

# Inspector of Custodial Services

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Inspection of Wellington  
Correctional Centre 2022

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## Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Inspection of Wellington Correctional Centre

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# Inspector's overview

We announced the inspection of three regional correctional centres in 2022: Wellington Correctional Centre (CC), South Coast CC, and Mid North Coast CC.<sup>1</sup> The inspection of Wellington CC took place in November 2022, followed by South Coast CC in February 2023 and Mid North Coast CC in May 2023.

Wellington CC is located at Wellington, approximately 350km from Sydney. The centre opened in 2007 and is situated on Wiradjuri land. Wellington CC can accommodate 616 male and female remand and sentenced inmates and provides accommodation for maximum, medium and minimum security classification inmates. South Coast CC is located at Nowra, approximately 167km south of Sydney. The centre opened in 2010 and is situated on Yuin land. South Coast CC can accommodate 928 remand and sentenced inmates and provides accommodation for maximum, medium and minimum security male inmates. Mid North Coast CC is located at Kempsey, approximately 445km north of Sydney. The centre opened in 2004 and is situated on Thunggutti/Dunghutti land. Mid North Coast CC can accommodate 990 male and female remand and sentenced inmates and provides accommodation for maximum, medium and minimum security inmates.

We inspected these three large regional correctional centres as part of one series of inspections as the centres are a similar age and original build from an infrastructure perspective. Wellington CC and Mid North Coast CC both have a women's unit attached to these male correctional centres and South Coast CC was originally designed to have a women's unit. All centres perform a similar function as the remand and reception centres for their local region and they all hold a high percentage and number of Aboriginal people.

Undertaking a multi-centre inspection takes time. The on-site component of these inspections took six months to complete. Although there are themes and systemic issues that have emerged across all three centres, which will be discussed in another report, I thought it was important to publish this report into Wellington CC as a standalone report. While Wellington CC is similar in role, function and build to South Coast and Mid North Coast CCs, unlike the other two centres it is co-located with Macquarie CC, which has brought its own unique circumstances and challenges, from a staffing and operational perspective.

Wellington CC was last inspected in 2017 as part of a themed inspection focusing on the management of women on remand in NSW. The inspection detailed in this report considered all aspects of Wellington CC, with a focus on the treatment and conditions of people in custody. This inspection took place less than a year after the re-opening of the centre, which closed for 10 months in 2021-2022 to repair extensive damage caused by a mouse plague.

After the completion of the on-site component of the inspection, we discussed most of the issues that were identified with the management of Wellington CC. Such discussions are particularly important as they provide an opportunity for local management to address any immediate concerns, considering that the report writing component of the inspection can take some time as we source various data and documents to comprehensively examine issues and as we ensure due process. It is pleasing to see that Corrective Services NSW moved promptly to address some of the issues identified at the time of the inspection.

**Fiona Rafter**  
**Inspector of Custodial Services NSW**  
**May 2024**

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<sup>1</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, 'Announcement of the inspection of three regional correctional centres' (Web Page, June 2022), <[https://inspectorcustodial.nsw.gov.au/documents/terms-of-reference/WCC\\_SCCC\\_and\\_MNCCC\\_Terms\\_of\\_Reference.pdf](https://inspectorcustodial.nsw.gov.au/documents/terms-of-reference/WCC_SCCC_and_MNCCC_Terms_of_Reference.pdf)>.

# Glossary of terms and acronyms

<b>Aboriginal</b>	'Aboriginal' when used in this report is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
<b>AVL</b>	Audio visual link
<b>Bangkok Rules</b>	United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Noncustodial Measures for Women Offenders
<b>CC</b>	Correctional Centre
<b>CCTV</b>	Closed-circuit television
<b>CMU</b>	Case management unit
<b>COPP</b>	Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
<b>CSI</b>	Corrective Services Industries
<b>CSNSW</b>	Corrective Services NSW
<b>CSSL</b>	Corrective Services Support Line
<b>EEP</b>	Education and Employment Plan
<b>EQUIPS</b>	Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed
<b>FSP</b>	Foundation Skills Program
<b>Gundanha program</b>	Gundanha Aboriginal Women's Employment program
<b>HIPU</b>	High Intensity Program Unit
<b>IAT</b>	Immediate action team
<b>ICS</b>	Inspector of Custodial Services
<b>ICS Act</b>	<i>Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012</i>
<b>ICS Standards</b>	Inspector of Custodial Services' <i>Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales</i>
<b>IDC</b>	Inmate development committee
<b>ILC</b>	Intensive Learning Centre
<b>JH&amp;FMHN</b>	Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
<b>LLN</b>	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
<b>LOP</b>	Local Operating Procedure
<b>LSI-R</b>	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
<b>KPI</b>	Key performance indicator
<b>MAAD</b>	Mothering at a Distance
<b>Mandela Rules</b>	United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners
<b>MOSP</b>	Manager of offender services and programs

<b>MPU</b>	Multipurpose unit
<b>OS&amp;P</b>	Offender services and programs
<b>PARRCC</b>	Planning for Adjustment, Responsivity, Reintegration, Criminogenic Needs and Communication
<b>RIT</b>	Risk intervention team
<b>SAPO</b>	Services and programs officer
<b>SMAP</b>	Special management area placement
<b>SOG</b>	Security operations group
<b>SORC</b>	Serious Offenders Review Council
<b>SSIP</b>	Short Sentence Intensive Program
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UOFC</b>	Use of Force Committee
<b>VTP</b>	Vocational Training Program
<b>WPT</b>	Workplace Training
<b>WRBP</b>	Women's Remand Bed Placement

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# Executive summary

Wellington Correctional Centre (CC) is a multi-classification correctional centre for male and female inmates. In addition to holding sentenced inmates with various security classifications, Wellington CC acts as an important remand and reception centre for the Central West region of NSW. Ideally, an inmate from this region should be able to spend their entire incarceration at Wellington CC, from their time on remand to their release.

The inspection of Wellington CC took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when quarantine and isolation practices were being used to try to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in NSW custodial centres. The Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) *Review of the Response to COVID-19 in NSW Custody* provides details of the policies and practices in place at the time of this inspection, and the impact of the pandemic on the correctional system.<sup>2</sup> It is acknowledged that in all centres, including in Wellington CC, these measures impacted the delivery of education, programs, and other activities that support inmate wellbeing and rehabilitation. At the time of our inspection, in-person social visits had resumed at Wellington CC and virtual visits were also taking place. While this was positive to see, there was some inequity in access to visits that needed to be addressed.

Wellington CC was experiencing staffing shortages at the time of the inspection and we understood it had been struggling with this issue for some time. This was due to a number of reasons, including high staff absences and Wellington CC's inability to attract new staff due to its different industrial arrangement. Many staff at Wellington CC expressed their dissatisfaction at being on a different award and having different employment conditions to those working at the adjacent Macquarie CC. It is acknowledged that the award arrangements were unified in January 2023. Notwithstanding this, we have recommended a review of the staffing profile and recruitment strategies at Wellington CC, to attract and retain more staff. Consideration of the introduction of 12-hour shifts, to align the centre more closely with Macquarie CC, should also occur.

The negative consequences of staff shortages were felt in all areas and greatly impacted inmates who experienced frequent lockdowns and reduced time out of cells. Staff shortages not only restricted inmates' access to services and activities but also significantly limited access to inmates by non-custodial staff who delivered programs, education, and case management support.

Wellington CC has one of the largest populations of Aboriginal inmates across correctional centres in NSW. However, we found that it was not operating with the needs of this population in mind. Apart from the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program provided in the High Intensity Program Units (HIPU), the centre provided few other programs and activities that were targeted towards Aboriginal inmates.

The centre was also not considering the cultural needs and wellbeing of these inmates, evident by the lack of suitable cultural space and visits from community Elders. While there was no Yarning Circle at Wellington CC at the time of the inspection, we understand there is now one Yarning Circle in each accommodation sector.<sup>3</sup> This is welcome.

Wellington CC had a low number of Aboriginal staff in its staffing profile and some staff lacked cultural competence in their interactions with Aboriginal inmates. The centre had two identified Aboriginal mentor positions which were vacant at the time of the inspection. Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) advised that one of these positions had since been filled by an Aboriginal Elder;<sup>4</sup> however, a recent visit to the centre by ICS staff confirmed the position was vacant again. We understand recruitment for one Aboriginal mentor position is currently well progressed. Funding is required for the second position.<sup>5</sup>

In this report, we have made a number of recommendations to address the gaps identified in relation to addressing the needs of Aboriginal people in custody. They include measures to improve

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2 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the response to COVID-19 in NSW custody* (Report, 2023).

3 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2024.

4 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

5 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2024.

wellbeing and rehabilitation opportunities available to these inmates, as well as recommendations around staffing. CSNSW have advised they are committed to providing more program opportunities for Aboriginal inmates at Wellington CC, as well as recruitment of Aboriginal staff at this centre.<sup>6</sup>

We found the infrastructure in Wellington CC to be modern and well-maintained. The refurbishment completed shortly before the inspection had further improved the physical conditions of the centre. At the time of the inspection, Wellington CC held far fewer people than its operating capacity. This provided more space for inmates and reduced overcrowding. The centre grounds were clean and in good condition, although inmates' access to outdoor areas varied significantly across different accommodation sectors and depended on staff availability.

The reduced population of the centre had the potential to lower the likelihood of inmate-on-inmate assaults and fights. However, an increase in the number of lockdowns and limited services and activities available to groups like remand inmates, could reverse the positive impacts of reduced operational capacity. It was positive to see that an upgrade to the closed-circuit television (CCTV) system had improved Wellington CC's physical security and incident response. We observed an over-reliance on the immediate action team and lack of confidence by some staff to de-escalate incidents without resorting to this team. This could be partly the result of the lack of custodial refresher training in de-escalation, which we have recommended is delivered more frequently.

Some groups of inmates were disadvantaged more than others. It was troubling to see that in a centre where one of the main functions was managing remand inmates, unconvicted inmates were locked down most often, which negatively impacted their ability to access services. We have made recommendations around providing services and activities for men and women on remand in Wellington CC.

Wellington CC was among the first centres to trial in-cell inmate tablets. By the time of the inspection, the tablets had been in place for more than a year and had become a part of the centre routine. The positive impact of this technology was noticeable, as it had improved connections to family and support networks and subsequently reduced the competition over communal telephones. However, serious infrastructure issues, such as poor connectivity especially in some of the cells in the main sector, created frustration and was one of the main issues of concern for inmates. If these issues remain unresolved, they can reverse some of the benefits of the introduction of tablets.

Another significant issue of concern for us was the treatment and conditions of female inmates at Wellington CC. As women remain a minority within the NSW correctional system, they are often held in small sections of correctional centres that are not designed for them and are not administered with their gender-specific needs in mind. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights the prevalence of this issue and the inherent disadvantages many women in custody face as a result. To address those disadvantages, the UNODC provides that prison management should acknowledge and understand that women in custody have different needs and requirements to men and reflect this in their management style, assessment and classification of women, programs offered to them, and in healthcare provisions.<sup>7</sup>

We found that Wellington CC failed to consider the unique needs of women in custody, who were primarily Aboriginal women. They were arguably the most disadvantaged group in this centre. It was disappointing to see that women had almost no access to educational courses, very limited work opportunities which were not meaningful and did not provide them with employable skills, and no access to remand, criminogenic or offence-based programs.

CSNSW advise Corrective Services Industries is responsible for providing education and work opportunities for suitable women, and that some women can attend the HIPU building.<sup>8</sup> We also note that access to rehabilitation services (work, programs, and education) is negatively affected when inmates are locked down; this occurred frequently in the accommodation area housing women. CSNSW have advised that lockdowns do occur, and that during these times women at the centre

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6 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

7 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment* (Criminal Justice Handbook Series, 2nd ed, 2014) 24-25.

8 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.



have access to tablets which have work booklets, self-help, and self-care information.<sup>9</sup>

In this report, we have made several recommendations to improve the conditions and treatment of women in custody at Wellington CC.

Despite a high number of available beds in the women's accommodation area of Wellington CC, women on remand were still advised that they could be moved to anywhere in NSW due to the Women's Remand Bed Placement (WRBP) policy. This included many women who had family and children in the local area. When we inspected Wellington CC in 2017 as part of a thematic inspection focusing on the treatment of women on remand, we recommended a review of the WRBP policy.<sup>10</sup> However, given at the time of this inspection, there had been no change to this policy, we were not satisfied that this issue and its negative impacts on women had been given due consideration. We are pleased that CSNSW have now committed to ceasing the use of the WRBP.<sup>11</sup>

The only program offered to women in custody at Wellington CC was a program unique to this centre called Gundanha Aboriginal Women's Employment program (Gundanha program). The Gundanha program was funded by the Commonwealth Government and aimed to provide Aboriginal women in custody with employment experience and training in the construction industry. While the premise of the Gundanha program is sound, we found that it had not achieved any of its goals. The centre was struggling to identify eligible participants. Rigid eligibility criteria restricted this program to Aboriginal sentenced women who had five to 24 months left of their sentences. This meant women on remand and those with short sentences were ineligible to participate; groups that made up a significant proportion of the population of female inmates at Wellington CC.

At the time of our inspection, no participants had completed the Gundanha program. Despite CSNSW spending \$1.8 million of Commonwealth funding on the construction of a building to house the program, that building was being used to provide employment to male minimum security inmates. The Gundanha program had been moved to an existing shed within the women's accommodation area in Sector 2.

We believe that although the Gundanha program was designed with consideration of the needs of women in custody, its location outside the secure perimeter of Wellington CC had limited the number of women able to benefit from the program. Moreover, we were concerned that a grant requested by the State of NSW and provided by the Commonwealth Government for Aboriginal women in custody to gain employment and training, was spent on constructing a building that is currently being used to provide employment to male prisoners. CSNSW have advised this is only a temporary measure and have provided assurances that they are committed to the Gundanha program taking place in its original location. CSNSW have committed to ensuring that the building that was built with Commonwealth funding will be used for the women's Gundanha program again from June 2024.<sup>12</sup> We will monitor the progress of this issue.

The psychology resources at Wellington CC were inadequate and did not address the demand. At the time of our inspection, a full-time senior psychologist was providing services to Wellington CC and Mannus CC. The psychologist was on site only one week per month and provided services via audio visual link for the rest of the month. Significant challenges were identified in the recruitment of an on-site psychologist for Wellington CC and we understand those challenges remain ongoing.<sup>13</sup> When we inspected Wellington CC five years ago, we identified a lack of regular access to psychologists as an issue of concern and recommended this be addressed. While this recommendation was made in reference to female inmates (the main focus of that report), we outlined that this gap was present for all inmates held at Wellington CC.<sup>14</sup> We are concerned by the lack of progress on this issue and consider it a high priority.

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9 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

10 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 18.

11 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

12 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

13 Corrective Services NSW have advised that recruiting staff for Wellington CC has been challenging due to various circumstances such as availability of housing, remote location, and competition with other employers in the regional area. It was reported that there was a labour shortage in this regional location which resulted in a much lower unemployment rate than the average for NSW. Corrective Services NSW also advised that they have been consistently advertising for the Wellington area in print media, job boards, roadshows, social media, and face-to-face information sessions (information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024).

14 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 19 and 102.

CSNSW have advised that recruitment is underway for senior psychologists across correctional centres, with a preference for on-site positions. However, CSNSW confirmed that the current senior psychologist allocated to Wellington CC is based in Sydney as the role was unable to be filled locally.<sup>15</sup> In our view CSNSW should prioritise the recruitment of a senior psychologist who is only focused on Wellington CC and is on site.

Our concerns about limited rehabilitation services were not limited to female inmates. We observed that this issue affected all inmates to varying degrees. The provision of programs varied in different accommodation sectors. Maximum and medium security male inmates had access to the Short Sentence Intensive Program and a few other non-intensive criminogenic programs but their access was often interrupted by unscheduled lockdowns. The HIPU was delivering almost all the programs to minimum security male inmates and yet this unit was underutilised and operating at half of its capacity.

Most educational courses available at Wellington CC were vocational training directly linked to inmates' employment. This meant inmates who were unemployed did not have access to education. The centre also faced issues regarding the recruitment of trainers.<sup>16</sup> CSNSW claim that the limited access to education is because education participation is not mandatory.<sup>17</sup> This is troubling.

The most concerning issue in relation to the provision of education at Wellington CC was the underutilisation of the Intensive Learning Centre (ILC). At the time of the inspection, the ILC had three teachers and only three students whose access to the ILC was repeatedly interrupted by unscheduled lockdowns and staff shortages.<sup>18</sup> The ILC was only available to eligible sentenced inmates held in the high security sector of Wellington CC. Women and minimum security male inmates did not have access to the ILC.

Despite CSNSW's advice that after the re-opening of Wellington CC in March 2022, people on remand became eligible to participate in the ILC,<sup>19</sup> they were not eligible to do so at the time of our inspection (seven months after the re-opening of the centre). During the inspection, the Governor of Wellington CC acknowledged the underutilisation of the ILC as an issue and was looking at ways to improve participation. Suggestions included changing the eligibility criteria so remand inmates could participate and allocating funds to enhance the physical environment of the ILC, including by creating gardens, installing a toilet and a BBQ area, updating the rooms, and replacing the fence in the area. We are advised these physical enhancements are scheduled for completion in 2024.<sup>20</sup>

While opening the ILC to suitable remand inmates can increase the participation rate, we note that the ILC is usually a 6-month program that requires a stable cohort of students. The nature of education delivery in the ILCs does not allow for a rolling intake of students throughout a course. If a student leaves the ILC, that place cannot be filled until the next intake of new students. This is more likely to occur with remand inmates as they are frequently transferred across the state by CSNSW. Therefore, this solution is limited to long-term remandees.

Positively, some of the employment opportunities available at Wellington CC, especially those offered to minimum security male inmates, were diverse and taught skills that could be useful in securing employment in the community. Work opportunities provided to maximum and medium security inmates needed further improvement in order to move from merely an activity to pass time to an opportunity to equip these inmates with employable skills.

It was also positive to see that Wellington CC worked appropriately with inmates who refused to work and encouraged them to engage in work through peer influence and centre routine, rather than through punitive measures. The low number of refusals to work at the time of the inspection showed the success of such measures.

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15 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

16 Corrective Services NSW advised that an additional Registered Training Organisation had been introduced to address the availability of trainers (information provided on 8 March 2024).

17 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

18 Corrective Services NSW advised that there were now two Intensive Learning Centre teachers employed at Wellington CC (information provided on 8 March 2024).

19 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

20 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

Finally, this report includes an assessment of health services provided at Wellington CC. We found the health centre to be clean and well-designed and that health services were delivered with reasonable efficiency. Staff had effective and professional relationship with custodial officers which helped the provision of services to patients.

However, we observed a misalignment between the range of available services and the profile (and likely needs) of inmates at Wellington CC. Despite having one of the largest numbers of Aboriginal inmates, the centre did not have a dedicated Aboriginal health worker and used a visiting Aboriginal health worker who serviced multiple correctional centres. There was no Aboriginal mental health worker allocated to Wellington CC, an issue that we had identified in our previous inspection in 2017. Furthermore, the centre did not have a dedicated women's health nurse and was serviced by a visiting practitioner.

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# Recommendations

## The Inspector recommends:

1. Corrective Services NSW undertake an operational review of Wellington Correctional Centre to ensure its staffing profile is aligned with its operating capacity and consider the implementation of a 12-hour shift model.
2. Corrective Services NSW undertake a review of recruitment strategies and staff training in regional and remote areas and address any barriers that exist.
3. Corrective Services NSW undertake a Work Health and Safety review of Wellington Correctional Centre firing range and related facilities.
4. Corrective Services NSW improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in custody at Wellington Correctional Centre, through regular visits from Aboriginal Elders, employing Aboriginal community mentors, and the creation of appropriate and accessible cultural spaces.
5. Corrective Services NSW frequently deliver refresher courses in de-escalation and use of force to correctional officers across NSW, including to those at Wellington Correctional Centre.
6. Corrective Services NSW conduct an annual CCTV review at Wellington Correctional Centre to identify any areas that require CCTV to enhance security.
7. Corrective Services NSW review education offered at Wellington Correctional Centre and increase access to education for all inmates.
8. Corrective Services NSW review the suitability of key performance indicators for education and ensure they measure education outcomes as well as outputs.
9. Corrective Services NSW introduce case management key performance indicators that measure outcomes, such as completion of case plan interventions.
10. Corrective Services NSW review the scheduling of in-person visits at Wellington Correctional Centre and provide transport between Wellington town and the correctional centre for social visitors.
11. Corrective Services NSW review the visits schedule and allocation of tablets for virtual visits at Wellington Correctional Centre, based on population size and demand.
12. Corrective Services NSW implement a TV rental scheme and resolve connectivity issues at Wellington Correctional Centre. Where connectivity issues have inhibited the use of inmate tablets, reimbursement should be provided.
13. Corrective Services NSW review the induction process at Wellington Correctional Centre to ensure it complies with legislative and policy requirements.
14. Corrective Services NSW ensure sufficient staff at Wellington Correctional Centre are trained to use the body scanners and provide refresher training to increase staff confidence in their use.
15. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre staff cease routine strip searching of inmates, record the reason for each strip search, and ensure the local operating procedures comply with the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures.
16. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre provide inmates with clothing and bedding as outlined in the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures, and ensure this supply is maintained throughout an inmate's time in custody at this centre.
17. Corrective Services NSW install a bed in the dry cell at Wellington Correctional Centre.
18. Corrective Services NSW ensure non-custodial staff at Wellington Correctional Centre can access safe and private rooms to interview inmates.

19. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre remove or cover the murals in the multipurpose unit (G pod) and allow other inmates held in this area to engage in therapeutic artwork.
20. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre improve access to the dedicated education and programs space (J block).
21. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre deliver programs for remand and SMAP inmates in the maximum security area (Sector 1).
22. Corrective Services NSW increase participation and access to the Intensive Learning Centre of Wellington Correctional Centre, paying particular attention to its accessibility to Aboriginal inmates.
23. Corrective Services NSW ensure the library in the maximum security area of Wellington Correctional Centre is operational and accessible.
24. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre improve access to the oval in the maximum security area and upgrade the equipment in the outdoor gym.
25. Corrective Services NSW ensure women who come into custody from the Wellington catchment area are not designated as Women's Remand Bed Placement, and that any change of placement involves a review that considers their Aboriginality, connection to Country, and ability to maintain contact with their children and family.
26. Corrective Services NSW appoint a female functional manager to the women's area (Sector 2) of Wellington Correctional Centre and ensure custodial staff assigned to the women's area reflect the demography of this sector.
27. Corrective Services NSW ensure all staff at Wellington Correctional Centre complete the Aboriginal cultural awareness and safety training.
28. Corrective Services NSW ensure the Gundanha program at Wellington Correctional Centre is operating in accordance with the Commonwealth grant provisions.
29. Corrective Services NSW ensure the High Intensity Programs Unit at the women's area of Wellington Correctional Centre is utilised to its full potential and deliver a range of programs for remand and sentenced women. This includes programs provided by external service providers.
30. Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre provide appropriate opportunities for women in custody to access programs, education, cultural activities, and work.
31. Corrective Services NSW ensure inmates in the men's 'honour house' have access to self-catering and can enhance their independent living skills.
32. Corrective Services NSW identify and establish work release opportunities at Wellington Correctional Centre and re-introduce community projects.
33. Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network investigate ways to support the effective and efficient utilisation of satellite clinics in Wellington Correctional Centre.
34. Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network ensure regular access to a women's health practitioner and Aboriginal health workers.
35. Corrective Services NSW establish a senior psychologist role that is only focused on Wellington Correctional Centre and is on site. Corrective Services NSW should explore ways to recruit for vacant psychologist positions as a matter of priority.
36. Corrective Services NSW ensure inmates held in the multipurpose unit (G block) of Wellington Correctional Centre are able to access a private space to speak to the psychologist.
37. 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*.



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# Wellington Correctional Centre profile

## Location

Wellington Correctional Centre (CC) is located on the land of the Wiradjuri people. It is 7km from Wellington, in the Central West of New South Wales, 360km west of Sydney.

## History

Wellington CC opened in September 2007 under Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) 'Way Forward' reforms. These reforms sought to achieve productivity savings through flexible use of resources within correctional centres. Key elements of the reforms included a different industrial award with reduced overtime payments, the introduction of rolling let-go and lock-in and dynamic allocation of staff, and enhancements to the structured day by creating split shifts in industries.<sup>21</sup>

In June 2021, Wellington CC sustained significant damage as a result of a mouse plague, forcing it to close for 10 months. After a \$38 million refurbishment to repair the damage, the centre re-opened in March 2022.<sup>22</sup>

## Function

Wellington CC is a multi-classification correctional centre. The largest accommodation area (Sector 1) holds sentenced and remand male inmates who are primarily classified as maximum security, although some have a medium security classification. At the time of the inspection, two of the eight accommodation units in Sector 1 were for special management area placement (SMAP)<sup>23</sup> or protection inmates. Male inmates with a minimum security classification are held in Sector 3. All inmates in Sector 3 are sentenced and 'normal discipline'.<sup>24</sup>

Wellington CC's smallest accommodation area is the women's area (Sector 2). It can hold female inmates with a minimum security classification.<sup>25</sup>

In December 2020, Wellington CC outlined its core functions as:

- reception, screening, and induction of male and female inmates
- ongoing management of remand and sentenced male and female inmates
- assessment, implementation of security, classification rating and progression plan for remand and sentenced male and female inmates.<sup>26</sup>

## Capacity

At the time of the inspection, Wellington CC had an operational capacity of 616 people across three accommodation areas: Sector 1 could hold up to 376 male inmates with a maximum or medium security classifications, Sector 2 could hold up to 101 female inmates, and Sector 3 could hold 139 minimum security male inmates.<sup>27</sup>

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21 Corrective Services NSW, *The Way Forward: Staff Information Package* (March 2004).

22 Department of Communities and Justice, 'Inmates return to Wellington Correctional Centre after mouse plague repairs' (Media Release, 18 March 2022) < <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases-archive/2022/inmates-return-to-wellington-correctional-centre-after-mouse-pla.html> >.

23 A SMAP is a designated area for those inmates assessed as being vulnerable or at risk from other inmates in a normal discipline area of a correctional centre. SMAP inmates should have their status reviewed once every 12 months to ensure this placement remains relevant. See Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 3.3 Special Management Area Placement* (version 1.4, 16 August 2023).

24 'Normal discipline' refers to inmates who do not require protection, nor are subject to a segregation or separation order.

25 Wellington CC holds female inmates with a CAT1, CAT2, or CAT3 security classification. According to CSNSW's *Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement*, women in custody with these security classifications are considered minimum security. (Corrective Services NSW, *Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement* (version 2.1, 29 October 2021)).

26 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.

27 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.

## Previous inspection by the Inspector of Custodial Services

Wellington CC was previously inspected by the Inspector of Custodial Services in July 2017 as part of a thematic inspection focusing on [the treatment of women on remand](#) across correctional centres in NSW.<sup>28</sup>

## Inspection dates

**Liaison visit:** 7-9 September 2022

**Inspection:** 13-18 November 2022

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

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# Inspection process

The office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) was established by the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012* (the ICS Act) in October 2013. The mandate of the office is to provide independent scrutiny of the conditions, treatment, and outcomes for people in custody, and to promote excellence in staff professional practice. The Inspector is required to inspect each adult custodial centre at least once every five years and report on each such inspection to the NSW Parliament with relevant advice and recommendations.<sup>29</sup>

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

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

The on-site phase of the inspection took place between 13 to 18 November 2022. The inspection team consisted of the Inspector, two principal inspection and research officers, two senior inspection and research officers, as well as one male and one female Aboriginal staff members. An official visitor appointed to Wellington CC also assisted with engagement with Aboriginal inmates. A health consultant with expertise and clinical background in custodial health joined the team.

Prior to the inspection, in September 2022, we conducted a liaison visit to Wellington CC to inform our planning. We also received documents and data from Wellington CC, CSNSW, the Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics branch of CSNSW, and Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JH&FMHN).

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

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

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

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.

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



A draft report or relevant parts thereof were provided to CSNSW and JH&FMHN in accordance with section 14(2) of the ICS Act. Submissions were received from CSNSW and JH&FMHN. In accordance with section 14(1) of the ICS Act, the Inspector provided the Hon Anoulack Chanthivong MP with the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the draft report. In accordance with section 14(3)(b) of the ICS Act, each submission and the Minister's response was considered before the finalisation of the report for tabling.

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# 1 Inmate profile

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## 1.1 Population

On 14 November 2022, the first day of the inspection, Wellington CC held 382 inmates: 31 women and 351 men. The total population was below the centre's operational capacity as it continued to gradually increase its population after the re-opening in March 2022.

Data provided by CSNSW, and presented below, gives a breakdown of the inmate population as of 30 June 2022, by legal status, age, cultural background, and security classifications.

According to that dataset, on 30 June 2022, Wellington CC held 312 inmates: 297 men and 15 women.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.1.1 Legal status and charges

As at 30 June 2022, just over one third of male inmates were on remand (100 people), 188 men were sentenced, and nine were appealing their sentences. Of the 15 women held in custody at that time, eight were on remand, five were sentenced, and two were appealing their sentences. The average time on remand for Wellington CC inmates was 227 days, with the longest period on remand being 4,907 days.

Acts intended to cause injury was the most serious offence or charge for 106 inmates, followed by illicit drug offences (42 inmates), offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations (40 inmates), homicide and related offences (23 inmates), and sexual assault and related offences (19 inmates).<sup>31</sup>

### 1.1.2 Age and cultural background

Wellington CC had a young inmate population, as indicated in Figure 1. As at 30 June 2022, almost half of the population was aged 34 or under.<sup>32</sup>

The centre held a large population of Aboriginal inmates across both male and female cohorts. As at 30 June 2022, Wellington CC held 158 Aboriginal inmates. They comprised 49% of the population of male inmates and 80% of the population of female inmates.<sup>33</sup> This percentage breakdown remained consistent and on the first day of the inspection, 54% of male inmates and 80.6% of female inmates were Aboriginal.<sup>34</sup>

Most inmates were born in Australia (80.4%) and 92.6% spoke English at home. Most inmates identified their cultural background as Australian (79.2%). The next largest cultural background identified was North African and Middle Eastern (4.2%), followed by Oceanian (2.2%).

The largest religious group was Catholic (12.2%), followed by Anglican/Church of England (6.4%), Muslim (5.1%), Christian (5.1%) and Buddhist (2.6%). The majority of inmates (59%) had no preferred religion.<sup>35</sup>

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30 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

31 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

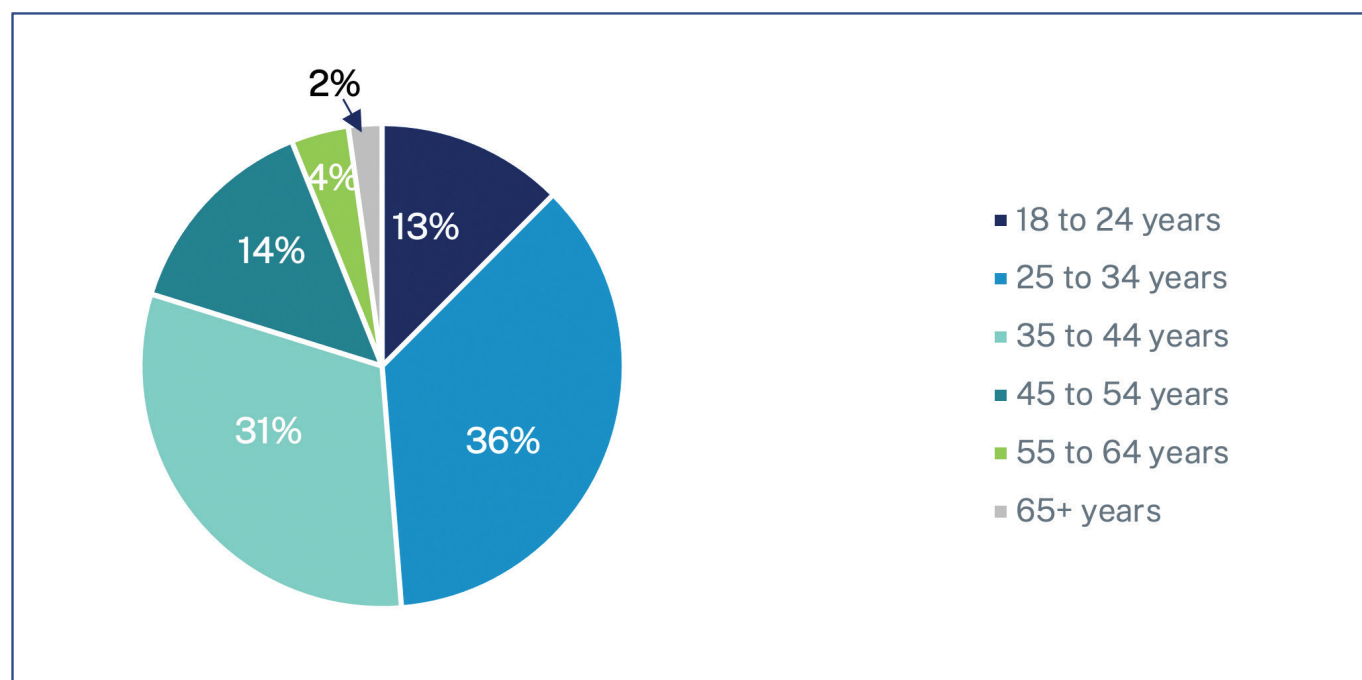
32 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

33 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

34 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 9 February 2023.

35 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

**Figure 1: Age distribution (percentage) of inmates at Wellington CC- June 2022**



### 1.1.3 Security classifications

As at 30 June 2022, Wellington CC held 65 inmates (or 20.8%) with a maximum (A2) security classification, 78 inmates (25%) with a medium (B) security classification, and 120 inmates (38.5%) with a minimum security classification (C1, C2, or CAT2 and CAT3 for female inmates). There were also 23 inmates (7.4%) with an 'escape risk' classification (E1 or E2), and the remainder had no classification (not yet classified).<sup>36</sup>

Around 13% of the population were SMAP inmates. The Serious Offenders Review Council (SORC)<sup>37</sup> managed 28 inmates (9% of the population) and the Pre-Release Leave Committee<sup>38</sup> managed 42 inmates (13.5% of the population). Wellington CC also held 16 people with immigration release notifications and two with High Security<sup>39</sup> designations.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Inmate security classifications and risk designations are defined in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cls 12, 14–15.

<sup>37</sup> SORC provides advice and makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW regarding the security classification, placement, and program participation of 'serious offenders'. See *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* s 197. A 'serious offender' is defined in the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* s 3 and includes an offender serving a life sentence, who must serve at least 12 years in custody or who is required to be managed as a serious offender due to a decision of the sentencing court, the State Parole Authority, or the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW.

<sup>38</sup> The Pre-Release Leave Committee is the division of the Serious Offenders Review Council that manages 'public interest inmates'. A public interest inmate includes one who is serving a custodial sentence for an offence which is the subject of wide public interest or that is specified in the policy; see: Corrective Services NSW, *Inmate Classification and Placement: Serious Offenders Review Council (SORC) and Subcommittee Managed Inmates* (version 2.6, 8 April 2022) 17–18.

<sup>39</sup> The Commissioner may designate an inmate as High Security, Extreme High Security, Extreme High Risk Restricted or National Security Interest. This applies to inmates who are considered to constitute a danger (or extreme danger) to other people, or a threat (or extreme threat) to good order or security, and there is a risk that the inmate may engage in, or incite others to engage in, activities that are considered a serious threat to the peace or good order of a prison; see: Corrective Services NSW, *Factsheet 9: Classification and Placement* (May 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

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## 2 Centre-wide issues and observations

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### 2.1 Staffing

Wellington CC had a staffing profile of 235.5 full-time equivalent (FTE), the breakdown of which is presented in Table 1.<sup>41</sup>

At the time of the inspection, the centre had 17 vacancies. The COVID-19 pandemic, temporary closure for remediation works, differing industrial arrangements, a competitive job market, staff absence due to worker's compensation, and high rates of sick leave were all reported to contribute to staff shortages at Wellington CC.

We heard that some staff did not return to Wellington CC after being redeployed during the temporary closure of the centre. Reportedly, four staff were permitted to transfer out of the centre during this period, with a view to fill those vacancies through an active recruitment process; however, this did not occur.<sup>42</sup> Further, some concerns were raised with the inspection team that several staff had been approved to transfer to Macquarie CC. Wellington CC confirmed that 14 people were on the transfer list to Macquarie CC; however, due to staff shortages, the transfer list was not activated.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the inspection, we observed the negative impacts of staff shortages. The centre was experiencing frequent lockdowns. This meant that inmates often remained confined to their cells for the day or part of the day and had limited access to exercise and recreation. Staff shortages also had a negative impact on the delivery of programs and education at Wellington CC, which affected inmates' ability to participate in and complete the required programs.

Data provided by CSNSW identified that from March 2022 (when Wellington CC re-opened) until 30 June 2022, the centre was locked down 52 times, with an average of 13 lockdowns per month.<sup>44</sup> In the following chapters we will provide more detailed analysis of the lockdowns that occurred in each sector of Wellington CC.

In the month of the inspection, 103 staff took a total of 270 days in sick leave. During the inspection, numerous staff told us that they were working regular overtime shifts to fill vacancies within the centre; this contributed to staff fatigue and low morale. Overtime payments in November 2022 reportedly totalled \$111,424.<sup>45</sup> The centre's budgetary projection anticipated expenditure on overtime would amount to \$1.19 million for the 2022–23 financial year.<sup>46</sup>

We understood that a call for expressions of interest was used to attract staff to Wellington CC and to alleviate some of the immediate staffing issues. It resulted in the temporary appointment of eight staff, two of whom were to be moved into ongoing employment at Wellington CC. The centre intended to issue another call to attract more staff. This is an innovative approach to fill some of the immediate staffing issues; however, with current staffing vacancies across custodial centres in NSW, this will not be a sustainable remedy.<sup>47</sup>

One of the significant barriers to attracting and retaining staff at Wellington CC was a different industrial award they were employed under, which was unique to Wellington, Mid North Coast, Dillwynia and John Morony CCs. We heard that staff employed in co-located Macquarie CC were not under the same award and it made Macquarie CC a more attractive employment option. The *Crown Employee (Correctional Officers, Department of Communities and Justice) Award for Kempsey, Dillwynia,*

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41 Information presented in Table 1 was provided by Wellington Correctional Centre in November 2022

42 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 27 January 2023.

43 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 27 January 2023.

44 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

45 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 19 January 2023.

46 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 15 November 2022.

47 Corrective Services NSW have advised that recruiting for Wellington CC has been challenging due to various issues such as availability of housing, remote location, and competition with other employers in the regional area, including farming, transport, mining, and other NSW government roles. Corrective Services NSW reported that a labour shortage in the Dubbo/Wellington region has resulted in a much lower unemployment rate than the average for NSW. Corrective Services NSW reported that they have been consistently advertising for roles in the Wellington area, through print media, job boards, roadshows, social media, and face-to-face information sessions (information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024).

*Wellington and John Morony* (KDWJ Award) was rescinded by consent on 12 January 2023, unifying the award arrangements for correctional staff in NSW.

At the time of the inspection, Wellington CC management indicated an intention to undertake a review of the centre's operational model, after the implementation of the changes to the industrial award. The aim of that review was to look at incorporating an 8-hour and 12-hour shift model into the operational routine. We found that staff were generally supportive of the introduction of 12-hour shifts, having seen it in operation at Macquarie CC. However, in 2023, the local committee established to review and consider the implementation of 12-hour shifts did not deem these shifts to be suitable for Wellington CC.<sup>48</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW undertake an operational review of Wellington Correctional Centre to ensure its staffing profile is aligned with its operating capacity and consider the implementation of a 12-hour shift model.**

Staff raised the importance of local recruitment and training, noting that attending primary training in Sydney can be a deterrent for some prospective employees. CSNSW reported that it provided primary training for custodial staff in regional areas where possible. The custodial training unit planned to deliver two custodial primary training courses at Wellington CC in the second half of 2023, which occurred.<sup>49</sup> CSNSW advised that the most recent course was completed on 9 February 2024, with six new recruits commencing from this class. Another primary training course is due to commence in May 2024.<sup>50</sup>

Overall, we observed a good level of collegiality within the centre. Members of the Wellington CC management team spoke highly of staff and identified that many of them were from the local area, and some had worked at the centre since it opened. Staff also reported that they felt generally supported, despite the challenges. A common view shared with us was that Wellington CC provided significant vocational learning opportunities, as it managed various inmate classifications and cohorts. This diversity exposed staff to work that they would not necessarily experience at other correctional centres.

Some staff were concerned about the number of new and inexperienced employees; however, this is to be expected and needs to be viewed within the context of addressing staff shortages. New staff need to be supported appropriately, through localised training and workplace supervision. Staffing issues had reduced the ability to offer training since the centre re-opened. Training delivery needs to be prioritised to ensure staff are equipped to perform their duties.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW undertake a review of recruitment strategies and staff training in regional and remote areas and address any barriers that exist.**

We visited a firing range located on the Wellington Correctional Complex used to facilitate staff firearms training. Several design elements of the training environment were of concern and needed to be addressed. The range had a noticeable slope which created difficulties for training officers to adequately supervise staff. Additionally, there were inadequate bathroom facilities. This was problematic, particularly for female staff, as once the training commenced, officers were unable to leave and re-enter the training area for safety reasons. CSNSW advised that it has assessed the facilities as meeting operational and occupational health and safety requirements and confirmed they will comply with Work Health and Safety requirements.<sup>51</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW undertake a Work Health and Safety review of Wellington Correctional Centre firing range and related facilities.**

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48 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

49 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023 and 8 March 2024.

50 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

51 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Table 1: Staffing profile of Wellington CC**

Area	Position	Approved FTE
Custodial	Governor	1
	Manager of security	1
	Functional managers	7
	Senior correctional officers	26
	Correctional officers	97
Corrective Services Industries (CSI)	Operations manager	1
	Manager of industries	1
	Manager of business units	2
	Senior Overseers	6
	Overseers	22
	Driver	1
	Administration clerk grade 1/2	1
Offender services and programs (OS&P)	Manager of offender services and programs (MOSP)	2
	Senior services and programs officer	4
	Services and programs officer (SAPO)	24
	Psychologist	1
	Mentor	1.5
Case management	Senior case management officer	2
	Case management officer	7
Education	Education services coordinator	1
	Assessment and planning officer	2
	Correctional education officer	1
	Literacy/numeracy teacher	4
Classification	Senior classification and placement officer	1
	Classification and placement coordinator	1
Rosters	Clerk grade 3/4	2
Sentence administration	Clerk grade 5/6	1
	Clerk grade 3/4	2
Administration	Business manager	1
	Finance and administration manager	1
	Clerk grade 3/4	2
	Clerk grade 1/2	6
	General scale clerks	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>235.5</b>



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## 2.2 Aboriginal inmates

It is well established that Aboriginal people are overrepresented within the correctional environment. In December 2022, there were 3,245 Aboriginal men in custody in NSW, accounting for 28.4% of the male inmate population in NSW. There were also 315 Aboriginal women in custody, comprising 38% of the female inmate population in NSW.<sup>52</sup>

One of the correctional centres that manages a significant number of Aboriginal people in custody is Wellington CC. At the time of our inspection, 56% of people in custody at this centre were Aboriginal. This percentage remained consistent prior to and after the inspection. Given such consistently high numbers of Aboriginal people in custody at Wellington CC, we examined the custodial conditions of this centre, its treatment of the inmates, and their access to rehabilitation services (work, programs, and education), with a particular focus on the needs of this population. This analysis is presented throughout this report.

At the time of our inspection, despite the high number of Aboriginal people managed at Wellington CC, only 5.6% of staff identified as Aboriginal.<sup>53</sup> Wellington CC was not able to provide a breakdown of the locations where those staff worked.

Further inquiries with CSNSW showed that in August 2023, the number of Aboriginal staff in Wellington CC rose to 6.91%. According to the data provided to our office, 3.6% of correctional officers and 7.4% of senior correctional officers were Aboriginal. There was a higher percentage of Aboriginal staff in the OS&P team.<sup>54</sup> The increase in the number of Aboriginal staff since our inspection is positive and it is critically important that CSNSW continue to recruit, retain, and appropriately support Aboriginal staff in the centres that hold a high number of Aboriginal inmates, such as Wellington CC.

Staff also need to be provided with adequate training to work with Aboriginal people in a culturally safe way.<sup>55</sup> As we will highlight later in this report, we heard about examples of inappropriate terminology used in reference to Aboriginal inmates that showed some staff lacked cultural competence in their interactions with this population. This was raised with the centre management at the time of the inspection.

CSNSW advise they are committed to building a respectful, purposeful, and collaborative culture that ensures the safety and engagement of staff and inmates and that the majority of staff act respectfully and professionally in the workplace. Where they do not, they are dealt with according to the appropriate policies and legislation.<sup>56</sup>

CSNSW also advise that all their staff members are required to undergo Aboriginal cultural awareness training upon the commencement of their employment. Additionally, CSNSW offer online courses and refresher courses to further enhance skills and knowledge. The CSNSW Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Directorate also provides local Aboriginal community engagement training to CSNSW staff working in the community. CSNSW aim to offer this training to the staff employed at correctional centres, in the future.<sup>57</sup> This is a good initiative. All staff, not merely new staff, should undertake mandatory Aboriginal cultural awareness training. This is particularly important in a centre with a high number of Aboriginal people in custody.

One of the main issues of concern identified in this inspection was limited availability of criminogenic and wellbeing programs for all inmates. We were particularly concerned that there were even fewer activities and programs for Aboriginal inmates. While the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program was being offered, this program does not teach Aboriginal culture and is not required to be facilitated by an Aboriginal person.

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

53 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 19 January 2023.

54 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 4 August 2023.

55 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Draft Inspection Standards for Aboriginal People in Custody in New South Wales*, Standard 4.3.

56 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

57 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

CSNSW have advised that the Deadly Aboriginal Dads program is going through consultation processes. Once the consultations are completed, the Offender Transformation Project would provide training in this program to the staff at Wellington CC, so they are able to deliver it to inmates. CSNSW also advise that the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program is currently under review, 'with consideration being given to the congruence between the program title and content; and a general content update. The program will be reviewed by key stakeholders, including the Aboriginal Strategy Unit before it is re-launched.'<sup>58</sup>

The Gundanha Aboriginal Women's Employment program (Gundanha program) was also provided to Aboriginal women in Sector 2 and incorporated cultural activities. However, there were a number of issues that effectively prevented this program from achieving its goals. This program is analysed in detail in section 4.3.1. Further, both the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening and Gundanha programs were only available to sentenced inmates, meaning there was little for Aboriginal people on remand.

Custodial facilities should have Aboriginal Elders visit regularly.<sup>59</sup> At the time of the inspection, there were no Elders regularly visiting Wellington CC. This may have been in part as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The centre management reported they were actively trying to bring in Aboriginal Elders and had engaged with two organisations about this. We will monitor the progress of this matter.

Wellington CC had created two identified Aboriginal community mentor positions, one full-time and one part-time; however, these positions were vacant at the time of the inspection. The Aboriginal community mentor role is intended to support Aboriginal inmates to maintain cultural connection and encourages the involvement of Aboriginal people who are recognised as being of significant standing in the community.<sup>60</sup> Even though Wellington CC recruited an Aboriginal mentor following the inspection,<sup>61</sup> this position is once again vacant. However, we understand the recruitment is well progressed. The second position is unfunded.<sup>62</sup>

Wellington CC is encouraged to continue to pursue connections with the local Aboriginal community and facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal mentors as well as regular visits from Aboriginal Elders.

In November 2022, Wellington CC had no suitable cultural spaces available for Aboriginal inmates. The centre was working with CSNSW's Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit to construct Yarning Circles. We understood that plans were being made to install a Yarning Circle in the dedicated education and programs space in Sector 1, known as 'J block'. As we explain in section 3.2.1, Wellington CC struggled to keep 'J block' open, negatively impacting the delivery of programs and educational courses. Further, to access this area, inmates needed to be escorted from their accommodation areas. Yarning Circles, as a space where inmates can connect with culture and with each other, need to be accessible. We were concerned that the planned Yarning Circle might not be accessible, limiting the potential of such a space to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal inmates.

CSNSW have confirmed the installation of Yarning Circles in each accommodation area.<sup>63</sup> We will continue to monitor the use and accessibility of these cultural spaces.

Prior to and after the inspection, we attended NAIDOC celebrations at Wellington CC. It was pleasing to see the participation of local Aboriginal people, including Elders. Inmates shared their culture through art, dance, and music at these events. While these celebrations are significant, it is important that recognising Aboriginal culture is not limited to such annual events. Wellington CC should build on these opportunities and incorporate the observance of Aboriginal culture and cultural activities into its daily routine.<sup>64</sup>

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58 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

59 Inspector of Custodial Services, Draft *Inspection Standards for Aboriginal People in Custody in New South Wales*, Standard 4.9.

60 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 11.6 Aboriginal Community Mentors* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 1.

61 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

62 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2024.

63 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 14 March 2024.

64 Inspector of Custodial Services, Draft *Inspection Standards for Aboriginal People in Custody in New South Wales*, Standard 2.6.



Aboriginal inmates who spoke to us also highlighted the importance of being able to speak with the Aboriginal inmate delegates. It was reported that the delegate in Sector 1 was previously able to move from pod to pod to engage with Aboriginal inmates; however, this was no longer the case. Wellington CC needs to identify a way to facilitate communication between Aboriginal inmates and the Aboriginal inmate delegate.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in custody at Wellington Correctional Centre, through regular visits from Aboriginal Elders, employing Aboriginal community mentors, and the creation of appropriate and accessible cultural spaces.**

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## 2.3 Safety and security

Different types of security measures – physical, procedural<sup>65</sup> and dynamic – need to be balanced to ensure that correctional centres are safe and secure.

In our inspection of Wellington CC, we:

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

When we previously inspected Wellington CC in July 2017, it held 713 inmates. In some accommodation sectors, this meant three or four inmates shared one cell. The current reduction in the centre's operational capacity reduced such overcrowding. While this development had a potential to lower the likelihood of assaults and tensions, it needed to be seen in the context of the challenges the centre was facing which included a rise in the number of lockdowns and idleness caused by lack of programs and educational opportunities. These challenges had the potential to act as counteracting factors.

### 2.3.1 Assaults and fights

Table 2 provides the most common breaches of correctional centre regulations at Wellington CC during two periods: in the 12 months from July 2020 to June 2021 (when the centre temporarily closed), and from March 2022 (when the centre re-opened) to 31 December 2022.

The data shows a drop in the number of all breaches in 2022, except for property damage. This is the case even when the data is adjusted to account for the fact that the second set of data represents a ten-month operational period, rather than a full 12 months.

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<sup>65</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its Handbook on Dynamic Security and Prison Intelligence (December 2015) defines procedural security as a clearly understood set of procedures that describe how and when staff should perform certain security-related tasks, such as CCTV monitoring, searches, and inmate counts and movements.

**Table 2: Most common breaches in Wellington CC<sup>66</sup>**

Breaches from July 2020 to June 2021	Number	Breaches from March 2022 to December 2022	Number
Charges against good order	662	Charges against good order	275
Fighting or assault	248	Fighting or assault	106
Abusive behaviour	160	Abusive behaviour	122
Drug charges	111	Drug charges	60
Property damage	85	Property damage	88

From the re-opening of the centre in March 2022 until 30 June 2022, force was used 12 times in Wellington CC, with a high of six uses of force recorded in April 2022. In the 12 months preceding the closure of the centre, there were 40 uses of force. In December 2020, force was used eight times, which was the highest monthly number in that period.<sup>67</sup>

From March 2022 to 30 June 2022, no assault on staff was reported. In the same period, the number of inmate-on-inmate assaults increased every month, totalling 25. All those assaults involved male inmates.

In the 12 months preceding the closure of the centre, there were 13 inmate-on-staff assaults. These were dispersed across that period and no inmate-on-staff assaults were recorded for five of these 12 months. Over the same period, there were 229 inmate-on-inmate assaults, 202 involving male and 27 involving female inmates. The highest number of assaults in one month involving male inmates was 32 in March 2021. This number was seven for female inmates and was recorded in December 2020.<sup>68</sup>

We requested and reviewed incident reports concerning violent incidents that occurred in the three months prior to the inspection (from August to October 2022). In that period, the centre recorded one assault on staff, four inmate-on-inmate assaults, and nine incidents of inmates fighting (although one of those fights should have been recorded as an assault). There was no record of inmate fights in the month of October. We are unclear if this was because no such incidents occurred or that the reports were not supplied.

### 2.3.2 Response to incidents

One of the most significant incidents in Wellington CC was a riot in April 2020. It affected most of the pods in Sector 1 and caused extensive damage to the centre. While on site, we viewed the CCTV footage from that incident. The footage was of very low quality, and we understood this created some challenges for the centre after the riot. It was, therefore, positive to hear that during the refurbishment of the centre, the CCTV system in Wellington CC was upgraded from analogue to digital and additional cameras were installed. These measures significantly enhanced the quality and coverage of the CCTV system and have undoubtedly contributed to the security of the centre.

We heard that staff shortages could have an adverse impact on incident response in Wellington CC. It was reported that on some occasions, the centre had only one response team and did not have enough staff to arrange for three tiers of response to incidents. Staff referenced the April 2020 riot and raised concerns that if such an incident had happened in recent months, when the centre was short staffed, they might not have been able to respond to it as well as they did on that day. We reviewed variation to the operational routine documents for the month of November 2022 and on at least six days, the centre only had one response team (although on three of those days, the centre was in complete lockdown and all inmates were confined to cells).

The immediate action team (IAT) had a presence in Wellington CC during the day. Previously, there was an IAT officer on site overnight, but this was no longer the case; some staff saw this as a risk.

<sup>66</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 3 April 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

We understood that the centre had a pool of 20 staff with relevant training that could be rostered to perform the IAT duties. Additionally, there were around 10 correctional officers who were not on the IAT staff pool but had training in the use of chemical munitions. This number may be insufficient if staff need to manage an incident by using chemical munitions and the IAT is not on site. Further, we heard that refresher training on the use of chemical munitions was offered infrequently.

Our review of incident reports showed most staff responded to incidents professionally and when use of force was required, used it proportionately. The uses of force were reported without delay. When senior staff who reviewed those reports were not satisfied with the response or had an obligation to report them pursuant to the policy, they were referred to the Use of Force Committee (UOFC) promptly.

However, it was identified during the inspection that there was a general over-reliance on the IAT to respond to incidents. During the inspection, we saw an inmate in the health centre after an interaction with the IAT. We reviewed the footage of that incident (CCTV and body-worn camera footage) as well as relevant incident reports. We understood the IAT was called after the inmate was seen by staff during morning let-go with a centre-issued hat that he had painted a different colour and did not comply with the initial warning to remove that item. We do not believe this was a serious incident and staff should have managed it without the intervention of the IAT. The subsequent response by the IAT was disproportionate and the centre's review found the staff in that team used excessive and unreasonable force.

The case was referred to the UOFC that reviewed the reports, CCTV camera footage, and body-worn video camera footage and agreed with the local determinations made by the Manager of Security and Governor of Wellington CC, that the use of force on the inmate was unreasonable, unwarranted, and unjustified. Having made this determination, the UOFC made a number of recommendations, and referred the matter to the Professional Standards and Investigations Branch. The UOFC also agreed with the original remedial action taken by the (then) Governor of Wellington CC to stand down one of the correctional officers from IAT duties.<sup>69</sup> We commend centre management and the UOFC for taking action in this matter.

Wellington CC reported that they had not offered refresher training in de-escalation to correctional officers in the 12 months prior to the inspection. Further, we heard feedback from some staff that the foundational correctional officer training did not include enough content on use of force and refresher courses on this subject were not offered frequently. Some staff believed that the less confident officers feel in using force, the more likely they would be to use excessive force.

CSNSW advise that they have provided refresher training to staff since the inspection and regular courses will be scheduled.<sup>70</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW frequently deliver refresher courses in de-escalation and use of force to correctional officers across NSW, including to those at Wellington Correctional Centre.**

We understood that at the time of the inspection, Wellington CC had approximately 20 body-worn video cameras which were allocated to members of the IAT. Body-worn cameras provide an added layer of accountability and assist staff in analysing incidents, especially as they have an audio feature that CCTV cameras do not have. Body-worn cameras can also enhance incident responses. This was discussed with the Governor of Wellington CC, and we were pleased to hear that shortly after the inspection, the centre joined a pilot program which issued body-worn cameras to all frontline staff.

In April 2023, we spoke to the team within CSNSW that was working on the wider rollout of body-worn cameras. It was positive to hear that the team was focused on equipping all frontline staff working in maximum security correctional centres with a body-worn camera and that those devices were also going to be used during medical escorts. The team reported that they had received positive feedback from the staff at Wellington CC after the rollout of body-worn cameras in that centre.

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69 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

70 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

The security operations group (SOG) in Wellington CC was fully staffed at the time of the inspection and the team believed they had sufficient resources to undertake their functions.

The SOG was situated outside the perimeter of Wellington CC, in an area between this centre and Macquarie CC. They reported that they did not have a monitor to view live CCTV footage. This was problematic as when critical incidents deteriorate and the SOG needs to respond, having an opportunity to watch live footage would assist in better preparation and response. Similar infrastructure was installed at Lithgow CC after its security upgrade. In December 2022, the Governor of Wellington CC informed us that a monitor for the SOG had been approved.

### 2.3.3 Drugs and contraband

Data obtained from CSNSW showed that from March 2022 to 30 June 2022, there were 12 instances of drugs being found, half of which related to buprenorphine. In this period, there was one urinalysis test that returned a laboratory confirmed positive result for drugs. In the 12 months from July 2020 to June 2021, there were 82 discoveries of contraband drugs, of which 62 related to buprenorphine. There were also 23 lab confirmed positive urinalyses.<sup>71</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW conduct an annual CCTV review at Wellington Correctional Centre to identify any areas that require CCTV to enhance security.**

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## 2.4 Rehabilitation

While some groups of inmates in Wellington CC had better access to educational, criminogenic and wellbeing programs, we found that, overall, rehabilitation and community integration were not adequately prioritised in the operation of the centre. Poor access to inmates and frequent lockdowns were identified as key barriers to delivering a variety of services, including programs and education. We often heard from staff and inmates that when the centre had to prioritise one opportunity over others, it would prioritise employment over delivering programs and education.

CSNSW advise that although Wellington CC is an identified location for programs like Connect, Real Understanding of Self-Help (RUSH), Short Sentence Intensive Program (SSIP), and the High Intensity Program Unit (HIPU), the facilitation of these programs is dependent on staff resources and inmate population.

They have also advised that the Offender Transformation Project has provided facilitator training in Mothering at A Distance (MAAD) over the past two years and provided facilitator training for Mini MAAD and Mini DAAD for 15 staff in the last six months. However, CSNSW acknowledge that similar to criminogenic programs, the ability of the centre to run these parenting programs is dependent on staff resources and inmate eligibility/suitability.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.4.1 Programs

Table 3 provides the list of programs that were delivered at Wellington CC in 2022. Programs provided in each sector are analysed further in the chapters focusing on those sectors.

Wellington CC had two OS&P teams: one team was responsible for the delivery of programs in the HIPUs in Sectors 2 and 3 and the other team was responsible for the delivery of programs in Sector 1 as well as non-HIPU programs in other sectors. We observed good collaboration between these two teams to deliver the programs and create arrangements that worked for their teams. With a proposed (at the time of the inspection) restructure of OS&P services under broader organisational reforms, the teams were planning for how best they could collaborate and deliver services in a new structure.

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<sup>71</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Table 3: Programs delivered by CSNSW at Wellington CC in 2022<sup>73</sup>**

Program name	Number of programs	Participants	Number of inmates completing programs	Completion rate
HIPU	N/A	53	33	62%
SSIP	N/A	46	11	24%
CONNECT (excluding those who participated as part of a HIPU or SSIP)	2	8	6	75%
CONNECT (as part of HIPU)	8	77	59	77%
CONNECT (as part of SSIP)	2	15	5	33%
Rolling CONNECT	1	9	9	100%
Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed (EQUIPS) Foundation <sup>74</sup>	11	217	155	71%
EQUIPS Addiction (all delivered in HIPU or as part of SSIP)	7	57	49	86%
EQUIPS Aggression <sup>75</sup>	5	51	30	59%
EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence (all delivered in HIPU or as part of SSIP)	2	18	14	78%
RUSH	0	0	0	N/A
Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program (delivered as part of HIPU)	8	64	63	98%
Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program (delivered as part of the SSIP)	2	12	9	75%
MAAD	1	8	3	38%

## 2.4.2 Education

Most educational opportunities provided in Wellington CC were training courses directly linked to inmates' employment. This limited the reach of educational programs to only the inmates who were already working.

Table 4 shows the education and training opportunities offered at Wellington CC in 2022. As the Intensive Learning Centre (ILC) was only available to inmates in Sector 1, information related to this learning centre is analysed in section 3.2.3 (Sector 1 education).

Staff reported difficulties in recruiting trainers who could deliver some of the educational programs like the Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) course or some of the traineeships. Reportedly, several planned courses were cancelled because of this issue. We note that in 2018, when we undertook a thematic inspection on the delivery of programs, employment, and education, the issue of insufficient trainers was of concern.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 15 September 2023 and 9 October 2023.

<sup>74</sup> The majority of EQUIPS Foundation programs were delivered as part of the SSIP and the HIPU in Sector 3. One EQUIPS Foundation program was offered outside of those, with 4 participants and 75% completion rate.

<sup>75</sup> The majority of EQUIPS Aggression programs were delivered as part of the SSIP and the HIPU in Sector 3. One EQUIPS Aggression program was offered outside of those, with 10 participants and 40% completion rate.

<sup>76</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020) 72.



CSNSW advise that a new Registered Training Organisation has been engaged to increase the number of trainers and that additional traineeships have been introduced, including high volume bakery and print and graphic arts.<sup>77</sup>

We understood that apprenticeships were rarely offered at Wellington CC, reportedly because the inmates who worked in industries and could undertake these opportunities did not have sufficient time left on their sentences.

Wellington CC was trying to increase the number of traineeships it offered but reported difficulties with both availability of trainers and low numbers of eligible inmates.<sup>78</sup>

**Table 4: Education and training offered at Wellington CC in 2022<sup>79</sup>**

Program type	Enrolment
Foundational Skills Program (various levels, inclusive of LLN and Digital Literacy)	53
Vocational Training Program (VTP) <sup>80</sup> – Agriculture	22
VTP -Cleaning Operations	33
VTP-Construction	23
Workplace Training (WPT) <sup>81</sup> -First Aid	10
WPT-Food safety	53
WPT – Forklift	7
WPT -White Card	5

At the time of the inspection, eight inmates were enrolled in four different traineeships. They were Certificate II in Horticulture, Certificate II in Construction Pathways, Certificate II in Workplace Skills, and Certificate II in Supply Chain Operations. None had yet completed a traineeship.

CSNSW advise that Wellington CC now also provide part qualification (short course) in ‘Cleaning Operations, Food Safety, Animal Care, Ground Maintenance Planting, Aboriginal Cultural Arts, Construction White Card, Forklift, Food Safety’.<sup>82</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review education offered at Wellington Correctional Centre and increase access to education for all inmates.**

We understood that key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to education consisted of the number of completed Education and Employment Plans (EEPs), number of completed core skills assessments, and number of Foundation Skills Program (FSP) offered (this consisted of Digital Literacy and LLN). While these indicators are important, they do not measure the education outcomes; for example, the KPI focused on the FSP only measures the number of courses that are offered and not the number of inmates who complete those courses.

It was also believed that some of these KPIs should be reviewed as they were set when the centre had a much higher population. For example, the monthly KPIs for completion of EEPs and core skills assessments were 42 each. In November 2022, Wellington CC had only completed 13 EEPs and seven core skills assessments.

<sup>77</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>78</sup> According to Corrective Services NSW, to be eligible to start an apprenticeship or traineeship, an inmate must: have at least 12 months remaining in custody before their earliest possible release date; be employed in a CSI industry; meet the citizenship and residency status requirements; have a core skill assessment result which meets the requirements for the level of the qualification; participate in an Education Profile Interview and/or education planning review, and be classified to the centre where application has been made.

<sup>79</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022 and 21 December 2023.

<sup>80</sup> CSNSW defines VTP as programs that aim to develop skills and allow inmates to attain recognised trade qualifications.

<sup>81</sup> CSNSW defines WPT as associated programs which include the use of a functional licence.

<sup>82</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

CSNSW advise that education KPIs have been reviewed and amended to detail local participation and completion rates.<sup>83</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the suitability of key performance indicators for education and ensure they measure education outcomes as well as outputs.**

### 2.4.3 Case planning and management

At the time of the inspection, the case management unit (CMU) of Wellington CC had one functional manager and a team of four staff. The approved staffing profile was one functional manager and nine staff (two senior case management officers and seven case management officers).

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

We heard that many sentenced inmates arrived at Wellington CC without a case plan. They were triaged by the CMU according to the length of time they had been without a case plan. It was reported that at the time of the inspection, 215 of the 282 eligible inmates had a current case plan. Of the 67 eligible inmates who did not have a case plan, 50 were still within the 42-day period and therefore their case plans were not overdue. Several inmates were also due for a case plan review.

The CMU reported having a good working relationship with the OS&P and education teams; they saw this as useful in managing and implementing inmates' case plans. Similar to other centres, the CMU and community corrections used two different assessment tools. The CMU used Planning for Adjustment, Responsivity, Reintegration, Criminogenic Needs and Communication (PARRCC) assessment that was used to measure the functional needs of inmates, while community corrections used a risk assessment tool called Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) which was used to measure the likelihood of re-offending and underlying criminogenic needs that contributed to re-offending.<sup>84</sup> We believe that there was a need for closer collaboration between the two teams to ensure the best results for inmates. We also note the parole unit was located outside of the centre, behind the parking area; this might have further reduced the visibility of this team to other staff and created additional barriers to collaboration and consultation with this team.

As part of the performance monitoring and reporting regime, 17 KPIs had been introduced. They include two KPIs that related to case planning and management: 'KPI 1: Current Case Plans' and 'KPI 2: Case Plan Interventions Completed'. KPI 2 appears to be designed as an outcome-focused performance indicator that can assess whether the interventions in a case plan have been completed. While this is positive, these KPIs are still under development and therefore not measured. When we spoke to the CMU, they were primarily reporting their performance based on output-focused performance indicators, for example meeting the timeframes relating to the preparation of case plans.

Measuring outcomes in addition to outputs is key in assessing whether the systems in place are suitably designed to reduce recidivism. This can be achieved by assessing whether inmates are provided with an opportunity to complete the interventions they need, for example by being placed in a correctional centre that offers required programs and with proper consideration given to the length of their sentence as well as their remaining time in custody.

CSNSW advise they are transitioning to KPIs that measure the quality of work rather than merely focusing on the quantity of work completed. According to CSNSW, new KPIs will be introduced in 2024.<sup>85</sup>

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83 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

84 Corrective Services NSW, *Compendium of Offender Assessments* (2021) 16 and 142.

85 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW introduce case management key performance indicators that measure outcomes, such as completion of case plan interventions.**

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## 2.5 Contact with family and friends

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

### 2.5.1 In-person visits

At the time of the inspection and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of restrictions on in-person social visits remained in place: all visitors had to undertake a rapid antigen test before a visit commenced, all inmates and all visitors aged five years and over had to wear a face mask, and all inmates had to be triple vaccinated against COVID-19 to receive in-person social visits.<sup>86</sup>

One month before our inspection, CSNSW issued a new Commissioner's Instruction that removed the vaccination requirement for visitors and permitted physical contact, consumption of food and drink, and use of children's play areas during visits (although the last two measures remained at the discretion of local management). In-person social visits were still limited to one hour and the maximum number of visitors per inmate remained limited to six.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, correctional centres were still not using the full capacity of their visits areas.

At Wellington CC, in-person social visits were conducted on weekends. On each day, up to 40 inmates held in Sector 1 could receive visitors. These visits occurred across two timeslots, 9am and 10.30am, each with a capacity of 20 inmates. Visits to inmates in Sectors 2 and 3 occurred across the same timeslots and in a different visits area. In total, eight female inmates and 24 minimum security inmates could receive visitors each day. Visits in both areas were one hour in duration.<sup>88</sup>

We observed the in-person visits during the inspection. All visitors passed through a tent located directly outside Wellington CC, where they undertook a rapid antigen test. They then proceeded to the gatehouse screening area where they were registered by the correctional officers on duty. All visitors were searched by the SOG who had a drug detection dog, and then went through a metal detector. Several visitors were searched using a body scanner. Depending on the location of the inmates they were visiting, the visitors were directed to either the maximum or minimum security visits areas. The officers interacted with visitors with respect and some of the regular visitors who spoke to us reported that they were generally treated well.

Only two visitors had registered for the 9am session and one arrived. The processing of that visitor was prompt. The 10.30am session was much busier, with 17 visitors having booked a visit. All visitors had arrived at around 10am. They were divided into four smaller groups to be processed. The first group was processed and taken to the visits areas at 10.15am. However, the last group was not fully processed until 10.54am, well past the session start time. This group was allowed to stay longer and were the last group to leave the centre at around 11.45am.

We were concerned about the accessibility of visits, especially for visitors who did not live locally. This is of particular significance as Wellington CC is a remand centre and holds many inmates from other parts of NSW. At the time of the inspection, there was no public transport to the centre and the only taxi service in Wellington was no longer operating. Therefore, only people who had private transport could visit the centre.

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86 All these requirements have since been removed. As of 3 February 2023, inmates no longer need to be vaccinated to receive visitors. As of 27 March 2023, visitors are no longer required to undertake a rapid antigen test before a visit. As of 3 September 2023, visitors are no longer required to wear face masks.

87 For a timeline of restrictions on in-person social visits in adult correctional centres, see: Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the Response to COVID-19 in NSW Custody* (Report, 2023) 28-29.

88 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.



We spoke to visitors who had been unaware of this situation and as a result, faced significant difficulties. Some people reported that they had planned to get a taxi from Wellington to the centre after travelling to the town by train. They had to ask friends to drive them when they found out the taxi service no longer operated. This issue was clearly highlighted by the experience of the visitor who missed the 9am session. She had similarly travelled by train to Wellington and upon discovering that the taxi service was not operational, had reportedly tried to walk the 8 km distance between Wellington and the correctional centre. It was raining heavily that day and there were no footpaths along the road, making it a dangerous walk. She was ultimately offered a tablet visit after she presented to the gate well after the last in-person visit session had started.

We understood that previously the centre had a vehicle that was used to transport visitors from Wellington to the centre. This option was no longer available.

Many people in custody at Wellington CC were from the Sydney area and the visit times did not align with the train timetable. The early start time of 9am for one of the two in-person visit sessions created further issues with visit accessibility. For non-local visitors, this meant having to stay in Wellington overnight, which required higher financial and time commitments. Indeed, reviewing the visits data for the period of September to November 2022 showed that the 9am timeslot was significantly underutilised. On many days in that period no one booked that timeslot or only one person attended. The highest number of visitors who were at Wellington CC for a 9am in-person visit session in that period, was four people and this happened only on two occasions.

CSNSW believe there is a demand for the 9am timeslot from visitors and advised this session would be retained. However, they have committed to reviewing the visits schedule.<sup>89</sup> CSNSW also advised that the majority of visitors arrive by private vehicle.<sup>90</sup> This is correct as there are no other options at present. CSNSW have committed to reviewing transportation options to Wellington CC.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the scheduling of in-person visits at Wellington Correctional Centre and provide transport between Wellington town and the correctional centre for social visitors.**

Wellington CC had one visits area for inmates in Sector 1 (maximum security visits area) and one for inmates in Sectors 2 and 3 (minimum security visits area). Mainstream and protection inmates in Sector 1 received their visitors in the same room. There were also non-contact visit booths that could accommodate six inmates in each session. On the day we observed the visits, 11 inmates used the maximum security visits area, five male inmates used the minimum security visits area, and one inmate and their visitor were placed in a non-contact visit booth.

We were concerned to see that apart from their size, there were no real differences between the two visits areas. Both areas had fixed chairs and tables throughout. We have observed in other correctional centres that often the visits area allocated to minimum security inmates has a more relaxed environment and chairs and tables can be moved. It is unfortunate that this was not the case in Wellington CC.

We noticed that the vending machines in the visits areas were switched off, preventing inmates and their visitors from accessing food. The Commissioner's Instruction in place at the time of the inspection had removed the prohibition on the consumption of food and drink that had been in place due to COVID-19, allowing local management to determine if food or drink was permitted.<sup>91</sup> The conversations we had suggested that the decision by Wellington CC to prevent the consumption of food or drink at visits was not due to concerns about COVID-19 but the view was that allowing food or drink could increase the risk of contraband introduction. We believe correctional centres should work to return visits to pre-pandemic conditions as much as possible.

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<sup>89</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>90</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>91</sup> Commissioner's Instruction 2022/40.

### Visits area for maximum security inmates



### Visits area for minimum security and female inmates



It was positive to see that inmates were able to wear their prison issued clothing to visits, rather than overalls. This was because all inmates were searched by body scanners after the completion of in-person visits. We observed the scanning process which was done professionally and promptly.

## 2.5.2 Virtual visits

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

In Wellington CC, inmates of all classifications could have virtual social visits via tablets on weekends. These visits occurred across three sessions on each of Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The duration of each virtual visit was 30 minutes.

We understood that a maximum of eight tablets were allocated to inmates in Sector 1, five tablets were allocated to inmates in Sector 2 and seven tablets to inmates in Sector 3.<sup>92</sup> This allocation did not correspond with the breakdown of the centre's population. At the beginning of the inspection, the population of Sector 1 was eight times the population of Sector 2 and three times the population of Sector 3; a breakdown that was in line with the population trend over the preceding months. However, Sector 1 inmates were only allocated three more tablets than the inmates in Sector 2 and one more than the inmates in Sector 3.

It was clear to us that the number of tablets and visit timeslots allocated to maximum security men were insufficient. This issue was also raised several times during our engagement with inmates. A review of the visits data for November 2022 showed that on most days the visit sessions for inmates in Sector 1 were fully booked. On the other hand, an average of two female inmates attended each virtual visit session, leaving the tablets allocated to this group unused. While we acknowledge that on a handful of particularly busy days, extra tablets were allocated to inmates in Sector 1, we maintain that insufficient tablets allocated to this population limited the number of visit sessions that their visitors could book.

It was also reported that inmates had to choose between a virtual or an in-person visit and could not have both on one weekend. This was confirmed by our analysis of the visits data for the period of September to November 2022. We note that many of the inmates in Sector 1 were on remand and were entitled to access visits at least twice per week.<sup>93</sup> It was unlikely that Wellington CC was meeting this requirement.

CSNSW advise that visits have now returned to their pre-pandemic levels and they ensure in-person and virtual visits comply with the requirements of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*

<sup>92</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.

<sup>93</sup> *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cl 76(1).

and the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* across all locations.<sup>94</sup> They have advised that the tablets allocated to virtual visits across the state are being replaced and have undertaken to review the number of tablets allocated to Wellington CC, having regard to the centre's operational need.<sup>95</sup>

Inmates in Sector 1 were placed in non-contact visit booths for the duration of their virtual visits. While this measure could help address the issue of noisy surroundings when all inmates are placed in one room, Wellington CC had only six booths. Considering the maximum number of Sector 1 inmates who could attend each session was eight, we were unclear where the other two were accommodated.

Some staff suggested that the centre could use the eight AVL suites for this group of inmates. If this proposal was to be implemented, these suites should be used in addition to the non-contact visit booths and not as an alternative. This would increase the number of available visit sessions. We also note that in other correctional centres, such as South Coast CC, the large visits area used for in-person visits was also used for tablet visits. Measures such as putting appropriate distance between inmates can address the potential noise issue.

Inmates in Sectors 2 and 3 were able to attend the virtual visits in their own sectors. In Sector 3, tablets were placed in a computer room located in a building attached to the officer's station. We heard that there were some issues with the connection which affected the quality of the video and sound. This was an issue of concern for both inmates and staff as it could lead to frustration. CSNSW advise that boosters can be used to address connectivity issues with the tablets allocated to the visits.<sup>96</sup>

On the day we observed the visits, only two inmates in Sector 3 had a virtual visit. In any event, the allocated room was too small for a full visit session with seven inmates.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the visits schedule and allocation of tablets for virtual visits at Wellington Correctional Centre, based on population size and demand.**

### 2.5.3 Inmate tablets

In October 2020, CSNSW introduced in-cell tablets for inmates in Dillwynia and John Morony CCs. A year later, this technology was rolled out to several other correctional centres, including Wellington CC.

When we inspected Wellington CC, more than a year had passed since the introduction of tablets and they had become a part of the daily routine. Inmates appreciated the ability to make phone calls in their cells until late at night as this provided them with more flexibility to speak to their family. Staff reported that the introduction of tablets significantly reduced the competition over the use of communal telephones, which consequently reduced the number of fights and opportunities for standover.

At the time of the inspection, inmates at Wellington CC could use their tablets to make phone calls (from the afternoon when they were locked into their cells and collected their tablets until 10pm), visit some pre-approved 'whitelisted' government agency websites such as Legal Aid, access some free content such as limited free games, and access paid entertainment content. Table 5 provides the price breakdown for entertainment bundles available on tablets (which remains current).

However, poor connectivity was reported as the biggest barrier to making effective use of tablets. This particularly affected those inmates who lived in the cells on the ground level of Sector 1 pods. Inmates told us that this issue repeatedly caused their phone calls to drop out or their access to paid content interrupted, yet they still had to pay for the cost of that service. This was also discussed in several inmate development committees (IDCs). Inmates felt frustrated that they were paying for a service that they could not access and believed they should be reimbursed if the service was not being delivered. Wellington CC was aware of this issue and was looking at ways to address it, including by installing signal boosters in the accommodation pods.

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94 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

95 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

96 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

CSNSW advise that the connectivity issues have now been resolved as wireless access points (WAP) were installed for in-cell inmate tablets. We understand that work commenced on site on 20 July 2023 and upon completion of the physical works, the programming, commissioning, and user acceptance testing of the WAPs were undertaken. The WAPs went live on the 25 August 2023.<sup>97</sup>

Wellington CC had no TV rental scheme as it was believed that access to free-to-air channels on the tablets was a viable alternative. We agree that tablets could be a viable alternative. However, the connectivity issues were a limitation. Inmates also did not have access to their tablets during the day to watch TV. This was problematic during lockdowns and suggested there was an ongoing need to ensure that TVs remained available for inmates to rent.<sup>98</sup>

**Table 5: Entertainment bundles on inmate tablets<sup>99</sup>**

Type of bundle	Type of subscription	Price
Unlimited bundle 1 (movies and music)	Monthly subscription	\$35
Unlimited bundle 2 (movies, music, and games)	Monthly subscription	\$38
Unlimited bundle 3 (movies, music, and games)	Daily subscription	\$8
Movies	Monthly subscription	\$25
	Daily subscription	\$4
Music	Monthly subscription	\$20
	Daily subscription	\$4
Games	Monthly subscription	\$5
	Daily subscription	\$1
Audio books and e-books	Monthly subscription	\$6.60
Local TV channels	Monthly subscription	\$2.53

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW implement a TV rental scheme and resolve connectivity issues at Wellington Correctional Centre. Where connectivity issues have inhibited the use of inmate tablets, reimbursement should be provided.**

Except for the ‘honour houses’, no other accommodation area in Wellington CC had facilities for in-cell charging of tablets. Inmates reported that they found this particularly difficult when the centre experienced lockdowns (which were frequent at the time of our inspection) as they were in their cells with nothing to help them pass time.

Wellington CC’s Local Operating Procedure (LOP) provided that inmate ‘sweepers’ for each pod should distribute the fully charged tablets prior to lock-in. Each tablet was to be allocated to a particular cell and could only be given to that cell to ensure accountability. The LOP provided that inmate ‘sweepers’ should collect the tablets in the mornings prior to prisoners being let out of their cells and put them in the charging station. When the sectors were locked down, the tablets were to be distributed during the issuing of meals for Sector 1 and during the afternoon head count for Sectors 2 and 3 and they were to be collected during the morning head count for all sectors.<sup>100</sup>

We inquired whether inmates at Wellington CC could be issued their tablets earlier on the days when the centre experienced lockdowns. The centre advised that tablets were usually fully charged by noon and could be handed out early. However, that meant they would run out of battery earlier and many inmates opted to wait until later in the day. Lack of in-cell charging was certainly a contributing factor to this issue.

<sup>97</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>98</sup> Inmates could purchase 34cm LCD televisions that according to Wellington CC’s ‘Activities Buy-Up’ cost \$290. However, many inmates including those who were unemployed might not have the funds to purchase TVs. Therefore, to ensure equity, TVs need to be available both for purchase and rent.

<sup>99</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Offender Tablet Roll-out* (December 2022).

<sup>100</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 19 January 2023.



We understood from CSNSW that it was piloting in-cell charging at Goulburn CC. It planned to conduct a review after the end of the pilot period to evaluate any risks and identify any security concerns and make decisions about the next steps.<sup>101</sup>

Another relevant issue was the high and often prohibitive cost of phone calls. This issue was not unique to Wellington CC and has been raised in all of our inspections following the in-cell tablet roll-out.

CSNSW meets the cost of all phone calls to the numbers listed on the Common Auto Dial List (CADL). It also covers the cost of all legal telephone calls for unsentenced inmates or sentenced inmates who face further charges. Unsentenced inmates can make three personal local phone calls per week free of charge while sentenced inmates can make one free personal local call every week.<sup>102</sup> This is the case when inmates use the tablets to make those phone calls. Inmates need to cover the cost of other phone calls.

According to the information provided by CSNSW, the cost of a 10-minute call to a local fixed line was \$0.25. It cost \$1.80 to call a national fixed line and a 10-minute call to a mobile phone cost \$2.60 (ten times more expensive than calling a local fixed line). CSNSW reported that this cost was the same when inmates used 'wall phones' in the communal areas and that they would ensure call rates were negotiated when the contract for providing telephone services was reviewed at the end of 2023.<sup>103</sup>

Facilitating inmates' contact with their family and friends can significantly contribute to inmate wellbeing and CSNSW should ensure the high cost of phone call is not a barrier to that end. As provided in the ICS Standards, where possible, inmates should be able to access discounted telephone charge rates.<sup>104</sup> This is particularly important at a centre like Wellington CC, where a significant number of inmates are not from the local area, including many Aboriginal inmates who are held off Country. They consequently must pay more to remain in contact with their families, a cost that many may find prohibitive. We note that this group is already disadvantaged by the distance of Wellington CC that can limit the ability of family and friends to visit the inmates in person.

## 2.5.4 Inmate mail

As we explained in our reports *Review of the Response to COVID-19 in NSW Custody* and *Inspection of Silverwater Women's and Dillwynia Correctional Centres*,<sup>105</sup> amendments made to the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* (CAS regulation) in mid-2020 and subsequently to the *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures* (COPP), significantly changed the way inmate mail is handled in NSW correctional centres. Those amendments require that all non-privileged mail (including cards and children's drawings) that do not contain prohibited goods are photocopied in colour. These copies can be provided to inmates, while the original mail is destroyed. Photographs can be issued to inmates if they are not tampered with and are not prohibited goods or otherwise inappropriate to issue to the inmate.<sup>106</sup>

Inmates at Wellington CC raised several issues relating to the handling of mail that were similar to the complaints we received in all of our recent inspections. They reported that the photocopied mail was often of poor quality and/or incomplete. Despite the provision in the COPP allowing the issuing of photographs, subject to certain conditions, inmates reported that they were only given a photocopy of the photographs and the original versions were destroyed. Some inmates also alleged that they received privileged legal mail that had been opened.

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101 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 August 2023.

102 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 8.2 Inmate Telephones* (version 1.11, 11 August 2023) 1.

103 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 23 August 2023.

104 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standard 105.5.

105 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the response to COVID-19 in NSW custody* (Report, 2023) 86-88 and Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Silverwater Women's and Dillwynia Correctional Centres* (Report, 2023) 85-86.

106 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 8.1 Inmate Mail* (version 1.10, 25 November 2021) 5.

We highlight the recommendations made in the abovementioned reports that CSNSW ensure the lawfulness of destroying original inmate mail and that this practice nonetheless ceases. Where there is no evidence of contraband, original mail should be placed in an inmate's property. Further, Wellington CC should ensure that authorised photographs are issued to inmates, as provided in the COPP.<sup>107</sup>

## 2.5.5 Maintaining family relationships

It was positive to see Wellington CC had engaged several external agencies and community-based organisations to assist inmates in maintaining relationships with their families, including their children.

A case manager visited the centre monthly and worked with inmates whose children were subject to child protection interventions and/or in foster care. They assisted the inmates to maintain connection with their children (when permissible) and engaged with eligible male and female inmates.

Shine for Kids also provided services that helped inmates maintain connections with their families. They supported parents in custody to create and post crafts to their children, assisting 39 inmates to do so in the last quarter of 2022. Shine for Kids reported that due to custodial staff shortages, they had to primarily focus on inmates in Sectors 2 and 3. They also planned to attend the in-person social visits and help keep child visitors engaged with age-appropriate toys and activities. The organisation had previously organised Child and Parents Days which aimed to provide children with quality time with their parent in custody. At the time we spoke to Shine for Kids, they were not delivering that program but were hoping to recommence.

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## 2.6 Court appearances and contact with legal representatives

Wellington CC has a significant remand population. It is a remand and reception centre for the Central West region of NSW and many inmates remanded in custody in Broken Hill and Sydney are transferred to Wellington CC under the CSNSW's Remand Bed Placement policy.

Wellington CC has four AVL suites for court appearances and four AVL suites for legal and professional appointments. Inmates who needed to appear before court were taken to the AVL area and placed in holding cells at 9am. They were held there until the confirmation was received from either the court or the inmate's lawyer that the inmate was no longer required. The centre had indoor holding cells for women and for inmates who needed to be held separately from others. There were also outdoor holding cells that were used for normal discipline inmates.

As Wellington CC did not provide tablets for court appearances, inmates with COVID-19 who were required to appear before court needed to be moved to the AVL area. During the inspection, there was a small COVID-19 outbreak among the inmates in F Pod in Sector 1. The centre had dedicated one AVL suite to the inmates in that pod who had a court appearance.

Inmates with a professional or a legal call were taken to the AVL area 15 minutes prior to their scheduled appointment. Those who were in segregation or in quarantine were not required to move to the AVL area as officers transferred the call to their housing location.

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<sup>107</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Review of the response to COVID-19 in NSW custody* (Report, 2023) 15 and Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Silverwater Women's and Dillwynia Correctional Centres* (Report, 2023) 15.

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## 2.7 Prisoner advocacy and complaints

### 2.7.1 Complaint mechanisms

During the inspection, some inmates raised concerns about the internal complaint handling mechanism at Wellington CC. They reported lack of timely response, lack of clarity about complaint escalation process, and perceived gaps in treating complaints confidentially.

Inmates at Wellington CC had access to the Corrective Services Support Line (CSSL), a free telephone support service for inmates in all correctional centres in NSW. Inmates could also access a number of external agencies via the free telephone call system, including the NSW Ombudsman, the Health Care Complaints Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), Legal Aid NSW, and Aboriginal Legal Service.

Wellington has official visitors who visit the centre on a regular basis to assist with the resolution of complaints at a local level. The Official Visitor Program is managed by the ICS. Official visitors are independent monitors who regularly attend correctional centres to take inquiries and complaints from inmates and monitor the conditions of prisons and treatment of inmates.

Prior to the inspection and to understand the main issues of concern for inmates at Wellington CC, we asked the NSW Ombudsman for complaint data related to this centre. We also reviewed the reports from the official visitors. Daily routine of the centre, medical issues, and issues related to property were the main issues of concern. This was similar to the complaints received prior to the closure of the centre in June 2021; however, in that period, access to psychologists and employment for female inmates were also specifically highlighted.

### 2.7.2 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. IDCs provide such forums. They allow inmates to raise with the centre management, and via nominated inmate representatives, issues of concern regarding services, programs, and activities.<sup>108</sup>

Wellington CC had one monthly IDC when the representatives of all sectors met with the centre's management. We reviewed the minutes from four IDC meetings that occurred prior to the inspection. They suggested the meetings were occurring on a regular monthly basis. We also met with all the representatives from the three sectors on the first day of the inspection and had a chance to observe an IDC meeting on the second day of the inspection.

We understood that each pod in Sector 1 had one representative and Sectors 2 and 3 each nominated one delegate. Given the high number of inmates in an area like Sector 3, it might be more suitable if the centre holds a separate IDC for this sector and allows the inmates to nominate more than one representative. It is unlikely that one representative can present all perspectives and issues of a sector with around 100 inmates. We also note that the men in the 'honour house' did not have a separate representative. Given the location of that accommodation area, it was unlikely that they were even able to meet with the Sector 3 representative and inform him of their issues of concern. Similar considerations should be made if Sector 2 moves to hold a higher number of women.

Further, Wellington CC did not separate the inmate cohorts in the IDC meetings, with representatives for maximum security protection and maximum security 'normal discipline' inmates attending the same meeting. This was not an issue when we observed the meeting; however, this is largely dependent on the individual representatives and how they interact with different inmate cohorts. The centre should be mindful of potential risks that could be associated with mixing inmate cohorts in the IDC meeting and review the arrangements as the representatives change.

Overall, we found the IDC meetings to be well-run and well-attended, including by senior management. Agendas were distributed prior to the meetings and the minutes provided were

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

detailed and clear. However, inmates reported that many of the substantive issues raised at these meetings remained unresolved as they were attributed to short staffing or infrastructure issues. Several inmates told us that lack of clear communication about when and how issues would be addressed exacerbated the situation.

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## 2.8 Reception, transfer, and release

Wellington CC receives new inmate receptions, inmates transferred from other correctional centres, and inmates transiting between correctional centres.

In the 12 months from September 2022 to August 2023, Wellington CC received 746 new inmate receptions and 1,168 inmates who were transferred from other correctional centres (an average of 62 and 97 inmates per month, respectively). During the same period, 776 inmates were released from the centre, an average of 65 releases per month.<sup>109</sup>

### 2.8.1 Reception and induction

The ICS Standards provide that ‘correctional centres should conduct formal induction programs which provide all inmates with an orientation to the correctional centre, its operations, and the services so as to facilitate informed choices within the discretion allowed to inmates’.<sup>110</sup> The ICS Standards emphasise that the induction processes should provide information in a manner that is readily understood by each inmate and should commence within a day of admission to the centre.<sup>111</sup>

We did not observe an induction session during our inspection of Wellington CC. However, we reviewed the local induction information booklet and Wellington CC’s LOP on reception, screening, and induction. We also spoke to relevant staff to better understand how Wellington CC provided information to newly received inmates.

We noted that some of the information in the local induction information booklet was incorrect or out of date. For example, while Wellington CC had created two Aboriginal mentor positions, they were yet to be filled and remained vacant at the time of the inspection. However, the booklet advised that the centre had Aboriginal mentors who were available from Monday to Friday and could provide support to Aboriginal inmates. It encouraged inmates to ask correctional officers for a referral to see the mentor(s). The booklet also advised that visitors could get to Wellington CC from Wellington town using a taxi service that offered subsidised fare. This service had ceased several months ago and as mentioned before, a lack of transport options had made Wellington CC inaccessible to visitors without private transport.

It is important that the induction booklets are regularly updated to reflect the current situation of the correctional centres. This is important as inmates should be able to rely on the local induction handbook as a reliable, accurate and up to date source of information.

The LOP on reception, screening and induction provided the information that had to be provided to inmates by the intake officer in the first 24 hours of their reception to Wellington CC. This information included:

- the name of the centre
- reception, screening, and induction process
- the procedure for the first night of arrival
- inmate property and how it would be stored
- when and to whom they could make a phone call

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<sup>109</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Movements Report* (August 2023) 1-14.

<sup>110</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standard 16.

<sup>111</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales* (May 2020) standards 16.1 and 16.2



- meals and the centre's procedure for providing special dietary requirements
- the functions of OS&P and CSI staff
- correctional centre routine and discipline.

The local policy required the correctional officer in charge of an accommodation pod to provide a brief orientation to inmates who had been escorted to that pod. This included explaining pod routine, muster, and use and misuse of the cell alarm system.<sup>112</sup>

According to Wellington CC's LOP, all newly received inmates needed to be interviewed by a SAPO on the first working day (Monday to Friday) after initial reception. The purpose of this interview was to ascertain any immediate outstanding needs and assist in resolving any issues of immediate concern for the inmate. SAPOs were also required to complete the intake screening form. Inmates who had been transferred to Wellington CC from another correctional centre were to be seen by a 'reception committee' within 72 hours of their arrival at Wellington CC. The local policy explained that this committee was facilitated by a SAPO and its role was to check various information, including an inmate's classification and placement status, review of their case plans, and whether screening and subsequent referrals had been actioned.<sup>113</sup>

The LOP also required that all newly received inmates undergo a formal induction meeting within 96 hours of their admission to Wellington CC. The induction meetings needed to be facilitated by a SAPO with assistance from inmate representatives. According to the LOP, the purpose of formal induction meetings was to provide inmates with information relating to the centre's routine, programs and services and to check whether the inmates had already received a copy of 'the Inmate Handbook, the local information brochure, and for Aboriginal inmates, the Aboriginal Inmates Handbook'.<sup>114</sup> We note that it is unclear if Wellington CC has an Aboriginal inmates handbook as we did not receive a copy of this document prior to and during the course of our inspection.

Induction practices and processes reported to us were at times not in line with the local policy and procedure. This could be explained by the fact that the staff were unaware of the existence of the LOP on reception, screening, and induction.

We were informed that induction information was mainly delivered in individual sessions rather than group sessions and consequently there was no opportunity for the involvement of inmate representatives in this process. It was reported that the screening and induction processes were generally combined and the SAPO allocated to a newly received inmate provided them with the required documents, including the information booklet during the screening interview. Given that the SAPOs have 36 hours (or until the next working day) to complete the screening interview but 96 hours to conduct the induction, we are unclear if combining the two procedures still allowed for the required timeframes to be met. A review of the induction handbook and process is required to ensure it complies with legislative and policy requirements.

In March 2024, CSNSW advised that a review of induction and screening processes was underway and the CSNSW Inmate Handbook was being redeveloped. The induction handbook at Wellington CC has reportedly been updated.<sup>115</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the induction process at Wellington Correctional Centre to ensure it complies with legislative and policy requirements.**

## 2.8.2 Searching

Wellington CC had body x-ray scanners (body scanners) in the reception room, visits area, and the gatehouse; they were operational during the inspection.

<sup>112</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 12 January 2024.

<sup>113</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 12 January 2024.

<sup>114</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 12 January 2024.

<sup>115</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

The COPP states that inmates may be body scanned as an alternative to a strip search in circumstances where strip searching is otherwise routine, such as on arrival from court or from another correctional centre, on departure or arrival from a medical escort, or after a contact visit. It also provides that inmates may be strip searched if a body scan image indicates that they may have concealed contraband.<sup>116</sup>

It was initially reported to us that many of the staff in Wellington CC had been trained in the use of body scanners and most inmates were body scanned as an alternative to a strip search. However, subsequent data provided by the centre and our own observations during the inspection did not support this.

We understood that approximately one-third of correctional officers (40 officers out of around 120) were trained to use body scanners.<sup>117</sup> However, it appeared to us that some staff lacked confidence using the body scanners to detect contraband. CSNSW believe that 'body scanner training has been provided to staff at Wellington CC and refresher training will be undertaken as required'.<sup>118</sup>

During the inspection, we observed the process of transferring inmates out of Wellington CC. All inmates who were departing the centre that day were strip searched. This was even though body scanners and the staff who could use them, were available on that day. We also heard that most new receptions and inmates transferred from other correctional centres were subject to both body scanning and strip searching. While there are provisions for strip searching inmates after they are body scanned, this is only the case if the image indicates the presence of contraband. This should not be done as a routine undertaking. It was further reported that inmates transferred out of the centre for external medical appointments were strip searched.

CSNSW advise that in accordance with Deputy Commissioner Memorandum 2022/05, 'wherever available and practicable, body scanning of inmates is preferable to strip searching. There remain operational reasons why strip searching will be utilised'.<sup>119</sup> We note that 2022/05 Memorandum also reiterates that a strip search should not be undertaken after a body scan unless the scan indicates the presence of contraband or unauthorised items. We encourage Wellington CC and CSNSW to ensure the local practice follows the policy and that strip searching of inmates is not used routinely.

Further, we were concerned to see that Wellington CC's LOP on the searching of inmates was dated November 2021 and presumably had not been updated after the introduction of body scanners to the centre. There was no mention of body scanning of inmates in the LOP and it stated that 'every inmate should be strip searched upon reception, and when leaving or returning from any form of temporary absence from the centre'.<sup>120</sup> This local procedure needs to be updated to bring Wellington CC in line with the CSNSW's policy and to reflect the current requirement regarding the use of body scanners. CSNSW have provided an undertaking to update the LOP to ensure it is consistent with the COPP.<sup>121</sup>

A review of CSNSW records identified that in the three months between October to December 2022, just over half of inmates who passed through reception were body scanned. Table 6 shows the number of times the body scanner in reception was reported to be used during this period and the number of inmate movements in each of those three months.

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116 Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 17.5 Body Scanning* (version 1.5, 24 March 2023) 10-11.

117 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 27 January 2023.

118 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

119 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

120 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 27 January 2023.

121 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Table 6: Comparison of the use of the body scanner with inmate movements between October – December 2022<sup>122</sup>**

	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	Total
Body scanner use (reception)	150	87	69	306
Inmate movements <sup>123</sup>	229	192	184	605

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure sufficient staff at Wellington Correctional Centre are trained to use the body scanners and provide refresher training to increase staff confidence in their use.**

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre staff cease routine strip searching of inmates, record the reason for each strip search, and ensure the local operating procedures comply with the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures.**

### 2.8.3 Inmate transfers

As mentioned, during the inspection, we observed the transfer of inmates out of Wellington CC. After being strip searched, inmates were brought one at a time and placed in a waiting escort vehicle. Those inmates who were processed first spent a long time waiting in the escort vehicle. Air conditioning to the vehicle compartments was not operating as the vehicle was turned off and the only ventilation available to inmates was through the external doors which were open.

While the escort vehicle appeared clean, some inmates reported that the compartment they were placed in smelt like urine and had not been adequately cleaned. The officers then sprayed the seats in the compartment with disinfectant. We note that during our inspection focusing on the transport of inmates across NSW, we encountered several examples where the vehicles had not been cleaned between each use. The recommendation in that report pertaining to the importance of cleaning inmate transport vehicles between each use is of relevance here.<sup>124</sup>

We also noticed that inmate ‘sweepers’ who were working in the reception area, were left unsupervised while loading inmates’ property onto the escort vehicle. This included valuable property such as bank cards and documents. We considered that this posed a risk to both Wellington CC and the inmates working in that area. It created the risk of property theft and opened the inmate workers to allegations relating to missing property.

### 2.8.4 Clothing and bedding

During the inspection, there were reports that many inmates did not receive the required clothing allocation. The COPP provides for a minimum allocation of clothing to be issued at reception and requires this quantity to be the minimum level that is maintained throughout an inmate’s sentence.<sup>125</sup>

We inspected the reception area where the clothing and bedding supplies were stored and packed for new arrivals. We noted that some of the stock, especially some underwear items, were particularly low. While in that area, we were informed that insufficient supply of clothing to inmates arriving in Wellington CC was indeed an issue but had reportedly improved in recent weeks. This was attributed by some to a change in the management of that area.

The bedding packs we inspected, complied with the requirement in the COPP although we noted that some bed linen was damaged and torn. It was also reported that used clothing, including used underwear, was provided to new arrivals. While it is permissible to re-issue appropriately laundered

<sup>122</sup> Information on the use of body scanners is provided by Wellington CC, 27 January 2023. Information on inmate movements is from Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Movements Report* (December 2022) 1-14.

<sup>123</sup> The number of actual movements through reception is likely to be higher than identified. The number of movements presented here includes new receptions, inmates transferred to Wellington CC from other correctional centres, and inmates moved to and from in-person court appearances. It does not include inmates transferred out of Wellington CC to another correctional centre or inmates escorted in and out of the centre for medical appointments.

<sup>124</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Inspection of Inmate Transport in NSW* (Report, 2022) 74.

<sup>125</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 1.5 Issuing Correctional Centre Clothing and Linen* (version 1.4, 22 June 2023) 4.

clothing items, this does not extend to underwear and socks.<sup>126</sup> We raised this issue with the Governor after the inspection and were advised this practice would cease. CSNSW have committed to ensuring that the provision of clothing and bedding is consistent with the COPP.<sup>127</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre provide inmates with clothing and bedding as outlined in the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures, and ensure this supply is maintained throughout an inmate's time in custody at this centre.**

### 2.8.5 Conditions of dry cell

A dry cell is a cell with no toilet or running water. Inmates who are suspected of concealing contraband within a body cavity or have refused or failed to supply a urine sample, can be placed in a dry cell. Inmates are not to be placed in a dry cell for more than 24 hours.<sup>128</sup> While inmates are placed in dry cells for a short period of time, the conditions of those cells should still be of a minimum standard.

Wellington CC had one dry cell which was located within the reception area. The cell did not have a bed and only had a mattress on the floor.

CSNSW advise that it will review the potential installation of a bed in the dry cell.<sup>129</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW install a bed in the dry cell at Wellington Correctional Centre.**

#### Dry cell at Wellington CC



<sup>126</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 1.5 Issuing Correctional Centre Clothing and Linen* (version 1.4, 22 June 2023) 4.

<sup>127</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>128</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 5.2 Inmate Accommodation* (version 1.5, 18 August 2023) 11.

<sup>129</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

## 3 Sector 1 (maximum and medium security)

On 14 November 2022, the first day of our inspection, 257 male inmates were held in Sector 1. Of those, 86 people were on remand, 11 were appealing their sentences and the rest were sentenced. Just under 60% of the inmates in this sector were Aboriginal.

Sector 1 held both maximum and medium security inmates. At the time of the inspection, 46% of the inmates in this sector had a medium security classification. They included 63 sentenced inmates and 41 inmates on remand with a medium security classification and 14 inmates who were classified as E2 (a classification assigned to medium security inmates who commit an escape offence). Sector 1 also held 39 unclassified inmates and a small number of minimum security inmates (eight with C1 and five with C2 classifications).<sup>130</sup>

We note that despite the fact that more than half of the inmates in this sector were not classified as maximum security, throughout the inspection we saw no notable differences in their treatment or in the length of time they spent outside their cells.

### 3.1 Custody

#### 3.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 1 was the largest accommodation area of Wellington CC. It could hold up to 376 inmates across seven accommodation pods (A-G). Two of the pods, B and E, were split into two sides and each side had its own yard and common area. The rest of the pods were not split and had a larger yard and common area for all the inmates within that pod.

**Table 7: Sector 1 pods**

Pod	Capacity	Population
A	58	Sentenced and employed
B1	30	Protection (SMAP), unemployed
B2	30	Protection (SMAP), unemployed
C	60	New receptions (at that time, the required period of quarantine for new receptions was seven days) <sup>131</sup>
D	60	Remand, unemployed
E1	30	Protection (SMAP), employed
E2	30	Offline for in-situ management of inmates with COVID-19
F	58	Sentenced and employed
G	20	This unit had 8 assessment cells, 6 segregation cells and 6 housing (protection) cells

The infrastructure of Sector 1 was modern, and during the period of closure, some refurbishment had been completed in this sector. The common areas and yards were clean and well-maintained, and the cells were either single occupancy or were shared between two inmates. All cells had a shower and a toilet.

Initially, each pod had a designated interview room which was located within the pod. However, when we inspected Wellington CC, those rooms were all being used for storage purposes, reducing the number of private interview rooms that were available for staff to use. As a result, staff from different areas such as OS&P, case management, and community corrections reported significant competition over the few remaining appropriate interview spaces, available outside some of the pods (such as

<sup>130</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 26 September 2023.

<sup>131</sup> It was envisaged that this would be a reception and remand pod when it was no longer required to quarantine new receptions.



E and B). To meet tight deadlines, some staff reported that they had to conduct interviews in the common areas of the pods, where privacy and safety could be compromised.

The COPP provides that the risks associated with professional interviews must be regularly reviewed and action taken to minimise or eliminate those risks.<sup>132</sup> Considering that the appropriate infrastructure already exists in Wellington CC to meet this requirement, the centre must revert to using the interview rooms for their original purpose or alternatively provide other safe and private interview rooms for the staff who need to meet with inmates.

CSNSW advise that Sector 1 interview rooms are now available for use.<sup>133</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure non-custodial staff at Wellington Correctional Centre can access safe and private rooms to interview inmates.**

**Pod common area (non-split)**



**Pod yard (non-split)**



### 3.1.2 Time out of cell

The structured day in Sector 1 was the same on weekdays and weekends. Inmates were let out of their cells at 8.15am and the lock-in procedure commenced at 3.10pm. This provided seven hours of time out of cell on normal operating days. However, Sector 1 experienced multiple lockdowns since the re-opening of the centre that further reduced the already limited time out of cell. Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, between late-July to mid-October 2022, Sector 1 experienced eight full-day and one half-day lockdowns that affected all the pods. However, on many more occasions, the sector was subject to a variation of routine which only affected some of the pods.

Pods C, D, and G experienced the highest number of lockdowns. These were the pods that held unemployed inmates and therefore their lockdown would have had the least impact on the operation of industries. In addition to the days when the full-sector lockdown was in place, G pod was locked down (either for the full day or half of the day) a further 17 times, C pod 15 times and D 10 pod times.

Other pods also experienced additional lockdowns but with much less frequency. For example, E pod was locked down six times, F pod four times, and each of A and B pods three times. We note that inmates engaged in essential work (for example, those filling buy-up orders), who resided in locked down units, were at times released from their cells so the work could continue.

This significant number of lockdowns, which were mainly attributed to staff shortages, was concerning. As mentioned, unemployed inmates (including those on remand) were disproportionately affected by these lockdowns, which in many instances had been occurring on consecutive days. The fact that remand inmates, who already had fewer (or no) opportunities to access services and activities, were also locked down more frequently was not reflective of good correctional practice.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 16.7 Interview Room Security* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 4.

<sup>133</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>134</sup> In the month of inspection, C pod that held remand inmates, experienced 11 days of lockdown: five along with other pods and six individually.



We note that the highest number of lockdowns affected G pod, where inmates were already in individual cells and remained in cell for much of the day. Both legislation and the COPP provide that all inmates, except for those confined to cells due to a penalty imposed for a correctional centre offence, must be provided with access to the open air for a minimum of two hours per day.<sup>135</sup> When G pod was locked down, inmates did not have such an opportunity. Given the restrictive nature of custody in G pod, such frequent denial of access to open air was problematic.

During the inspection, we observed the rolling let-go and lock-in procedures in Sector 1 and found them to be efficient.

### 3.1.3 Segregation and protective custody

Separation from the general inmate population may be required for a range of reasons, including where an inmate:

- is subject to segregation under section 10 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* (the CAS Act)
- needs to enter protective custody under section 11 of the CAS Act
- is being held separately from other inmates for ‘the purposes of the care, control or management of the inmate ...’ under section 78A of the CAS Act.

G pod in Sector 1 was a multipurpose unit that housed inmates who posed a risk to others or to the good order of the centre (segregated custody), those who required protection and could not associate with any other inmates (protective custody), and inmates who were placed on a risk intervention team (RIT) management plan. G pod was split into two sides with segregation cells on one side and the protection and RIT cells on the other. Each side had a small corridor along which the cells were located.

Since the re-opening of the centre in March 2022 and until the end of June of that year, 38 segregation orders were made at Wellington CC. March 2022 had the lowest number of segregation orders, with four orders and the highest number of orders were made a month later, in April 2022 (12 orders). The average time spent on segregation in that period was 16 days. In the 12 months prior to the centre closure (July 2020-June 2021), 105 segregation orders were made, ranging from zero in both July and August 2020 to 19 in December 2020. The average time spent on segregation during that period was lower, at 12 days.<sup>136</sup>

We observed the weekly segregation review meeting to understand who was being held on a segregation order and how those orders were reviewed. The reviews appeared to be done ‘on the papers’ and without any involvement of the inmates. The staff in the segregation review meeting were of the view that the case notes made by custodial officers of their daily conversations with the inmates would suffice. We were also advised that most people at Wellington CC only spent 14 days on a segregation order. It appeared to us that most of the segregation review decisions were based upon the length of time a person had spent on a segregation order as opposed to whether they were required to be in segregation.

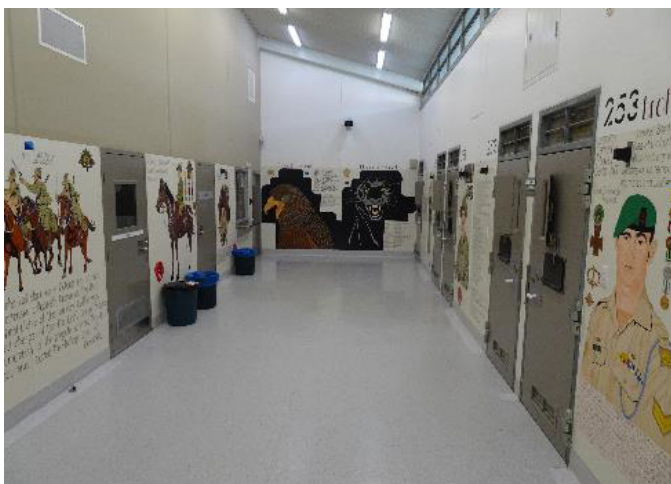
G pod was full on the day we inspected it. The cell infrastructure was appropriate and the pod was clean and well-maintained. We observed that all the common walls were covered in military murals. We heard that these murals were painted some years ago by an inmate who had spent a long period of time in G pod. It was certainly positive to see that art was used to change the often-barren atmosphere of the segregation unit. We also acknowledge the positive efforts of the centre to provide a meaningful opportunity to pass time for an inmate who was in long-term isolation. However, in our opinion, some of these murals are not suitable for an area that can house people in mental health crisis. One mural, for example, depicted large silhouettes of two soldiers pointing their guns at two doors. One of those doors was of a cell where an inmate on a RIT management plan was placed in, on that day (photo below). In general, and especially given the small size of the pod, heavily

<sup>135</sup> *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* cl 53(1); Corrective Services NSW, *Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures: 6.11 Daily Exercise and Time out of Cell* (version 1.1, 12 March 2020) 4.

<sup>136</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

decorated walls with military images do not create a therapeutic environment.

### Military murals in G Pod



The murals in this area should be removed or covered to ensure they are compatible with the function of this accommodation area. Considering the high percentage of Aboriginal men in custody in Sector 1, this can present an opportunity to include images relating to Aboriginal culture and history and to allow Aboriginal people in this unit to create such artwork.

CSNSW maintain that they have never received complaints about the murals at Wellington CC. Notwithstanding this, they have committed to undertake a review of the decision making process relating to the appropriateness of murals at correctional centres.<sup>137</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre remove or cover the murals in the multipurpose unit (G pod) and allow other inmates held in this area to engage in therapeutic artwork.**

Eight cells in G pod were used for people who were on a RIT management plan. Wellington CC also had five designated RIT cells within its main health centre. The determination regarding the placement of inmates on a RIT management plan was made by JH&FMHN in conjunction with CSNSW, and after consideration of the individual circumstances of each inmate. We understood that the five cells in the health centre were primarily used for inmates presenting with serious and recurring risk of self-harm or those with significant mental health issues, as the location of those cells would allow for easier access to inmates and closer supervision of them.

<sup>137</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

G pod accommodated multiple cohorts of inmates, with different risks and needs. This pod was often full and there was a particularly high demand for its RIT cells. Proper management of such a diverse group of inmates requires high staffing resources.

G pod was ordinarily managed by three staff. However, we were concerned to hear that in the month of the inspection, this area was subject to a variation of routine 13 times, which meant fewer staff were present. On those occasions, G pod was left with no staff three times, had only one staff member four times and on the other six occasions, had two staff. As mentioned previously, this pod also experienced high number of lockdowns in the months leading up to the inspection. Such frequent understaffing in this area is of concern, especially considering that inmates on a RIT management plan often require more intensive support and supervision.

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## 3.2 Rehabilitation

### 3.2.1 Programs

All programs in Sector 1 were delivered from a dedicated education and programs space, known as 'J block'. This was close to where Sector 1 industries were located and inmates needed to be escorted from their accommodation areas to access it.

The biggest challenge identified in delivering programs in Sector 1 was a lack of regular access to inmates. This was the result of frequent lockdowns (which occurred in Sector 1 most often), as well as frequent reassignment of custodial staff in 'J block' to other posts when the centre experienced short staffing. We heard that for 'J block' to remain open, two custodial staff needed to be stationed there; however, these posts were often one of the first to be reassigned. This led to a perception among both staff and inmates that Wellington CC did not adequately prioritise inmates' engagement in programs and placed a higher priority on the operation of industries and employment of inmates as they assisted with the cost of running the centre.

The OS&P team had a program schedule for four days a week. It was reported that in the week prior to the inspection, there was only one day of program delivery. The persistent barriers to delivering programs resulted in significant delays in inmates completing the programs they needed to complete. On several occasions, inmates were transferred out of the centre midway through program completion (which was more likely to happen when programs took longer to complete); for some that meant losing their chance of ever finishing the program. We understood that there were ongoing discussions with the Governor and a commitment was made to ensure the block was staffed at least one to two days per week to provide the OS&P team with some certainty regarding their ability to deliver programs. CSNSW believe the access to 'J block' has now been resolved.<sup>138</sup>

Staff reported that short staffing not only affected the integrity of program delivery, but it had also negatively affected inmates' engagement with the programs. It was believed that when inmates resumed participating in programs after a period of disruption, staff had to spend more time on motivating them to engage and on helping them remember the previously discussed content.

It was reported and we observed a good working relationship between the OS&P team and custodial staff. The OS&P team credited the functional managers for building a collegial relationship between custodial and non-custodial staff. They also believed that collaboration on inmates' RIT management plans helped strengthen this rapport. Following the inspection, we spoke to some of the external service providers who provided programs and services to inmates at Wellington CC and they spoke highly of the efforts of custodial officers to facilitate the delivery of their services.

Sector 1 offered SSIP for inmates with short sentences who had a higher risk of returning to custody. It was positive to see a degree of flexibility in allowing inmates to participate in the SSIP; for example, the eligibility was not rigidly based on overall length of sentence and an inmate's proximity to the end of their sentence was also taken into account. This opened the SSIP to inmates with longer sentences who were approaching their earliest possible release date and needed to do a program before consideration of their release.

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138 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.



At the time of the inspection, there was a cohort of 20 inmates in Sector 1 participating in the SSIP. However, they were facing the same disruptions as other inmates. Due to the intensive nature of the SSIP, those disruptions had more adverse impacts, both on the delivery of the program and on keeping the inmates engaged in an intensive delivery model.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre improve access to the dedicated education and programs space (J block).**

During our engagement with inmates in Sector 1, two groups raised concerns about lack of access to programs: inmates who were on remand and SMAP inmates. This issue was also raised by some of the staff we spoke to.

Staff referred to the higher number of incidents in the remand units and believed that idleness and lack of access to programs, education and employment had increased the level of tension and frustration among this cohort. Some inmates on remand believed that lack of access to remand programs disadvantaged them during sentencing. Similarly, SMAP inmates had very limited opportunities to participate in programs. This was a missed opportunity as these two groups had a lower employment rate and therefore had more free time that could have been used to participate in programs and educational courses.

CSNSW advise that they are reviewing the full suite of programs available for people in custody, including programs for people on remand and SMAP inmates and that they recognise the benefits of providing program opportunities for people on remand. We have also been informed that Wellington CC aim to deliver programs to both remand inmates and SMAP inmates when staffing allows.<sup>139</sup>

CSNSW also advise that inmates on remand receive fundamental support services and have access to some low intensity support programs for issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence. They highlighted that criminogenic rehabilitation programs are targeted to sentenced prisoners and contain an offence mapping component. Those on remand cannot be compelled to discuss details of their offence while court proceedings are ongoing.<sup>140</sup> We agree and do not suggest that remand inmates should be participating in criminogenic programs. We encourage the delivery of remand programs, such as those focused on substance abuse and domestic violence. We agree that the priority services for remand inmates should be access to legal visits, access to health and welfare services, and the provision of immediate crisis and mental health services.

We note the CSNSW's advice that they deliver Remand Domestic Violence Intervention<sup>141</sup> and Remand Addiction Intervention<sup>142</sup> for inmates on remand and highlight that while we have observed these programs in other correctional centres, they were not regularly delivered at Wellington CC at the time of our inspection. As noted in section 4.3.1, a program like Remand Addiction Intervention was identified by our team as a highly useful program for inmates like women on remand at Wellington CC.

During the inspection, we heard that SAPOs could no longer deliver NEXUS and it was being run as a self-directed program where inmates were provided with information booklets. This was not considered to be conducive to successful outcomes as the information in those booklets was reported to be dense and not easy to understand. There was a lack of certainty as to how useful this delivery method was, particularly for inmates with limited literacy or those with low intellectual functioning.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre deliver programs for remand and SMAP inmates in the maximum security area (Sector 1).**

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<sup>139</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>140</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>141</sup> According to CSNSW, the Remand Domestic Violence Intervention has been developed through collaboration between CSNSW and Legal Aid NSW and is a five-session intervention that focuses on assisting inmates to understand their legal circumstances specific to domestic violence and to provide them with knowledge and skills for healthier relationships. The intervention is based on cognitive-behavioural therapy principles and strategies contained in the EQUIPS suite of programs (information provided by CSNSW, 8 March 2024).

<sup>142</sup> According to CSNSW, the Remand Addiction Intervention is a modified version of the Corrective Services EQUIPS Addiction program and is based on cognitive-behavioural therapy principles and strategies. The Remand Addiction Intervention aims to meet the needs of inmates on remand who may benefit from a cognitive-behavioural therapy-based addiction intervention, to better understand their addiction, reduce unhelpful thinking and distress, and learn new coping skills (information provided by CSNSW, 8 March 2024).

### 3.2.2 Employment

Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, in November 2022, Sector 1 had the capacity to provide 229 jobs for inmates: 64 jobs across the ‘services industries’ (which includes internal grounds maintenance and cleaning), and 165 jobs across the CSI business units.<sup>143</sup> In that month, the centre employed 133 inmates in Sector 1, just over half of the population of that sector.

In Sector 1, inmates in each pod were assigned to one specific business unit. This meant if an inmate wanted to change their employment, they had to change their housing location. Inmates in A pod worked in the print shop, inmates in E pod packed groceries (buy-ups), and F pod inmates worked in foil tray recycling. Inmates in B pod (where most SMAP inmates were held) and C pod (where new receptions were held) were unemployed, except for a few people who worked as cleaners (‘sweepers’).

We heard that around 15 positions per day were available in the CSI business units for remand inmates in D pod who wanted to work. Remand inmates could also work as cleaners.<sup>144</sup> This was positive. However, given the high number of remand inmates held in Sector 1 and the function of Wellington CC as a remand centre, efforts should be made to ensure the number of employment opportunities available to remand inmates is close to the number of expressions of interest to work received from them. Some of the staff we spoke to hoped that an increase in the number of students in the ILC could create further vacancies in employment areas for remand inmates.

**Table 8: Employment profile- Sector 1<sup>145</sup>**

Industry	Capacity	Description	Number of people employed in November 2022 <sup>146</sup>
Canteen-buy-up	30	Inmates filled buy-up orders for six correctional centres: Wellington, Macquarie, Lithgow, Mannus, Bathurst and Kirkconnell.	29
Bakery	45	Not operational	0
Engineering (Foil tray)	30	Inmates cleaned and packaged the foil trays used for inmate meals, so they could be recycled.	39
Print shop	60	Inmates packed condoms for the NSW correctional centres. The print shop also printed labels and did some digital printing.	35
Internal grounds maintenance	15	Inmates undertook maintenance tasks such as lawn mowing and gardening.	10
ILC	20	Payment for inmates attending the ILC	2
SSIP	N/A	Payment for inmates attending SSIP	8
Unit cleaners	23	Inmates cleaned the units and distributed meals.	10

<sup>143</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 31 August 2023.

<sup>144</sup> The requirement for inmates to work only applies to those who have been convicted of a criminal offence, not those who are on remand. However, the ICS standards provide that work should be made available to inmates on remand if they express a desire to work. This is in line with the Corrective Services NSW policy that provides that remand inmates ‘while not obliged to work are to be encouraged to participate in work and other programs for their own self-development’.

<sup>145</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 31 August 2023 and 7 September 2023. Data for November relates to 23 November 2022, not the week of inspection. Further, note that due to staff shortages and variations to routine, on some days the industries did not operate with all the inmates assigned to them.

<sup>146</sup> Number of people employed in each industry has been calculated using Inmate Assignment Location Report. There may be some discrepancy in the total number of inmates employed in each industry. This usually happens when inmates work and attend SSIP. As payments for participation in SSIP are generally lower than some of the industry wages and to not disadvantage inmate workers who attend the SSIP, inmate workers are reported against their workplaces for the entire day (even when they attend the SSIP for half a day). This is in line with the CSI policy on inmate wages.

As part of its business units, Sector 1 had a bakery that was closed at the time of the inspection. We understood that the bakery did not re-open when the centre re-opened in March 2022 as remediation works continued. The delays were attributed to issues with external contractors. It was hoped that the bakery would re-open in early 2023 with upgraded security, a new design to allow more efficient workflow, and a reduced inmate profile of 45 (down from 60).

While some of the business units provided meaningful work and employable skills to inmates, this was not the case across all employment areas. The most notable example was the print shop, which was the biggest business unit with a capacity to employ up to 60 inmates.

The print shop supplied and packed condoms for correctional centres throughout NSW. It also printed labels and supplied journals for record keeping. The unit did laser printing onto aluminium signs and had some external contracts. However, with the digital transition and a lag in operation following the re-opening of Wellington CC, this business unit had experienced a downturn in workload. For example, the workshop previously produced hardcopy files for various branches of CSNSW; however, those copies were no longer needed as the majority of files were online. Some of the machines in the workshop were modern and could be found in private printing businesses; some others were old and effectively obsolete.

When we visited the workshop, we observed that most inmate workers were not engaged in work. We saw three inmates performing different aspects of the condom packing process. We believed this job could be done by one person and provided no skills development. Two people were operating printing machines and the rest of the inmates were preparing food, talking, playing cards, and walking up and down the workshop floor for exercise. Some of the inmates who spoke to us were disappointed that they were not learning any skills and were just passing time in the workshop. Positively, the inmate clerk learnt computer literacy in his role.

### 3.2.3 Education

Wellington CC is one of only four correctional centres in NSW that has an ILC. It was, therefore, disappointing to see such a rare resource being completely underutilised. The number of students enrolled at the ILC at the time of our inspection was the same as the number of teachers: there were three of each. This was despite the fact that the ILC had capacity for 20 students. Data obtained from CSNSW shows that throughout 2022, the number of students enrolled at the ILC remained around 2 to 3 with only one student enrolled in August 2022.<sup>147</sup> The centre attributed this underutilisation to challenges in receiving inmates who were both eligible to participate in the ILC and willing to be transferred to Wellington CC.

We note that difficulties experienced by correctional centres in identifying and retaining students was an issue when we reviewed inmates' participation in the ILCs across NSW in 2018. However, this issue seems to have only worsened in Wellington CC, as in 2018 this centre had the highest number of students among the four correctional centres with ILCs.<sup>148</sup>

In Wellington CC, the ILC was located in 'J block' in Sector 1, and therefore was only accessible to male inmates held in this sector. Further, even within that sector, only sentenced inmates were eligible to attend the ILC. In addition to being sentenced, eligible inmates needed to have a sentence of at least 18 months, a core skills assessment score below 3.3, and identified criminogenic need.

At the time of the inspection, the inmate students were scheduled to attend classes four days a week between 8.30am to 2pm, with a shorter day on Fridays. However, short staffing and consequent challenges with inmate access to 'J block', negatively affected the operation of the ILC. In the week of the inspection, the ILC was only fully operational on Wednesday. It was closed on Monday and Tuesday and open for half a day on Thursday.

Contrary to CSNSW advice that people on remand became eligible to participate in ILC after Wellington CC re-opened,<sup>149</sup> this group was not eligible to do so when we inspected the centre more

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<sup>147</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 21 December 2023.

<sup>148</sup> Inspector of Custodial Services, *Programs, Employment and Education Inspection* (Report, 2020) 77.

<sup>149</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.



than seven months after its re-opening. In our discussions with centre management, the Governor acknowledged the underutilisation of the ILC as an issue and reported that they were looking at ways to improve participation. This included changing the eligibility criteria so remand inmates could participate and allocating funds to enhance the physical environment of 'J block', including by creating gardens, installing a toilet and a BBQ area, updating the rooms, and replacing the fence in the area. According to the advice received from CSNSW, this infrastructure work is scheduled for completion in March 2024. We understand that installation of cameras and entry/egress points in this area are also part of this project.<sup>150</sup>

While opening the ILC to suitable remand inmates can increase the participation rate, we note that the ILC is usually a 6-month program that requires a stable cohort of students. The nature of education delivery in the ILCs does not allow for a rolling intake of students throughout a course. If a student leaves the ILC, that place cannot be filled until the next intake of new students. This is more likely to occur with remand inmates as they are frequently transferred across the state. Therefore, while this solution may increase the number of students in the short-term, it may not be a sustainable solution for efficient use of this education area.

We understood that the Intervention Pathways in case plans prioritised programs over education (including ILC). This was reported to further limit the number of inmates attending the ILC.

CSNSW policy and instructions provide that if identified Intervention Pathways for an inmate at initial classification include intensive programs (such as SSIP or HIPU) or if they include EQUIPS programs, the inmate must be referred directly at that time and placed in an appropriate correctional centre that offers those programs. However, when the identified Intervention Pathway at initial classification includes education (such as ILC), normal classification processes apply, and the classification and placement team does not need to recommend and approve an inmate's placement to a participating centre. These policy and instructions further state that when an inmate is identified as being required in a centre to participate in ILC, corporate education will request a change of placement, in a way similar to the arrangements for inmates who need to participate in intensive therapeutic programs.<sup>151</sup>

While these priorities are established to ensure inmates have enough time to participate in criminogenic programs, de-prioritisation of educational pathways can continue to create barriers to utilising the full capacity of the infrastructure and resources that are available in very few centres.

CSNSW advise that between 2021 to 2023, they undertook a project to review the ILC resources and material across the state and introduce intervention pathways. CSNSW support increasing the number of Aboriginal inmates in the ILCs (as we recommended below), 'provided that they have been assessed as eligible and suitable for the program'.<sup>152</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increase participation and access to the Intensive Learning Centre of Wellington Correctional Centre, paying particular attention to its accessibility to Aboriginal inmates.**

Apart from the ILC, most other educational opportunities offered to inmates in Sector 1 were vocational education related to inmate employment. One of the few exceptions was the digital literacy course. This was being delivered as a 10-week program by BSI Learning. At the time of the inspection, seven people were enrolled in that course; however, four were unable to participate as they were residing in F pod that was managing a small COVID-19 outbreak.

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<sup>150</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>151</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Identifying Interventions for Classification & Placement* (2022) 7-9.

<sup>152</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

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## 3.3 Care and wellbeing

### 3.3.1 Access to purposeful activity

Chronic staff shortages meant that inmates in Sector 1 very rarely had access to the oval as the activities post was routinely reassigned or not filled.

We inspected the oval and identified it as a good recreational space, with undercover areas for exercise and seating and a large green space for running, walking or team sports. The equipment room had a reasonable range of equipment. However, most of the equipment in the outdoor gym was old, broken and needed to be replaced. Having broken equipment is a potential safety hazard and we could not observe any instructions on the proper use of the equipment.

We understand the gym equipment has now been serviced.<sup>153</sup>

Since the re-opening of Wellington CC in March 2022, the main library, located in Sector 1, had not been operational. It was reported that a library liaison officer had just been appointed and when they commenced, an inmate librarian would also be employed. We also note that the library was in 'J block' which, as mentioned, remained largely inaccessible to inmates.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure the library in the maximum security area of Wellington Correctional Centre is operational and accessible.**

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre improve access to the oval in the maximum security area and upgrade the equipment in the outdoor gym.**

'J block' - outside space



Sheltered gym in Sector 1



Broken gym equipment in Sector 1



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153 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

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## 4 Sector 2 (women)

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### 4.1 Profile of female inmates at Wellington CC

On the first day of the inspection, there were 31 women in Wellington CC's Sector 2. This included 12 women on remand (38.7% of the population), 17 sentenced women (54.8% of the population) and two women who were appealing their sentences. All had a minimum security classification.

In the year prior to June 2021 (when Wellington CC closed to repair damage caused by a mouse plague), the average monthly population of women held in Sector 2 ranged between 40 to 65. After the re-opening of the centre in March 2022, the average monthly population of female inmates remained consistent at around 15 in the months of April, May and June 2022 and then gradually increased.<sup>154</sup>

As mentioned before, the majority of women in custody at Wellington CC were Aboriginal. On the first day of the inspection, 80% of the women (25 out of 31) were Aboriginal. Ten of those Aboriginal women were on remand.<sup>155</sup>

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### 4.2 Custody

#### 4.2.1 Physical environment

Sector 2 of Wellington CC could hold up to 101 women. This included 13 places in the external 'honour house' and 12 places in the multipurpose unit (MPU).

The previous inspection of Wellington CC in 2017 was primarily focused on the treatment and conditions of women on remand. During that inspection, the team was impressed with the grounds and accommodation units for female inmates. Our observations in this inspection were similar. The accommodation units were in very good condition and some of the maintenance issues previously identified had been addressed during the refurbishment. The grounds provided women with appropriate access to space, sun, and fresh air. The outdoor gym, despite being small, provided an opportunity for exercise. There was also a well-kept vegetable garden adjacent to the gym.

**View of the outdoor gym and an accommodation unit      Common room in an accommodation wing unit**



The style of accommodation in Sector 2 was 'cottage' style. There were three accommodation units for women, each containing two wings. Each wing had five cells, a kitchen, and a common room. Each unit could accommodate up to 26 women (13 per wing), apart from one unit that could hold up to 24 women. During the inspection, that unit was being used as a COVID-19 quarantine unit, where women

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<sup>154</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 20 September 2022.

<sup>155</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 9 February 2023.



newly received into custody would spend seven days. In addition, the MPU had two segregation, four assessment and two housing cells.

We noted that women on remand and sentenced women were not placed in separate units and resided together.

The women's 'honour house' was located outside the secure perimeter. At the time of our inspection, the unit had recently re-opened and held only two women. Like other female accommodation units, the 'honour house' was in very good condition. It looked clean and freshly renovated. The outlook from the rear of the building was over a bush setting.

The 'honour house' presented great potential to prepare women for release and life in the community. Strategies should be put in place to ensure this area is better utilised and reaches its full potential.

### Women's 'honour house'



#### 4.2.2 Time out of cell<sup>156</sup>

On normal operating days, women started their day between 6.30am to 7am on weekdays and were locked in their units (and not their cells) at 5pm. On weekends, women started their day between 8am to 8.30am and were locked in by 3pm.

While it was positive to see women were afforded some flexibility on weekend mornings when there were no structured activities or programs, the early lock-in time of 3pm was problematic. It only allowed women to be out of their units for a maximum of seven hours, on two days of the week. This was almost two and half hours less than the daily average for minimum security custodial settings in NSW, which is already the lowest daily average in Australia.<sup>157</sup>

Half-day or full-day lockdown of Sector 2 happened frequently. Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, between late-July to mid-October 2022, this sector experienced seven full-day and three half-day lockdowns. Additionally, a restricted structured day of 8am to 4pm was implemented on three weekdays in that period. In the month of the inspection, the sector experienced six full-day lockdowns and operated with a restricted structure on eight other days. This meant the sector was subject to a variation of routine for almost half of November 2022.

#### 4.2.3 Classification and placement

Law, policy, and international best practice all highlight the importance of considering the location of inmates' families in placement determination. The *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (the Bangkok Rules) state that 'women

<sup>156</sup> In line with the definition adopted by the Productivity Commission in its reporting on government services, time out of cell is defined as the average number of hours in a 24-hour period that inmates are not confined to their cells or units. Women in Wellington CC were not confined to their cells after lock in, but they were confined to their units.

<sup>157</sup> Productivity Commission, Australian Government, *Report on Government Services 2024* (Report, January 2024) Table 8A.13.

prisoners shall be allocated, to the extent possible, to prisons close to their home or place of social rehabilitation, taking account of their caretaking responsibilities, as well as the individual woman's preference and the availability of appropriate programmes and services'.<sup>158</sup>

Aboriginal people should be able to serve out their sentences within their own Country and their transport off Country should only be undertaken when absolutely necessary.<sup>159</sup> An analysis of the last known postcodes of female inmates at Wellington CC showed that at the time of the inspection, most women were either from Wellington CC's catchment area (NSW Central West) or that Wellington CC was the closest correctional centre to them that could hold women.

While this was positive, we became aware that management staff in Sector 2 were advocating for the transfer of women in metropolitan correctional centres to Wellington CC to increase the centre's female inmate population and consequently reduce the cost per prisoner per day.

We were also concerned that five years on from our last inspection of Wellington CC, when we analysed the Women's Remand Bed Placement (WRBP) policy in detail<sup>160</sup> and recommended its review,<sup>161</sup> it remained in place. This policy could be used to override the legislation and transfer women on remand to any centre in NSW with vacant remand beds, without consideration of the location of their families. This can result in placement decisions informed more by the interests of correctional centres rather than by the best interests of women in custody and their children.

We observed the initial classification of two female inmates on remand, who were both in custody for the first time. It was positive to see that unlike some other centres where classification determination was conducted 'on the papers', both inmates met with the staff individually and face to face. We had the chance to review the inmates' paperwork prior to the meeting and found the classification assigned to them in the meeting to be appropriate. However, we observed a lack of understanding by the staff of the classification system and were concerned that incorrect information was provided to the inmates, which created unnecessary anxiety. This issue was discussed with centre management at the conclusion of the inspection.

Even though both women were in custody for the first time on relatively minor charges, they were both spoken to by a senior custodial manager on the basis that they would be sentenced to a period of imprisonment, disregarding the possibility that they might be released on bail, found not guilty, or sentenced to a non-custodial term.

When we raised our concerns with the centre management, we were told that the more experienced staff in the classification and placement team were all absent during our inspection.

Further, the women were informed that they were WRBP and that meant they could be transferred anywhere in the state. This was even though both women were from the local area and had family and (in the case of one Aboriginal woman) children. Considering that Sector 2 of Wellington CC routinely has a high number of beds available, it is unclear why women from the catchment area are being designated as WRBP and moved away from their family and off Country.

CSNSW advise that they will cease the use of remand bed placement.<sup>162</sup> This is a welcome development as this has been a long-standing recommendation of our office.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure women who come into custody from the Wellington catchment area are not designated as Women's Remand Bed Placement, and that any change of placement involves a review that considers their Aboriginality, connection to Country, and ability to maintain contact with their children and family.**

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158 *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders*, GA Res 65/229, UN Doc A/RES/65/229 (16 March 2011, adopted on 21 December 2010) Rule 4.

159 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Draft Inspection Standards for Aboriginal People in Custody in New South Wales*, Standards 1.1 and 1.3.

160 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 41-49.

161 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 18.

162 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

## 4.2.4 Staffing

Staffing is a determining factor for the conditions of any custodial setting. In an area that primarily holds Aboriginal women, gender responsiveness and cultural sensitivity should be the key staffing considerations.

The UNODC identifies the following as some of the requisite elements of a gender-sensitive management style:

- the recognition of the different needs of women;
- a capacity and willingness by prison staff to communicate openly with prisoners and a less authoritarian manner;
- skills such as active listening, patience in explaining rules and expectations;
- awareness of emotional dynamics, and the capacity to respond firmly, fairly and consistently.<sup>163</sup>

Further, the UNODC sees the emphasis on dynamic security as an essential component of a gender-sensitive management style, especially as high security measures and over-reliance on disciplinary measures have detrimental impacts on the mental wellbeing of female inmates.<sup>164</sup>

Wellington CC reported that 20 custodial staff had completed training in working with women; this included six senior custodial officers and 13 custodial officers. It was reported that seven of these staff were actively rostered to work in Sector 2 where four staff worked on weekdays and three on weekends. The centre reported that often two female custodial staff were assigned to this area. Given the number of staff working in this accommodation area on a normal operating day, this indicates that the majority or all staff rostered to work with women in custody at Wellington CC, had completed training in working with female inmates.<sup>165</sup>

The functional manager in charge of Sector 2 was a male staff member. We note that the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (the Mandela Rules) provide that in prisons that hold both male and female inmates, 'the part of the prison set aside for women shall be under the authority of a responsible woman staff member'.<sup>166</sup>

CSNSW advise that Wellington CC currently has two substantive female functional managers.<sup>167</sup> While it is positive to hear that Wellington CC provides opportunities for leadership of female staff, we highlight that in line with the Mandela Rules, it is important that correctional centres assign female staff members to accommodation areas set aside for female inmates. Therefore, Wellington CC should appoint a female functional manager to Sector 2.

During the inspection, we observed a gap in staff awareness of cultural sensitivity. While we observed several examples of staff interacting with inmates professionally and with respect, we were concerned to hear about comments that reflected a lack of cultural competency. We heard that a unit where unemployed inmates were placed, was frequently referred to as 'the Mission' as it accommodated mostly Aboriginal women and a unit accommodating non-Aboriginal women, described as 'good workers', was referred to as 'Parliament House'. These references were indicative of the discriminatory attitudes of some staff members towards Aboriginal women at the centre. This was raised with the centre management at the time of the inspection.

CSNSW advise that they are committed to building a respectful, purposeful, and collaborative culture and expect staff to always act with professionalism. CSNSW also maintain that any instances identified where staff use inappropriate language, including to describe an inmate unit, will be addressed.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>163</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment* (Criminal Justice Handbook Series, 2nd ed, 2014) 26.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment* (Criminal Justice Handbook Series, 2nd ed, 2014) 37.

<sup>165</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 27 January 2023.

<sup>166</sup> *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 81.

<sup>167</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>168</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.



As previously mentioned, in August 2023 around 3.6% of correctional officers and 7.4% of senior correctional officers in Wellington CC were Aboriginal.<sup>169</sup> It was, however, unclear how many of those officers were assigned to Sector 2. We believe, given the high percentage of Aboriginal women in Sector 2, there needs to be at least one Aboriginal custodial officer in this sector on any day. It is also necessary for staff to complete Aboriginal cultural awareness and safety training.

CSNSW also advise that all their staff members are required to undergo Aboriginal cultural awareness training upon the commencement of their employment. Additionally, CSNSW offer online courses and refresher courses to further enhance skills and knowledge. The CSNSW Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Directorate provides local Aboriginal community engagement training to CSNSW staff working in the community. CSNSW aim to offer this training to the staff employed at correctional centres, in future.<sup>170</sup> This is a good initiative. All staff, not merely new staff, should undertake mandatory Aboriginal cultural awareness training. This is particularly important in a centre with a high number of Aboriginal people in custody.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW appoint a female functional manager to the women's area (Sector 2) of Wellington Correctional Centre and ensure custodial staff assigned to the women's area reflect the demography of this sector.**

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure all staff at Wellington Correctional Centre complete the Aboriginal cultural awareness and safety training.**

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## 4.3 Rehabilitation

Women in custody at Wellington CC had very limited opportunities to participate in programs, educational courses or to work.

### 4.3.1 Programs

At the time of the inspection, no criminogenic or offence-based programs were being offered to women at Wellington CC.

The only program available to a small number of female inmates was the Gundanha<sup>171</sup> program. This program was devised after our 2017 inspection found a lack of employment for women at Wellington CC.<sup>172</sup> Developed by CSNSW for Wellington CC with funding from the Commonwealth, the Gundanha program is 16 weeks long and aims to provide Aboriginal women in custody with employment experience in the construction industry as well as relevant education and training. It is modelled on the Gundi program which is available to Aboriginal male prisoners at St Heliers CC.

In May 2018, the Commonwealth Government approved the award of \$1,815,000 in grant funding<sup>173</sup> to CSNSW to deliver the Gundanha program as a vocational education and employment pathway program for Aboriginal female inmates at Wellington CC. It was envisaged that the funding would be used for the expansion of a CSI site at Wellington CC, in order to create a facility for the construction of modularised pre-fabricated housing for Aboriginal and other communities. The site was to be built outside the secure perimeter of the centre.<sup>174</sup>

The project was expected to be delivered by 30 June 2021; however, the timeframe was later updated to 30 October 2022.<sup>175</sup> It was agreed that the project would operate with in-kind contributions from CSNSW, including building work readiness capabilities, delivering vocational training, and cultural

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169 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, August 2023. Data relating to November 2022 was not provided by Wellington CC to give a point in time snapshot of staff Indigenous status.

170 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

171 Gundanha is a Wiradjuri word meaning women's shelter.

172 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 19.

173 Australian Government, 'Grant Award View - GA18091' *GrantConnect* (Web Page, undated) <<https://www.grants.gov.au/Ga/Show/e961cc74-b29a-1989-4a1b-a4ae31bb09f6>>. Please note that while this page does not name the Gundanha program, we have confirmed that it refers to this program by checking the Internal Reference ID.

174 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023.

175 Australian Government, 'Grant Award View - GA18091' *GrantConnect* (Web Page, undated) <<https://www.grants.gov.au/Ga/Show/e961cc74-b29a-1989-4a1b-a4ae31bb09f6>>.

strengthening activities. It was also agreed that any ongoing funding related to the program after the end of the grant term would be the responsibility of CSNSW.<sup>176</sup>

The building of the dedicated space did not commence until late 2019 and was completed at the end of 2020. The delays in the completion were attributed to factors such as inclement weather. CSNSW's reporting shows that of the \$1,815,000 granted to this program, \$1,800,000 was spent on the construction of the new building and the purchase and installation of major equipment. The remaining \$15,000 was allocated to operational expenditure, consultants, and contractors. This grant was reported as fully spent by the end of October 2022.<sup>177</sup>

In the reporting period of January to June 2020, it was reported that 36 Aboriginal participants were identified and assessed eligible for this program. In the next reporting period, July to December of that year, 33 Aboriginal participants were identified and assessed as eligible for this program.<sup>178</sup> It was reported that the participants accessed programs on literacy and numeracy, cultural strengthening, as well as gaining skills on how to design and construct items such as tool belts and chairs. All these programs were delivered in an alternative location as the dedicated space was still under construction at that time.<sup>179</sup> No data is available that shows the number of participants who completed the program but based on our conversations with staff during the inspection, it is unlikely that any of them did.

In mid-2021, we visited Wellington CC to see the Gundanha program. At that time, we saw a few women who were engaged in the program, which had finally commenced running from the new building. However, immediately after our visit, the centre closed due to the extensive damage caused by a mouse plague, so effectively the Gundanha program never properly commenced. After the re-opening of the centre, work started to make this program operational. This eventuated in September/October 2022, shortly before our inspection.

At this time, the Gundanha program was being delivered from the Vocational Training Unit, a space inside an existing shed in Sector 2 and within the secure perimeter. Despite most of the Commonwealth funding having been spent on the construction of a building for the Gundanha program participants, at the time of the inspection, that building had become a workplace for male minimum security inmates who took over the work of constructing modularised housing.

CSNSW have advised this is only a temporary measure and have provided assurances that they are committed to the Gundanha program taking place in its original location. CSNSW have committed to ensuring that the building that was built with Commonwealth funding will be used again for the women's Gundanha program from June 2024.<sup>180</sup> We will monitor the progress of this issue.

In November 2022, when we inspected Wellington CC, a TAFE teacher and an overseer were training the Gundanha program participants in construction skills two days a week, and SAPOs delivered the Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program to participants on two other days of the week. On Fridays, the women participated in a cultural program provided by an Aboriginal woman from an external organisation. The SAPOs used the HIPU in Sector 2 for the delivery of Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program. This was the only program being delivered in the HIPU, which was commonly referred to as the 'Gundanha HIPU'.

We were told that the capacity of the program was 10 participants, and it was intended to run three times a year. This is at odds with the reported key objective of the program which was to train up to 80 Aboriginal women each year.<sup>181</sup> This shortfall was attributed to lower funding being available for the Gundanha program.

We observed that Wellington CC was struggling to identify the 10 participants required for each round of the program, even though most of the inmates in Sector 2 were Aboriginal women. The first

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<sup>176</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023.

<sup>177</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023.

<sup>178</sup> We note that while the report states 33 participants were identified, it later reports the number of Aboriginal women employed under this activity as only 13 women.

<sup>179</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023.

<sup>180</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

<sup>181</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 17 March 2023.

round of the program that commenced in September/October 2022 started with eight participants but had only four participants by the time of our inspection: one woman was removed from the program due to her behaviour, two women were released from custody, and one woman was transferred to another correctional centre.

Eligible candidates for the Gundanha program are Aboriginal women who are serving a sentence and have five to 24 months left of their sentence. However, as mentioned, 40% of the Aboriginal women held at Wellington CC at the time of our inspection were on remand and therefore ineligible. Many sentenced women also serve short sentences which again make them ineligible.

We understood that CSNSW tried to identify women who met the eligibility criteria from across the state. However, this resulted in some women being moved away from their family support to a centre that was difficult to visit (especially for families with children) merely to fill a program that was not designed with a practical understanding of the cohort of women in custody at Wellington CC.

It is also not clear why it was proposed to construct the building for the Gundanha program outside of Sector 2 and the secure perimeter of the centre. It was foreseeable that doing so would significantly limit the number of eligible participants as prisoners would need a section 6(2) order<sup>182</sup> to be able to work outside the secure perimeter. Not every woman in custody is eligible and approved for a section 6(2) order and this limits the number of participants. Further, of 800 women in custody in NSW, around 450 are sentenced, and the majority serve short sentences. Therefore, without any changes to the program's eligibility criteria, identifying suitable and eligible participants will continue to be difficult.

We believe that while the premise of the Gundanha program is sound, it had not achieved any of its goals. As mentioned, the centre was struggling to identify eligible participants. At the time of our inspection, no participants had completed the program, and despite spending \$1.8 million of Commonwealth funding on the construction of a building to house the Gundanha program, that building was being used at that time to provide employment for male minimum security inmates.

The centre acknowledged some of these issues and was considering ways to make the program more accessible. They included turning the Gundanha program into a rolling program or removing the criminogenic parts of the program and opening it to both sentenced and unsentenced Aboriginal women. This measure will be problematic when the program returns to its original location as unsentenced women are not able to participate in a program that is run from a location outside of the secure perimeter.

On the last day of inspection, our team observed the participants undertaking the cultural component of the Gundanha program. The participants were enjoying this component and believed it would suit all Aboriginal women. We understood there was capacity on the part of the external facilitator to extend this component to all Aboriginal women, in particular the weaving and painting activities. As this component was not an offence-based program, it could be offered to all Aboriginal women (sentenced and unsentenced) irrespective of their eligibility for the Gundanha program.

CSNSW advise that their contracts with external service providers are subject to NSW Government procurement policy frameworks. They report that the Aboriginal Strategy Directorate is continuing to work with Wellington CC to increase the availability of cultural programs for women with two programs currently being assessed.<sup>183</sup>

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182 Section 6 of the CAS Act permits the Governor of a correctional centre to direct a convicted inmate to carry out community service work, or any work for CSNSW or a public or local authority: within the inmate's correctional centre, within the inmate's correctional complex but outside the correctional centre, or outside the inmate's correctional complex. An order that operates outside a correctional centre or the grounds of a correctional complex is known as a section 6(2) order.

183 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Building built for Gundanha program**



**Building built for Gundanha program- Inside**



**Vocational Training Unit in Sector 2  
(current location of Gundanha program)**



**Vocational Training Unit- Inside**



**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure the Gundanha program at Wellington Correctional Centre is operating in accordance with the Commonwealth grant provisions.**

Despite having a large remand cohort in Sector 2, Wellington CC offered no programs for them. On the last day of our inspection, the Remand Addiction Intervention program was run by two SAPOs. This program was not normally scheduled to run in Sector 2 and was provided on that day as the SAPOs who were normally based in Sector 1, were unable to deliver the programs in that area due to staff shortages. This program was well-attended, and the participants were fully engaged. The women reported that this was the first week they had attended such a program. Both participants and facilitators believed this was the type of program that needed to be run on a regular basis at Sector 2 of Wellington CC.

The HIPU in Sector 2 was underutilised to the point that the staff had been relocated to the HIPU in Sector 3. This space cannot fulfill its potential if it operates only as the 'Gundanha HIPU'.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure the High Intensity Programs Unit at the women's area of Wellington Correctional Centre is utilised to its full potential and deliver a range of programs for remand and sentenced women. This includes programs provided by external service providers.**

#### 4.3.2 Employment

Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, in November 2022, Sector 2 had an employment profile of 71 jobs for women in custody. None of those jobs were in CSI business units and all were related to the service industries. They included roles like internal and external grounds



maintenance, clerks, and cleaners. Inmates attending the HIPU were also classified as employed and paid.<sup>184</sup>

At the time of the inspection, very few women were employed. It was disappointing to see that five years on from our 2017 inspection when we highlighted the lack of employment for women in custody and despite an injection of \$1.8 million dollars by the Commonwealth Government, such little progress had been made.

The main employment available to women in custody in Wellington CC, was external grounds maintenance. However, women needed a section 6(2) order to be able to work outside the secure perimeter. In November 2022, only nine sentenced women had such orders and three of them were working in external grounds maintenance. Women remanded in custody are not eligible for a section 6(2) order. This meant that women on remand (who at the time of the inspection comprised almost 40% of the population), could not even be considered for the main employment opportunity that Sector 2 had to offer.

Nine other women were working on internal grounds maintenance or as cleaners ('sweepers'). As those roles were not considered 'essential work', women did not go to work when Sector 2 experienced lockdowns.

Wellington CC management were considering ways to increase meaningful employment opportunities for female inmates. Re-commencing community projects was one proposal that was being considered. However, we note that participation in community projects still requires a section 6(2) order that is only available to a small group of inmates.

Another proposal was to expand the Greyhound as Pets program available in Dillwynia CC to Wellington CC. We understand that in December 2023, this program was launched at Wellington CC.<sup>185</sup>

### 4.3.3 Education

The educational opportunities available to female inmates at Wellington CC were scarce. Most of the educational courses were linked to employment in industries. As none of the women were employed at CSI business units, those educational opportunities were not available to them. The Gundanha program should have addressed this issue but for the reasons already discussed it did not.

The below observation from the UNODC is particularly relevant here and highlights why there is a need for Wellington CC to reconsider how it approaches the rehabilitation of women in custody:

Female prisoners, typically from marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of society, are likely to have suffered particularly from discrimination prior to imprisonment. They are less likely to have been employed than men at the time of imprisonment. In a majority of cases, they commit an offence due to poverty. Many are unable to end violent relationships due to the lack of economic freedom. By providing women with adequate and equal opportunities for vocational training in prisons, and thereby assisting them to gain employment after release, prison authorities can make an immense contribution to the social reintegration of women prisoners.<sup>186</sup>

Further, as the ILC was in Sector 1, it was not available to women in custody in Sector 2. The centre reported that it was facing challenges in recruiting BSI trainers to deliver the LLN course. It was reported that one woman was completing a traineeship and one woman was undertaking distance education.

CSNSW advise that women in Sector 2 now have opportunities to complete part qualifications (short courses) in Animal Care, Forklift, and Cultural Arts (Wuurra program). A review is reported to be underway to identify other partial and full qualifications that are suitable for Wellington CC.<sup>187</sup>

184 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 31 August 2023.

185 Greyhounds as Pets NSW, 'Wellington Joins GAP Prison Program', *Greyhound as Pets* (Web Page, 4 December 2023) <<https://www.gapnsw.com.au/news/2023-12-04/wellington-joins-gap-prison-program>>.

186 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment* (Criminal Justice Handbook Series, 2nd ed, 2014) 50.

187 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure Wellington Correctional Centre provide appropriate opportunities for women in custody to access programs, education, cultural activities, and work.**

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## 4.4 Care and wellbeing

### 4.4.1 Wellbeing programs

‘Wellbeing programs’ are designed to develop pro-social skills and address responsivity factors that can impede an inmate’s capacity to engage with criminogenic programs.<sup>188</sup> Research into these programs has highlighted their benefits, particularly for female inmates, as they can assist this group to work with their personal issues in a way that can be instrumental in helping them avoid re-offending.<sup>189</sup> These programs include Aboriginal Cultural Strengthening program, Dads and Family (Aboriginal Babiin-Miyagang) program, MAAD, and Out of the Dark.

However, the delivery of wellbeing programs often faces challenges as they are assigned the lowest priority in the list of SAPOs’ responsibilities.<sup>190</sup> We have observed that these programs often have a higher chance of being delivered when there is additional support, often in the form of a qualified external agency who takes on the responsibility of running these programs.

In Wellington CC, Barnardos continued to play an invaluable role in running some of the CSNSW’s approved ‘wellbeing’ and other complementary programs for female inmates.

In 2022 and after the re-opening of the centre, Barnardos delivered one program entitled ‘Book of Me’. It was a 6-8 week program that focused on building self-esteem, identity, and family connections. They also delivered one Out of the Dark wellbeing program and four art and craft activity days. It was reported that the number of participants in these programs was low as the number of female inmates remained low in that period.

In 2023, Barnardos planned to deliver parenting-focused programs like Keeping Children Safe and Empowering Parents, as well as further rounds of programs like Book of Me and Out of the Dark. Given the evident value that Barnardos were adding to the welfare of female inmates in Wellington CC, the centre’s continued partnership with this service provider is commended.

In Wellington CC, SAPOs had the responsibility for delivering the MAAD program. This program was only offered once in 2022 and based on the data from CSNSW, it was not offered in the first half of 2023.<sup>191</sup>

### 4.4.2 Access to purposeful activity

Women in Sector 2 had access to the library and could utilise the outdoor gym. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no formal activities scheduled.

The combination of limited rehabilitation services (work, programs, and education) and lack of scheduled activities resulted in a sense of frustration and boredom. This was exacerbated by frequent lockdowns when women were locked in their units with nothing to occupy their time.

Lack of access to TVs (given the centre’s lack of TV rental scheme) and tablets until later in the afternoon made the situation more difficult. Staff acknowledged that they observed an increase in incidents and challenging behaviour which could be partly attributed to these issues.

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<sup>188</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Compendium of Offender Behaviour Change Programs* (2021) 119.

<sup>189</sup> For further information, see: Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 74-75.

<sup>190</sup> Corrective Services NSW, *Policy for Prioritising Offender Services and Programs in Custody* (2019) 7-8.

<sup>191</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 9 October 2023. Please note data provided only covered the periods of 1 January 2022 -31 December 2022, and 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023. Therefore, at the time of writing, we did not have the data for second half of 2023.



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## 5 Sector 3 (minimum security)

On the first day of the inspection, 14 November 2022, Sector 3 of Wellington CC held 94 male inmates who were all sentenced and had security classifications of C1 or C2.

On that day, 37% of the sector's population (35 out of 94 inmates) were Aboriginal, a lower percentage than other areas of the centre.

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### 5.1 Custody

#### 5.1.1 Physical environment

Sector 3 of Wellington CC could hold up to 139 male inmates. This included 14 places in the external 'honour house'.

The style of the accommodation was similar to Sector 2. There were five separate accommodation units that could hold between 21 to 27 people. Inmates in each unit shared a kitchen, a common room, and had access to one accessible bathroom. Each unit had two wings. While cells in each wing had their own toilet, they shared a bathroom with two showers.

The units were clean and in good condition. It was positive to see that none of the cells held more than two inmates, even though some larger cells with bunk beds had the capacity to hold up to four inmates. We understood there was no plan to place more than two people in each cell in the near future. However, the structure had been left in place in case the sector needed to accommodate more inmates in the future.

There were some maintenance issues that needed to be addressed. There were no blinds or curtains in the common rooms and inmates were using bed sheets to cover the windows. Limited cleaning supplies were available to inmates.

The grounds were well maintained and provided people in custody with a large green space, as well as access to sun and fresh air. It was pleasing to see this space was being utilised by inmates as we observed them playing a game of touch football on one of the days we were on site. Several vegetable gardens had also been installed in the space, allowing the inmates to grow fresh produce.

We saw gym equipment in the accommodation grounds; however, most of the equipment was old and in poor condition, with some of the weight machines broken and unusable.

**Sector 3 accommodation ground**



**Common room in an accommodation unit**



### 5.1.2 Time out of cell

The structured day in Sector 3 was similar to Sector 2. On normal operating weekdays, the men started their day at 6.30am and were locked in their units at 5pm. On weekends, inmates were out of their units from 8.30am until 3pm. Similar to Sector 2, the early lock-in time of 3pm on weekends was problematic as it only allowed the inmates to be out of their units for a maximum of seven hours; much lower than the daily average for minimum security custodial settings in NSW.

Sector 3 experienced multiple lockdowns although they occurred less frequently than other sectors. Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, between late-July to mid-October 2022, Sector 3 experienced three full-day and three half-day lockdowns. A restricted structured day of 8am to 4pm occurred on one weekday in that period. This variation of routine was also in place for four consecutive days shortly before our inspection and two days in the week of the inspection. Inmates reported that on such days, they could not exercise or use the outdoor area after they came back from work or programs, as they were locked in shortly after their return.

### 5.1.3 Living conditions of the 'honour house'

The men's 'honour house', located outside the secure perimeter, was clean and in good condition. Like the women's 'honour house', this unit was re-opened shortly before our inspection. Inmates reported that they appreciated the calmer environment and more relaxed surroundings that this accommodation area provided.

However, the main role of such units is to provide greater opportunities for independence to prepare inmates for release into the community, with trust and independent living arrangements replacing the control and the institutionalisation that are found in closed-security correctional centres. 'Honour houses' that are designed and managed well, can play an invaluable role in reducing recidivism and increasing rehabilitation opportunities prior to an inmate's release.

In Wellington CC, apart from being located outside the secure perimeter and slightly longer time out of cell for inmates, there were no other significant differences between this unit and other Sector 3 units. At the time of the inspection, the living conditions, and the level of access to services and amenities in the 'honour house' were almost identical to other Sector 3 units. This meant that no real incentives were in place for inmates to work towards being placed in the 'honour house'.

Inmates placed in this unit had no opportunity for work release, day release or to work on community projects. They had limited exercise options as they were not allowed to go outside the fence that surrounded the accommodation, in order to walk or exercise. Limited exercise equipment was available within the area they had access to.

Unlike similar units in other correctional centres, there was no provision for self-catering and inmates relied on the standard buy-ups and CSI meals. Inmates in the 'honour house' had the same cooking equipment as those in other units of Sector 3. While they had more cooking utensils, lack of access to raw ingredients meant they could not use the utensils to make their own meals. The vegetable garden was being built by inmates at the time of the inspection and was not yet in use. Inmates also did not have access to a meat buy-up. They reported that they had cancelled their BBQ buy-up (which was available to all inmates across the centre) as they assumed their access to the meat buy-up would be approved in the IDC. However, this did not happen and at the time we spoke to them, they had access to neither. Lack of an 'honour house' representative in the IDC was reported to be an additional barrier to self-advocacy and prevented this group from properly raising their concerns and requests.

CSNSW advise that inmates in the 'honour house' now have access to self-catering facilities.<sup>192</sup>

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure inmates in the men's 'honour house' have access to self-catering and can enhance their independent living skills.**

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192 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

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## 5.2 Rehabilitation

### 5.2.1 Programs

At the time of the inspection, the majority of the programs offered to inmates in Sector 3 were being delivered through the HIPU. Despite this, the HIPU was operating under capacity. We understood that it was initially designed to accommodate 80 inmates, with this figure later revised to 60. When we inspected Wellington CC, 30 inmates were participating in Sector 3 HIPU.

The HIPU participants were divided into two groups of 10 and 20, with the first group participating in the EQUIPS Aggression and EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence programs and the second group completing CONNECT, Cultural Strengthening program and NEXUS. It was envisaged that the second group would then continue with the EQUIPS programs.

The HIPU was delivering the programs more intensively and, as inmates were doing the courses in quick succession, some of the course content was condensed to reduce repetition. While the planned program cycle was around 14 weeks, the delivery was at times hampered by unscheduled lockdowns due to staff shortages.

The HIPU team was planning for the next cohort to commence in January 2023; however, they reported that they did not yet have enough eligible inmates. Reportedly, seven inmates were on the waiting list and the minimum number required was 10.

We believe that the HIPU building provided a therapeutic and inviting space for the participants. The artwork displayed on the walls, the creation of a small but well-resourced library that was open to all inmates in Sector 3, and efforts to make the programs more interactive, encouraged inmates to continue participating in programs. It was also positive to hear that art and music programs had been implemented in the HIPU. The staff rightly believed that such activities provided inmates with a respite after participating in programs that explored difficult topics.

However, a well-designed space that is significantly underutilised, fails to deliver on its main objective, which is addressing identified criminogenic needs of people in custody and providing them with skills to manage their risk of re-offending. This was the case in relation to the HIPU in Sector 3. Data obtained from CSNSW shows that in the year 2022, only 53 inmates participated in both of Wellington CC HIPUs. This includes the few women who participated in the HIPU in Sector 2. The completion rate was 62%.<sup>193</sup>

**Common room in the HIPU- Sector 3**



**Library in the HIPU (accessible to all inmates)**



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193 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 15 September 2023.



## 5.2.2 Employment

Based on the information provided by Wellington CC, in November 2022, Sector 3 had the capacity to provide 139 jobs for inmates: 64 jobs across the ‘services industries’ (such as internal grounds maintenance or cleaning), and 75 jobs across the CSI business units.<sup>194</sup> That meant the sector had the potential to employ every inmate held there. The fact that Sector 3 did not hold remand inmates might have also contributed to the higher number of employment opportunities that the sector had to offer. At the time of the inspection, the rate of unemployment in this sector was indeed lower than other sectors; however, there was still a relatively large number of inmates (22 out of 94 people) who were unemployed.

The range of employment offered by CSI business units to inmates in Sector 3 was diverse and provided people with trade skills that could be useful in gaining employment when they were released to the community. Inmates were working in the engineering workshop, modular buildings unit, the external kitchen, and external laundry. In November 2022, all industries had fewer workers than their capacity. For some, this difference was small but others, such as the modular buildings unit, were operating at a number significantly below their capacity.

### Engineering workshop



### Laundry

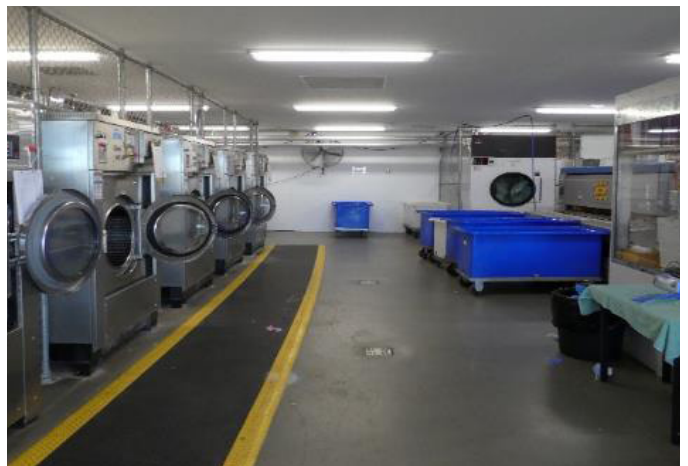


Table 9 details the employment opportunities available to inmates in Sector 3, including the capacity of each area and the number of people assigned to those areas in November 2022. It should be noted that staff shortages, variations of routine, and lockdowns had a negative impact on employment.

The modular buildings unit of Wellington CC was of particular interest. This unit provided meaningful employment for inmates along with trade skills that could assist them in securing a job after release. Inmates were proud of working in this unit as they were building housing for the Western NSW area, where most of them came from. We understood CSNSW had entered a partnership with Aboriginal Housing to build housing for Indigenous communities through the collective work of inmates in Wellington CC and a number of other correctional centres. We note, however, that the number of Aboriginal inmates who were working in this unit was low.

The modular buildings unit was operating with significantly lower number of inmates than its capacity. At the time of the inspection, 13 inmates were employed in this unit and this number dropped to nine inmates, a week after the inspection. As mentioned previously, the work of this unit was carried out in the building that was initially built for the Gundanha program. We acknowledge that this unit effectively started operations in March 2022 when Wellington CC re-opened and the designation of the building changed from a workshop for female inmates to one for minimum security male inmates, and therefore it was still working on scaling up.

<sup>194</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 31 August 2023.

**Table 9: Employment profile- Sector 3** <sup>195</sup>

Industry	Capacity	Description	Number of people employed in November 2022 <sup>196</sup>
Engineering	15	Inmates built products such as strainer posts, benches, Gibney barriers, and cattle panels. In some cases, work was shared with other correctional centres to create the finished products.	13
Food services (kitchen)	15	Inmates reheated the already prepared food. They did not undertake food preparation.	7
Modular buildings	30	Inmates built modular houses and buildings for the Western NSW area, focusing primarily on housing for the Aboriginal community.	9
Laundry	15	Inmates laundered the clothing and linen of Wellington CC as well as some external clients.	8
Internal grounds maintenance	15	Inmates undertook maintenance tasks such as lawn mowing and gardening.	3
HIPU	40	Payment for inmates attending the HIPU	25
Store	2	Inmates packed hygiene packs.	1
Reception room/ intake 'sweepers'	2	Inmates cleaned the reception, clinic and AVL area and assisted in readying property for people being transferred from the centre.	2
Unit cleaners	5	Inmates cleaned the units and distributed meals.	4

The lower number of inmates in Sector 3 at the time of our inspection and the need for workers to keep industries operational, created competition between CSI and the HIPU. A solution was reached at the local level whereby inmate workers who attended the HIPU would do a 'split day'. They worked from 8am to 11.30am and attended the HIPU from 11.30am until 4.30pm. Although this appeared to be a practical solution, variations of routine did not work well with this arrangement and negatively affected inmates' participation in the programs offered in the HIPU. This was because the HIPU staff had modified their work pattern by starting and ending their shifts later, in order to be available for the hours allocated to the delivery of programs in a split day arrangement. That meant when the sector was operating on a restricted structured day with reduced time out of cell, the only way for the HIPU staff to deliver the programs was by changing their shifts again, often at short notice given the nature of unscheduled variations of routine, which was not feasible for staff.

It was disappointing to see that inmates had no opportunity to participate in the work release program. The location of Wellington CC and the logistical challenges associated with transporting inmates to potential workplaces were reported as the main contributing factors. Further, since its re-opening, Wellington CC had not provided opportunities for inmates to participate in community projects.

<sup>195</sup> Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, 31 August 2023 and 7 September 2023. Data for November relates to 23 November 2022, not the week of our inspection.

<sup>196</sup> See footnote 146. The arrangement for the inmates who both attend the HIPU and work is the same as those who attend the SSIP and work; therefore, there might be some discrepancy in the total number of inmates employed in each industry.



CSNSW advise that community projects have now been re-established for eligible inmates. Work release partnerships have also been established with two companies and further discussions are underway with two others.<sup>197</sup> This is a positive development.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW identify and establish work release opportunities at Wellington Correctional Centre and re-introduce community projects.**

### 5.2.3 Education

Inmates in Sector 3 faced some of the same challenges that inmates in Sector 2 did. They did not have access to the ILC, and therefore needed to rely on BSI for courses that targeted reading and writing skills. However, as mentioned, Wellington CC struggled to recruit BSI trainers who could deliver the LLN courses.

As some of the inmates in Sector 3 were employed at CSI business units, they had the opportunity to undertake vocational education related to their employment. However, often those courses had a disproportionate focus on supporting the industries and were offered to assist in (or were pre-requisite of) performing job related tasks.

There were also challenges in securing external providers to deliver vocational courses. For example, inmates in the engineering unit could undertake forklift courses. This was a course that many inmates found useful and looked forward to. However, due to difficulties in getting assessors, one of the two forklift courses was cancelled.

Very few if any of the inmates in Sector 3 were doing traineeships. This was attributed to short sentences, or a short period of time spent in Sector 3 prior to transfer or release. While these factors certainly play a part in reducing the number of inmates who can undertake a traineeship, more effort should be put into identifying those who are able to undertake such traineeships and into matching suitable opportunities with eligible inmates.

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<sup>197</sup> Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

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## 6 Health services

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### 6.1 Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network services

A multidisciplinary team with nursing staff provided health services to patients<sup>198</sup> in Wellington CC. The centre's main health centre operated from 7am to 9.30pm, seven days a week. It had one consulting room, one treatment room, a dental suite, a radiology suite, two telehealth facilities, and one patient waiting area. The health centre was clean and well-designed and had a good patient flow.

#### Treatment room in the main health centre



Wellington CC also had three satellite clinics which were not being used to their full potential. This was reportedly due to issues with equipment and stock. Effective use of satellite clinics can support the operation of the main health centre and reduce the logistical challenges associated with various cohorts of patients requiring access to one health centre. For example, satellite clinics can be used to provide health services to women held in Sector 2; this can reduce the need for female inmates being brought to the main health centre.

While we acknowledge that the use of satellite clinics is not always possible and not all health services can be provided in these locations, the JH&FMHN and Wellington CC management are encouraged to work on addressing some of the present issues to utilise the full capacity of these clinics.

JH&FMHN advise that equipment and stock issues in the satellite clinic rooms have been resolved and those clinics are being used to support provision of healthcare to patients. JH&FMHN have undertaken to explore further opportunities to maximise the use of these resources and put in place an automated and auditable mechanism to monitor and report on such use.<sup>199</sup>

**Recommendation: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network investigate ways to support the effective and efficient utilisation of satellite clinics in Wellington Correctional Centre.**

#### 6.1.1 Staffing

Wellington CC health centre was funded for 14.1 full-time employees plus 1.18 FTE leave relief. The health centre had a full-time nursing unit manager. Some resources including the drug and alcohol nurse, Aboriginal health worker and population health nurse were shared with other correctional centres (including the co-located Macquarie CC).

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<sup>198</sup> Health staff working in correctional centres describe people in custody receiving health services as patients rather than inmates. Consistent with this, the report will also use this terminology in the context of those receiving health services.

<sup>199</sup> Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

The local general practitioner (GP) clinic at the time of the inspection was unfilled and GP services were being delivered entirely through telehealth. We understand that the vacant GP position was filled in July 2023 and two in-person clinics (totalling 16hrs) are now being delivered at Wellington CC every fortnight.<sup>200</sup>

In addition, 32 hours of oral health services (four clinics) and a 6-hour optometry clinic were scheduled to run every two months. As the centre had x-ray facilities, a regular radiology clinic was scheduled for non-urgent appointments. A sonographer visited on a periodic basis from Orange, based on demand. Urgent medical imaging appointments were facilitated through Dubbo Base Hospital. The team reported a good relationship with local health providers who provided both urgent and non-urgent services.<sup>201</sup>

The health staff were committed to providing quality care for patients. They reported, and the inspection team observed, effective and professional relationships with local CSNSW staff which facilitated the operation of the health centre.

When Wellington CC temporarily closed in June 2021, health staff were deployed to other locations around NSW. This reportedly created some challenges for maintaining cohesion within the team after the centre re-opened and the health team re-convened. While the centre was working locally to address those issues, JH&FMHN should consider strategies to ensure health teams are provided with support for team development when they return to centres after a period of closure. This will ensure that the teams are performing at an optimal level and is particularly relevant now as across NSW, a number of correctional centres are temporarily closed.

Telehealth was utilised at Wellington CC for regular GP clinics, as well as some specialist services such as psychiatry and drug and alcohol services. The use of telehealth in regional areas is an important strategy to provide access to specialist services without the need to travel. However, if local services are required to support the operation of telehealth, this should be considered when allocating resources. Concerns were raised with the inspection team that the provision of a nurse in the telehealth clinic to support the operations, took the nurse away from their primary care duties and this was not properly considered in the allocation of local resources.

## 6.1.2 Responding to the needs of prison population

While the health services at Wellington CC were provided with reasonable efficiency, the range of available services did not appropriately match the inmate profile and their likely needs.

The centre did not have a dedicated Aboriginal health worker. A visiting male Aboriginal health worker, who was part of the Aboriginal Chronic Care Program of Justice Health, was responsible for servicing multiple correctional centres, including Wellington CC.<sup>202</sup> This was done through a mix of in-person and telehealth appointments.<sup>203</sup> It appeared that compared to 2017 (when Wellington CC was last inspected by ICS), there was less involvement from Aboriginal health workers. For example, in 2017, an Aboriginal health worker ran a popular and successful healthy lifestyle program for women in Sector 2;<sup>204</sup> this was no longer available.

Given the significant number of Aboriginal inmates in Wellington CC, JH&FMHN should review the staffing profile in this centre with a view to introducing an Aboriginal health worker dedicated to this centre. JH&FMHN is encouraged to look at developing strategies that can address the difficulties associated with the recruitment of Aboriginal health workers.

JH&FMHN advise that in line with a new 5-year Aboriginal Workforce Plan, they aim to increase Aboriginal representation across a range of positions for enhanced cultural safety. This includes consideration of all vacant positions for targeted recruitment. However, creation of roles above the existing profile would require identification of new funding. JH&FMHN also note that Aboriginal

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200 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

201 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 26 September 2022.

202 Those centres, primarily in western NSW, included Wellington CC, Macquarie CC, Bathurst CC, Oberon CC, and Lithgow CC.

203 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 28 March 2023.

204 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 80-81.

health workers are non-clinical roles with limited scope of practice and career pathways.<sup>205</sup>

Furthermore, Wellington CC did not have a dedicated women's health nurse as part of its staff. The centre was serviced by a visiting practitioner who delivered 72 hours of service between July 2020 and June 2021. As at 16 September 2022, seven women were on the waiting list to see the women's health nurse for non-urgent matters (priorities 3,4 and 5) and none were waiting longer than the recommended wait time. However, the only patient whose matter was listed as priority 2 (semi-urgent) had been waiting for 71 days at that time; this was even though the recommended wait time for priority 2 category was between 3 to 14 days.<sup>206</sup>

We note that most women in Wellington CC were Aboriginal and their specific health needs as Aboriginal women should be considered and responded to.

JH&FMHN advise that women's health nurse practitioners and midwives provide a mix of in-person and virtual care clinics to women in Wellington CC, informed by service demand, with additional care and monitoring by the GP. They advise that specific needs of women at the centre will be further addressed through provision of an in-reach women's mental health service (which is part of the Custodial Mental Health team). The 'hub and spoke' care model, where clinicians work across multiple sites, is preferred by JH&FMHN as it enables services to be more responsive to changes in demand across all sites. JH&FMHN considers a dedicated women's health position at Wellington CC is not warranted at this time.<sup>207</sup>

JH&FMHN also advised that to further support women in custody, JH&FMHN encourage their primary health nurses to complete a reproduction and sexual health clinical accreditation program to become competent in undertaking cervical screening and breast checks.<sup>208</sup>

**Recommendation: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network ensure regular access to a women's health practitioner and Aboriginal health workers.**

### 6.1.3 Mental health services

Wellington CC had one full-time mental health nurse. As at 16 September 2022, there were 100 patients on the waiting list to see the mental health nurse, although none were priority 1 (urgent) and four were priority 2 (semi-urgent). The remainder had been categorised as priorities 3 (non-urgent), 4 (routine), and 5 (follow-up). Almost all patients had been waiting a period which was within the recommended wait time for their triage category.

Psychiatry services were provided four hours a week by telehealth and the waitlist to see a psychiatrist consisted of 44 patients, with no patients waiting longer than the recommended wait time.<sup>209</sup>

While these resources seem to be adequate for the population of the centre at the time of the inspection, we note that there was no Aboriginal mental health worker allocated to Wellington CC. This was despite the fact that this centre had one of the highest percentages of Aboriginal inmates, across both the male and female populations. This issue was identified during the 2017 inspection of Wellington CC<sup>210</sup> and lack of progress on this is disappointing. We acknowledge that challenges exist with the recruitment of Aboriginal mental health workers; however, we encourage JH&FMHN to increase its efforts to attract Aboriginal mental health workers, especially in centres where the need for this support is heightened due to the profile of the population.

According to the data provided by CSNSW, as at 30 June 2022, Wellington CC held 20 inmates with a recorded history of mental illness and 27 mandatory notification–RIT inmates. Between March 2022 and 30 June 2022, there were 13 recorded acts of self-harm.<sup>211</sup>

205 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

206 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 26 September 2022.

207 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

208 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

209 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 26 September 2022.

210 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 103.

211 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, September 2022.

Regarding mental health services, JH&FMHN advise that they are pursuing recruitment to two state-wide identified positions in the Custodial Mental Health service:

- Aboriginal mental health clinician who can provide in-person care at Wellington CC, South Coast CC, or Mid-North Coast CC (a single-site base) and a virtual care service to other centres. However, there have been multiple unsuccessful recruitment rounds to this role.
- Aboriginal health worker.<sup>212</sup>

#### 6.1.4 Drug and alcohol health services

A number of inmates who spoke to the inspection team reported difficulties in accessing the drug and alcohol nurse, who was a resource shared with the co-located Macquarie CC. The drug and alcohol nurse provided 24 hours of service per week to patients at Wellington CC. The centre also had access to a drug and alcohol doctor who provided 8 hours of service per week by telehealth.

Data obtained prior to the inspection showed that as at 16 September 2022, 138 people were on the waitlist to see the drug and alcohol nurse but none was considered urgent or semi-urgent. There were 13 patients in priority 3 category who were waiting longer than the recommended wait time for this category, which was 14 to 90 days. Those patients were waiting between 91 to 210 days. Further, 26 inmates were waiting to see a drug and alcohol doctor, with one patient's case being considered semi-urgent and the rest non-urgent. Only one priority 3 patient was reported to be waiting longer than the recommended waiting time.<sup>213</sup> Waiting lists should continue to be monitored to assess if this level of resource, which was shared with another correctional centre, is adequate.

JH&FMHN advise that in 2023 and after our inspection of Wellington CC, drug and alcohol nurse resourcing to the centre increased from 3 to 4 days per week. Further, the demand for drug and alcohol services at the centre is being supplemented through triaging and waitlist management support by the drug and alcohol nurse practitioner and extra ad hoc services by the drug and alcohol nurse from the Dubbo Drug Court, when required and workload permits.<sup>214</sup>

#### 6.1.5 Management of COVID-19

During our inspection, Wellington CC was managing a small COVID-19 outbreak. According to the information obtained from JH&FMHN afterwards, in total 20 COVID-19 positive patients were managed as part of that outbreak, with none requiring acute or intensive care-level treatment.<sup>215</sup> The patients appeared to be managed well and in line with the monitoring and quarantine protocols that were in place at the time of the inspection.

Positively, patients were being managed locally rather than being transferred to Sydney, a decision that was supported by them. We also noted that stronger emphasis on localised decision-making relating to the management of quarantine and isolation was supported by the local health staff.

The pandemic, nonetheless, continued to create challenges for the delivery of patient care.

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## 6.2 Psychology services

Psychology services in NSW correctional centres are managed by CSNSW. At the time of the inspection, Wellington CC had insufficient psychology resources to address the demand. A full-time senior psychologist was providing services to Wellington CC while also delivering some services at Mannus CC, where he was based. The psychologist was on site in Wellington CC one week per month and engaged with inmates via AVL for the rest of the month. Providing psychology services via AVL is challenging as it lacks a face-to-face element, limits rapport building and complicates follow ups. It is also a strategy that is difficult for some inmates to engage with and respond well to.

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212 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

213 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 26 September 2022.

214 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 1 March 2024.

215 Information provided by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, 28 March 2023.



We understood that previously one senior psychologist and three base-grade psychologist roles were assigned to Wellington CC (but not necessarily filled). Two of those positions were transferred to the Mobile Psychology Team in 2019. That left the psychology team with two positions: the senior psychologist and an unfilled base-grade psychologist. It was reported that some support was occasionally provided by another senior psychologist who conducted some of the AVL sessions. However, that assistance was dependent on the availability and workload priorities of that psychologist.

In an update provided in September 2023, CSNSW reported that Wellington CC psychology team still had the same structure. A new senior psychologist was recruited who was working across Wellington Community Corrections and Wellington CC. The base-grade psychologist position remained vacant. Some assistance was provided by the Mobile Psychology Team, as well as the community senior psychologists in the West and South region whenever their workloads permitted. Unfortunately, all psychological services were being provided remotely, via AVL. CSNSW identified significant challenges in recruiting on-site psychologists for Wellington CC, with several unsuccessful rounds of recruitment. CSNSW reported that since 2017, there has not been an on-site psychologist in Wellington CC on an ongoing basis.<sup>216</sup>

This was an issue of concern we identified when we inspected Wellington CC in 2017. At that time, a psychologist from Bathurst CC came to Wellington CC once a week to see inmates and had a long referral list. We recommended that CSNSW ensure counselling and psychological services are available<sup>217</sup> and heard from CSNSW that it was trying to fill vacant psychologist roles and establish external partnerships to provide counselling.<sup>218</sup> It is of concern that more than five years later there has not been any progress on this.

According to CSNSW, lack of an on-site senior psychologist limited the recruitment of a base-grade psychologist, as the more intensive level of supervision required for provisional psychologists would not be available. Further, the prospect of working solo as a psychologist made the position less attractive. CSNSW reported that it was working on assigning a senior psychologist to Wellington CC who would only provide services to that location, as well as increasing the number of base-grade psychologists so a psychology team could be created at Wellington CC.<sup>219</sup>

In its most recent update, CSNSW advise that recruitment for psychologists has been challenging in all areas due to ongoing award negotiations. However, it has been particularly difficult to recruit for regional locations.<sup>220</sup> Despite this, recruitment is underway for senior psychologists in CSNSW, with a preference for on-site positions. CSNSW confirmed that all vacancies for psychologist roles are filled as a priority. Currently, the senior psychologist allocated to Wellington CC is based in Sydney as the role was unable to be filled locally.<sup>221</sup>

At the time of the inspection, the senior psychologist in Wellington CC worked closely with the JH&FMHN mental health team. Referrals were received and triaged by the psychologist and the cases that were considered an immediate priority, were referred to JH&FMHN.

Most psychological services were related to cases that were assessed as 'psych 2' (high priority). 'Psych 2' category concerns duties that require the specialised skills and knowledge of the psychologists and includes several sub-categories.<sup>222</sup>

The majority of 'psych 2' referrals in Wellington CC prior to our inspection related to the sub-category of 'sub-acute mental health impairments', with 55 to 80 open service requests. This was followed by 20 open service requests relating to 'specific intervention for cognitive impairment', eight to 16 open service requests relating to 'sub-acute suicide/deliberate self-harm prevention assessment

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216 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 11 September 2023.

217 This recommendation was made in relation to female inmates as the focus of that inspection was on the treatment and conditions of women on remand. However, the lack of regular access to a psychologist was an issue for all inmates in Wellington CC.

218 Inspector of Custodial Services, *Women on Remand* (Report, 2020) 102 and 108.

219 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 11 September 2023.

220 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

221 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.

222 Information on operational priorities of Corrective Services NSW psychologists is available in Corrective Services NSW, *Policy on Providing Psychology Services in CSNSW* (version 3.7, 10 November 2020).

and intervention', and three to eight open service requests relating to 'specific intervention for challenging behaviours'.<sup>223</sup>

The psychologists working for CSNSW also provide reports and assessments that are time-sensitive and must be prioritised by their due date. At Wellington CC, the psychologist was providing 10 criminogenic risk assessments and had three to five active service referrals for structured case notes for pre-sentence reports. Since the re-opening of the centre and until August 2022, on average, 145 psychology sessions per month were provided to the inmates.<sup>224</sup>

Provision of psychology services to inmates in G block of Sector 1 was particularly challenging as this block did not have an AVL suite. There was also no space for face-to-face consultations. This often meant the psychologist needed to speak with inmates through the cell hatches; an option that offered more privacy than having the cell door open when officers were within the hearing distance. As mentioned earlier, some of the inmates in G block were in segregated custody while others were in protective custody or on a RIT management plan. Generally, this is a population that presents with added needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, such barriers to provision of psychological services in an appropriate and private setting is concerning.

CSNSW have assured us that interview rooms are now available for this purpose.<sup>225</sup>

Inmates also reported a need for counselling, especially grief counselling. We understood that in the absence of any other resources, the chaplain provided this support despite lack of official training.

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW establish a senior psychologist role that is only focused on Wellington Correctional Centre and is on site. Corrective Services NSW should explore ways to recruit for vacant psychologist positions as a matter of priority.**

**Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure inmates held in the multipurpose unit (G block) of Wellington Correctional Centre are able to access a private space to speak to the psychologist.**

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223 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.

224 Information provided by Wellington Correctional Centre, November 2022.

225 Information provided by Corrective Services NSW, 8 March 2024.



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