



Inspector of
Custodial Services

Inspector of Custodial Services

St Heliers Correctional
Centre 2021



Inspector of Custodial Services

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(November 2022)

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Glossary of terms and acronyms

Aboriginal	'Aboriginal' when used in this report is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
AVL	Audio-visual link
CC	Correctional Centre
CMU	Case management unit
COPP	Corrective Services NSW's Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
CSA	Core skills assessment
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW
CSI	Corrective Services Industries
EQUIPS programs	Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed programs
GP	General practitioner
Guiding Principles	Corrective Services Administrators' Council's <i>Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia</i>
ICS	Inspector of Custodial Services
ICS Act	<i>Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012</i>
IDC	Inmate development committee
JH&FMHN	Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
OS&P	Offender services and programs
ROAMS	Remote Off-Site and Afterhours Medical Services
RUSH program	Real Understanding of Self Help program
SAPO	Services and programs officer
SOG	Security Operations Group
WH&S	Workplace health and safety

Executive summary

St Heliers Correctional Centre (St Heliers CC) is a minimum security correctional centre for men located at Muswellbrook in the Upper Hunter Region of New South Wales (NSW). It is one of seven stand-alone custodial centres for males classified as minimum security in NSW.¹

We last inspected St Heliers CC in November 2017 as part of the *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* report.² At the time we commented that one of the features of the NSW correctional system is the number of minimum security correctional centres located in regional areas. These facilities often play a valued role in regional, rural and remote areas, contributing to the local economy and engaging with local services and communities. As with our last inspection, we wanted to observe what services and opportunities were available to men who are serving (and completing) their sentences at St Heliers CC, which is a considerable distance from major metropolitan areas.

St Heliers CC is located on green farmland and includes two accommodation areas, and an administration building. It provides a range of productive employment opportunities for men, including housing construction, horse rehabilitation and local community work through the Mobile Outreach Program. St Heliers CC is also the only centre in NSW to offer a program run by the Red Cross that encourages people in custody to volunteer their time and run projects that benefit others, such as Christmas gifts for the children of people in custody. The Red Cross also provide ongoing training in areas such as conflict resolution.

While we found that these opportunities and the physical environment of St Heliers CC were strengths of the centre, the accommodation areas were aged and in need of urgent repair or maintenance and security upgrades. We also found that some areas, such as a reliance on Corrective Services Industries (CSI) meals, did not provide the best opportunities for people to prepare for their release and reintegration into the community. While the location of St Heliers CC makes it ideal for a work release program, with the region providing good employment opportunities, we found that this program had been hindered at St Heliers CC by a number of factors, including COVID-19 restrictions.

When we inspected St Heliers CC in 2017 it was having issues filling a dedicated psychologist position due to a shortage of psychologists in regional NSW.³ The implementation of a mobile psychology team was intended to address this issue, however access to psychological services remained limited or not available due to staffing issues. This is something that should be addressed by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) as soon as possible.

A number of leadership changes in the years prior to our inspection had led to instability and staffing issues. During the inspection we noted that St Heliers CC had benefited from the leadership of the current governor. Despite this, the overall vision and purpose for St Heliers CC was unclear. We were told St Heliers CC was intended to be an 'Aboriginal centre of excellence' and we therefore examined the services and opportunities offered for Aboriginal men. This included the Gundi Program, a program designed to provide Aboriginal men in custody with a direct pathway to employment and work release.

1 The other six standalone custodial centres for minimum security male inmates in NSW are Dawn De Loas Correctional Centre, Glen Innes Correctional Centre, Kirkconnell Correctional Centre, Mannus Correctional Centre, Oberon Correctional Centre and Mary Wade Correctional Centre. Of these, only Dawn De Loas Correctional Centre and Mary Wade Correctional Centre are located in metropolitan Sydney. See Corrective Services NSW, *CSNSW Placement Guide – Male* (version 2.5, undated).

2 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020).

3 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

We were pleased to see that the Gundi Program had developed since our last inspection, and now offered a cultural component through two courses. We observed the positive impact that the Gundi Program had on Aboriginal men. However, we also became aware of a number of barriers impacting the success of the program, including the number of Aboriginal men being placed at St Heliers CC, and the inability to identify suitable Aboriginal men to transfer to St Heliers CC. This was perplexing given Aboriginal men make up over 27% of the sentenced population in NSW,⁴ and St Heliers CC is the only location offering a cultural program for Aboriginal men that includes work release opportunities. We would like to see the role that St Heliers CC has in the rehabilitation of Aboriginal men better defined, and services and opportunities such as the Gundi Program developed and supported. This should include cultural safety training for all staff at St Heliers CC.

At the time of our inspection, all NSW correctional centres were subject to COVID-19 restrictions. In-person visits had just resumed, however were underutilised due to factors such as visitor vaccination requirements and time limitations. Due to the rural location of St Heliers CC and distance most families must travel, the social video visits were still extremely popular. These should be continued as an alternative to in-person visits. Overall, we found that staff were following COVID-19 protocols, and that at the time of the inspection the COVID-19 vaccination roll out was going well at St Heliers CC, with the majority of men in custody, as well as all correctional and health staff fully vaccinated. While not in use at the time of the inspection, we did identify that the accommodation unit dedicated for COVID-19 inmate isolation and quarantine was in very poor condition and not fit for immediate occupation.

Health services at St Heliers CC are provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JH&FMHN) and it was pleasing to see good cooperation and communication between JH&FMHN staff, custodial staff and management regarding health matters. We noted that wait times for certain services had been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. We also identified a need for increased access to Aboriginal health workers and additional Aboriginal health services if St Heliers CC is to meet the needs of Aboriginal men.

Since our inspection, COVID-19 restrictions have eased and CSNSW have been working to implement our recommendations. This is to be commended. Many of our recommendations are in progress and we will continue to monitor their implementation.

⁴ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 'New South Wales Custody Statistics' (Quarterly Update, June 2022).

Recommendations

The Inspector recommends:

1. Corrective Services NSW prioritises identifying and resolving immediate and ongoing maintenance issues at St Heliers Correctional Centre, including ensuring that the segregation cells are fit for purpose.
2. Corrective Services NSW increases the number of Aboriginal men placed at St Heliers Correctional Centre.
3. Corrective Services NSW installs two-way intercom systems in the accommodation units at St Heliers Correctional Centre.
4. St Heliers Correctional Centre staff complete relevant training like Aboriginal cultural awareness and cultural safety training.
5. Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network should provide for an Aboriginal health worker position at St Heliers Correctional Centre or ensure there is a process by which Aboriginal men can access an Aboriginal health worker when needed.
6. St Heliers Correctional Centre should receive regular virtual and in-person psychology services.
7. Corrective Services NSW finds an alternative and more suitable solution for onsite COVID-19 isolation and quarantine at St Heliers Correctional Centre.
8. St Heliers Correctional Centre regularly reviews its induction material, including the local inmate handbook, to ensure information provided is accessible, current and correct.
9. St Heliers Correctional Centre ensures that all current and newly arriving inmates have the full allocation of clothing and linen provided by the *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures*.
10. St Heliers Correctional Centre introduces at least partial self-catering into the Compound.
11. Corrective Services NSW ensures that the AVL suites at St Heliers Correctional Centre are sound proofed.
12. Corrective Services NSW focuses on rolling out tablets or increases inmate phones and access to the TV rental scheme at St Heliers Correctional Centre.
13. Corrective Services NSW prioritises the completion of the planned cultural centre in the Compound.
14. Corrective Services NSW develops and supports the Gundi Program and clarifies and communicates the purpose and function of the program.
15. Corrective Services NSW ensures that Aboriginal programs are delivered in a culturally safe way.
16. Corrective Services NSW engages with Aboriginal Elders and organisations to provide mentoring and cultural support for Aboriginal men.
17. Corrective Services NSW re-establishes an art program for Aboriginal men at St Heliers Correctional Centre.

18. St Heliers Correctional Centre should ensure that eligible people have an active case plan.
19. Corrective Services NSW continues to support the Red Cross program and considers implementing the program at other minimum security centres.
20. Corrective Services NSW measures education completion rates in addition to participation rates.
21. Corrective Services NSW allows inmates to pursue distance education at St Heliers Correctional Centre.
22. Corrective Services NSW and St Heliers Correctional Centre conduct a workplace health and safety audit of employment areas.
23. Corrective Services NSW continues to support the Mobile Outreach Program and considers implementing the program at other minimum security centres.
24. Corrective Services NSW supports the work release program at St Heliers Correctional Centre locally and works towards increasing work release opportunities.
25. The Inspector recommends that 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*.

Correctional centre profile

Location

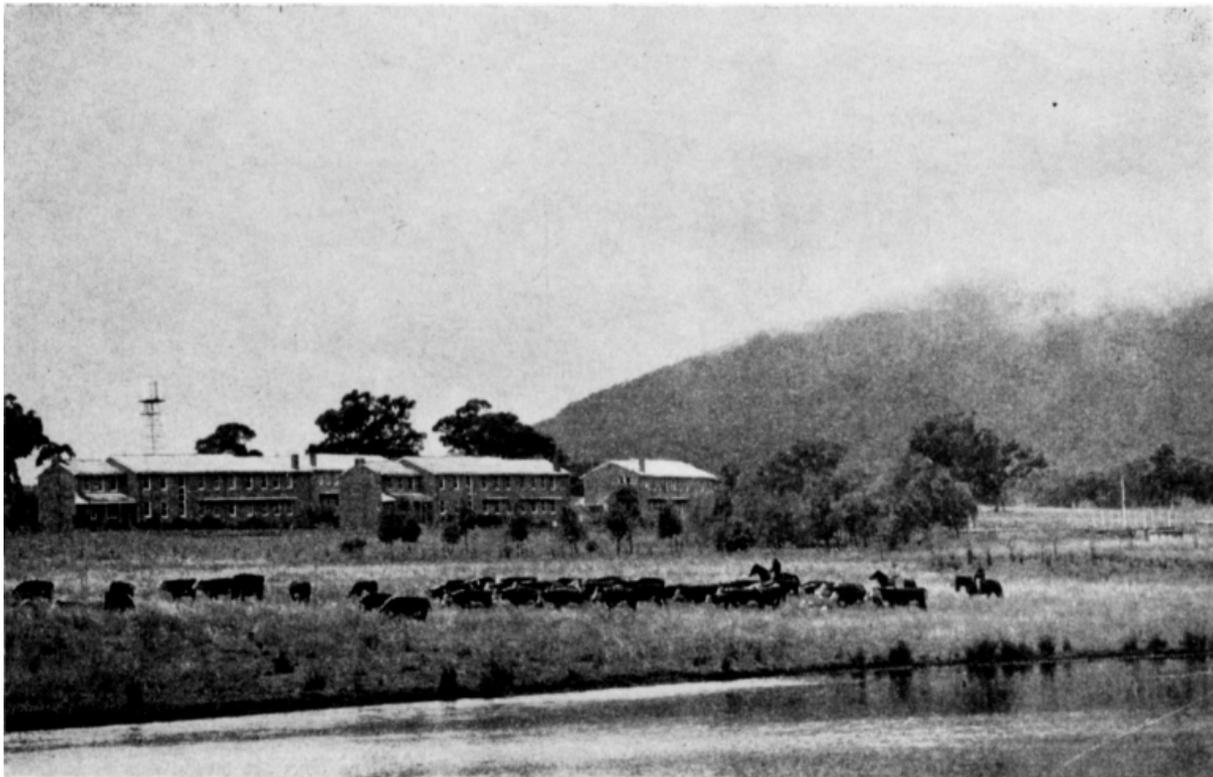
St Heliers CC is located in Muswellbrook NSW, approximately 10km drive from the town's centre. Muswellbrook is in the Upper Hunter Region of NSW, approximately 250km north of Sydney's central business district.

The Wonnarua people are the traditional custodians of the land where St Heliers CC is located.

History

The agricultural property that St Heliers CC is located on was purchased in 1945 by the Child Welfare Department (now known as the Department of Communities and Justice) and officially opened in 1948 as a training school for boys aged 13 to 18.⁵ It was later converted to a care facility for boys and girls in 1973, operating through to 1986.⁶ St Heliers CC was opened as an adult correctional centre in 1989.

A photo of St Heliers Training School for boys in 1963. Buildings pictured remain as inmate accommodation today at St Heliers CC⁷



Mustering a beef herd at St. Heliers with Alyn, Patterson and the new Wollombi and Glendon cottages in background

5 Child Welfare Department of New South Wales, *Annual Report 1949* (Report, 1948–49) 21.

6 Department of Youth and Community Services of New South Wales, *Annual Report 1974* (Report, 1973–74) 44–5.

7 Child Welfare Department of New South Wales, *Annual Report 1963* (Report, 1962–63) 18.

Capacity

St Heliers CC can hold a maximum of 286 inmates across two accommodation areas.

Previous inspection by the Inspector of Custodial Services

St Heliers CC was last inspected by the Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) in November 2017 as part of the *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* report.⁸

Inspection dates

Pre-inspection liaison visit: 20 May 2021

Inspection: 5 to 9 December 2021

⁸ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020).

Inspection process

The office of the 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.⁹

Inspection provides independent information gathering and analysis concerning what is working well and which areas require improvement.

Prior to, and after the onsite inspection, a range of information was obtained (through meetings and in documentary form) from CSNSW and JH&FMHN. During the onsite inspection, observations were made, documentation was obtained and discussions were held with individual and groups of men in custody (including the inmate development committee) and CSNSW and JH&FMHN staff at St Heliers CC.

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.

A draft report or relevant parts thereof were provided to CSNSW and JH&FMHN in accordance with section 14(2) of the ICS Act, and submissions were received from both. In accordance with section 14(1) of the ICS Act, the Inspector provided the Hon Dr Geoff Lee MP, Minister for Corrections 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 was considered before the finalisation of the report for tabling.

⁹ *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012* s 6.

1 Inmate profile

1.1 Legal status and charges

All of the 217 men in custody at St Heliers CC on 5 December 2021 were sentenced, with 11 inmates appealing their sentence.

Table 1: Profile of most serious offences for inmates at St Heliers CC on 5 December 2021¹⁰

Offence	Number of inmates
Illicit drug offences	73
Acts intended to cause injury	65
Homicide and related offences	14
Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences	10
Robbery, extortion and related offences	8
Sexual assault and related offences	7
Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations	7
Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons	6
Fraud, deception, and related offences	6
Abduction, harassment, and other offences against the person	5
Unlawful entry with intent/ burglary, break and enter	5
Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences	4
Miscellaneous offences	3
Theft and related offences	2
Property damage and environmental pollution	2

1.2 Security classifications and designations

The majority of people (175 or 80.6%) held a C2 classification, and 42 people (19.4%) had a C3 classification.¹¹ Twenty-five (11.5%) people were Immigration Release Notification inmates and five people (2.3%) were managed by the Serious Offenders Review Council (SORC).

1.3 Demographic information

On the 5 December 2021 43 people (19.8%) at St Heliers CC identified as Aboriginal.

The largest religious group was Catholic (9.2% or 20 inmates), followed by Christian (7.8% or 17 inmates), Muslim (5.1% or 11 inmates) and Buddhist (4.6% or 10 inmates). Over half of all people (57.1% or 124 inmates) did not identify as being religious or their specific religion was unknown.

¹⁰ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

¹¹ Inmate security classifications and risk designations are defined in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cl 12. A C2 security classification is for those inmates who 'need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times but who need some level of supervision by a correctional officer or some other person authorised by the Commissioner'. A C3 security classification is for inmates who 'need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times and who need not be supervised'.

The top five languages were English (184 or 84.8%), Vietnamese (10 or 4.6%), Arabic (six or 2.8%), Mandarin (four or 1.8%) and Nepali (two or 0.9%). Seven people were identified as requiring a translator.

The age and cultural profile of people in custody at St Heliers CC is outlined in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1: St Heliers CC age profile on 5 December 2021¹²

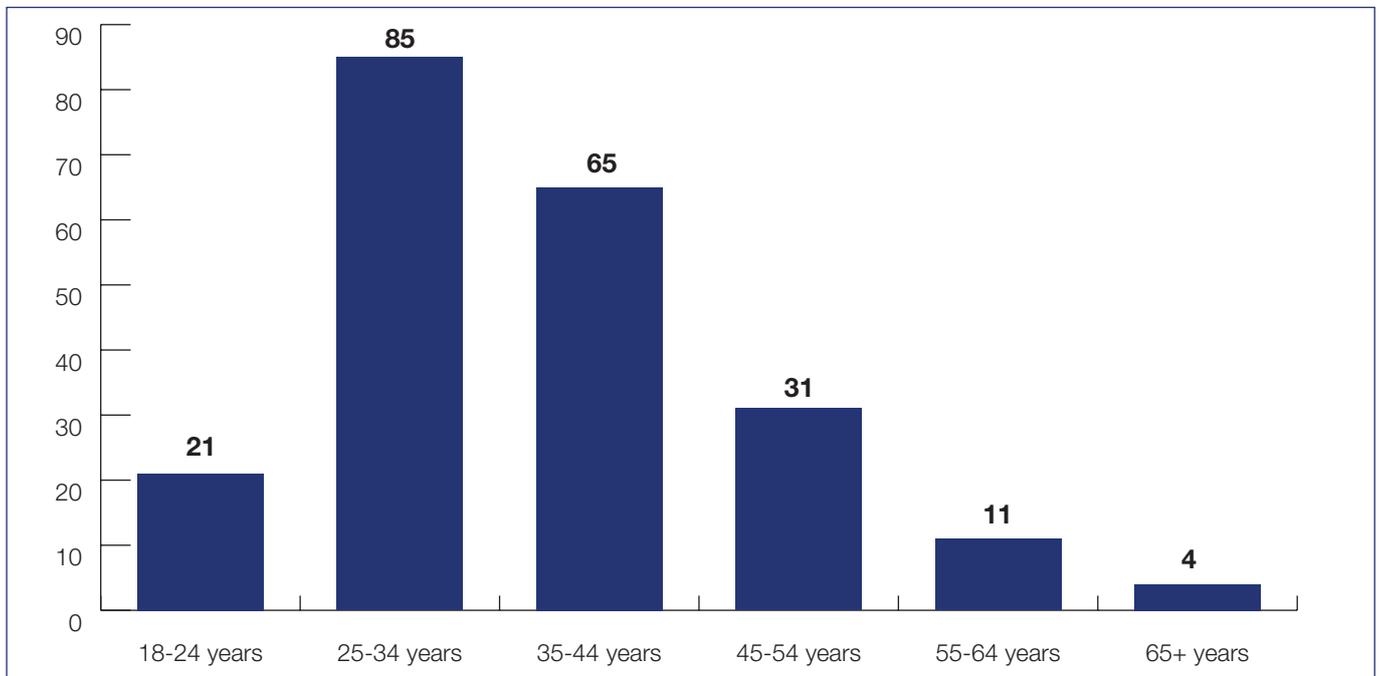
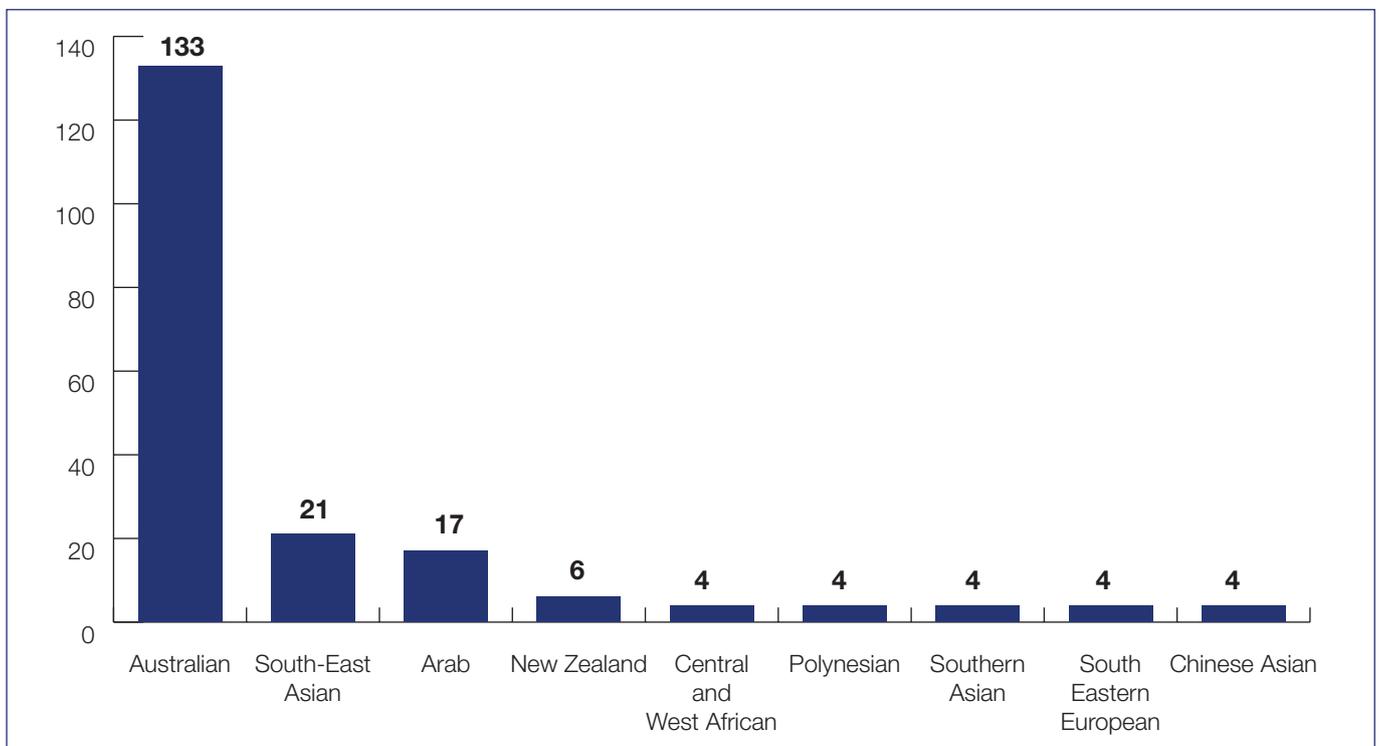


Figure 2: St Heliers CC cultural profiles on 5 December 2021¹³



Note: Top nine cultural profiles included. Australian people include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

¹² Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

¹³ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

2 Infrastructure

2.1 Layout

St Heliers CC is located on farmland on the outskirts of Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley. It has two main accommodation areas: Area 1, known as 'the Compound' and Area 2, known as 'Dumaresq'.

Within the Compound there is a reception area for processing new inmates, inmate clothing stores, a health centre, a building with education rooms and a library, a building with staff offices and program rooms, a chapel, a kitchen and laundry, a gym and tennis courts, and a visits area. Within Dumaresq there is also an officer's station, a gym and an inmate recreational room.

Located on the grounds of St Heliers CC, but outside the Compound and Dumaresq areas, is an administration building with staff offices, a cultural area for Aboriginal men and inmate work areas. A strength of St Heliers CC is its physical location and the open green space available.

2.2 Inmate accommodation

2.2.1 Area 1, known generally as the 'Compound'

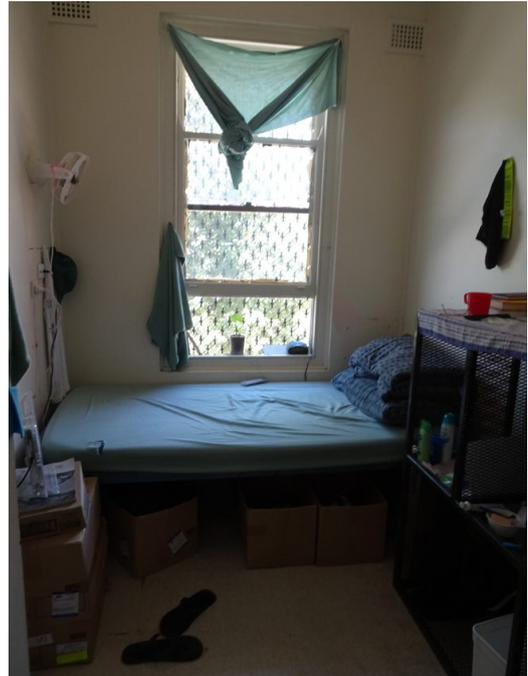
The Compound has a maximum operational capacity of 185 people and is where the majority of men at St Heliers CC are housed. The accommodation is located within a contained area (surrounded by a security fence) that houses new receptions and other men who require assessment of their suitability to progress to Area 2, which is considered the privileged housing section at St Heliers CC.

The living units in the Compound are mostly contained in ageing, two-storey brick buildings. Four main buildings are each divided into two living units, with up to 22 men sharing each living unit. There was a mixture of single and shared rooms, with approximately two-thirds of men sharing a room with one other person, and one-third in a single room. Each living unit had shared facilities such as showers, toilets and a common room. The men were locked into the units (but not individual rooms) of an evening, allowing some freedom to shower and eat after lock-in. Room doors did not lock and we observed a number of doors without handles.

An accommodation block in the Compound



An inmate cell in the Compound



While group-style housing is preferred for a minimum security facility, many areas in the Compound were dilapidated, visibly in need of repairs, and dirty. We observed issues that were present when St Heliers CC was last inspected in 2017, including broken windows, doors with fraying or exposed wood and chipped tiling. Some fridges and air conditioners were out of order or leaking. Many areas were in need of refurbishment and repainting, and blankets or sheets were being used as curtains. We did observe a unit that had the interior walls painted prior to our inspection, which was a noticeable improvement to other units.

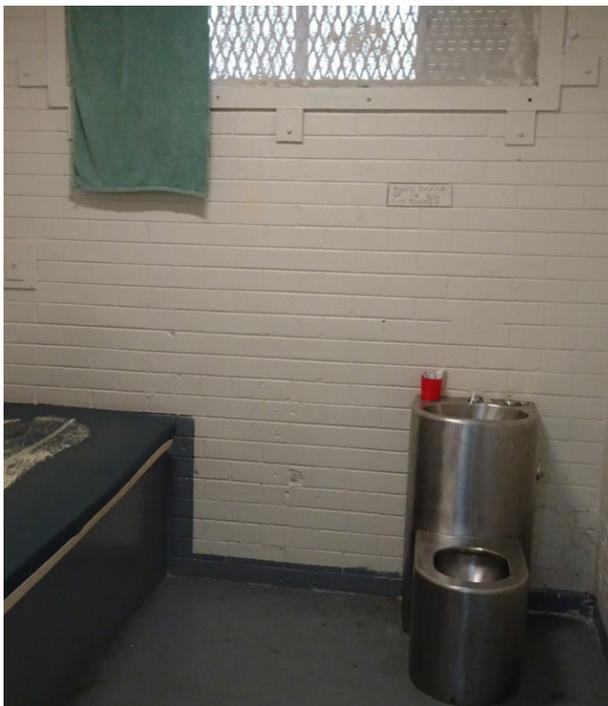
Common rooms were equipped with a television and basic kitchen area and some plastic chairs or bench seating. Despite being a minimum security facility, there were no basic lounges or sofas to sit on. Some individual rooms were too small to accommodate a small desk. Despite cold temperatures in winter and hot temperatures in summer, some common rooms were fitted with a simple bar heater, with no air conditioning. Overall, the accommodation in the Compound was of a low standard for a minimum security environment.

The Compound includes a number of holding cells that are used for a variety of reasons including for segregation or for inmates awaiting transport to a higher security correctional centre. The conditions of these cells were extremely poor, with the exception that televisions had been installed since our last inspection. CSNSW should ensure that the segregation unit is fit for purpose.

Leaking fridge in an accommodation unit in the Compound



Segregation cell in the Compound



Segregation cell television



2.2.2 Area 2, known as ‘Dumaresq’

Dumaresq is considered a privileged housing location that sits outside the secure fence and has a maximum operational capacity of 96 inmates. Dumaresq has a higher standard of accommodation than the Compound, and is more suitable for a minimum security facility. It is a series of single storey group houses, each containing 13 rooms and accommodating up to 14 men. Most rooms are single occupancy (12 single occupancy rooms and one double occupancy room per unit) although they lacked a basic desk for reading and writing.

Each unit contains a shared kitchen, common room, shower block and laundry. This area also has gym equipment, a recreation area, and access to green space. Some of the green space was being well utilised to grow fresh vegetables and herbs.

Common room in Dumaresq



Herb and vegetable garden at Dumaresq



We noted that Dumaresq, like the Compound, had several maintenance issues in addition to general wear and tear. These issues included mould observed in one of the houses, air conditioners and fridges out of order or leaking, and gaps between the ceilings and walls that were reportedly allowing insects and rodents into the accommodation houses. Like the Compound, the gym was well used however the equipment was old and makeshift and did not appear to be of a safe standard.

Mould and taped gaps on the ceiling of a room in Dumaresq



Dumaresq gym equipment



2.2.3 Pages unit

In addition to the two main accommodation areas, Pages unit is a single storey unit for up to 12 inmates. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic it was used as a transition area for men moving from the Compound to Dumaresq. At the time of inspection, the Pages unit was assigned for use as accommodation for inmates who needed to be medically isolated or quarantined due to COVID-19. The unit was observed to be in very poor condition (see section 5.3).

Management acknowledged in both this inspection and in 2017 that maintenance was a challenging issue at St Heliers CC. We were provided with the minutes of workplace health and safety (WHS) meetings that were held at St Heliers CC on 19 November 2020, 25 January 2021 and 11 May 2021 and were informed that St Heliers CC had not undergone a WHS audit for the past two years. We noted that the WHS minutes raised a number of important safety items however, it was not clear if these issues were resolved. We further noted that the minutes did not capture a number of maintenance issues we observed throughout the inspection, for example broken air conditioners or missing handles on inmate rooms.

In September 2022, we were informed that a site audit was conducted in June 2022 and the refurbishment of inmate accommodation units in the Compound was set to commence that month. The Department of Communities and Justice has also established a new Infrastructure Support Services contract creating a permanent CSI Facilities Maintenance team at St Heliers CC. This team of three staff will provide a planned and reactive maintenance service and will assist in the development of an Asset Management plan for St Heliers CC. The plan will prioritise a project to upgrade the segregation cells.¹⁴

Recommendation: CSNSW prioritises identifying and resolving immediate and ongoing maintenance issues at St Heliers CC, including ensuring that the segregation cells are fit for purpose.

¹⁴ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

3 Custody

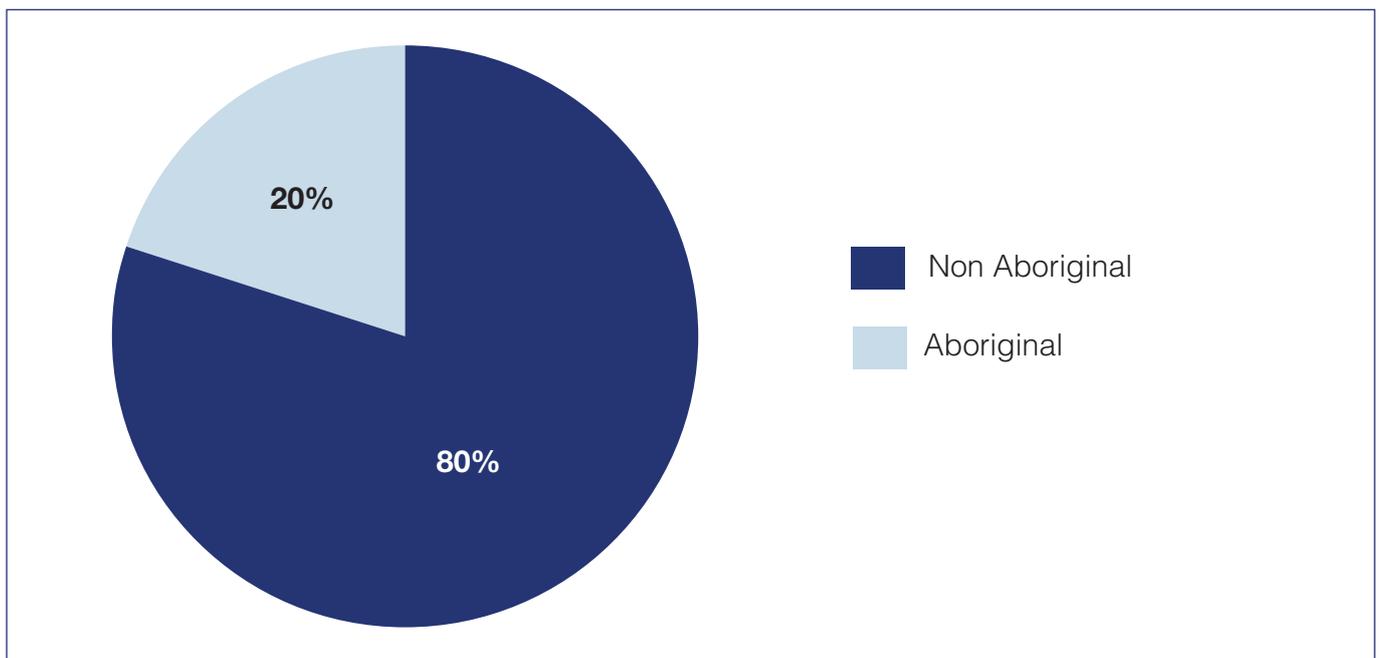
3.1 Function

St Heliers CC is a minimum security facility that accommodates sentenced male offenders with a C2 and C3 security classification. In May 2021 St Heliers CC outlined its core functions as the:

- reception and induction of sentenced C2 classification male inmates from other centres within CSNSW
- on-going management of sentenced male inmates
- assessment and implementation of security, classification ratings, and progression plans for sentenced male inmates.¹⁵

In the lead up to, and during the inspection we heard St Heliers CC referred to as an ‘Aboriginal centre of excellence’. We understood that this was because St Heliers CC runs a program for Aboriginal men focused on culture and providing Aboriginal men with work release opportunities (the Gundi Program is discussed further in the Rehabilitation and Release chapter).

Figure 3: Indigenous status of St Heliers CC inmates at 5 December 2021¹⁶



Note: Percentages have been rounded up.

With an overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody, it was encouraging to learn throughout the inspection about the initiatives at St Heliers CC connecting Aboriginal men to their culture and providing reintegration support through potential ongoing employment opportunities. However, it was clear that staff and inmates were unsure of where these initiatives sat within the overall purpose and priorities of St Heliers CC. Adding to this confusion was the fact that the Aboriginal population at St Heliers CC had been consistently low for an extended period of time (as at 5 December 2021 19.8% of men in custody at

¹⁵ Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, May 2021.

¹⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

St Heliers CC identified as Aboriginal). If St Heliers CC is intended to be a correctional centre focused on the rehabilitation of Aboriginal men, this should be integrated into its purpose and function, and communicated clearly to staff and men in custody.

We also became aware that the union was insisting that an unofficial cap of 80 Aboriginal men be enforced at St Heliers CC. We are unaware of any similar caps in place at any correctional centres in NSW and were confused as to why such a cap would be in place. This does not appear to be in line with any CSNSW policy and was inconsistent with St Heliers CC being an 'Aboriginal centre of excellence'.

3.2 Classification and placement

CSNSW outlines that classification is the process whereby inmates are designated a security rating that determines the custodial location in which inmates are to be managed. This classification is comprised of two parts – security rating and placement.¹⁷

A central component of the classification system is to assign inmates with the lowest necessary security classification to accommodate their level of risk.¹⁸ This is reflected in the Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia (Guiding Principles) which state that inmate classification and placement should be based on 'an objective assessment of prisoners' security risk, rehabilitation and reintegration needs'.¹⁹ Likewise inmates should be placed in accommodation 'compatible with their assessed risks and needs to ensure their safety and security and the good order of the facility'.²⁰ Some inmates will be assessed as suitable for a minimum security facility shortly after sentencing. Some will arrive there after progressing from higher security environments.

As a minimum security location St Heliers CC accommodates men who have been classified with a security rating of C2 (need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times, with some supervision) and C3 (need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times and who need not be supervised).²¹ As at 5 December 2021, 80.6% of inmates at St Heliers CC held a C2 classification, and 19.4% had a C3 classification.

An inmate's classification must be reviewed at least once every 12 months. During our inspection we observed a routine 12-month classification review and an early unscheduled classification review for an inmate to progress from a C2 to a C3 classification. We found that these classification reviews were conducted well, and that the staff conducting the reviews were knowledgeable and interacted respectfully with the men.

However, we identified that more Aboriginal men with a C2 classification needed to be transferred to the St Heliers CC to participate in the Aboriginal programs offered. We were informed there had been issues with the state-wide classification system identifying suitable Aboriginal men classified as C2 to come to St Heliers CC.

CSNSW advise they are holding regular meetings to identify suitable Aboriginal people classified as a C2 or C3 for placement at St Heliers CC. The CSNSW Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit works with the classification, case management and offender services and programs teams to support appropriate

17 Corrective Services NSW, *Inmate Classification and Placement: Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement*, (version 2.0, 1 February 2021) 4.

18 Corrective Services NSW, *Inmate Classification and Placement: Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement* (version 2.0, 1 February 2021) 6; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Lifers: Classification and Regression* (Report, September 2015) 12. See also Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales, *Expectations: Criteria for Assessing the Treatment of and Conditions for Men in Prisons* (2017) [83].

19 Corrective Services Administrators' Council, *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia* (February 2018) [3.3.1].

20 Corrective Services Administrators' Council, *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia* (February 2018) [3.3.2].

21 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* (NSW) cl 12.

program pathways for Aboriginal people in custody.²² We will continue to monitor the progression of Aboriginal men to minimum security classifications and correctional centres.

Recommendation: CSNSW increases the number of Aboriginal men placed at St Heliers CC.

3.3 Safety and security

Minimum security correctional centres provide opportunities for rehabilitation, for reparation to the community through community work, and for preparing people for reintegration into the community. These facilities should ordinarily provide the best opportunities for men in custody, with the assistance of staff, to prepare for release. The WA Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has also highlighted that minimum security placements should also provide opportunities to test their 'capacity to respond to increasing trust rather than moving straight from a high security environment to freedom'.²³

During the inspection we heard that St Heliers CC experienced issues with illegal contraband, particularly drugs and mobile phones. From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021 the most common breach of correctional centre regulation was drug charges (58 charges).²⁴

To assist in detecting illegal contraband St Heliers CC has video surveillance coverage. St Heliers CC can also request the assistance of the Security Operations Group (SOG), a specialised CSNSW unit based in Cessnock, to provide occasional surveillance when required. SOG will respond to these requests if they have resources available at the time.

CSNSW has advised it has reviewed the security processes and surveillance coverage at St Heliers CC and will continue to do so. This has led to additional contraband strategies being trialled at the centre.²⁵ It is also important that all staff are trained in dynamic security and processes.

From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021 the second and third highest breaches of correctional centre regulation at St Heliers CC were charges against good order (50 charges) and failure to attend muster (36 charges).²⁶

It is important that staff at St Heliers CC ensure that they are following relevant legislation and policy correctly, which together set out the process for disciplining inmates who have committed correctional centre offences.²⁷ This includes that any offence or suspected offence must be reported to the governor or officer in charge immediately, and that only governors or delegated officers may make determinations and impose penalties.²⁸ An inmate can be locked in a cell 'pending adjudication for a correctional centre offence if it is necessary for the safety of persons or the security, good order and discipline of the correctional centre' however this must be reported to the governor and JH&FMHN immediately and recorded.²⁹

If, after conducting an inquiry, an inmate is found guilty of a correctional centre offence, a governor or delegated officer can consider confining an inmate to a cell for up to seven days.³⁰ However an inmate

22 Information from Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

23 Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, WA, *The Flow of Prisoners to Minimum Security, Section 95 and Work Camps in Western Australia* (Report, December 2012) 1.

24 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

25 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

26 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2022.

27 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* pt 2, div 6; Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 14.1 Inmate Discipline* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020)

28 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 14.1 Inmate Discipline* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 5–6.

29 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 14.1 Inmate Discipline* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 7.

30 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* s 53(1)(c).

discipline checklist outlining the factors to be considered must be completed before taking this measure.³¹ St Heliers CC is a minimum security centre, and cells in the accommodation units do not have locks. This means the segregation cells are used to confine an inmate to cell. As previously discussed, St Heliers CC segregation cells are in poor condition and CSNSW should ensure that St Heliers CC has segregation cells that are fit for purpose.

During the inspection we observed a staff member wearing a body worn camera. As outlined in CSNSW policy, body worn cameras 'can be beneficial for de-escalating incidents, deterring offending behaviour, and reducing vexatious or frivolous complaints against staff'.³² We were informed that four body worn cameras had been in use at St Heliers CC since April 2020. Staff provided positive feedback about the use of body worn cameras and it was pleasing to hear that an additional eight cameras were approved for use at St Heliers CC in February 2022.³³

We noted that accommodation units at St Heliers CC had one-way alert systems and no video surveillance coverage. The one-way alert system, known as a 'knock up' enables inmates to alert staff in the event of an incident, however they do not allow communication with staff to inform them of details of the incident, including the urgency of the incident. This means that staff are not as informed as they could be when responding to incidents and this creates a security and safety risk for both staff and inmates. CSNSW has advised that it plans to incorporate CCTV in accommodation areas and suitable intercom systems as part of the centre-wide refurbishment of accommodation units.³⁴

Recommendation: CSNSW installs two-way intercom systems in the accommodation units at St Heliers CC.

31 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 14.1 Inmate Discipline* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 12–13.

32 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedure – 13.12 Body-Worn Video* (version 1.2, 12 March 2020) 1.

33 Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, March 2022.

34 Information from Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

4 Staffing

In May 2021 St Heliers CC had a staffing profile of 84, outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Staffing profile of St Heliers CC

Area	Approved full-time equivalent
Custodial	39
CSI	25
Administration/Classification	6
Offender services and programs (OS&P)	6
Case management unit (CMU)	6
Education	2
Total	84

In the period since our last inspection St Heliers CC had experienced several leadership changes, and at the time of the inspection had a relatively new governor. The leadership changes, in addition to an unclear vision and purpose, had led to instability and staffing issues.

The feedback we received from both staff and men in custody about the new governor was very positive, and it was evident that a number of constructive initiatives had already been implemented. However, staff were wary that the leadership could change again, and were fatigued by the lack of consistency that could come with further change.

Generally, we found staff at St Heliers CC to be accommodating and respectful to our staff during the inspection. We did hear about alleged bullying, harassment, discrimination and racism between staff, and also from staff to inmates. At the time of the inspection St Heliers CC had a number of outstanding matters with CSNSW's Professional Standards Branch. However, not all of these related to conduct at work. CSNSW advise there has only been one complaint of alleged racism made by an inmate since the new governor was appointed.³⁵

It is important that CSNSW deals with these issues in a consistent and timely manner, particularly if St Heliers CC is intended to be a centre focused on the rehabilitation of Aboriginal men. It is also important that staff are provided with regular and ongoing training to educate staff on areas such as professional conduct and diversity.

In March 2022 only 19 staff at St Heliers CC had completed the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training offered by the Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy. Six staff had completed the Working with Culture and Diversity training and 120 staff had completed the 'Doing the Right Thing' Workplace Ethics training. St Heliers CC management said that completion numbers had been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.³⁶

Recommendation: St Heliers CC staff complete relevant training like Aboriginal cultural awareness and cultural safety training.

³⁵ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

³⁶ Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, 30 March 2022. Corrective Services NSW advise that Aboriginal cultural awareness training is delivered to all new custodial case management and offender services and programs staff. Other staff are encouraged to undertake this training. The Aboriginal cultural awareness course is now available on the on-line training platform. Training is also available to any centre that requests supplementary training: Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

5 Physical and mental health

5.1 Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network services

The St Heliers CC health centre is newer than other facilities at St Heliers CC. It was well organised with good equipment and facilities including a dental suite, consultation and treatment rooms and telehealth facilities. The health centre is staffed from 8.00am to 4.30pm, seven days per week. Outside of those times there is access to after-hours telephone support, and an ambulance can be called for injuries or emergencies.³⁷

JH&FMHN staff, custodial staff and management all reported good cooperation and communication regarding health matters. Men in custody had good access to the health centre, and clinics for vaccinations and population health were run regularly.

A general practitioner (GP) attends the centre one day a week which is adequate, however the position is not covered when they are on leave. This potentially could create gaps in service however this had not been an issue in the months before our inspection, as the GP had not taken leave. JH&FMHN said that in addition to the GP they accessed the Remote Off-Site and Afterhours Medical Services (ROAMS) approximately three times a week.

Table 3: The average wait time in FY2021–22 per clinical priority on 25 May 2022³⁸

Priority level	Waitlist target	Average wait time at St Heliers CC
P1	1 to 3 days	0 days
P2	3 to 14 days	21.7 days
P3	14 days to 3 months	32.2 days
P4	3 to 12 months	31.9 days
P5	No timeframe	59.5 days

Note: This is the average wait time for the following services: primary care nurse, GP/ primary care nurse practitioner, mental health nurse, psychiatrist, population health nurse, optometrist and physiotherapist. Waitlist entries include those waiting for routine follow-ups or periodic reviews.

During the inspection we heard that it was taking a long time to see a dentist, and we noted that as at 26 May 2022 there were five people on the waitlist to receive treatment for at least 272 days.³⁹ JH&FMHN confirmed that dental services had been significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions preventing dental teams visiting the centre. JH&FMHN staff said that they had no issues arranging for men requiring urgent dental work to go to the local hospital for treatment during this period.

The services of an Aboriginal health worker were not accessed during COVID-19 lockdown periods in 2021, or in the six months to May 2022.⁴⁰ JH&FMHN acknowledged that they need to provide access to Aboriginal health workers and additional Aboriginal health services if there is going to be an increase in Aboriginal men at St Heliers CC. For example, Aboriginal people have a higher rate of diabetes as well as a

37 St Heliers Correctional Centre has access to the following after-hours telephone services: an after-hours nurse manager, the Remote Offsite After Hours Medical Service and a mental health helpline.

38 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, May 2022.

39 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, May 2022.

40 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, May 2022.

higher rate of hospitalisation and death from diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians.⁴¹ Currently, inmates with diabetes who are insulin-dependent are not placed at St Heliers CC as nursing coverage concludes at 4.30pm and therefore does not enable the provision of evening insulin.⁴²

St Heliers CC does not manage patients with acute psychiatric or mental health needs, 'unless very stable on medication'.⁴³ If an otherwise stable person becomes very unwell, they are transferred to another facility. JH&FMHN staff use telehealth to access any required psychiatry services, with a mental health nurse consulting through telehealth fortnightly, and a psychiatrist consulting through telehealth monthly. They also have the capacity to respond to emergencies if required.

Recommendation: JH&FMHN should provide for an Aboriginal health worker position at St Heliers CC or ensure there is a process by which Aboriginal men can access an Aboriginal health worker when needed.

5.2 Psychology services

Psychology services in NSW correctional centres are managed by the OS&P branch of CSNSW. When we inspected St Heliers CC in 2017, they had one full-time registered psychologist position which was vacant, and were having difficulty filling the position due to a shortage of psychologists in regional NSW.⁴⁴

On this inspection we were informed that that they had never been able to fill the position, which had been vacant for four years. The position had subsequently been moved to the Mobile Psychology Unit within OS&P in 2019 and, prior to COVID-19, a team of two to three psychologists were attending St Heliers CC every six to eight weeks for two days. The Mobile Psychology Unit has a staffing profile of a senior psychologist and three psychologist positions. A senior psychologist based at Cessnock Correctional Centre was also visiting St Heliers CC approximately once every three weeks to conduct and deliver face-to-face service provision.

Inmates at St Heliers CC can be referred to psychology services by JH&FMHN or CSNSW staff, or other external agencies (for example judges/magistrates or the State Parole Authority). Referrals are triaged based on their priority level, psych 1, 2 or 3. It was reported that St Heliers CC would very rarely have any men in custody with psych 1 referrals, and the primary workload would be men classified in priority as psych 2, which means they must be responded to within four days to 12 weeks. Psych 3 referrals relate to wellbeing, suitability, adjustment and reintegration and has no fixed timeline for response.

Following the inspection, we met with members of the Mobile Psychology Unit and heard that visits to St Heliers CC were significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, including state-wide travel restrictions. The Mobile Psychology Unit shifted their service delivery mode to AVL, however there was a delay in setting this up. Psychologists in the Mobile Psychology Unit thought that a mix of in-person and AVL service delivery to St Heliers CC would be ideal, as in-person visits were still important to establish rapport. The Mobile Psychology Unit also found that referrals for psychology dropped when they provided an AVL service only.

In March 2022 the Mobile Psychology Unit stopped servicing St Heliers CC due to staff shortages. The senior psychologist based at Cessnock Correctional Centre was responding to psych 2 referrals when required. As at September 2022, staffing remains an issue with St Heliers CC being serviced by the Mobile

41 Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Indigenous Australians Agency, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework- Diabetes* (Web Page, 12 April 2022) <<https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/1-09-diabetes>>

42 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 16 September 2022.

43 Corrective Services NSW, *CSNSW Placement Guide – Male* (version 2.5, undated).

44 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 46; Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

Psychology Unit on a needs basis with inmates seen via AVL or in-person when it is staffed.⁴⁵ CSNSW should continue to focus on establishing a regular psychology service at St Heliers CC.

We also noted that there was no access to Aboriginal psychology services. We suggest that these relationships should be established, especially if the Aboriginal population at St Heliers CC increases.

Recommendation: St Heliers CC should receive regular virtual and in-person psychology services.

5.3 COVID-19 protocols

At the time of the inspection St Heliers CC was classified as an ‘orange zone’ which meant that staff were required to wear surgical masks when inmates were present.⁴⁶ We found that this direction was generally well followed by staff, except for a few instances where masks were not worn properly. We observed inmates and visitors wearing masks and following COVID-19 protocols at an in-person visit session. We noted that staff had arranged the visits area so that visiting groups were sitting close together, when the space did allow for more social distancing.

JH&FMHN staff had established a positive initiative of distributing COVID-19 packs to men released to the community. These packs included surgical masks, hand sanitiser and wipes.

It was also positive to hear that at the time of the inspection the COVID-19 vaccination roll out was going well at St Heliers CC, with the majority of inmates and all staff fully vaccinated. As part of the Gundi Program (discussed in the Rehabilitation and Release chapter) we heard an external Aboriginal facilitator discuss his choice to be vaccinated with Aboriginal men. This provided an invaluable opportunity for Aboriginal men to ask questions and discuss any concerns they had, and we suggest that more conversations like this are facilitated in the future.

Table 4: St Heliers CC COVID-19 inmate vaccination rates on 23 May 2022⁴⁷

First dose received		Second dose received		Third dose received		Declined	
All	Aboriginal	All	Aboriginal	All	Aboriginal	All	Aboriginal
93.8%	100%	92.9%	100%	84.1%	94.4%	6.2%	0.0%

Note: Vaccination rates based on centre occupancy at time of reporting.

At the time of inspection, the process for inmates suspected to have COVID-19 was for a nurse to administer a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. The inmate would then quarantine in an observation cell located in the Compound, or Pages unit, an accommodation unit for up to 12 inmates located next to the Compound. If the inmate tested positive, they were transferred immediately to the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre (MRRC) in Sydney.

Pages unit was also being used as quarantine accommodation for inmates returning from external appointments, and it was reported to have last been used to quarantine six inmates in October 2021.

We observed that Pages unit was not suitable for immediate occupation as it had not been cleaned, and furniture was distributed across the unit in a disorganised manner, with some rooms empty. There were additional issues that in our view made the unit unsuitable as a place of quarantine or medical isolation for COVID-19. For example, the unit had shared bathroom and kitchen facilities, and various maintenance and

45 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

46 Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner’s Instruction No. 2021/46 (30 September 2021).

47 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, May 2022.

infrastructure issues, including windows being stuck open or closed, and broken bathroom and kitchen facilities. To communicate with staff, men only had access to a one way 'knock up' button.

From August 2022, inmates with COVID-19 will no longer be transferred to the MRRC and will remain at St Heliers CC. This has prompted CSNSW to consider alternatives to using Pages unit.⁴⁸ JH&FMHN believe Pages unit is suitable for quarantine or medical isolation of COVID-19 patients, because patients are seen at least daily by health staff for physical and mental health checks.⁴⁹

Pages unit



A cell in Pages unit



Recommendation: CSNSW finds an alternative and more suitable solution for onsite COVID-19 isolation and quarantine at St Heliers CC.

48 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

49 Information provided by the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 16 September 2022.

6 Services and amenities

6.1 Induction

At the time of inspection new inmates were being received to St Heliers CC one day a week.

An induction session was conducted by a services and programs officer (SAPO) on the Monday morning after men arrived. We observed an induction session where the SAPO took the men through the local inmate handbook. The handbook outlines important local information about the daily routine, activities and employment. It was useful for the men to be taken through this information in-person and have an opportunity to ask questions.

We noted however that some of the information in the handbook was out of date and at times incorrect. For example, information about in-person visits had not been updated to include that video visits had been introduced because of COVID-19. We acknowledge that changes in public health orders and changing protocols have made it difficult to keep handbooks current during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, inmates should be able to rely on the local inmate handbook as a reliable, accurate and up to date information source. Since our inspection the local inmate handbook has been reviewed and updated and St Heliers CC will undertake an annual review.⁵⁰

At the time of inspection there were seven men who had been identified as requiring a translator. In line with CSNSW policy it would be appropriate for the SAPO to seek the services of an accredited interpreter to help facilitate induction sessions if there is any doubt about a person's ability to comprehend or express themselves in English.⁵¹ There was no evidence available that an interpreter service had been accessed by a SAPO in 2021, and the local inmate handbook was only available in English. For men who spoke Chinese or Vietnamese as a first language there were St Heliers CC information sheets available. This was a positive initiative that was organised for St Heliers CC by the Red Cross.

Recommendation: St Heliers CC regularly reviews its induction material, including the local inmate handbook, to ensure information provided is accessible, current and correct.

6.2 Clothing and bedding

6.2.1 Clothing

CSNSW's *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures (COPP)* provide that all newly received inmates should be provided with a minimum quantity of clothing, hygiene and bedding items. It further provides that the quantity of clothing issued to an inmate at their initial reception into custody should be the minimum level of items they maintain throughout their sentence. Clothing and hygiene items must travel with the inmate on transfer to another correctional centre.⁵²

The local inmate handbook provided information that was inconsistent with this policy and advised inmates 'going on escort' (which we understood to mean being transferred to another correctional centre) to return all their linen and clothing to the reception room.

Men in custody at St Heliers CC can access the clothing stores on Mondays. We heard that it was common for men to arrive at St Heliers CC with only the clothes that they were wearing, meaning men were having

50 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

51 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 11.1 Language Services* (version 1.2, 16 July 2020) 5.

52 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 1.5 Issuing Correctional Centre Clothing and Linen* (version 1.3, 16 March 2021) 4.

to wait days until they could get additional clothes. Additionally, men were only permitted to receive two clothing items at a time, meaning it could take weeks to obtain the minimum quantities of clothing as outlined by the COPP.

Our inspection of the reception room discovered that there were no new underwear or socks readily available, however there was a store of laundered underwear. Providing laundered underwear to inmates is also inconsistent with the COPP, which states that used underwear and socks must not be re-issued to inmates.⁵³

We have previously recommended that CSNSW issue all inmates in NSW with a jacket in winter as part of the inmate clothing entitlements.⁵⁴ The COPP provides that it is at the discretion of the governor whether to issue warmer clothing items such as sloppy joes, track pants and jackets free of charge. At St Heliers CC sloppy joes, track pants and jackets needed to be purchased by inmates.

CSNSW has advised that following our inspection an audit was conducted and a large volume of inmate clothing and bedding was purchased.⁵⁵ We will continue to monitor this.

Recommendation: St Heliers CC ensures that all current and newly arriving inmates have the full allocation of clothing and linen provided by the *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures*.

6.2.2 Bedding

All inmates should be provided with a bed and bedding suitable for the climate and adequate to keep them in good health. Mattresses and bedding should be clean, in good order, durable, fire retardant, and meet health and safety standards.⁵⁶ The last time we inspected St Heliers CC we observed uncovered and damaged foam mattresses. Damaged non-fire-retardant mattresses are a fire safety hazard and a hygiene issue.

In this inspection it was positive to see an improvement in the overall condition of mattresses. We also observed that pillows were readily available, when previously St Heliers CC had no pillows in storage and inmates were creating 'makeshift pillows' made from foam ripped from a mattress and placed inside a pillow case.⁵⁷

On reception to a new correctional centre the minimum issue of bed linen is one pillowcase, two sheets and two blankets. We spoke to two men who had arrived at St Heliers CC that week and they confirmed they had received linen packs on arrival.

Like warmer clothing, the COPP outlines that it is at the governor's discretion to issue bed linen free of charge in excess of the minimum requirements where required, for example issuing a doona. At St Heliers CC doonas are available to purchase. We have previously found that the prison-issued bedding is insufficient for colder climates.⁵⁸ Given the age and lack of heating in the accommodation blocks in the Compound, St Heliers CC should consider making warmer bedding more accessible.

53 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 1.5 Issuing Correctional Centre Clothing and Linen* (version 1.3, 16 March 2021) 4.

54 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Prison Greens: The Clothing and Bedding of Inmates in NSW* (Report, June 2017) 24; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Goulburn Correctional Centre and the High Risk Management Correctional Centre 2021* (Report, June 2022) 37–8.

55 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

56 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standards 73.1–73.4.

57 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 44.

58 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Prison Greens: The Clothing and Bedding of Inmates in NSW* (Report, June 2017) 29; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 30–1; Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Goulburn Correctional Centre and the High Risk Management Correctional Centre 2021* (Report, June 2022) 37–8.

6.3 Food and nutrition

As is standard across most of the NSW correctional system, Corrective Services Industries (CSI) Food Services provides food for inmates at St Heliers CC. Lunch and evening meals are made offsite, with dinner re-heated in the St Heliers CC retherm kitchen and delivered in the afternoon from 3pm.

Inmates are entitled to the provision of sufficient nutritious food at normal meal times which reflect community practice.⁵⁹ Providing warm evening meals in the afternoon means that men have the option of eating dinner earlier, when it is provided to them, or later at dinner time when the food is cold. We highlighted in the *Inspection of Emu Plains Correctional Centre* report that providing meals earlier is a practice that occurs routinely in maximum security settings where people are locked into their cells for the night at 2pm.⁶⁰ This practice is inconsistent with the daily schedule and function of a minimum security correctional centre like St Heliers CC. Minimum security correctional centres should ideally provide some opportunities for people to develop essential independent living skills, such as through self-catering arrangements, or some level of daily meal choice, complemented by kitchen/hospitality training and accreditation.

Men in the Compound were only provided with CSI meals, with the exception of the introduction of an egg buy up, which they could purchase with their own funds. CSNSW have advised that these units are not conducive to self-catering as they do not comply with health and safety standards. It is intended to incorporate kitchens into these units as part of the planned refurbishment (subject to budgetary considerations).⁶¹

To complement or replace the ready meals provided by CSI, men in Dumaresq (used as a privileged accommodation area) can purchase (from their own funds) meat and vegetables to prepare their own meals. The men also maintained an impressive herb and vegetable garden and we observed this fresh produce being used.

When we inspected St Heliers CC in 2017 the men in Dumaresq were able to purchase meat but not fresh vegetables. Inmates had been disciplined for 'smuggling' vegetables from the farm or kitchen and we noted that it was not unreasonable to allow minimum security inmates to purchase fresh vegetables.⁶² It was therefore positive to see fresh vegetables available for purchase by inmates in Dumaresq. However, this issue continued for the men in the Compound, as we heard men were charged for taking fresh vegetables from the vegetable preparation area.

Units such as Dumaresq provide hygienic, properly equipped kitchens, that enable men to develop the independent living skills needed for their release. Ideally, some capacity for self-catering should be available in all minimum security correctional centres.

Recommendation: St Heliers CC introduces at least partial self-catering into the Compound.

59 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standards 91–93; Corrective Services Administrators' Council, *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia* (February 2018) [4.2.2]; *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, GA Res 70/175, UN Doc A/RES/70/175 (8 January 2016, adopted on 17 December 2015) rule 22(1).

60 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Emu Plains Correctional Centre* (Report, April 2022) 23.

61 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

62 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 44.

Breakfast food in the Compound



Fresh herbs in Dumaresq



Fresh vegetable buy up in Dumaresq



Fresh chicken soup prepared in Dumaresq



6.4 External contacts and communications

6.4.1 In-person visits

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic visits to inmates at St Heliers CC were facilitated on Saturdays and Sundays in a dedicated visits area which includes an outdoor and indoor area. While a fairly simple and non-descript facility, it appeared adequate in space for the population. Inmates enjoyed the longer visits (9.30am to 2pm) and the ability to cook lunch on a BBQ for their family and friends. Positive family relationships and support can be an important part of people's reintegration planning.

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.⁶³ In the lead up to our inspection it was announced that in-person visits would resume at correctional centres across NSW with a number of conditions including:

- a visit period of up to 30 minutes
- inmates and visitors (including children) had to be double vaccinated
- maximum of two visitors (two adults or one adult/one child)

⁶³ *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 s 275.*

- visitors and inmates were required to wear a surgical mask provided by the correctional centre at all times.
- inmates and visitors were allowed a short embrace at the start of the visit but had to maintain social distancing at all other times.⁶⁴

We observed the first session of in-person visits held at St Heliers CC since the resumption of in-person visits. The requirement for children to be vaccinated excluded child visitors under the age of 12 years, as at the time this group were ineligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. We heard this made facilitating visits difficult as some visitors needed to arrange child care. Due to the rural location of St Heliers CC the limit of 30 minutes per visit meant that many visitors were travelling long distances for a short visit, or visitors were choosing not to travel until longer visits were allowed.

In-person visits were subsequently suspended again in January 2022 due to the high rates of COVID-19 infection at the time.⁶⁵ In-person visits resumed again in March 2022.⁶⁶

St Heliers CC visits area outside



St Heliers CC visits area inside



6.4.2 Social video visits and audio visual link facilities

In response to the suspension of in-person social visits, CSNSW introduced video visits via tablets in correctional centres across NSW, including St Heliers CC. At the time of inspection, St Heliers CC held social tablet visit sessions on Saturdays between 9.30am and 4.00pm. St Heliers CC had six tablets available, with sessions running for 25 minutes each. The 78 tablet visit slots available on the day we observed visits had been fully booked, indicating the popularity of the video visits and that there were possibly not enough slots to meet demand.

Staff and inmates provided feedback that they would like to see the video visits continue, even when in-person visits resume as they are convenient for families and friends who live a long distance from St Heliers CC. Another positive of the social video visits through tablets is that they are available to inmates with family or friends overseas. We did hear feedback however that barriers remained around the fixed visit schedule and its incompatibility with international time zones.

⁶⁴ Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner's Instruction No. 2021/58 (25 November 2021).

⁶⁵ Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner's Instruction No. 2022/03 (11 January 2022).

⁶⁶ Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner's Instruction No. 2022/10 (3 March 2022)

There were two audio visual link (AVL) suites located in the Compound, used for court appearances, legal appointments and social visits when required. There was also an additional room for legal phone calls. We noticed that noise from the AVL suites could be heard in the adjoining staff offices and heard that this was an ongoing issue. CSNSW have advised they were unaware of the issue as it had not been reported by St Heliers CC staff.⁶⁷

Recommendation: CSNSW ensures that the AVL suites at St Heliers CC are sound proofed.

6.4.3 Phones

Maintaining positive family relationships and support can be an important part of reintegration planning. Inmate phones enable men in custody to maintain frequent contact with family and friends. When we inspected St Heliers CC in 2017, we noted that the number of inmate telephones was too low for the population, and that there was room to improve the privacy for men using the phones.⁶⁸

We found that there had been no improvements made since our last inspection. All six inmate phones in the Compound were under a covered area, with three phones on each side. There was no privacy – conversations could be heard by other phone users and those waiting for the phone. Where inmate phones are grouped together like this, we would suggest installing a barrier that could help reduce noise.

There should be enough telephones for the population to communicate with family, friends, and the outside world. With a capacity of 185 inmates there was one phone for every 31 inmates in the Compound. While there were three additional inmate phones in the industries and employment areas if needed, these were not accessible to men not working in these areas, and are generally not accessible following completion of the inmate working day or on weekends.

In Dumaresq there were five inmate phones for a maximum of 96 inmates. Like the Compound however, three of the phones were located outside and offered little privacy. In both the Compound and Dumaresq we observed all the phones in use frequently, and often lines of men waiting to use the phones.

As inmates were locked in their units from 4.30pm, the placement of the phones outside the accommodation units in both areas heavily restricted the time that men could use the phones, especially those working in a location with no access to a phone (noting that Dumaresq inmates on work release had additional time after returning from work to use the phones).

In the 2020–21 period, CSNSW rolled out 800 secure tablets to inmates across two correctional centres and reported that the introduction of these tablets allowed inmates to access programs, educational material and approved news websites.⁶⁹ The tablets also lengthen the time during which inmates can make phone calls to family and friends, helping people in custody to maintain positive family relationships and support. We were informed that CSNSW had completed a preliminary site audit in relation to the tablet rollout at St Heliers CC in March 2022, and that tablets would be introduced state-wide by the end of 2023.⁷⁰ The program of work anticipates that tablets will be available to each inmate at St Heliers CC by December 2022. The tablets will enable inmates to make 10-minute phone calls to their approved contact lists until 10pm each night.⁷¹

67 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

68 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 45.

69 Department of Communities and Justice, *2020–21 Annual Report: Volume 1 Performance and Activities Report* (Report, 2021) 25.

70 Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, 30 March 2022.

71 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

Covered area with inmate phones in the Compound



External phones in Dumaresq



6.5 Inmate development committee

Each correctional centre should establish a staff-inmate forum at which inmates can draw attention to issues of concern before they become the source of complaints. This is known as an inmate development committee (IDC). CSNSW policy requires governors to ensure that an IDC is established in each correctional centre.⁷²

After our previous inspection of St Heliers CC and four other minimum security correctional centres in non-metropolitan NSW, we recommended that CSNSW ensure IDC meetings were run regularly, and minutes recorded, as required by the COPP.⁷³

Positively, we found that St Heliers CC had a functioning IDC that had met regularly in 2021. During our inspection we attended an IDC meeting and found that inmate representatives were able to articulate issues and concerns on behalf of their fellow inmates. We noted that the majority of the inmate representatives were from Dumaresq. It would be preferable for IDC meetings to have an even representation of inmates from each accommodation area.

St Heliers CC should also ensure that an Aboriginal delegate is appointed and attends all IDC meetings and consider establishing an Aboriginal inmate committee to provide support to Aboriginal inmates.⁷⁴

6.6 Faith services

St Heliers CC has a dedicated chapel space that is located inside the Compound and a full-time Christian chaplain. A Muslim chaplain based at Cessnock CC attended St Heliers CC around once a month. Christian services were scheduled weekly at the chapel on Mondays and Muslim services were scheduled on Fridays.

We were informed that contact was made on behalf of inmates to additional religious representatives when needed. We heard that access to community-based religious programs had been limited during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷² Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 9.8 Inmate Development Committees* (version 1.2, 12 March 2020)

⁷³ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020).

⁷⁴ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 11.3 Aboriginal Inmate Committees* (version 1.2, 12 March 2020).

6.7 Access to purposeful activity

The ICS *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in NSW* provide that inmates should have reasonable access to a range of sports, recreation and cultural activities and that recreation areas and equipment must be maintained to ensure safety of use.⁷⁵ The men at St Heliers CC had access to two gyms, which were well used during the inspection period. As noted previously, both gyms had older makeshift equipment that did not appear to be of a safe standard. Although no structured sporting activities or competitions were observed, there was a tennis court in the Compound in use. Dumaresq inmates also had access to a recreation room with a table tennis table and billiards table. The relatively early lock-in from 4.30pm limited the use of these spaces.

When we visited St Heliers CC previously we noted that a fitness ‘boot camp’ was running three afternoons per week as part of a wider pilot program with the Red Cross. At the time of inspection, the wider program was still running however the boot camp had stopped. Men expressed a desire to undertake fitness training and recommence the boot camp.

In many correctional centres across NSW inmates can purchase a television for personal use. To make televisions accessible, correctional centres can implement a rental scheme, where inmates can rent televisions on a more affordable monthly or weekly basis. We found that St Heliers CC did not have an adequate rental scheme in place, with only 20 televisions available to rent. This can create issues such as standover between inmates. Since our inspection St Heliers CC had purchased additional televisions for rent. However, CSNSW advise the need to increase televisions for rent is superfluous as inmates will be able to watch television on their tablets.⁷⁶

Recommendation: CSNSW focuses on rolling out tablets or increases inmate phones and access to the TV rental scheme at St Heliers CC.

⁷⁵ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standards 100–101.

⁷⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

7 Rehabilitation and release preparation

7.1 Support for Aboriginal people

7.1.1 Cultural infrastructure

Since our last inspection of St Heliers CC in 2017, a dedicated cultural area for Aboriginal men had been installed near but outside the Dumaresq area. During our inspection we spoke to a local Elder who had been involved in the planning of the cultural area and had seen it used by inmates for events including NAIDOC celebrations. This development was a positive step in recognising the importance of and facilitating a connection to culture for Aboriginal men in custody. However, we noted that due to its location outside the Compound the majority of Aboriginal men had little or no access to the area unless supervised by staff. This prevented the area being used regularly and to its full potential.

This issue had already been identified by St Heliers CC, and we were informed that plans were underway to build an additional cultural area in the Compound to be funded by a local Aboriginal community fund.⁷⁷

Recommendation: CSNSW prioritises the completion of the planned cultural centre in the Compound.

7.1.2 Programs for Aboriginal men in custody

Gundi Program

In 2017 we commended the work being done with the Gundi Program, a program designed to provide Aboriginal men with a direct pathway to employment and work release. At the time, the Gundi Program worked directly with the affordable housing business unit doing construction work to build demountable houses for Aboriginal housing agencies from different parts of NSW.

During this inspection we were pleased to find that the Gundi Program had expanded, and now included a cultural component. In addition to providing employment, education and vocational training and work release, the following two cultural courses were available to Aboriginal men.

Cultural Immersions course

Aboriginal men learn from an Aboriginal cultural educator about Aboriginal dance, traditional Aboriginal food and cultural practices. The course, which runs for one session a week for six to eight weeks, was held in the visits area of the Compound as the majority of participants could not have access to the cultural area.

We observed one session of the Cultural Immersions course, which included a very detailed discussion about Aboriginal family lines, organisational structures and cultural practices. The second half of the session gave inmates the opportunity to be painted with ochre and taught Aboriginal dances, including the totem dances of the kangaroo and goanna. The Aboriginal cultural educator was very engaging, and the level of inmate interest and attention throughout the session was high. From 1 January to 31 December 2021, 51 Aboriginal men completed the Cultural Immersions course⁷⁸ (noting that the course was impacted at times during this period by COVID-19 restrictions preventing external facilitators from attending St Heliers CC).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ This was delayed by nine months due to COVID-19 but was proceeding at the time of writing: Information provided by Corrective Service NSW, 21 September 2022.

⁷⁸ Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, 30 March 2022.

⁷⁹ Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner's Instruction No. 2021/26 (16 July 2021).

Didgeridoo course

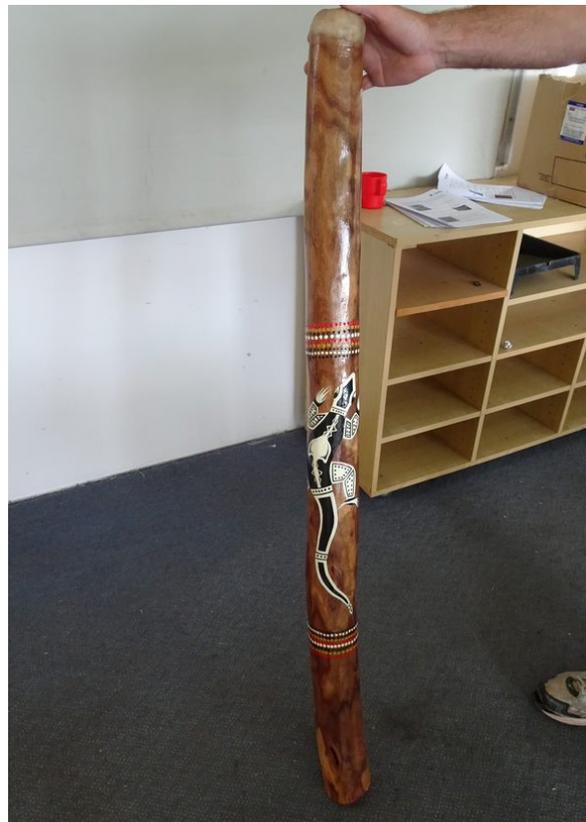
The didgeridoo course is run over six weeks and provides an opportunity for Aboriginal men to make their own didgeridoo and then learn how to play it. The course is run by an Aboriginal Elder and Bidjara man. We observed the first session of the didge course, where Aboriginal men chose a raw branch and started to carve it into a didgeridoo. The Aboriginal Elder spoke about his story, and then engaged with and guided the men as they started to work on their didgeridoos.

Like the Cultural Immersions course, we observed high levels of engagement. Speaking to the men participating in the course, we found that while many were knowledgeable about their culture, this was the first time they had made a didgeridoo. It was evident that the men had a level of respect for their work and enjoyed assisting each other. From 1 January to 31 December 2021, 38 Aboriginal men completed the didgeridoo course⁸⁰ (noting that the course was impacted at times during this period by COVID-19 restrictions preventing external facilitators from attending the centre).⁸¹

Didgeridoos being shaped



A completed didgeridoo



Employment

The Gundi Program has continued to provide Aboriginal men with a direct pathway to employment and work release, however men are no longer solely employed with the affordable housing business unit. Aboriginal men could participate in employment opportunities across all business units at St Heliers CC, based on their personal preference. Throughout their time at St Heliers CC Aboriginal men are guided by the Gundi Program project officer, an identified Aboriginal position, that is responsible for connecting Aboriginal men with suitable work release opportunities.

⁸⁰ Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, 30 March 2022.

⁸¹ Corrective Services NSW, Commissioner's Instruction No. 2021/26 (16 July 2021).

We were impressed with the hard work of the Gundi Program project officer in running and developing the Gundi Program. With the support of several dedicated staff, the Gundi Program project officer had developed strong relationships with Aboriginal men in custody, as well as with Blackrock Industries, a local Indigenous service company, and a number of local businesses. It was positive to see staff and local community organisations working together to provide Aboriginal men with work release opportunities despite facing a number of challenges including COVID-19 restrictions that prevented St Heliers CC inmates from attending community-based work. We heard this strained relationships with local businesses when the men on work release could not attend work for extended periods of time, often at short notice.

The Gundi Program is fortunate to benefit from the strong support of a local mining company, which provides a grant and most of the funding for the program every two years through a local Aboriginal community fund. When we spoke to the mining company they expressed their desire to formalise this support on an ongoing basis through a memorandum of understanding.

Recommendation: CSNSW develops and supports the Gundi Program and clarifies and communicates the purpose and function of the program.

Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program

Separate to the Gundi Program, the OS&P team at St Heliers CC had introduced the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program. The program was developed by CSNSW's Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit for Aboriginal people in custody and is an adaption of the mainstream Real Understanding of Self Help (RUSH) program.⁸²

We observed a session of this course, which was delivered by two non-Aboriginal SAPOs. We found the delivery of an Aboriginal cultural program by non-Aboriginal staff to be culturally insensitive, and unsafe, especially considering that a number of inmates participating expressed that they did not have a strong knowledge of their Aboriginal heritage. St Heliers CC has an identified Aboriginal SAPO, however we were informed that they were not trained to deliver the course.

We confirmed that the course was delivered independently of the cultural programs run through the Gundi Program, and this created a confusing experience for the Aboriginal men in custody, and St Heliers CC staff. Going forward it would be preferable to see the two programs work together to complement each other.

Recommendation: CSNSW ensures that Aboriginal programs are delivered in a culturally safe way.

Aboriginal Elders, staff and all of the Aboriginal men in custody that we spoke to, were highly supportive of the cultural programs at St Heliers CC, provided they were delivered in a culturally safe manner. Aboriginal Elders stressed the importance of Aboriginal people developing a connection to their culture from Aboriginal people connected to the land they identify with. It is acknowledged that the Gundi Program does this exceptionally well, however, this should be expanded to the other cultural programs being offered at St Heliers CC, to assist Aboriginal men in custody to connect with Aboriginal people from their own communities.

Recommendation: CSNSW engages with Aboriginal Elders and organisations to provide mentoring and cultural support for Aboriginal men.

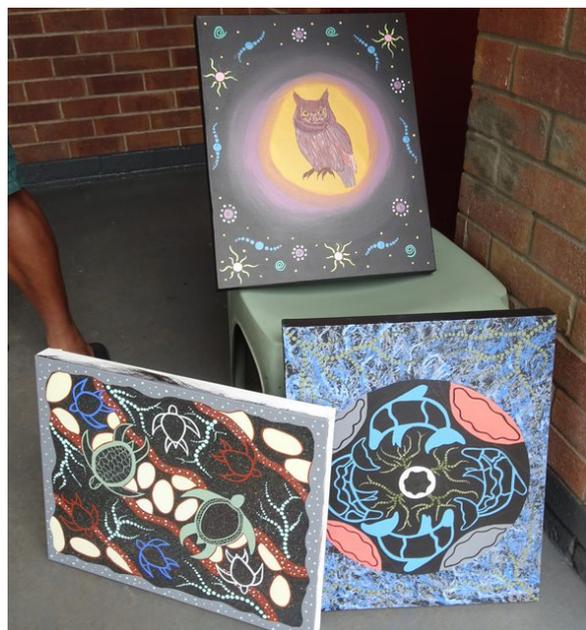
⁸² Corrective Services NSW, *Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program Guide and Resources* (2020) 2. Corrective Services NSW have advised that they are working on the development of Aboriginal program content that is matched to the EQUIPS program content. In addition to the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program, two new Aboriginal specific programs, Deadly Dads and Dads at a Distance are currently going through an accreditation process: Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

Art is an important way for Aboriginal people to express their connection to culture, land and their identity and community. During the inspection we heard that St Heliers CC had run an Aboriginal art program, however it had not been conducted for some time. At the time of the inspection, Aboriginal men could receive two canvases a month for self-directed painting. This arrangement limited the art that Aboriginal men could do. CSNSW advise that staffing issues have impacted the ability to run an Aboriginal art program but they are supportive of men entering their art in competitions and displaying their artwork in a local art gallery.⁸³

When we inspected Goulburn Correctional Centre in 2021, we found that the Nura Warra Umer Creative Works Centre had been closed.⁸⁴ The program had originally been established to provide Aboriginal men with a balance of cultural and vocational workplace and business management skills, aimed at acquiring skills to contribute to their economic independence and successful return to the community upon release.⁸⁵ As the Aboriginal inmate population increases at St Heliers CC it would be an excellent opportunity for CSNSW to re-establish a program like the Nura Warra Umer Creative Works Centre.

Recommendation: CSNSW re-establishes an art program for Aboriginal men at St Heliers CC.

Artworks completed by Aboriginal men



7.2 Case planning and management

At the time of the inspection, the case management unit (CMU) at St Heliers CC had a staffing profile of one functional manager, one senior case management officer and five case management officers.

The CMU undertakes risk and needs assessments to identify what programs, services, work and education people in custody should undertake during their sentence to reduce their risk of reoffending. To be eligible for a case plan a person must be sentenced and have at least three months to serve before their earliest possible release date. Case plans should be developed within six weeks of a person being sentenced and approved within seven weeks. On 6 December 2021, the CMU reported that 78% of men at St Heliers

⁸³ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

⁸⁴ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Goulburn Correctional Centre and the High Risk Management Correctional Centre 2021* (Report, June 2022) 43, 49.

⁸⁵ Department of Communities & Justice, 'A place to create & link with identity', *Corrective Services Industries* (Web Page, undated) <<https://www.csi.nsw.gov.au/Pages/csi-services/csi-services.aspx>>.

CC had a current case plan. We were informed that this number was not higher as an increasing number of men were arriving at St Heliers CC without case plans. Since our inspection the number of men with a completed case plan has increased to 96%.⁸⁶

It is also important that the CMU works closely with OS&P, education, psychology, JH&FMHN and the work release teams to ensure that case plans effectively consider all the programs, services, work and education options available at St Heliers CC.

Recommendation: St Heliers CC should ensure that all eligible people have an active case plan.

7.3 Programs

At the time of the inspection the OS&P team at St Heliers CC consisted of one manager (who was also the manager of the teams at Glen Innes and Tamworth correctional centres), a senior SAPO and three SAPOs (including one Aboriginal SAPO).

St Heliers CC offers Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed (EQUIPS) programs, including EQUIPS Maintenance. It could also run the RUSH and CONNECT programs, as well as an Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program for Aboriginal men. We heard OS&P staff had been unable to run all these programs due to low numbers of eligible inmates. OS&P staff were not trained to deliver EQUIPS Maintenance at the time of the inspection.

St Heliers CC does not offer a number of programs, for example intensive programs designed for inmates serving short custodial sentences. Throughout the inspection we heard that it was a common issue that men were placed at St Heliers CC, but were later required to transfer to another correctional centre to complete programs. This is an issue that needs to be addressed through the classification and placement and case management systems, or by increasing the program offering at St Heliers CC.

We were informed that narcotics anonymous had been running prior to COVID-19, however when we inspected there were no drug and alcohol programs at St Heliers CC. Both the men in custody and staff provided feedback that these programs were needed. CSNSW should consider running these programs at St Heliers CC.

⁸⁶ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

Table 5: Programs run at St Heliers CC 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021⁸⁷

Program	Participants
EQUIPS Foundation. Aims to reduce re-offending by addressing general criminogenic needs. Duration 20 x 2 hours (40 hours total).	10
EQUIPS Addiction. Designed to address the addictive behaviour of program eligible offenders and to provide participants with a pathway to support services for addictive behaviours. Duration 20 x 2 hours (40 hours total).	15
EQUIPS Aggression. Designed to increase participants' ability to manage difficult life events and minimise aggressive behaviour. Duration 20 x 2 hours (40 hours total). Duration 20 x 2 hours (40 hours total).	3
<p>Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening Program. The aim of the program is to address responsivity issues for Aboriginal offenders including intergenerational trauma and disconnection from community so they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop new coping skills for dealing with life's stress • develop new communication skills necessary for improved relationships • recognise Aboriginal Culture and Belonging • raise awareness of self-efficacy and self-care towards prosocial living. <p>Duration 4 x up to 2hour sessions (8 hours total).</p>	5

7.3.1 Red Cross program

In 2019 we noted that the Red Cross had started a pilot program at St Heliers CC, providing first aid training and 'Red Cross accreditation' to men in custody, as well as mentoring and boot camps.⁸⁸ At the time of the inspection, St Heliers CC was the only correctional centre in NSW delivering the program. The program was run by an external facilitator and supported by a SAPO.

We were extremely impressed with the program, which operates weekly. Men in custody volunteer their time and are not employed or paid to participate. Projects that were run included providing Christmas cards to men in custody with free postage and organising Christmas gifts for the children of men in custody. The men also run ongoing projects including acting as mentors for new arrivals and writing a newsletter for distribution around St Heliers CC. The men are provided with ongoing training through the program, including conflict resolution.

CSNSW has confirmed that the Red Cross program has been approved to be funded for 12 months by CSNSW and is going to be continued to St Heliers and expanded to Shortland Correctional Centre.⁸⁹

Recommendation: CSNSW continues to support the Red Cross program and considers implementing the program at other minimum security centres.

⁸⁷ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 31 March 2022.

⁸⁸ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 46.

⁸⁹ Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

7.4 Education

At the time of the inspection St Heliers CC was staffed with an education services coordinator and an assessment and planning officer. They were responsible for conducting core skills assessments (CSA) and referrals. People in custody are required to do a CSA every three years and many men arrive at St Heliers CC having already completed a CSA. Inmates with English as a second language may not be eligible to undertake a CSA and education confirmed that they did not use interpreter services to assess inmates. As previously highlighted, the services of an accredited interpreter should be sought if requested or required, or if there is any doubt about a person's ability to comprehend or express themselves in English.⁹⁰

The education and traineeship courses that were offered from July 2020 to July 2021 are outlined in the table below.

Table 6: Education and vocational training offered at St Heliers CC July 2020 to July 2021

Course/Program	Enrolled	Participants	Sessions	Completions
Driver Knowledge Test	28	28	78	0
Foundational Skills Pathway - Level 1 Digital Literacy	53	49	541	6
Foundational Skills Pathway - Level 1 Language, Literacy, Numeracy	42	40	502	11
Foundational Skills pre-certificate - Language, Literacy, Numeracy	18	15	150	7
Traineeship/Apprenticeship	31	29	32	1
Vocational Training - Agriculture	53	42	872	0
Vocational Training - Business	13	13	154	0
Vocational Training - Chemical Handling Certification	12	10	60	0
Vocational Training - Cleaning Operations	30	25	152	0
Vocational Training - Construction	42	41	158	0
Workplace Training - Asbestos	37	36	141	0
Workplace Training - Crane	28	28	273	0
Workplace Training - Dogging	29	29	334	0
Workplace Training - First Aid	10	0	0	0
Workplace Training - Food Safety	27	22	44	0
Workplace Training - Forklift	30	29	206	0
Workplace Training - Tractor Driving	42	32	192	0
Workplace Training - White Card	52	39	78	0

The range of vocational and workplace training at St Heliers CC is excellent. While completion rates will have inevitably been affected by periodic COVID-19 restrictions, transfers, releases, length of sentence, disciplinary matters and inmate choice, we were still disappointed to see that completion rates were extremely low.

⁹⁰ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 11.1 Language Services* (version 1.2, 16 July 2020) 5.

Although CSNSW already collects and reports on completion rate data it is pleasing that a review of education KPI and performance targets is underway.⁹¹

Recommendation: CSNSW measures education completion rates in addition to participation rates.

We also found that there was no distance education being offered at St Heliers CC. CSNSW advise this is due to staffing issues.⁹² This meant that there had been no change since we last inspected St Heliers CC, when we recommended that CSNSW work to increase the number of inmates undertaking distance education at minimum security correctional centres.⁹³

Recommendation: CSNSW allows inmates to pursue distance education at St Heliers CC.

St Heliers CC has 10 computers that can be accessed 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday for legal services and to complete tasks such as writing resumes. The library, located in the Compound, was in excellent condition and featured fiction and non-fiction books, as well as newspapers and magazines.

The St Heliers CC inmate library



Computers in St Heliers CC library



91 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

92 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

93 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 19.

7.5 Employment

People in custody should have access to a range of productive employment opportunities, to use their time constructively, to learn and develop skills, and increase employability.⁹⁴ St Heliers CC offered a diverse range of work experience and related vocational training.

During the inspection, St Heliers CC had a range of employment opportunities available in:

- agriculture, including vegetable production, hay production and beef cattle
- vegetable processing, including preparation and packing of raw vegetable produce for distribution through the correction system
- furniture production, including refurbishment of school furniture such as desks and chairs, production of noticeboards and whiteboards for on-sale in the government sector and security screen doors
- engineering/construction, including constructing modular cell blocks for the corrections system
- affordable housing/construction, including construction of modular housing for Land and Housing Corporation NSW
- horse rehabilitation, working with retired racehorses in partnership with Racing NSW
- Mobile Outreach Program
- traditional prison industries such as kitchen, laundry and ground maintenance.

⁹⁴ Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standards 126–131.

Table 7: Employment profile of St Heliers CC as at 7 April 2022⁹⁵

Employment	Profile	Actual
Agriculture/Stables	30	17
Vegetable processing	30	14
Furniture	30	20
Modular housing/Demountables	75	25
Activities/Reception/Admin/Programs	8	6
Community Projects	10	3
Food Services/Laundry	15	13
Centre maintenance	15	4
Ground maintenance/Hygiene	15	9
Clerks	3	3
Education clerks	3	3
Work release	30	12
Wing sweepers	8	2
Total	272	131

Note: Lower than average population affected employment numbers

The diversity of useful onsite work experience offered at St Heliers CC is one of its strengths. Construction skills in particular are in demand for employment in the community. While agricultural work experience and training is perhaps not as sought after in the community, it can be preferred by men who wish to return to regional areas. A range of specific skills that may well be useful for some such as horse handling, chemical handling, land care and animal welfare were on offer at St Heliers CC. The furniture business unit had a series of large workshops and incorporated basic industries enabling people without any industry experience to develop basic skills to improve employability.

During the inspection we observed that a number of men were trusted by correctional staff to oversee processes such as the distribution of inmate clothing and activities buy ups and received little supervision from staff. While it was positive to see the men being given responsibility, a lack of staff supervision can lead to inconsistency in processes and create issues such as opportunities for standover.

We observed in some work areas, including offsite locations, that inmates did not have the correct WHS equipment, for example safety glasses and work boots. It is important that St Heliers CC has proper processes in place to ensure that inmates are provided with adequate equipment that meets WHS requirements. This includes for people who work in outdoor areas who must be provided with sunscreen and wide brimmed hats.⁹⁶

During our inspection we checked WHS paperwork and it appeared that all inmates had received a role description and appropriate training. We did however hear that there had been workplace incidents, including one serious incident where an inmate was taken to hospital.

⁹⁵ Information provided by St Heliers Correctional Centre, 7 April 2022.

⁹⁶ Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures – 6.12 Sun Protection for Inmates* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 4.

Since our inspection St Heliers CC has conducted WHS training for staff and established a WHS committee. Employment areas are inspected monthly by a WHS representative. Audits have also been conducted and SafeWork NSW has attended the site for inspections.⁹⁷

Recommendation: CSNSW and St Heliers CC conduct a workplace health and safety audit of employment areas.

7.5.1 Mobile Outreach Program

In 2017 we recommended that the Mobile Outreach Program at St Heliers CC should continue to be supported by CSNSW.⁹⁸ The Mobile Outreach Program is unique to St Heliers and involves a small team of men who perform regular valuable community work outside the correctional centre, under the supervision of a correctional officer. Work they undertake includes the ongoing responsibility for maintenance of the War Memorials for the RSL sub-branch in Muswellbrook. The crew also assists in ground maintenance work around local cemeteries and churches, painting and maintenance of community facilities, as well as annual activities such as both setting up and cleaning the showground in Aberdeen for the highland games each July.

In the past St Heliers CC has also facilitated sending a mobile work crew, together with supervising staff, offsite for longer periods for bigger projects, including installing modular homes manufactured at St Heliers CC for Aboriginal people in remote areas. This has required inmates to camp out overnight under the supervision of correctional officers. Other correctional centres operate community projects that assist local communities with projects but do not involve travel requiring overnight stays.⁹⁹

Unfortunately, the consistent running of the Mobile Outreach Program over the past two years had been impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns. We were told that the offsite program had also not run for some period due to COVID-19. Correctional officers were said to have assisted with the community work when the men involved in the program were restricted from leaving St Heliers CC. The projects that the men work on are predominately outdoors in environments that can facilitate social distancing. Going forward we would like to see the Mobile Outreach Program continue to operate, with safe COVID-19 protocols in place if required.

Recommendation: CSNSW continues to support the Mobile Outreach Program and considers implementing the program at other minimum security centres.

7.5.2 Work release

St Heliers CC is close to Muswellbrook and can take advantage of a variety of town-based, mining and agricultural employment opportunities. When we inspected St Heliers CC in 2017 it had a successful work release program.¹⁰⁰

Prior to this inspection we understood that the overall responsibility for the work release program at St Heliers CC was with two teams that were not based locally. A work release team based in Sydney was responsible for interviewing eligible men and assessing their suitability for the program, and maintaining new and existing relationships with local employers. The SOG, a specialised CSNSW unit based in Cessnock, was responsible for attending St Heliers CC for the purpose of attaching, monitoring and removing ankle bracelets. The Gundi Program officer based at St Heliers CC was also available to support the Sydney-

97 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

98 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 16–17.

99 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

100 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Five Minimum Security Correctional Centres in Non-Metropolitan NSW* (Report, February 2020) 26–7.

based work release team by identifying suitable Aboriginal men for work release opportunities, and to assist in creating work opportunities for Aboriginal men in the local community.

In 2021–22 St Heliers CC had approval for up to 30 inmates to participate in the work release program. As of 3 May 2022, there were 15 men participating in work release at St Heliers CC, employed across three local employers. Six of these inmates identified as Aboriginal and all the work release opportunities were working directly with or supporting the local mining industry.¹⁰¹

During our inspection we heard that the success of the work release program had faced barriers including:

- COVID-19 restrictions, which included the suspension of inmate external leave and the work release program for periods during March 2020 to March 2022.¹⁰² These restrictions also impacted weekend leave, which was last approved on 19 June 2021.¹⁰³
- Transport to and from work. At the time of the inspection the men on work release could only get to work via push bike, or if their employer was able to transport them to and from St Heliers CC. Local employers identified this as the main constraint that prevented employers from participating in the work release program.¹⁰⁴
- Over-reliance on the Gundi Program project officer based at St Heliers CC to create work release opportunities for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men in custody at St Heliers CC.

Factors such as these hindered not only the day to day running of the work release program, but also the potential of the program to expand and improve. For example, the ability to establish relationships with new employers to increase and diversify work opportunities, taking advantage of a region where there are good employment opportunities. It would be ideal for a dedicated position to be established at St Heliers CC to enable the program to run efficiently and focus on increasing work release opportunities.

Since our inspection, and with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, there are now 18 inmates actively engaged in work release with five different employers, and CSNSW is working to increase work release opportunities.¹⁰⁵

Recommendation: CSNSW supports the work release program at St Heliers CC locally and works towards increasing work release opportunities.

101 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 6 May 2022.

102 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 6 May 2022.

103 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 6 May 2022.

104 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 6 May 2022.

105 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 September 2022.

7.6 Parole and release from custody

Since the inspection in 2017 the parole team servicing St Heliers CC had moved its base from St Heliers CC to the Cessnock Correctional Complex parole unit. The team works to pre-release delivery standards, which set out when they must engage with people about their parole ahead of their release, and also the frequency of contact. The team said that being based at Cessnock Correctional Complex was working well, and that they had adequate staffing resources to cover the workload.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the parole team were not always able to attend St Heliers CC in-person due to COVID-19 restrictions, and we received feedback that this had created confusion about how the men in custody could access the parole team ahead of their impending release. As of March 2022, the team reported having a physical presence at St Heliers CC one day a week, with the goal to eventually have one member of the parole team onsite at St Heliers CC four days a week. An established in-person presence will hopefully ensure that the service delivered is consistent and accessible.



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