



Official Visitor Program Review Report

**A review of the Official Visitor Program
operating in custodial settings in New South Wales**

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BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

This report is the result of a program review conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services into the Official Visitor Program for the New South Wales adult and juvenile correctional systems.

Description of the Official Visitor Program

Official Visitors are community representatives appointed by the Minister for Corrections. The role of Official Visitors is to be independent observers of the custodial environment, and to report on the conditions in custodial facilities and the types of issues that are of concern to detainees, inmates and staff. They assess the treatment of detainees and inmates, and facilitate the resolution of enquiries and complaints raised by those held in custody. The work of Official Visitors relates directly to the outcomes for the NSW State Plan, *NSW 2021*, and contributes to Goal 18 which seeks to improve community confidence in the justice system.

Official Visitors visit their assigned centres approximately once a fortnight. While at the facility, Official Visitors record enquiries and complaints, and try to resolve them at the local level by speaking to staff. They also examine the facility and make a note of conditions. Official Visitors are not authorised to conduct investigations or carry out audits.

Official Visitors are required to:

- Visit their assigned centre regularly
- Clarify issues raised by, or on behalf of, detainees and inmates
- Make representations to centre management on behalf of detainees and inmates
- Advise detainees and inmates about actions taken and outcomes
- Monitor and assess the process used to resolve individual complaints and provide regular feedback to detainees and inmates
- Meet with management at the start and conclusion of each visit to discuss any matters raised
- Provide management with a list of enquiries at each visit
- Submit regular reports to the required authorities using the agreed format
- Maintain a diary recording details of visits
- Understand the functions and services of Juvenile Justice NSW or Corrective Services NSW, and other relevant external organisations
- Establish a professional working relationship with staff and management at their assigned centre.

Background of the Review

In February 2014, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services took on responsibility for overseeing the Official Visitor Programs conducted in adult correctional centres and juvenile justice centres. These programs had been managed separately for many years by Corrective Services NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW respectively. During the handover phase, the Inspector recognised that the two groups of Official Visitors were operated and administered quite differently. The programs had not been evaluated since their inception.

The appointment of Official Visitors is established in NSW legislation – the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* for the adult correctional system, and the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987* for the juvenile justice system. Oversight of the Official Visitor Programs is established in the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012*. There was no question about the continuation of the program. The purpose of the review was to identify areas of the program where improvements could be implemented, and to bring the previously separate programs into alignment as a single program as far as possible given the different environments.

Summary

The review was undertaken by the Official Visitor Coordinator in the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. Between August 2014 and April 2015, the Coordinator worked on the review in addition to the normal workload.

A number of improvements were identified across the following areas of the program:

- Recruitment and induction
- Reporting
- Information sharing
- Conferences
- Resources

As the review progressed, identified improvements were put into place immediately, or integrated into a longer term plan for implementation at the beginning of the next appointment period which commences on 1 October 2015.

The broader lessons learned from this review are that the program can easily stagnate and lose focus. Simply dealing with day to day issues and not being mindful of the wider goals of the program can result in Official Visitors becoming under-informed and operating in isolation.

For programs to be successful it is important that they have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is a time of rapid change in corrections with the adult system experiencing record inmate numbers, and numbers currently rising in the juvenile system. Initiatives, such as making all prisons smoke free and introducing electronic banking, represent significant changes for the risk-averse custodial sector, and may be an indicator of a new era in corrections.

The program must be subject to continuous improvement to keep pace with changes in the correctional environment. Official Visitors must adapt and respond to these evolving circumstances, and the program must give them the means to do so successfully.

INTRODUCTION

Type of Review

The type of review undertaken was a Formative–Interactive review. The review was formative because it took place during the life cycle of the program, and it was interactive because the objective was to promote continuous improvement of the program.

About the Reviewer

The Official Visitor Coordinator was the primary program reviewer. At the time of completion of this review, the Coordinator had been undertaking the role for two years and nine months. For the first 19 months of that time, the Coordinator was responsible only for the Corrective Services' Official Visitors. When the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services was established, the Coordinator was appointed to the role in the Inspector's office. At that time, the Juvenile Justice Official Visitors were amalgamated into the program.

Scope of the Review

The following factors were considered inside and outside the scope of the review.

In:

- Initiatives that could be put in place and changes to the existing program that would improve the delivery of the program
- Improved consistency across the whole program
- Enhanced or additional resources and information supplied to Official Visitors.

Out:

- The need for the program. The continuation of the program is assumed, as it is established under legislation.
- Whether the program is working and why it does or does not work
- What Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice hope to get out of the program, and whether their needs are being met.

Review Focus

The review focused on the following key aspects of the program:

1. Identifying areas for program improvement
2. Improving consistency across the whole program
3. Enhancing resources and information supplied to Official Visitors

Stakeholders

The stakeholders in this review were identified as the Official Visitors, the former Minister for Justice (who had responsibility for appointing Official Visitors until March 2015), the Minister for Corrections, the Inspector of Custodial Services, Juvenile Justice NSW, Corrective Services NSW, and those in custody.

Comparative Official Visitor Programs

There are similar Official Visitor programs operating in different sectors and in the correctional sector in different states. The Coordinator did not have an opportunity to travel interstate to observe other correctional programs, but the Coordinator did meet with the Coordinator of the NSW Mental Health Official Visitor Program (MHOV).

The MHOV Program has been in operation for more than 165 years. The size of the MHOV Program is larger than the custodial Official Visitor Program. There are 75-85 Official Visitors appointed at any given time, who have responsibility for visiting 74 hospitals and 105 community facilities. Visits are conducted in pairs comprising of one professional Official Visitor and one community Official Visitor. Professional Official Visitors are persons with qualifications in a health-related area, such as a general practitioner, registered psychologist, or similar. Community Official Visitors are persons who are suitability qualified or interested but who do not fit into the professional category. These can be people who have experience with mental illness either personally or through family members.

Overall, the MHOV Program presented as professional and was considered to be an example on which improvements could be modelled for the custodial Official Visitor Program. A number of elements from the MHOV Program were integrated into the Official Visitor Program as part of this review. These are detailed in the Program Improvements section.

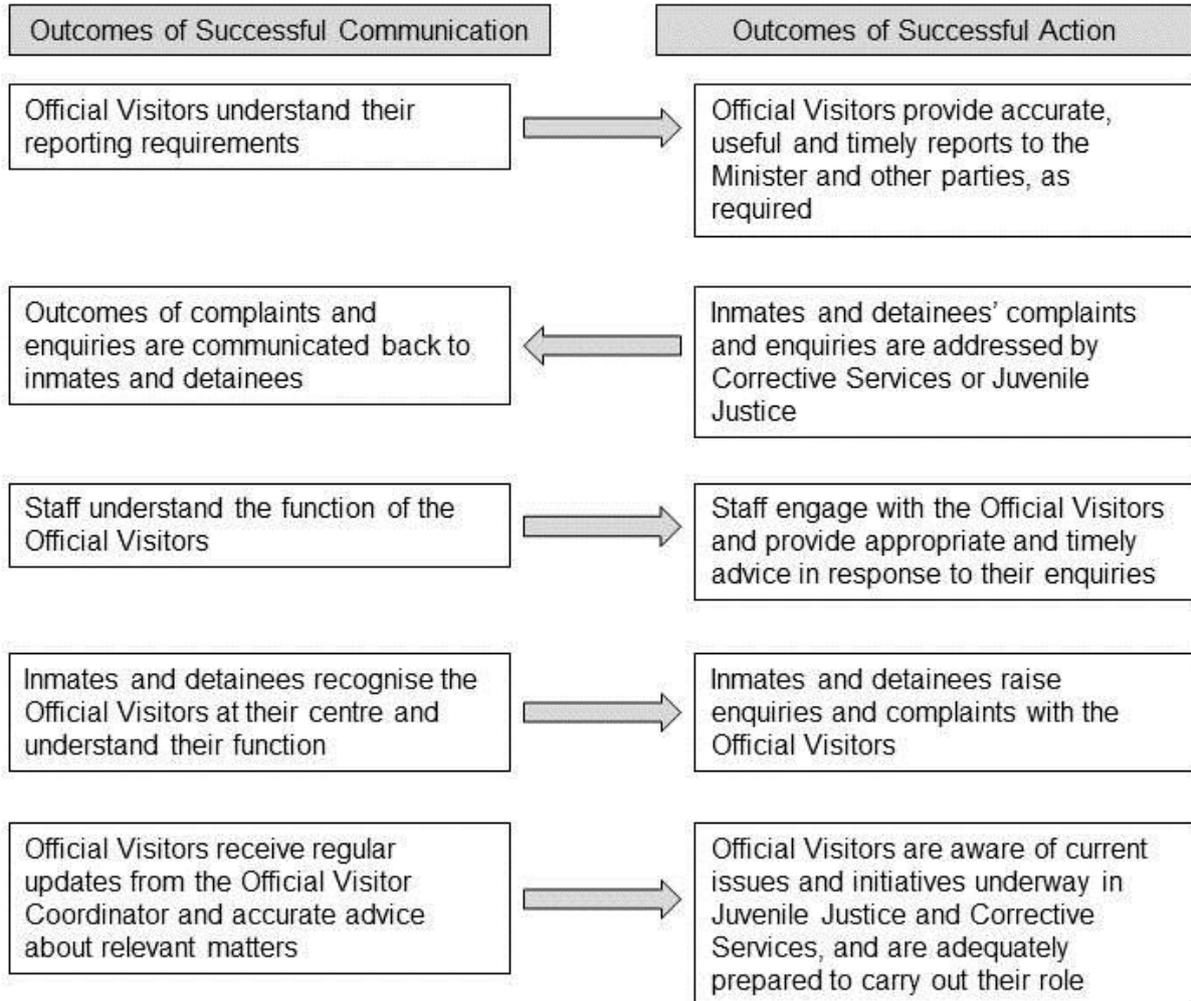
Program Logic

The following diagram shows the program logic for the Official Visitor Program. Programs are designed to bring about change. The program logic model shows the reason for the inception of the program, and the activities that result in the desired change.

The diagram is read from the bottom (aim of the project) to the top (outcome of the project).

PROGRAM LOGIC

Official Visitors observe and report on the condition of the correctional environment and the treatment of inmates and detainees, and facilitate the resolution of enquiries and complaints made by detainees, inmates and staff.



The 1978 Royal Commission into NSW Prisons, led by Justice Nagle, identified that the management of prisons was not transparent enough, and recommended that a Special Prison Ombudsman, who had full powers of investigation into the actions of the Department of Corrective Services, be appointed to deal with the rights and grievances of prisoners.

The Government of the time decided instead to trial an Official Visitor Program. After a successful pilot in early 1985, expansion occurred throughout the state in November. In 1988, statutory appointment of Official Visitors was included in the relevant legislation.

The aim of the Official Visitor Program is to provide independent oversight of the custodial environment, increase transparency, and inform the government about the conditions and treatment found in custody.

REVIEW PLAN AND METHODOLOGY

Communication with Stakeholders

Stakeholders were consulted through a variety of communication channels, including emails, telephone calls, and meetings. A conference was held with each of the Official Visitor groups, where the program review was discussed and their input was sought.

A session at the 2014 State Conference (for Corrective Services' Official Visitors) was dedicated to group discussions on six major aspects of the Official Visitor Program. These were:

- Recruitment
- Induction
- Reporting
- Information
- Conferences
- Resources

A session at the 2014 State Conference (for Juvenile Justice Official Visitors) was dedicated to a discussion about reporting.

The Official Visitor Coordinator met with staff from the Commissioner's office at Corrective Services NSW to discuss reporting requirements of the Commissioner. The Coordinator also met with staff from the Minister's office to discuss reporting requirements of the Minister.

Towards the end of the review, the Official Visitor Coordinator again met with staff from Corrective Services to introduce them to, and train them in, the use of electronic reporting.

The Official Visitor Coordinator, in consultation with the Inspector, considered all of the collected data and determined what might be suitable for introduction into the Official Visitor Program. As changes were incorporated into the program these were communicated through the use of email and telephone calls.

A Working Party (of Corrective Services' Official Visitors) was established to provide feedback for proposed resource enhancements. Members of the Working Party were involved in editing the content for the *Common Enquiries Booklet* and the revision of the *Official Visitor Handbook*, and they comprised the pilot group for the testing of the electronic reporting.

The majority of changes identified through this review were implemented over a number of months from December to April, with the remainder to be completed before the next appointment period begins on 1 October 2015.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Recruitment and Induction

Official Visitors are appointed for a period not exceeding two years. The recruitment process is at the discretion of the Minister at the time. For Corrective Services' Official Visitors, appointments had historically been made based solely on the information provided in the applicant's written application. This group of Official Visitors numbers around 50 and is spread widely across the state. This makes face-to-face interviews a logistical impossibility. The Juvenile Justice Official Visitors had previously undergone an interview process with joint involvement from the Minister's office and staff from Juvenile Justice NSW. There were seven Juvenile Justice Official Visitors at the time of the review.

At the start of each period the Official Visitors appointed for that period are drawn together for an Induction Conference. This conference provides an introduction for new Official Visitors on topics such as the administration of the program, and security requirements while at custodial centres. It also provides new and existing Official Visitors the opportunity to meet each other and network. Newly appointed Official Visitors are paired with a mentor for their initial visit to their centre. The mentor is an experienced Official Visitor from the same centre or a nearby centre or, in the case of Juvenile Justice Official Visitors, the Senior Official Visitor. New Official Visitors and their mentors have their first opportunity to meet and interact at the Induction Conference.

The Official Visitors generally reported that this process worked well, especially the mentoring aspect. However, some reported that they felt underprepared for their first visit even after attending the Induction Conference. The only information they had received prior to their appointment was by way of the advertisement for the role and the associated application package. They felt that the information could have been more detailed.

Data Collection

The following suggestions were made by the Official Visitors:

- The application package should include more details on what the role is really about.
- Information regarding the physical requirements of the role should be disclosed early in the recruitment process.
- The induction package should contain information on industries.
- There should be specific information on how Official Visitors should deal with confidential information, areas in which they can and can't help, and clarity on whether they can share issues with other Official Visitors.

The following suggestions were made by the Inspector of Custodial Services:

- That interviews and reference checks be conducted for potential new Official Visitors.
- Initiatives should be sought to attract a more diversified group of Official Visitors; specifically more Indigenous and female applicants.
- The residential address of each applicant should be more closely considered when deciding to appoint a person as an Official Visitor and to which centre they should be assigned, to minimise travel distances.

- As Official Visitors are a useful source of information, and they have established excellent working relationships with staff at custodial centres, they should be incorporated into the inspection process.

General observations:

It was noted that the MHOV Program advertises a community service element to the role. Official Visitors take on the role with the knowledge that not all work will be remunerated.

Improvements

An application package is provided to all individuals who are interested in applying for the position of Official Visitor, as part of the recruitment process. The package was redrafted to include information which was not previously provided, such as a more detailed list of functions of the role including a community service element, anticipated duration of visits, physical requirements, and technological requirements.

The Official Visitor Coordinator, in conjunction with the Department of Justice Human Resources Branch, drafted a Role Description for the Official Visitor role. The Role Description is consistent with the Public Service Commission's capabilities framework which is being rolled out across the NSW state government.

Corrective Services Industries provided an information package for Corrective Services' Official Visitors early in 2014. This package will be kept up to date and provided to the Official Visitors at the Induction Conference at the start of each appointment period.

Information on how Official Visitors should deal with and share information will be included in the review of the *Official Visitor Handbook* (for Corrective Services' Official Visitors) and the *Official Visitor Manual* (for Juvenile Justice Official Visitors). See Resources section below for more details about amendments to the *Handbook* and *Manual*.

Time has been allowed during the 2015 recruitment project for interviews and reference checks for potential new Official Visitors. The advertisement for this round of recruitment has been drafted to encourage people from diverse groups to apply.

Reporting

Official Visitors are required to report to the relevant Minister and the Inspector of Custodial Services. Official Visitors to adult correctional centres are also required to report to the Commissioner of Corrective Services. Official Visitors to juvenile justice centres submit a report to the Centre Manager of their centre after each visit.

Official Visitors who are assigned to multiple facilities are required to submit a separate report for each facility. This results in some Official Visitors writing up to six reports at certain reporting periods. The Official Visitors agreed that there were too many reports to complete.

Additionally, some of the information requested by the current reports was duplicated. This was especially true for the Minister's report and the Commissioner's report for the Official Visitors to adult correctional centres. There was a need to consolidate, reduce or amend the onerous reporting requirements.

Shortly after responsibility for the Official Visitor Program was transferred to the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, a template was created to allow the Official Visitors to report to the Inspector. The template asks the Official Visitors to report in three areas – risks found in the custodial environment, instances of good practice observed, and any other significant issues that the Official Visitor would like to raise with the Inspector.

Data Collection

The following suggestions were made by the Official Visitors:

- Any new report template should retain the current open-ended topic areas.
- The Commissioner's and Minister's reports could be amalgamated.
- The Aboriginal Statewide Official Visitors requested a separate report template.
- A consolidated report for each centre, or a summary of reports for each period, would be helpful to inform Official Visitors of issues arising at other centres.

General observations:

- The Juvenile Justice Official Visitors were using different templates for the Centre Manager's reports.
- One element drawn from the MHOV Program was the idea of electronic reporting. Instead of completing a paper-based report, the Mental Health Official Visitors enter their reports into an online electronic form, which is submitted with a click of a button. This allows the MHOV staff to download entire reports, or extract and analyse certain data across a selection of reports or all reports.

The Official Visitor Coordinator met with Corrective Services to discuss the scope of ability to amend the Commissioner's quarterly reporting template. Corrective Services was in favour of amending any sections of the report, however, they were not in favour of consolidating the Commissioner's report with the Minister's report.

The Official Visitor Coordinator met with the staff of the Minister for Justice to discuss the Minister's reporting requirements. At the end of March 2015, a state election was held. As a result, there was a change to the NSW Cabinet and responsibility for Corrective Services NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW was removed from the justice portfolio. A new Minister for Corrections was sworn in, in April. The Official Visitor Coordinator met with the staff of the new Minister to discuss the Minister's reporting requirements.

Improvements

The way in which reports to the Inspector are analysed and responded to was enhanced. On receipt of the reports for the period ending 31 December 2014, the Official Visitor Coordinator produced an amalgamated report for each correctional centre using the individual reports submitted by each Official Visitor. Correctional centres are divided into geographical regions – North, South, and Metropolitan. The Inspector provided comment on each report, and the reports for each region, including the Inspector's comments, were distributed to all Official Visitors in that region.

The amalgamated reports were used as the basis for a briefing on current issues which was provided to the (then) Minister for Justice and the Commissioner of Corrective Services.

A similar process was undertaken for the Juvenile Justice Official Visitors, however, there was no amalgamation of reports necessary. As there are only seven juvenile justice centres across the state and seven corresponding Official Visitors, all reports, which included the Inspector's comments, were provided to all of the Official Visitors.

As a result of the meeting with the Minister's staff, it was agreed that the Official Visitors would report jointly to the Minister and the Inspector through a single, combined report. This is to take effect from the next appointment period which commences on 1 October 2015. This will allow the new group of Official Visitors to be advised of the change and trained in the use of the new report.

Moving to electronic reporting was considered to be a significant step toward progressing and professionalising the Official Visitor Program. Electronic reports will provide consistency in formatting, and a faster and more secure method of submission than the current paper-based reports. Electronic reports are more economical, as they will save on printing and postage costs for Official Visitors. The use of technology is now the norm, and the Official Visitor Program will be enhanced by making use of technological advances.

The Official Visitor Coordinator sourced a program which allows the Official Visitors to complete their reports using a customised electronic form. Access is via a website and does not require a login. When submitted, reports are held on a secure website which is accessible by the Inspector's office for download and data analysis. A separate electronic report form was also created for Corrective Services' Official Visitors to report to the Commissioner. Corrective Services has a private login to allow for secure access to the Commissioner's reports. The program allows the Inspector's office and Corrective Services to download individual reports, or extract data from multiple reports for the purposes of analysis. This will streamline analysis for these agencies, negate the need for manually entering data, and reduce the risk of error.

The Working Party, consisting of Corrective Services' Official Visitors, conducted a trial of the new reporting system by providing an electronic report to the Commissioner for the reporting period ending 31 March 2015. A number of improvements were made to the electronic report as a result of the experience of the trial and suggestions made by the Working Party members.

A template was created for the Centre Manager's reports, with input from the Juvenile Justice Official Visitors. The report format was agreed by all Official Visitors and the new format was implemented immediately.

The Coordinator also created a Centre Manager's report for the use of the Corrective Services' Official Visitors. Providing a report at the end of each visit is not a requirement for the Corrective Services' Official Visitors, so the report is only for the use of those Official Visitors who prefer to provide a formal record to the centre. The template, titled *Follow Up Request for Matters Outstanding*, was provided to the Official Visitors for their use.

A report format was also created to allow the Aboriginal Statewide Official Visitors to report to the Inspector on matters arising from their visits with Aboriginal offenders. The report was created for use from 30 June 2015. This will also be converted to an electronic report from 1 October 2015.

Information

The Corrective Services' Official Visitors had historically been sent a limited amount of information via a monthly email. They were provided with executive instructions in the form of Commissioner's and Assistant Commissioner's Memoranda, and the Corrective Services in-house magazine *The Bulletin*. Distributing information at such long intervals was not particularly useful. Official Visitors were often provided with information long after it would have proven useful. Monthly emails tended to contain a large amount of information, the sheer volume of which discouraged the Official Visitors from reading it.

The Juvenile Justice Official Visitors had historically received no information except for updated versions of the policies which they received at the commencement of the appointment period. The Juvenile Justice Official Visitors had login access to the Juvenile Justice intranet.

Data Collection

The following suggestions were made by the Official Visitors:

- Official Visitors assigned to the same centre would benefit from meeting to share information about the centre.

Information provided by Juvenile Justice NSW:

- The intranet user log showed that the intranet was accessed twice in the previous year by one Official Visitor. This resource was being under-utilised.

General observations:

- The variety of information was insufficient.
- Updates were not provided often enough. Providing weekly updates would be more beneficial.
- In order to be most useful, the information provided needed to cover a wider breadth of information, rather than being focused only on executive directions.

Improvements

The Official Visitor Coordinator began a routine of weekly updates for both groups of Official Visitors. For the Corrective Services' Official Visitors, the daily broadcasts are scanned for relevant information, updates from the Commissioner are forwarded, and news items from the Corrective Services' intranet are provided, along with the previously provided executive instructions.

For the Juvenile Justice Official Visitors, the weekly electronic publication *Jigsaw* is sent to the Official Visitors, along with any executive instructions and other announcements.

Individual Official Visitors often seek the Coordinator's advice on matters that arise while undertaking their duties. In providing advice to individual Official Visitors about such matters, the Official Visitor Coordinator decides whether the issue may be applicable to a larger group of Official Visitors and distributes the information accordingly.

The Coordinator saves a copy of all advice provided to the Official Visitors, for record-keeping purposes, and to allow the same information to be provided to others if the same enquiry is made in the future.

In relation to the Official Visitors' suggestion that they would benefit from meeting to share information about their centre, it was agreed that Official Visitors at the same centre could meet face to face on a quarterly basis as long as this is done in conjunction with a visit – not on a separate day.

Conferences

Conferences are a beneficial activity for the Official Visitors. They provide an opportunity for Official Visitors to meet and network, and to share information and learn.

When Juvenile Justice administered the Official Visitor Program, contact between the Official Visitors was organised by the Senior Official Visitor. Juvenile Justice Official Visitors had been meeting twice a year for a period of time. These meetings were often attended by the Executive Director of Juvenile Justice and other staff from the centre where each meeting was held.

For the Corrective Services' Official Visitors, conferences had been sporadic over recent years. When the creation of the position of Inspector of Custodial Services was announced in 2012, Corrective Services put all conferences on hold until the Inspector's position was filled.

Data Collection

The following suggestions were made by the Official Visitors:

- All conferences should have an outcome.
- Conferences should be dynamic; not a static process of just listening to speakers.
- Official Visitors should be canvassed for ideas for conference topics.
- Conferences should have a corporate focus (i.e. executive managers presenting).
- Would like to have small group discussions at each conference.
- Presentations could be shorter – maximum of 15 minutes for each speaker.
- Would like to see a variety of presenters – e.g. Community Offender Services, Department of Education, research-based topics presented by academics or researchers.
- The Corrective Services' Official Visitors would like to have regional conferences – that is, three smaller conferences exclusively for the Official Visitors in the North, South, and Metropolitan regions.

Improvements

An annual conference will be held for both groups of Official Visitors. An Induction Conference will be held at the beginning of each appointment period, and a State Conference will be held every other year in the middle of the appointment period.

Every conference will have a tangible outcome, even if it's just sharing of additional information to reinforce the messages from the speakers. Conferences will be targeted at executive management level. The Official Visitor Coordinator will vary the speakers for future conferences, and will set aside time for Official Visitors to discuss issues of concern in small groups.

For the Corrective Services' Official Visitors, each conference will be two days in duration, starting with the next conference in October 2015. The Coordinator explored the cost of regional conferences. However, the cost of such events appears to be prohibitive. The majority of the cost associated with conferences comes from reimbursing travel expenses for

each Official Visitor to travel to a central location. Holding three regional conferences is 50 per cent more expensive than holding one State Conference. The benefits of a regional conference may be achieved at a State Conference by inviting speakers from the regions to present, such as the Regional Directors.

Resources

Official Visitors were historically provided with a number of resources. The Corrective Services' Official Visitors operate with an *Official Visitor Handbook*, and are provided with a number of stationery items such as diaries and notebooks. The Juvenile Justice Official Visitors operate with an *Official Visitor Manual*.

Data Collection

The following suggestions were made by the Official Visitors:

- Develop a procedures manual.
- A feedback mechanism would be useful to identify Official Visitors who are underperforming.

General observations:

- The Official Visitors may benefit from a resource which provides answers to the most commonly raised questions by inmates.

Improvements

Updating the *Official Visitor Handbook* (for Corrective Services' Official Visitors) and the *Official Visitor Manual* (for Juvenile Justice Official Visitors) is an ongoing activity. The current publications are in need of a considerable rewrite. The Coordinator will ensure that both publications receive a full review in time for the commencement of the 2015-2017 appointment period.

As Official Visitors enjoy a high level of independence, it was considered too restrictive to draft a procedures' manual. However, it was recognised that some Official Visitors, especially those who are newly appointed, would benefit from having some written guidelines on how to go about performing the mechanics of their role. As part of the review of the *Handbook* and *Manual*, a process for undertaking the Official Visitor role will be included.

The new versions of the *Handbook* and *Manual* will contain information on the following additional topics:

- Monitoring Official Visitors' performance
- Work Health and Safety considerations
- Technology requirements
- Issues that should be raised with the Official Visitor Coordinator
- Information on how Official Visitors should deal with and share information
- Effective evidence gathering
- Ethical conduct
- Inmate Development Committees (Corrective Services' Official Visitors only)
- Reporting outside the normal reporting periods
- A copy of the Role Description

There are certain complaints which continue to be raised by inmates even after they have been addressed at the centre level. Unfortunately, misinformation and rumours circulate freely around the correctional environment. A resource containing accurate and comprehensive responses to complaints that inmates commonly raise may be useful for Corrective Services' Official Visitors. The Working Party, consisting of Corrective Services' Official Visitors, are providing input and feedback into the rewrite of the *Official Visitor Handbook* and development of the *Common Enquiries Booklet*.

Initiatives that were considered but not adopted

The following were either suggested by the Official Visitors or considered by the Inspector and Official Visitor Coordinator.

Limited term at a centre

Longevity occasionally breeds over-familiarisation and a sense of ownership among the Official Visitors. There have been instances in the past where Official Visitors have overstepped the limits of their role by giving directions to staff, lobbying management, and advocating on behalf of inmates.

It is arguable whether this is solely due to a sense of ownership, or whether it relates more to a fundamental lack of understanding about the purpose and boundaries of the role. Nevertheless, moving an Official Visitor to a new centre is one way of dealing with such behaviour. Imposing a limit on the number of years an Official Visitor can be assigned to the same centre was considered, but ultimately discarded. A better strategy is to deal with problem behaviour through discussion with, and education of, the Official Visitor.

Applicants for the Official Visitor role be connected with an experienced Official Visitor to discuss the role before applying

A statewide advertising campaign attracts in excess of 300 enquiries about the Official Visitor role. It is not feasible for Official Visitors to deal with this volume of enquiry. The Official Visitor Coordinator is the most suitable person to take these enquiries. The Coordinator is knowledgeable about the Official Visitor role and can answer any questions asked by the applicants. As discussed above, the application package has been redrafted to include more detailed information and give applicants a better understanding of the role.

Creation of an Official Visitor website that includes a forum for group discussions

This suggestion was not considered feasible at this time. In 2012, a website was launched by Corrective Services for the exclusive use of the Official Visitors. However, this initiative was unsuccessful. As the website was hosted by the Corrective Services' internal network, users were required to negotiate a cumbersome and unreliable login process to connect to the network before they could access the website. Many Official Visitors were discouraged by the difficult login process, some declined to participate at all, and the website was not used. The website did not include a forum. In the absence of such means for communication, the Official Visitors do have the ability to email each other as a group. The Official Visitors are provided with a contact list for all currently appointed Official Visitors, which includes telephone numbers and email addresses.

Distribution of statistics (for example, waiting list times for medical services at each centre, etc)

This suggestion was supported by a small number of Official Visitors but was not widely endorsed by the whole group. Nevertheless, the suggestion was considered. It was decided that collection of such statistics was not feasible at this time given the limited resources in the Inspector's office. Current waiting times for medical services are available in the Inspector's report on overcrowding titled, *Full House: The growth of the inmate population in NSW*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of recommendations were implemented throughout the program review process. However, because these improvements were made as a result of the review, the full list of recommendations is provided below.

The review recommends that:

1. The Official Visitor application package is redrafted to include additional information, such as a more detailed list of functions of the role including a community service element, anticipated duration of visits, physical requirements, and technological requirements.
2. A Role Description is drafted for the Official Visitor role.
3. The information package provided by Corrective Services Industries early in 2014 is kept up to date and provided to the Official Visitors at the Induction Conference at the start of each appointment period.
4. Potential new Official Visitors are interviewed and reference checks are conducted.
5. The advertisement for the Official Visitor role is worded to encourage people from diverse groups to apply for the position.
6. A Centre Manager report is created for the use of the Juvenile Justice Official Visitors.
7. The Official Visitors report to the Minister and Inspector in a combined report, which focuses on risk and good practice in the correctional environment.
8. The Official Visitor Coordinator undertakes analysis of the Minister/Inspector's reports provided six monthly by the Official Visitors. This analysis is to include an amalgamated report for each custodial centre, with the amalgamated report, and the Inspectors comments, distributed to all Official Visitors.
9. The amalgamated reports are used to create a high level snapshot of the areas of highest risk in the current custodial environment. The snapshot will be provided to the Minister and Commissioner of Corrective Services.
10. The Official Visitors will provide all reports electronically to the Minister, Inspector and Commissioner (for Corrective Services' Official Visitors). Electronic reporting will be a requirement from 1 October 2015.
11. A report is created specifically for the Aboriginal Statewide Official Visitors to report to the Inspector.
12. Updates are provided to both groups of Official Visitors on a weekly basis.

13. In providing advice to individual Official Visitors about specific matters, the Official Visitor Coordinator decides whether the issue may be applicable to a larger group of Official Visitors and distributes the information accordingly.
14. Official Visitors at the same centre may meet face to face on a quarterly basis as long as this is done in conjunction with a visit – not on a separate day.
15. An annual conference is held for both groups of Official Visitors. An Induction Conference is held at the beginning of each appointment period, and a State Conference is held every other year in the middle of the appointment period.
16. Every conference has a tangible outcome, even if it's just sharing of information to reinforce the messages from the speakers. Conferences are targeted at executive management level. The Official Visitor Coordinator varies the speakers, and sets aside time for Official Visitors to discuss issues of concern in small groups.
17. Each Corrective Services' Official Visitors' conference is two days in duration.
18. In lieu of regional conferences, speakers from the regions will present at future conferences.
19. Updating the *Official Visitor Handbook* (for Corrective Services' Official Visitors) and the *Official Visitor Manual* (for Juvenile Justice Official Visitors) is an ongoing activity. The Coordinator will review both publications prior to the commencement of the 2015-2017 appointment period.
20. A *Common Enquiries Booklet* be created to provide accurate and comprehensive responses on topics commonly raised by inmates.
21. A Summative Evaluation be undertaken to determine whether the intended goals of the program are being achieved, whether the program has an effect on the custodial setting, and whether the program is cost effective.

DISCUSSION

The scope of this review was limited. This was necessary due to the time and resources available. Any changes proposed for the program needed to be identified, tested and ready for implementation prior to recruitment for the 2015-2017 appointment period.

A further program review might look to address the following areas and questions:

- What is working or not working, and why?
- Which aspects of the program are most valuable?
- What do Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice hope to get out of the program?
- Are their needs being met?
- Has the program met its goals?
- Are there any unintended consequences?
- Is this a good program?
- Is it still the right solution?
- Further improvements to the delivery of the program.

In order to address these questions, the review needs to gather data from external stakeholders – that is, staff from Corrective Services NSW, Juvenile Justice NSW, inmates, and detainees.