seen within three months), 4 (need to be seen within six months), 5 (need to be seen within 12 months), and 6 (need to be seen within 24 months). Oral health priority categories for treatment are A (need to be seen within one week), B (need to be seen within three months), C (need to be seen within six months), D (need to be seen within nine months), E (need to be seen within 12 months), and F (need to be seen within 24 months).

¹⁹⁵ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

The wait time for dental care was worse for patients living in Sector 5. In the period from 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, 96% of people who needed oral health assessment were seen outside of the recommended waiting time. All of them were in the first two priority categories. Further, in the same period, two people needed to be treated within one week but neither received treatment within that timeframe. Three others needed treatment within three months and only one was treated within the recommended wait time.¹⁹⁶

JH&FHMN stated that provision of oral health services in this reporting period was

significantly impacted by COVID-19 safety measures, affecting overall wait times. From late June 2021 to early 2022, dental activity in NSW public health dental clinics was restricted to urgent and emergency care; patient access was restricted for those in COVID-19 isolation/quarantine; and some clinics were impacted by reduced staffing due to isolation requirements (CSNSW and Justice Health), and prioritisation of vaccination clinics.¹⁹⁷

However, it appeared that provision of dental care at South Coast CC continued to fail to meet the needs of inmates at this correctional centre. At the end of 2022, well past the period cited by JH&FMHN as a challenging period, the wait time to see a dentist remained very high. As at 20 December 2022, some of the inmates who needed to be assessed for oral care urgently (within one week) had been waiting up to 221 days. Further, some of the inmates who needed to be assessed within one month were waiting up to 313 days. As at 20 December 2022, only one person was assessed as priority one for dental treatment, which requires treatment within one week. He had remained on the wait list for 110 days.¹⁹⁸

A report by the Auditor-General for NSW published in 2021 found that JH&FMHN was not meeting recommended seven-day wait times for patients who required serious or urgent dental care, showing the systemic nature of this issue. This report could not determine whether delays in dental care were leading to acute health conditions. This was because the database recording dental care wait times was not linked to the main patient appointment system and therefore it was not possible to see the link between waiting for dental care and a health issue that may arise as a result.¹⁹⁹ However, an integrative review on oral health in prisons suggests that in general a lack of timely care and poor oral healthcare can lead to a significantly higher risk of developing chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease or diabetes.²⁰⁰

JH&FMHN advises that the current staffing profile and industrial limits on the monthly number of rural clinics prevent an increase in on-site dental service provision without new funding for additional resources. It is supplementing its monthly on-site clinics with Oral Health Fee for Service Scheme dental vouchers for use with community dental providers to support timely patient access to oral health care.

Recommendation: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network increases access to dental care for patients at South Coast Correctional Centre.

Health centres at South Coast CC also provided a number of allied health services, including optometry (2.5 hours per month for each health centre) and physiotherapy (eight hours per month for each health centre). Telehealth was utilised at South Coast CC, including for specialist services such as alcohol and drug, mental health, and hepatology.

At the time of the inspection, South Coast CC did not have a dedicated Aboriginal health worker even though around 30% of the population of this centre was Aboriginal. The inadequate resources allocated to Aboriginal health is a systemic issue that we observed in all three correctional centres we inspected as part of this series of inspections, all of which housed a high number of Aboriginal inmates.

¹⁹⁶ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

¹⁹⁷ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

¹⁹⁹ The Audit Office of New South Wales, *Access to health services in custody* (Report, 2021) 21.

²⁰⁰ Evensen, K.B. and Bull, V.H. 2023, Oral health in prison: an integrative review, *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 251-269

In April 2023, JH&FMHN published its *NSW Healthy Prisons Framework for Action* which has a primary focus on Aboriginal health promotion. Three guiding principles underpin and inform this framework. The first principle is developing joint policies and partnership programs between lead agencies (including CSNSW and JH&FMHN) to promote health and wellbeing in prisons. This includes focusing on the delivery of culturally appropriate prevention programs for Aboriginal people and culturally and linguistically diverse inmates through 'embed[ing] 'Make Aboriginal health everyone's business' into job descriptions across Justice Health NSW and CSNSW...[and] employ[ing] higher ratio of Aboriginal health workers in NSW prisons'.²⁰¹

This document demonstrates JH&FMHN's awareness of the current gaps in the provision of healthcare in prisons, especially for Aboriginal inmates, and appropriate identification of actions to address those gaps. However, real change will be achieved through prompt implementation of this framework. We consider increasing the number of dedicated Aboriginal health workers a priority, especially in correctional centres with a high number of Aboriginal inmates. While we understand these roles are non-clinical, Aboriginal health workers are key to health promotion, supporting Aboriginal inmates' health, and their access to culturally safe services that meet their needs.

7.1.2 Mental health services

The main health centre of South Coast CC received 84 hours of mental health nurse service every fortnight which was provided in person. A mental health nurse practitioner was also available as required via telehealth. Sector 5 had access to 42 hours of in-person mental health nurse service every fortnight.

As at 2 December 2022, there were 121 patients on the waiting list to see a mental health nurse. None of those patients were priority 1 (urgent). Seven people were priority 2 (semi-urgent), two of whom were waiting much longer than the recommended wait time of three to 14 days (one patient was waiting 28 days and another was waiting 89 days). Of the 61 patients who were classified as priority 3 (non-urgent) and needed to be seen within 14 days to three months, two patients were waiting longer than that time. None of the patients in priority 4 category (routine) was waiting longer than the recommended time of three months to one year.²⁰²

The total hours of psychiatry services available to patients at South Coast CC was 64 hours per month. This was provided through a mix of telehealth and in-person appointments. From 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, there were 126 psychiatrist appointments delivered in person, and 482 psychiatrist appointments were delivered via telehealth. The waitlist to see a psychiatrist consisted of 105 people, none of whom were classified as a priority 1 or priority 2 patient. Almost all patients had been waiting a period which was within the recommended wait time for their triage category.²⁰³

According to the data provided by CSNSW, as at 31 October 2022, South Coast CC held 61 inmates with a recorded history of mental illness and 73 mandatory notification-RIT inmates. Between 1 November 2021 and 1 October 2022, there were 27 recorded acts of self-harm.²⁰⁴

At South Coast CC, in addition to the seven camera assessment cells in the main health centre, there were 10 camera assessment cells in G pod in Sector 1 that could be used for the placement of inmates on a RIT whose management plan required placement in such cells. South Coast CC reported that the beds in the main health centre were utilised first for the placement of these inmates. As the number of inmates on a RIT management plan on any given day rarely exceeded the number of beds in this area, most inmates on a RIT were accommodated in the health centre. This was positive although we note that when we visited South Coast CC again in June 2024, a number of inmates on a RIT were housed at G pod.

During the inspection, our team observed a RIT review meeting and found the process to be working well. The members of the RIT worked well together and the assessment process was sound. However, we were concerned to learn that the JH&FMHN nurse who was assigned to the RIT was not

201 Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, *NSW Healthy Prisons Framework for Action* (Report, April 2023) 29.

202 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

203 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 10 January 2023.

204 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 December 2022.

trained in RIT processes and protocols. We requested further information from JH&FMHN regarding the training that health staff assigned to the RIT needed to complete. JH&FMHN provided that to be eligible to participate in a RIT, nursing staff (of at least Registered Nurse level and excluding eligible mental health nurses) must have completed suicide prevention in custody training. This training comprises of an e-learning module and a full-day workshop.

According to JH&FMHN, as at 23 July 2023, 76% of targeted staff have completed this training and further workshops were scheduled for delivery in 2023. A new e-learning module for annual refresher training was also being developed. At the time of reporting, the module was in the final testing phase before its state-wide roll-out.²⁰⁵ We welcome JH&FMHN's work to ensure health staff who are part of a RIT have completed required training and encourage the network to increase its efforts to ensure all targeted staff do so.

7.1.3 Drug and alcohol services

In the main health centre of South Coast CC, a drug and alcohol nurse provided 52 hours of service per week in person and a drug and alcohol doctor was available for 16 hours per week via telehealth. In Sector 5, a drug and alcohol nurse was available in person for 16 hours per week. The health centre also had access to a drug and alcohol doctor who provided eight hours of service per fortnight by telehealth.

The wait list data suggests more resources were required in this area. While no patient was listed as priority 1, two people were triaged as priority 2 to see a drug and alcohol nurse but neither were seen within the recommended wait time of three to 14 days. They were waiting for 31 and 147 days. Further, around 40% of the patients who needed to see a drug and alcohol doctor or a nurse within 14 days to three months (priority 3 patients) were waiting longer than the recommended wait time. Patients with clinical priority of 'routine' and 'follow up' were seen on time.

Administration of depot buprenorphine was reported to have a significant impact on the resources and workload of primary health nurses as this task had shifted from a dedicated opiate substitute therapy role to primary health nurses.

7.1.4 Management of COVID-19

At the time of the inspection, the requirement to quarantine new reception inmates for seven days was still in place. Those inmates used to be accommodated in medical cells for the entire quarantine period to ensure easy access to health staff, however this limited their time out of cell. This practice was changed not long before the inspection and inmates only spent a short time in those cells before being moved to a dedicated accommodation area in F pod in Sector 1. This change was received well by both staff and inmates. It was positive to see that South Coast CC recognised the importance of providing longer out of cell time and changed its procedures to provide this.

We inspected the F pod and found the measures taken by staff to increase time out of cell to be effective. This included dividing inmates into different groups who could spend their time out of cell together. A nurse reviewed inmates subject to quarantine and isolation at least daily.

Both JHNSW and CSNSW staff reported a significant workload associated with managing COVID-19 within the centre.

205 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 4 August 2023.

7.2 Psychology services

Psychology services in NSW correctional centres are managed by CSNSW. South Coast CC had two psychology teams: one team delivered therapeutic programs such as VOTP. We discussed the structure and role of this team, as well as the challenges they were facing, in section 2.4.1. of this report, where we reviewed the programs delivered at South Coast CC.

The second psychology team delivered psychology services to inmates in all accommodation areas of South Coast CC. This team had one senior psychologist and five psychologists (two of whom were working part-time). There was also an Aboriginal cadet intern position in the team which was vacant at the time of the inspection. However, it was reported that a suitable candidate for that position had been identified, and they were due to commence soon.

Both CSNSW (custodial and non-custodial) and JH&FMHN staff could (and regularly did) make referrals to the psychology team at South Coast CC. They could do so through several avenues, including through the Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS), email referrals, phone calls, verbal consultations, and paper-based referrals. Referrals were then triaged and allocated to a service line according to the service need and then operationally prioritised according to the policy.

The psychology team at South Coast CC had a significant workload. From November 2021 to October 2022, it provided an average of 317 psychology services per month, with the highest number of monthly services (553 services) delivered in March 2022.²⁰⁶

In October 2022, the team received 13 'psych 1' referrals, a lower figure than the average of around 18 to 20 'psych 1' referrals per month. 'Psych 1' referrals are considered immediate priority and relate to duty of care, for example acute suicide and deliberate self-harm assessment or acute violence/harm assessment. Psychologists need to attend to these referrals within three days.

In the same month, the psychology team at South Coast CC also received 332 referrals which were assessed as 'psych 2' (high priority). 'Psych 2' category concerns duties that require the specialised skills and knowledge of the psychologists and includes several sub-categories. These referrals need to be actioned within 12 weeks. The majority of 'psych 2' referrals at South Coast CC (70%) related to the sub-category of 'sub-acute mental health impairment'. There were also 110 time-dependent assessments or interventions related to criminogenic risk or need of inmates.²⁰⁷

Similar to other correctional centres with a large number of SMAP inmates, the psychology team needed to complete Static-99R reports (a commonly used assessment tool that estimates sexual recidivism risk and needs to be completed by a trained psychologist). At South Coast CC, the psychology team prioritised completion of Static-99R reports based on an inmate's earliest possible release date.

Compared to many correctional centres across the state, South Coast CC could be seen as having higher resources to respond to the mental health needs of inmates. This applies to both the resources provided by CSNSW and by JH&FMHN. However, South Coast CC was also receiving much higher numbers of inmates who required mental health support. This meant almost all of the resources allocated to this centre were being utilised to respond to high priority and urgent cases. Few resources were available to provide ongoing and holistic mental health support to inmates which is key in rehabilitation, preparation for release, and ultimately in reducing recidivism. We encourage CSNSW to review the resources of the psychology services team at South Coast CC to ensure it is able to address the needs of all inmates in this correctional centre.

Another issue of note is the ability of correctional centres to retain psychologists. The location of South Coast CC meant it was more successful in attracting psychologists compared to some of the other regional correctional centres we have inspected. However, the centre struggled to retain the psychologists as they gained further experience. This was primarily due to the significant differences in remuneration offered to psychologists who worked in private practice compared to those employed by CSNSW. This issue is not unique to South Coast CC and was highlighted in our report

²⁰⁶ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

²⁰⁷ Information provided by South Coast Correctional Centre, 21 December 2022.

following the inspection of Mid North Coast CC.²⁰⁸ It remains of significant concern to us as it causes ongoing staff shortages, disrupts provision of care, and results in the loss of experienced staff who can respond effectively to the complex needs of a vulnerable population.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW reviews pay scales for psychologists to assist with attraction and retention of those staff.

208 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Mid North Coast Correctional Centre 2023* (Report, 2024) 99.

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