



Inspector of
Custodial Services

Inspector of Custodial Services

Inspection of Oberon
Correctional Centre



Inspector of Custodial Services

Produced by Inspector of Custodial Services

Level 3, 50 Phillip Street
Sydney NSW 2000

P: 02 8061 9387

W: www.custodialinspector.justice.nsw.gov.au

ISSN: 2207 0389

November 2020

© State of New South Wales through the Inspector of Custodial Services November 2020. This work may be freely reproduced for personal, educational and government purposes. Permission must be received from the department for all other uses.

This document has been prepared by the Inspector of Custodial Services for general information purposes. While every care has been taken in relation to its accuracy, no warranty is given or implied. Further, recipients should obtain their own independent advice before making any decisions that rely on this information.

For extended copyright permissions or to request the report in an alternative format such as Braille, audiotape, and large print contact custodialinspector@justice.nsw.gov.au

(November 2020)

Contents

- Foreword..... 4
- Acknowledgements..... 5
- Glossary of terms and acronyms..... 6
- Executive Summary..... 7
- Recommendations 12
- Introduction..... 13
- Oberon Correctional Centre overview 16
- Correctional Centre Security 18
- Reception and Transport..... 23
- Care and Wellbeing 26
- Employment, Programs and Education 32

Foreword

The ICS is required to inspect each correctional facility at least once every five years. Oberon Correctional Centre (Oberon CC) was first inspected in 2015 as part of the Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS) report Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW.

This report is the result of the second round of five year inspections of NSW correctional facilities. In contrast to the previous ‘theme based’ inspection, this inspection employed an inspection methodology that addressed all areas of operation of Oberon Correctional Centre.¹ Terms of Reference (TOR) of the inspection were informed by our inspection standards for adult custodial services in New South Wales.²

The inspection of Oberon CC was scheduled to occur in late March 2020. With the increasing spread of the COVID-19 virus and its potential impact on correctional centres, it was determined to conduct the inspection of Oberon CC remotely. This was the first time this had been tried and although it was successful, this was due to the centre being a small minimum security facility and a high degree of co-operation from management and staff at the centre. It was supplemented by a pre and post inspection visit to the centre. The use of this methodology in the future will need to be determined on a case by case basis.

The centre is in a remote location and has endured a challenging 12 months. It was threatened by bushfires in early 2020 requiring the evacuation of all staff and inmates. Oberon CC staff and the local community worked together to coordinate the evacuation to Bathurst and Lithgow correctional centres. More recently, staff have been formally recognised for their bravery during the bushfires.

Since March the centre has been operating in accordance with its COVID-19 plan. At the time of writing there were no active COVID-19 cases at Oberon CC.

Fiona Rafter
Inspector of Custodial Services
November 2020

1 Theme based inspections address a specific issue such as Programs Employment and Education; and Women on Remand. See www.custodialinspector.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/Reports-and-publications.aspx

2 Inspector of Custodial Services (NSW), *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales*, June 2020.

Acknowledgements

The Inspector would like to acknowledge the assistance and co-operation of staff and inmates at Oberon Correctional Centre who made the remote inspection possible. My appreciation is also extended to Mr Paul Speter, Official Visitor at the centre. The assistance of the staff from the Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics unit and other units in CSNSW is also appreciated.

Glossary of terms and acronyms

AVL	Audio Visual Link
Buy-up	Purchase by inmate of pre-approved items
CCTV	Closed circuit television
CMO	Case Management Officer
CMU	Case Management Unit
CPT	Classification and Placement Team
CSNSW	Corrective Services New South Wales
CSI	Corrective Services Industries
EQUIPS	Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed programs including EQUIPS Addiction, EQUIPS Aggression, EQUIPS Domestic Abuse and EQUIPS Foundation.
GLC	Gurnang Life Challenge
HIPU	High Intensity Programs Unit
IDC	Inmate Development Committee
ICO	Intensive Corrections Order
ICS	Inspector of Custodial Services
JH&FMHN	Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
MOS	Manager of Security
MOSP	Manager of Services and Programs
NUC	Adult Nucleus inmate. NUCs assist and support inmates undertaking the Young Adult Offenders Program
NUT	An inmate who is training to be a NUC
OIMS	Offender Integrated Management System is CSNSW centralised data recording system.
RAPO	Regional Aboriginal Programs Officer
RIT	Risk Intervention Team
ROGS	Report on Government Services
RUSH	Real Understanding of Self Help
SAPO	Services and Programs Officer
Section 6.2 Order	An Order, in accordance with the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, directing an inmate to carry out work in or outside the centre, as the Governor considers suitable
SMAP	Special Management Area Placement
SPA	State Parole Authority
YAOP	Young Adult Offenders Program
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

Oberon Correctional Centre (Oberon CC) is a minimum security centre within the Gurnang State Forrest, west of the Blue Mountains, approximately 40 kilometres from the town of Oberon. The location is both picturesque and unique and is subject to extreme weather conditions from heat and bush fires in the summer to below zero temperatures which regularly bring snow during the winter months.

Oberon CC has accommodation for approximately 140 minimum security inmates. There are two groups of inmates – the majority are young adults undertaking the Young Adult Offenders Program (YAOP) and some older men working towards release. The YAOP is an integral part of CSNSW's plan to manage young offenders and is central to the operations of Oberon CC. Oberon CC has a positive staff culture with both custodial and non-custodial staff committed to the YAOP and the general philosophy of the centre. The centre also plays an important role in the local community who value the participation of inmates in community work and work release opportunities.

The remote location of Oberon CC has been its greatest asset and at times the biggest obstacle to success. The physical setting is an ideal location for the YAOP, and older inmates have been able to participate in community work and work release in the surrounding community. However technology issues have plagued the centre. In the past this has resulted in disruption to the YAOP caused by inmates having to transfer to and from other centres for court, legal visits and basic health services. During the course of this inspection, a number of technology solutions were implemented that should improve the environment of Oberon CC for both staff and inmates and help it to achieve its true potential.

The inspection found a small number of staff were not up to date with their training. Recent initiatives by CSNSW for Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy (BFCSA) to deliver face-to-face training for regional centres through virtual classrooms using technology should address those shortcomings.

The inspection of Oberon CC occurred in late March 2020. With the increasing spread of the COVID-19 virus in the immediate lead up to the inspection, and its potentially serious impact on correctional centres, it was determined to conduct the inspection of Oberon Correctional centre remotely. This was the first correctional centre inspection conducted remotely by ICS and the revised methodology was developed within a very short time frame. Remote inspection requires a high level of cooperation from a correctional centre to provide facilities and co-ordinate staff and inmates. The assistance of the Management and staff of Oberon CC is acknowledged and appreciated and emblematic of the “can do” attitude of the staff at this centre.

Arriving at Oberon CC

Oberon CC is not a reception centre. Sentenced minimum security inmates from other correctional centres arrive weekly at Oberon CC from Bathurst Correctional Centre and once a month from Sydney if participating in the YAOP.

The reception process was observed to be professional and respectful. COVID-19 procedures were operating at the centre. Inmates had their temperature taken and social distancing was adhered to in the holding area. Privacy however was an issue. Reception interviews were conducted in an area where officers and other inmates are present. This afforded inmates little privacy when being interviewed by the admissions officer. The reception process is completed with all new arrivals taken on an orientation walk of the centre before being escorted with their property to their accommodation unit. An orientation walk of the centre is a simple practice that would be of benefit to inmates at other minimum security correctional centres.

Inmates reside in communal living accommodation units. Each unit has a kitchen, living area, bathroom and laundry. The majority of inmates share a room. Single room accommodation is usually given to older inmates on work release/ community projects and those who are employed to assist on the YAOP.

The upkeep of accommodation units and programs/ education areas was disappointing. The inspection found a number of maintenance issues in need of attention around the centre, including the condition of the segregation cells. It was disappointing to see broken windows, exhaust fans and heating, and bathrooms and kitchens in need of repair. Oberon CC is situated in an alpine region and subject to extremely cold temperatures. Attending to broken windows and heating issues in a timely manner is particularly important for the safe management of inmates at Oberon CC.

Adequate supplies of warm clothing and bedding is also essential at the centre. Oberon CC was inspected in 2015 as part of the ICS report *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW (Clothing and Bedding Report)*. The report made several recommendations around correctional centres maintaining adequate supplies of warm clothing and bedding and for stock management systems to be in place.³ Despite this there was evidence that clothing and bedding supplies were not adequately maintained at the centre. It was also unclear as to whether any stock management controls are employed at the centre.⁴

The Inmate Delegate Committee (IDC) provides a forum for inmates to communicate regularly with management on issues that collectively concern inmates at Oberon CC. It meets monthly and was observed during inspection as functioning well. However a number of issues appeared to remain unresolved for lengthy periods.

The Young Adult Offender Program

The YAOP has operated at Oberon CC for over 30 years. The YAOP is central to the operations of Oberon CC and is an integral part of CSNSW's plan to manage young offenders. It is a comprehensive 16 week program involving staff from all operational areas including vocational education, industries and employment, programs, custodial and the Gurnang Life Challenge (GLC). Older inmates are employed as an Adult Nucleus (NUC) or an Adult Nucleus in training (NUT) to mentor and assist the younger men through the program. The multi-disciplinary nature of the YAOP requires coordination and direction which was commonly referred to throughout the inspection as important and in need of attention. It is recommended that an Oberon CC based coordinator role for the YAOP is established.

It was surprising to find that under half of the inmates who participated in the YAOP graduated from the program and a quarter of the participants failed. Almost a third of the inmate participants do not complete the YAOP. The primary reason for this is their release by the State Parole Authority (SPA) on reinstatement of either an intensive corrections order (ICO) or home detention order (HDO). Others are transferred out of Oberon CC as they are unable to stay for medical or safety reasons. To some extent the number of inmates who are unable to complete the YAOP could be reduced by a more rigorous selection process of participants in the program with greater attention to release dates, risk factors and medical suitability.

Despite overwhelming support for the YAOP from inmates and staff at Oberon CC, there was acknowledgement of the need to review the program. The core components of the YAOP appear to be valid and there is anecdotal evidence of change among inmates. Notwithstanding this, it is important that the program is reviewed to ensure its philosophy is clear, its core elements remain valid and it is achieving desired outcomes. Greater clarity is required for staff and inmates around the core elements of the program and how success or failure is determined. The YAOP employs a therapeutic model in dealing with behaviour

3 Recommendations 5, 6 & 15, *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW*, June 2017; NSW Inspector of Custodial Services.

4 Recommendations 19 *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW*, June 2017; NSW Inspector of Custodial Services.

and indiscretion with official sanctions being avoided where possible. Although interactions between inmates and correctional officers were reported as generally positive, a number of officers would benefit from further training in the therapeutic values of the YAOP. The CSNSW is currently working on the culture of correctional centres and developing a training program for officers in inmate behaviour and custodial response styles. Oberon CC has been identified as a pilot site for the program.

A review of the YAOP would also allow for operational alignment with High Intensity Program Units and other therapeutic programs in CSNSW correctional facilities. It is also important to review program offerings to ensure that offending behaviour is being adequately addressed and in a culturally appropriate manner. The Inspector is aware that CSNSW have commenced a review since the inspection. This is supported.

Classification

Inmates who arrive at Oberon CC fall into two groups—young adults undertaking the Young Adult Offenders Program (YAOP) and older males working towards release.

The work of the Classification and Placement Team at Oberon CC comprises of reviews of inmate classification and consideration of change of placement of an inmate to another correctional centre. The responsibilities of the CPT at Oberon CC extend beyond that which is generally required in other correctional facilities. In addition to administering the CSNSW Classification and Placement Policy, Oberon CPT is intrinsically involved in the YAOP, overseeing inductions and inmate assessments at each stage of the YAOP. The dedication and commitment of the CPT at Oberon CC is commendable however greater clarification of their role in administering the YAOP should be considered as part of the review of the YAOP.

To be placed at Oberon CC, an inmate must be classified as a minimum security C2. Classification is reviewed annually to determine if an inmate will progress to a C3 classification. A C3 is the lowest security rating in the classification system and indicates an inmate requires minimal supervision and is suitable to be considered for leave from the centre. Almost equal numbers of inmates progressed in classification, retained their classification or regressed in classification. Classification decisions should be based on information around an inmate's institutional behaviour, response to programs, risk and likelihood of escape.⁵ The inspection found the CPT at Oberon CC placed undue reliance on arbitrary matters that were not consistent with the CSNSW Inmate Classification and Placement policy and procedures. The ICS accepts there may be some misunderstanding in interpreting classification and placement policy and procedures and recommends training for all CPT staff at Oberon CC.

Purposeful Day

As Oberon CC is a minimum security facility, inmates have reasonable freedom of movement throughout the correctional compound during the day. The average time out of cell each day is 10.74 hours.⁶ This exceeds the NSW state average for open correctional centres⁷ and allows inmates to participate in either the YAOP or work as well as enjoy some leisure time before being locked in their accommodation units for the evening. The gym is popular with inmates and well utilised. Other activities include cricket, softball, basketball, football, table tennis, pool tables, DVDs, board games, art and music.

At the time of inspection inmates at Oberon CC had access to a small library with limited books and limited accessibility. The library space has recently expanded to include several reading tables and an inmate librarian has been employed to assist with administrative functions and opening hours of the library.

5 Clause 12-14A *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014*.

6 CSNSW Research and Evaluation Service (CRES) data dated 25 February 2020.

7 Report on Government Services 2020, 8 Corrective Services data tables, 8A.13 Time out-of-cells (average hours per day), viewed September 2020, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/justice/corrective-services#downloads>

This means inmates now have access to a good sized library space with varied books and reading materials.

CSI meals are provided to all inmates at Oberon CC. In addition inmates can purchase weekly meat and groceries from their money and prepare food in the kitchen in their accommodation unit. This is a positive initiative and an invaluable opportunity for men to participate in the communal activity of food preparation and cooking. Unfortunately, young offenders on low wages and with no family financial support are unable to buy additional food and miss out on the development of essential living skills. There was a need to replace broken appliances in accommodation units and ensure additional cooking appliances were available to cater for various religious food handling and cooking practices around meat and pork.

Health Care and other Services

Due to its remote location, the health centre at Oberon CC is unable to provide a complete suite of health services. It is because of these limitations that the centre is unable to accommodate inmates who have mental health or serious or chronic health conditions.

Inmates requiring dental and health services not available at Oberon CC must be transferred to Bathurst or Kirkconnell CC for attention. The recent installation of telehealth facilities at Oberon CC is welcomed as it will greatly increase health services to Oberon CC and should reduce the operational impact on the centre from medical escorts to hospital or other correctional centres. Notwithstanding, JH&FMHN should continue to closely monitor the standard of health services delivered to inmates at Oberon CC.

At the time of inspection all psychology services were arranged via telephone with the psychologist at Kirkconnell CC. This is not ideal and is not conducive to a therapeutic counselling environment. Regular psychology services are essential to Oberon CC to support the YAOP. The recent installation of Audio Visual Link (AVL)⁸ facilities at Oberon CC may be able to address the gap in psychology services at the centre.

Inmates with court appearances are transferred from Oberon CC to Bathurst CC for court AVL hearings. The need to transport inmates for court AVL to Bathurst CC has a substantial operational impact on the centre and inmates. They also disrupt inmate participation in the YAOP and the GLC as inmates generally need to stay several nights at Bathurst CC. The remote location of the centre does not lend itself to legal visits. The recent introduction of two AVL suites at Oberon CC will enable AVL calls between inmates and their lawyer and court appearances. The ability for inmates to remain in the centre for court appearances will have a positive impact on centre operations and inmate participation and progression through the YAOP.

At the time of inspection 9.4% of the population were Aboriginal inmates. Despite quarterly visits to Oberon CC from the Regional Aboriginal Programs Officer (RAPO), Aboriginal young men at the centre would benefit from regular connection with a visiting Elder for spiritual and cultural support, which was something that had occurred in the past at Oberon CC. CSNSW should seek to identify Aboriginal inmates that would benefit from the YAOP and reintegration opportunities offered at Oberon CC. This is particularly important since the closure of Brewarrina Correctional Centre and Ivanhoe Correctional Centre.

Maintaining contact with family

Inmates are encouraged to maintain contact with family and friends. In addition to being able to use several telephones on the centre compound, visits operate all day Saturday and Sundays with family and friends. Visitors are able to bring food and use the barbeques provided in the outside visits area. The visits area is a pleasant environment with a secure fenced area for children to safely play.

⁸ CSNSW have audio-visual link studios in most centres. AVL Facilities enable real time audio and visual communication between persons at different places. CSNSW recently installed 2 AVL studios at Oberon CC.

At the time of inspection, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSNSW had suspended visits from families and friends to inmates to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to correctional centres. To accommodate and encourage continued connectivity with family and friends CSNSW introduced tablets to facilitate inmate video visits.⁹ Despite initial internet connectivity issues at Oberon CC, management and CSNSW pursued all options and were able to provide tablet visits to inmates to connect with family. The ICS supports the re-introduction of family visits and the continued use of tablets post pandemic as a way of maintaining contact with family.

The new AVL suites will also provide an additional facility for inmates to connect with families and friends who are unable to visit the centre or reside interstate or overseas.

Employment and Education

The centre operates several industries which provide various employment opportunities for inmates. Those industries are timber production, agriculture, afforestation, kitchen/ laundry and building maintenance. Work release opportunities are also available for approved inmates.

Industry overseers at Oberon CC support and encourage inmates to gain skills that will help their employability on release. Vocational certificate courses are primarily offered, however inmates are also able to complete a 12 month horticulture traineeship program and graduate with a certificate II in horticulture.

Vocational training at Oberon CC is generally linked to the industry workplace and inmates are able to obtain qualifications that will enhance their work participation at the centre. There was overwhelming acknowledgement from all operational areas within Oberon CC that vocational education will help inmates obtain employment upon release. Delivering opportunities to attain varied qualifications and skill sets whilst incarcerated, should help CSNSW meet the NSW Premier's priority to reduce recidivism by five percent by 2023.¹⁰

Preparation for Release

Oberon CC has a cohort of older inmates, who are not part of the YAOP, and who are preparing for release to the community. Increasingly, older inmates at Oberon CC are being identified by the SPA as not having adequately addressed their criminogenic needs, and needing to complete a particular program before being considered for parole. Programs offered at Oberon CC are intrinsically connected to the YAOP. There are no programs offered to older inmates. If those inmates are to address the concerns of the SPA they must transfer to another centre to complete the required program(s). This often results in inmates exceeding their earliest possible release date. This is a system failure that should be addressed by ensuring inmates have completed programs before they are placed at Oberon CC. It is important that CSNSW Classification and Placement give due consideration to inmates' case plan requirements and readiness for parole before placement at Oberon CC. Alternatively, programs could be made available at Oberon CC for older inmates.

Oberon CC is strongly supported by the local community, Oberon Council, local business and community groups. The centre has been successful in securing longstanding relationships with several local industries which provide work release opportunities for inmates. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSNSW temporarily suspended all external work to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to correctional centres. Work release is an invaluable step. It provides opportunities for inmates to engage with the community and provides transition to release. The Inspector supports the re-commencement of work release as soon as it is safe to do so.

⁹ Commissioner's Instruction 2020/15, 'Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Interim Measure – Temporary inmate use of tablets with SIM cards in correctional centre visiting sections for social visits' 27 March 2020.

¹⁰ Premier's Priorities ; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/reducing-recidivism-prison-population>

Recommendations

The Inspector recommends:

1. Corrective Services NSW ensure staff meet their ongoing training requirements by delivering face to face training at remote centres either in person or through the use of technology.
2. Corrective Services NSW review reception procedures at Oberon CC to ensure inmate privacy and confidentiality of information.
3. Corrective Services NSW ensure centres are maintaining stock management and quality controls to ensure they can provide inmate clothing and bedding entitlements.
4. Corrective Services NSW conduct:
 - a. a maintenance audit of inmate accommodation and facilities at Oberon CC to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements;
 - b. regular maintenance at Oberon CC of segregation cells and the provision of adequate bedding; and
 - c. an audit of essential ground maintenance and farming equipment at Oberon CC.
5. Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network continue to monitor the standard of health services delivered to inmates at Oberon CC.
6. Corrective Services NSW ensure regular psychology services are accessible to inmates at Oberon CC.
7. Corrective Services NSW ensure adequate cooking appliances are available in accommodation units at Oberon CC to cater for religious and cooking needs.
8. Corrective Services NSW ensure library services at Oberon CC are adequately maintained and readily accessible to inmates.
9. Corrective Services NSW increase the number of Aboriginal young people participating in the Young Adult Offender Program and reinstate the visiting Elder program at Oberon CC.
10. Corrective Services NSW explore the continued use of tablets at Oberon CC to facilitate family contact and support.
11. Corrective Services NSW review the Young Adult Offender Program and establish an Oberon CC based coordinator role for the Young Adult Offender Program.
12. Corrective Services NSW consider the provision of programs for adult inmates at Oberon CC.
13. Corrective Services NSW review the adequacy of training of all classification and placement staff and senior officers at Oberon CC.
14. Corrective Services NSW maintain work release opportunities and consider the creation of community projects at Oberon CC.
15. That this report is made public immediately upon being tabled in NSW Parliament, in accordance with section 16(2) of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2012* (NSW).

Introduction

Role, powers and function of ICS

The office of the Inspector of Custodial Services 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 adults and young people in custody, and to promote excellence in staff professional practice.

The principal functions of the Inspector, as set out in section 6 of the ICS Act, are as follows:

- to inspect each custodial centre (other than juvenile justice centres and juvenile correctional centres) at least once every 5 years,
- to inspect each juvenile justice centre and juvenile correctional centre at least once every 3 years,
- to examine and review any custodial service at any time,
- to report to Parliament on each such inspection, examination or review,
- to report to Parliament on any particular issue or general matter relating to the functions of the Inspector if, in the Inspector's opinion, it is in the interest of any person or in the public interest to do so,
- to report to Parliament on any particular issue or general matter relating to the functions of the inspector if requested to do so by the Minister,
- to include in any report such advice or recommendations as the Inspector thinks appropriate (including advice or recommendations relating to the efficiency, economy and proper administration of custodial centres and custodial services),
- to oversee Official Visitor programs conducted under the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* and the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987*,
- to advise, train and assist Official Visitors in the exercise of the functions conferred or imposed on them under those Acts,
- such other functions as may be conferred or imposed on the Inspector under this or any other Act.

In addition to the purpose and powers of the Inspector as detailed in the legislation, the Inspector also has a responsibility to ensure that ethical and professional practice is observed across the custodial environment in NSW.

Inspection Methodology

The inspection of Oberon Correctional Centre had regard to the standards for adult custodial services in New South Wales in conjunction with other relevant standards, legislation, policies and procedures.

The inspection examined the following four areas from the Inspection standards for adult custodial services in New South Wales:

- a. Custody
- b. Care and wellbeing
- c. Rehabilitation
- d. Resources and systems

Approximately two months prior to inspection, document and data requests were forwarded to Oberon Correctional Centre and to Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW). Supporting documentation concerning the management and operations of the correctional centre was provided by the Centre and CSNSW and were analysed prior to inspection.

An on-site visit to the centre took place approximately two months prior to the inspection and provided vital context to the inspection team leader to scope the inspection.

The inspection methodology was further developed. Structured and semi-structured interviews with senior management, staff, inmates and external agencies were identified as important and included the following:

- Manager of Security (MOS)
- Manager of Industries (MOI)
- Manager of Services and Programs (MOSP)
- Psychologist
- Case Management
- Classification
- Education Services Coordinator
- TAFE
- Justice Health – Health centre Nurse Unit Manager(NUM) and staff
- Correctional Officers
- Community Corrections
- Regional Aboriginal Programs Officer (RAPO)
- Inmates and inmate representatives on the Inmate Development Committee (IDC)

The Oberon CC inspection team consisted of four people including the Inspector of Custodial Services, a Principal Inspection and Research Officer, a Senior Inspection and Research Officer, and an Inspection and Research Officer.

The inspection of Oberon CC was scheduled to occur in late March 2020. With the increasing spread of the COVID-19 virus in the immediate lead up to the inspection, and its potentially serious impact on correctional centres, it was determined to conduct the inspection of Oberon Correctional centre remotely. This was the first correctional centre inspection conducted remotely by the ICS and the revised methodology was developed within a very short time frame.

A decision was made to conduct telephone interviews instead of face to face interviews and obtain video footage to supplement on-site observations. Remote inspection requires a high level of cooperation from a correctional centre and the management and staff at Oberon CC facilitated the inspection by coordinating interviews and video footage requested by the ICS.

Staff and inmates were interviewed via a confidential line established by the ICS, and inmates were provided with an individual private space for their interviews. Inmates were randomly selected for individual interviews

by the ICS from each accommodation unit, across age groups and all work and program areas. In addition the ICS spoke individually with members of the IDC. Inmates were given an information and consent form to read, discuss and complete prior to taking part in interviews. If Inmates were happy to be interviewed and/or filmed they signed the consent form and it was emailed to the ICS.

Video footage was recorded of centre infrastructure and operations such as accommodation areas, and programs rooms as well as admissions and reception processes, an IDC meeting, GLC activities and camp preparations.

A further on-site visit took place approximately three months post inspection which afforded the opportunity to clarify matters that arose during the inspection and observe infrastructure and operations in person.

Oberon Correctional Centre overview

Oberon Correctional Centre (Oberon CC) is remotely situated west of the Blue Mountains in Shooters Hill, approximately 40 kilometres from the town of Oberon. Located in an alpine forest region, the daily temperature range during the winter months (June to August) is generally in the range of 0-9 degrees celsius. In summer months (December to February) rain can be scarce and bush fires become a threat. Such extremes in weather present many operational challenges for the centre.

Recent bushfires in the summer of 2019-2020 saw the centre threatened by fire. With the assistance of local community, Oberon CC staff evacuated inmates to Bathurst and Lithgow Correctional Centres. The ICS commends management and staff of Oberon CC for their professionalism and bravery in difficult and dangerous circumstances.¹¹ The ICS is pleased to see that the centre has a current Bushfire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan (3 January 2020).

The correctional centre occupies several hectares within the Gurnang State Forrest. It is a minimum security centre and accommodates approximately 140 minimum-security inmates. The compound includes administration buildings, industries sheds and several inmate accommodation units which are captured within perimeter fencing. There are also several residences on the correctional site to accommodate the Manager of Security (MOS) and correctional staff.



Oberon Correctional Centre entrance



Gurnang State Forest

The Oberon correctional population consists of older males working towards release and young adults undertaking the Young Adult Offenders Program (YAOP). The YAOP and Gurnang Life Challenge (GLC) are an integral part of CSNSW's plan to manage young offenders. The GLC is the physical component of the YAOP and includes overnight camps, high ropes and adventure challenges. Oberon CC accommodates only minimum security sentenced inmates of C2 and C3 classifications. It is not suitable for inmates with association issues or who require substantial medical and mental health support.

¹¹ Articles 'When heat was on' appeared in Oberon Review 10 September 2020 and 'Evacuation Appreciation' appeared in Western Advocate Bathurst 10 September 2020.

Oberon CC has 51 staff covering custodial, industries, programs and services, and administrative positions. The centre reports no staffing level concerns and has access to a casual officer pool if needed.¹²

Programs at Oberon CC are primarily centred around the YAOP. All inmates are encouraged to work. Oberon CC offers six types of inmate employment at the centre being horticulture, afforestation, timber production, catering services, laundry, ground maintenance, and assisting with the YAOP. Higher education is accommodated and vocational education and training opportunities provided.

¹² The casual officer pool services Bathurst, Lithgow, Kirkconnell and Oberon Correctional Centres. The pool has 78 available officers and is adequately resourced to help with any vacancies at Oberon CC when needed.

Correctional Centre Security

Operational Security

Oberon CC is a minimum security facility. Inmates are able to move freely throughout the correctional compound but are prohibited from entering other accommodation units and restricted areas. A number of headcounts occur during the day. There are also regular perimeter checks and targeted and random searching.

Custodial Training

It is important that correctional staff meet ongoing training qualifications. Staff are required to update core skills training in first aid; managing at risk inmates; use of batons and urinalysis testing. A small number of staff were not up to date with their training requirements and it is acknowledged that this can be difficult at remote locations. Oberon CC have two senior correctional staff, who are field training officers, and assist staff in meeting their training requirements. They are also responsible for facilitating training at Oberon CC or neighbouring centres, if necessary.¹³ It is pleasing to hear that CSNSW has recently approved an increase in face-to-face training of correctional staff by Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy (BFCSA) and ensured greater accessibility of training for regional centres through virtual classrooms using technology.¹⁴

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure staff meet their ongoing training requirements by delivering face to face training at remote centres either in person or through the use of technology.

Correctional centre discipline

The Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 (the Act) and the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014* (the Regulation) makes provision for correctional centre offences and consequential disciplinary action.¹⁵ Correctional centre offence is defined in the Act as any act or omission by an inmate (whether or not it is also a criminal offence) that occurs while the inmate is within a correctional centre or correctional complex or is taken to be in the custody of the Governor of a correctional centre and is declared as a correctional centre offence by the regulations.¹⁶

Where it is alleged that an inmate has committed a correctional centre offence the Governor of the correctional centre may charge the inmate with the offence and conduct an inquiry into the allegation. If satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that an inmate is guilty of a correctional centre offence the Governor may apply a penalty provided for in the Act.¹⁷ Internal disciplinary procedures should be transparent, consistent, fair and have respect for natural justice.¹⁸

The inspection reviewed 12 months of data on Oberon CC offences in custody. Between 1 February 2019 and 31 January 2020 Oberon CC recorded 263 offences in custody. The most common offence related to acts against the good order of the prison (n=121, 46%). The next most common categories related to drugs (n=65, 24.7%) and smoking related offences. (n=53, 20.2%). See table 1 below for details.¹⁹

13 Information received from CSNSW 28 October 2020.

14 Information received from CSNSW 28 October 2020.

15 Division 6 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*; Part 6 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulations 2014*.

16 Section 51 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*.

17 Section 52 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*.

18 Inspector of Custodial Services (NSW), *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services in New South Wales*, June 2020, Standard 52.

19 Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020 (Table A7).

Table 1: Oberon Correctional Centre - breaches of correctional centre regulations by category
Period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020

Offence Category	Number	(%)
Charges against good order	121	46.0
Other drug charges	65	24.7
Smoking related	53	20.2
Property damage	13	4.9
Abusive behaviour	5	1.9
Failure to attend muster	5	1.9
Alcohol charges	1	0.4
Total	263	100%

The most common sanctions imposed on inmates for correctional centre offences at Oberon CC between 1 February 2019 and 31 January 2020 were off buy-ups (n=21, 36%). The next most common sanctions imposed were off contact visits (n=11, 19%) and off amenities (n=10, 17%). See Table 2 below for details.

Table 2: Oberon Correctional Centre - correctional centre sanctions by category
Period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020²⁰

Sanction Imposed	Number	%
Off buy-ups	21	36
Off contact visits	11	19
Off amenities	10	17
Confined to Cell	6	10
Off phone calls	5	9
Good Behaviour	4	7
Off Television	1	2
Total sanctions	58	100%

It was explained to the inspection team that the YAOP employs a therapeutic model in dealing with behaviour and indiscretions. If possible, official sanctions are avoided. Warnings are the preferred sanctions and the centre employs a staged process for penalties using case notes and reprimands as a first response sanction and seven days off buy-ups as a subsequent response, with the penalty being greater for subsequent offences.

The centre has low numbers of inmates who either refuse to work or are dismissed from work. It was

²⁰ Information provided by CSNSW dated 16 June 2020.

encouraging to hear that the Manager of Industries and industry overseers prefer to work with inmates and find them suitable work locations within the centre.

Inmate and officer interactions were generally positive. However, a small percentage of correctional officers acted in a punitive manner with younger inmates. Their attitude impacts on inmate progression through the YAOP and is contrary to the therapeutic environment of the YAOP. CSNSW is currently working on the culture of correctional centres and developing a training program for officers in inmate behaviour and custodial response styles in certain situations. Oberon CC has been identified as a pilot site for the program.

Contraband and drug testing

Over a 12 month period (1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020) there were 48 cases of drug related contraband detected in the centre. Tobacco (n=15; 31.3%) and buprenorphine (n=14; 29.2%) were the most commonly recorded. See Table 3 for details.²¹ Centre data records eight drug paraphernalia finds of which half were attributable to smoking implements (n=4; 50%).²²

Table 3: Oberon Correctional Centre – details of drug detection Period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020

Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Tobacco	15	31.3
Buprenorphine	14	29.2
Prescription Medication	5	10.4
GVM	4	8.3
Tablet Illicit	4	8.3
Other	3	6.2
Crystal	1	2.1
Cigarette	1	2.1
Powder	1	2.1
Total	48	100

CSNSW identifies drug use by inmates through targeted, random and program testing.²³ Oberon CC employs both targeted and random approaches to testing. Urinalyses results from 70 samples confirm buprenorphine (n=35) as being the drug most commonly consumed. The second highest being cannabis (n=16) with the remaining results attributable to small numbers of other illicit and prescription drugs.²⁴

Assaults and use of force

Oberon CC reports low numbers of assaults and use of force. Data provided recorded 18 incidents of assault over 12 months (1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020). 17 were inmate on inmate and one was an assault of an officer. Report on Government Services (ROGS) data 2018-2019 records the state average of

21 Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020 (Table A8.2).

22 Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020 (Table A8.3).

23 Corrective Services NSW, Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures, Testing inmates for drug use v1.2, (24 October 2019) 1.

24 Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020.

27 (inmate upon inmate) assaults per 100 prisoners.²⁵ Oberon CC sits below that average at approximately 12 (inmate upon inmate) assaults per 100 prisoners.²⁶

The centre also reports low rates of use of force (n=2) with no consequential injuries to inmates reported by Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JH&FMHN).²⁷

Segregation and separation

CSNSW is responsible for the care and safety of all inmates in correctional facilities. At times inmates are placed in segregation for the safety of others and the security of the centre.²⁸ Inmates may also be separated from other inmates for their care, control and management.²⁹

There were 14 periods of segregation over the 12 month period (1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020) at Oberon CC. The maximum time in segregation was 14 days and the lowest was three days. The average length of time in segregation was seven to nine days.³⁰

Oberon CC has a segregation unit with three cells for inmates on segregation or in need of separation. The cells can, and occasionally do, accommodate two inmates. Each cell has a shower and toilet and they are heated in the winter months. Inmates have daily access to a separately located outdoor exercise area. The segregation cells were dilapidated and in need of cleaning. There was peeling paint, rusted pipe marks and shower floors were in need of resurfacing.



Segregation cell



Shower in segregation cell

25 ROGS data records separate categories of 'serious assault' and 'assault'.

26 See Corrective Services Data Tables <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/justice/corrective-services>.

27 Clause 6.1 Corrective Services NSW, Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures, 13.7 Use of force v.1.8, (16 December 2017); interview with JH&FMHN staff.

28 Section 10 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*.

29 Section 78A *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999*; Part 4 Div 1 *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014*.

30 CSNSW CRES data Table A4 25 February 2020.

At-risk inmates

An inmate identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm must be managed in the least restrictive manner based on an objective assessment of their individual risk, needs, health and welfare. This principle is reflected in relevant CSNSW policy.³¹

Oberon records low numbers of inmates who are identified as either at-risk, self-harm or have a history of mental illness. In the 12 month period (1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020) two inmates self-harmed, two presented with a history of mental illness and three were placed on a Risk Intervention Team (RIT) Management Plan.³²

Oberon CC has a camera cell equipped with closed circuit television (CCTV) in the segregation unit which can be used to house inmates on a RIT Management Plan. The cell can accommodate two inmates if needed. An uncovered mattress was observed in the camera cell. All mattresses issued to inmates should be covered and even more so in camera cells where at-risk inmates are housed.

31 Corrective Services NSW, Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures, 3.7 Management of inmates at risk of self-harm or suicide v.1.2, (16 December 2017).

32 CSNSW CRES data Table B1 (Mental Health) 25 February 2020.

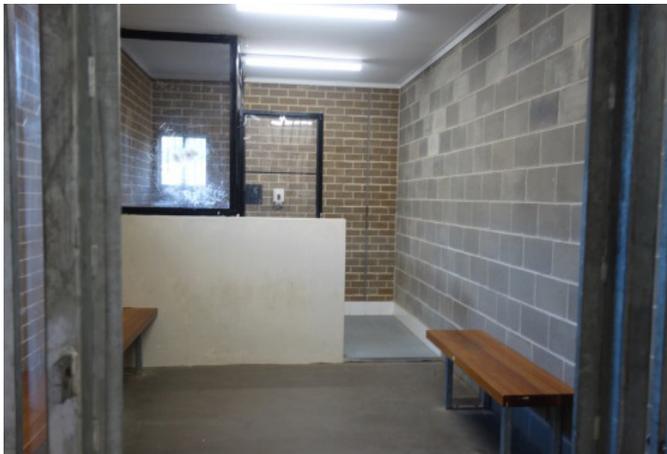
Reception and Transport

Reception and admission

Oberon CC receives inmates from other correctional centres. No inmates are received directly from court. New inmates are transferred to Oberon CC once a week in a centre transport vehicle that operates between Oberon CC and Bathurst CC. Inmates transferred to Oberon CC to participate in the YAOP arrive once a month from Sydney.

On arrival inmates are placed into a holding cell and are called separately to the admissions counter for interview by the admissions officer. CSNSW standard reception and risk assessment questionnaire is read out to the inmate and their answers recorded. If appropriate, the admissions officer will provide a brief overview of the YAOP to inmates enrolled in the program. Each inmate is provided with an Oberon CC information booklet and encouraged to familiarise themselves with centre procedures and requirements. All new admissions are then taken on an orientation walk of the centre before being issued with reception packs of linen and clothing. They receive their personal property later in the day.

Video footage of the reception process was viewed by the inspection team. The temperature of each inmate was recorded on reception and nursing staff provided a briefing on COVID -19 protocols at the centre. The reception process was performed in an orderly fashion and appeared to operate well. However the reception interviews were conducted in an area where officers and other inmates are present. This can compromise inmate privacy and it is recommended that reception procedures are reviewed to ensure inmate confidentiality.



Reception holding cell area



Reception area

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review reception procedures at Oberon CC to ensure inmate privacy and confidentiality of information.

Clothing and Bedding

Oberon CC was inspected by the ICS in 2015 as part of a review of clothing and bedding in NSW correctional centres.³³ The resulting Report made several recommendations around correctional centres maintaining adequate supplies of warm jackets, thermal underwear and warm bedding for inmates.³⁴

New admissions to Oberon CC are issued a linen pack. The pack contains two sheets, one pillowcase and two blankets. Due to the cold climate new and second hand doonas are meant to be available for purchase by inmates. However, doonas were unavailable at the time of inspection.

Clothing packs are offered to inmates. They generally include two t-shirts, singlets, shorts, track pants, sloppy joes and a winter jacket. Underwear, socks, beanie and gloves are issued on request. Jackets are provided to inmates year round, due to the cold climate.

It was unclear whether any stock management controls are employed at the centre as recommended in the *Clothing and Bedding Report*.³⁵ Moreover, there was evidence that clothing supplies were not adequately maintained, which was disappointing in light of previous ICS recommendations. It was reported during inspection that Oberon CC had a recent shoe, sock and underwear shortage. A follow up visit to Oberon CC in June 2020 revealed adequate stock levels of all clothing and doonas except socks. In preparation for the extremely cold conditions the winter months bring, Oberon CC also had electric blankets available for purchase by inmates.



Clothing stores



Warm jackets

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure centres are maintaining stock management and quality controls to ensure they can provide inmate clothing and bedding entitlements.

Transport and court escorts

The CSNSW transport vehicle arrives monthly at Oberon CC with new admissions for the YAOP. It travels from Sydney collecting inmates from the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre (MRRC) and other Sydney correctional centres. In addition, the centre also performs a weekly transport run to and from

33 NSW Inspector of Custodial Services, *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW* (Report, 2017). ('Clothing and Bedding Report').

34 Recommendations 5, 6 & 15, *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW*, June 2017; NSW Inspector of Custodial Services.

35 Recommendations 19 *Prison Greens: The clothing and bedding of inmates in NSW*, June 2017; NSW Inspector of Custodial Services.

Bathurst CC to transfer inmates with an upcoming court hearing via AVL and collect inmates who are transferred to Oberon CC via Bathurst CC.

The need to transfer inmates to Bathurst CC for court AVL has a substantial operational impact on the centre and inmates. AVL escorts disrupt inmate participation in the YAOP and the GLC as inmates generally need to stay several nights at Bathurst CC and in some cases up to two weeks.³⁶ In many cases, disruption to the YAOP results in the inmate having to repeat program components. This consequently extends completion of the program to beyond the scheduled 16 weeks and can affect YAOP intake numbers and completion rates.

A post inspection visit to Oberon CC revealed the construction of an AVL facility with two AVL suites. The installation of AVL facilities at Oberon CC will remove the need to transfer inmates to Bathurst. This is a positive move forward for Oberon CC.

³⁶ Interviews with staff and inmates 2020.

Care and Wellbeing

Accommodation and Infrastructure

Inmates reside in 12 open style units which can accommodate a total of 140 inmates. Ten units are positioned around the main compound and accommodate inmates on the YAOP. Two units are positioned at the back of the compound and the area is demarcated with perimeter fencing. The two units accommodate adult worker and work release inmates. These units differ slightly from the other accommodation units in that an ensuite bathroom is shared between two rooms. The other accommodation units are a mix of single room and double room accommodation. At the time of inspection 70 inmates were in double rooms and 50 inmates were in single room accommodation. Each unit has a communal kitchen, living, bathroom and laundry.



Cell – Accommodation Area



Common Room – Accommodation Area

Inmate accommodation units were generally well appointed however they were in need of repair in several areas including broken windows, exhaust fans and heating, damaged flooring in bathrooms and kitchens, and faulty hot water systems. Staff offices and interview rooms were also observed to have an extreme case of rising damp with rotting floor and skirting boards. The recent engagement by CSNSW of an external facilities management service has helped in having maintenance work performed. However ongoing maintenance is required of staff areas, inmate accommodation units and the segregation unit (see earlier ‘Segregation and separation’).

Another area in need of attention is ground maintenance and farming equipment. Some equipment is old, and in need of replacement or repair, which impacts the ability of inmates to perform ground maintenance and farming work. CSI will endeavour to conduct an audit of the ground maintenance and farming equipment with a view to repair or replace equipment as necessary. The centre has prepared and lodged capital grants funding applications with CSNSW.³⁷ Capital grants for fencing and equipment will keep industries operational and provide effective work and training environments.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW conduct:

- a) a maintenance audit of inmate accommodation and facilities at Oberon CC to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements;**

³⁷ Interviews with staff 2020.

- b) **regular maintenance at Oberon CC of segregation cells and the provision of adequate bedding; and**
- c) **an audit of essential ground maintenance and farming equipment at Oberon CC.**

Health Care

Due to its remote location, Oberon CC is not equipped to manage serious or chronic health conditions.³⁸ Inmates identified for placement at Oberon CC are reviewed by JH&FMHN staff to ensure they do not have a medical condition that would preclude them from being placed at Oberon.³⁹ The health centre at Oberon CC operates Monday – Friday, 8.00 am - 4.30 pm and has two registered nurses (.7 FTE and .3 FTE). Outside health centre hours, centre staff are able to contact the After Hours Nurse Manager (AHNM) or ROAMS for assistance.

The health centre provides limited services. Nursing staff provide primary health assessments, including chronic disease screening and administer medication. Nursing staff are supported by a primary care Nurse Practitioner visiting the centre on a monthly basis. At the time of inspection there were 15 patients on the waitlist for routine follow up appointments. The Nurse Unit Manager (NUM), who oversees the health centre, is based at Kirkconnell CC and visits fortnightly. The NUM is responsible for reviewing waitlists weekly to ensure that patients are seen in a timely manner.

An optometrist visits the centre every three months. There are no general practitioner services, dental services or mental health practitioner services at Oberon CC. Inmates requiring those services are transported by centre staff to Kirkconnell CC for treatment. There was concern among inmates and staff that unattended medical issues may result in the hospitalisation of inmates. In 2019 114 inmates were transferred to hospital and medical appointments. There is currently a project underway by JH&FMHN to educate nursing staff to make appropriate assessments.⁴⁰

A post inspection visit to Oberon CC revealed the installation of a telehealth monitor in the health centre. This has the potential to greatly enhance the delivery of health services to inmates at Oberon CC and reduce the operational impact of medical escorts and transfers on the centre. JH&FMHN have subsequently advised that a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner provides a fortnightly telehealth service to Oberon CC. There are currently five patients on the mental health telehealth wait list for routine follow up appointments.⁴¹

Recommendation: Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network continue to monitor the standard of health services delivered to inmates at Oberon CC.

Psychology Services

At the time of inspection there were no on-site psychology services at Oberon CC. If required, inmates were able to speak with the psychologist at Kirkconnell CC via a phone appointment. Regular psychology services are essential to Oberon CC given the cohort of young offenders. The centre would benefit from a psychologist in attendance as well as using AVL facilities for psychology services.

CSNSW have implemented a new strategy to address the challenge of delivering psychology services throughout the state. A mobile psychology team has been established to provide a 'fly in, fly out' (FIFO)

38 Interviews with staff 2020.

39 Information received from JH&FMHN 23 October 2020.

40 Interviews with staff 2020.

41 Information received from JH&FMHN 23 October 2020.

service, where needed. In addition new psychologist supervisory roles have been established and the recruitment of provisionally registered psychologists is occurring. A provisionally registered psychologist had recently been appointed at Kirkconnell CC to assist the senior psychologist with regular services to Oberon CC.⁴²

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure regular psychology services are accessible to inmates at Oberon CC.

Food

CSI provides meals to every inmate at Oberon CC. Inmates are also able to supplement CSI meals with weekly meat and other grocery buy-up. This enables inmates to use their own money to purchase certain items and prepare their own food, in the kitchen in their accommodation unit. This is a positive initiative for a minimum security centre, to assist in preparing men to return to the community on completion of their sentence. Unfortunately, young offenders on low wages with no family or financial support were unable to buy additional food, and missed out on learning these valuable life skills.

There was a need to replace broken appliances and supply adequate cooking appliances in accommodation units. Additional cooking appliances are also necessary to cater for various religious food handling and cooking practices around meat and pork.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure adequate cooking appliances are available in accommodation units at Oberon CC to cater for religious and cooking needs.

Spiritual and Pastoral Care

Maintaining faith is encouraged and supported by management and staff at Oberon CC. At the time of inspection there was no chaplaincy service at Oberon CC due to the recent retirement of the chaplain. In the interim, the chaplain from Lithgow CC visits Oberon CC weekly and conducts services. Recruitment for a new chaplain is underway but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Out of Cell Hours, Activities and Library

Inmates at Oberon CC spend an average time out of cell of 10.74 hours per day and 9.7 hours per day where a varied operation routine is employed.⁴³ This exceeds the state average for time out of cell of 10.4 hours for open security custodial areas (ROGS2018/19).⁴⁴

Oberon CC offers a variety of activities for inmates, seven days a week, between the hours of 11.00am and 7.00pm. It has a fully equipped gymnasium that includes free weights, weight machines, sports balls and boxing equipment. Other activities available to inmates include cricket, softball, basketball, football, table tennis, pool tables, DVDs and board games. Regular sporting competitions are enjoyed by inmates. Art and music is also provided and guitars are available for use by inmates. Due to poor television reception pay TV is available in every unit. Inmates pay a nominal fee for this access.

42 Information provided by CSNSW June 2020.

43 Varied operation routine is any change to the normal daily operation of the centre eg. staff sick leave, operational searches, or any other issue. It results in reduced time of cell for inmates.

44 Report on Government Services 2020, 8 Corrective Services data tables, 8A.13 Time out-of-cells (average hours per day), viewed September 2020, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/justice/corrective-services#downloads>

At the time of inspection inmates at Oberon CC had access to a small library with limited books and limited accessibility. The library space has recently expanded to include several reading tables. An inmate librarian has been employed to assist with administrative functions and opening hours of the library. On a recent visit we observed a variety of books and reading materials in the new library. This is a welcome development.



Library

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW ensure library services at Oberon CC are adequately maintained and readily accessible to inmates.

Cultural Activities

At the time of inspection Aboriginal inmates made up 9.4% of the population of Oberon CC. With the closure of Brewarrina Correctional Centre, CSNSW should seek to identify Aboriginal inmates that would benefit from the YAOP at Oberon CC.

The Regional Aboriginal Programs Officer (RAPO), responsible for the Northern District, visits Oberon CC every few months providing support to the Aboriginal delegate on the IDC and Aboriginal inmates generally. The RAPO coordinates and oversees annual NAIDOC celebrations at the centre.

Funding of \$500 is provided to the centre for Aboriginal cultural activities. With this funding, the centre commenced an Aboriginal Art program for Aboriginal inmates and other interested inmates. Several artworks were produced and are displayed in the visits area at Oberon CC. This is a positive program and additional funds should be made available.

Aboriginal inmates would also benefit from regular connection with a visiting Elder for spiritual and cultural support. The inspection team were informed that in the past Oberon CC had a visiting Elder program which was well received at the centre.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW increase the number of Aboriginal young people participating in the YAOP and reinstate the visiting Elder program at Oberon CC.

External Contacts and Communication

Visits

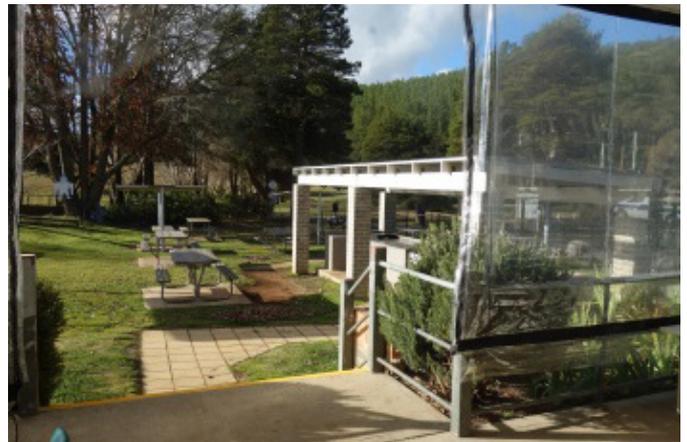
Visits at the centre are appropriate for minimum security inmates. Oberon CC offers all day visits on Saturday and Sundays for family and friends. Visitors can bring in food and are able to use the barbecues provided in the outside visits area. There is an additional fenced area for children to safely play.

To protect the health and safety of inmates and staff during COVID-19, CSNSW ceased all visits from families and friends to correctional centres. In recognition of the importance of family and friends to the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates, CSNSW introduced the use of tablet technology to allow inmates to see and speak with their family and friends.⁴⁵ There were some initial delays in the implementation of tablet visits at Oberon CC due to its remote location and associated internet connectivity issues. This resulted in a temporary facility being erected at the highest point of the centre complex to facilitate clear and continuous internet connection. Visits were operating by May 2020 with the centre facilitating 36 tablet sessions of 30 minutes duration per day.

Tablets should continue to be used at Oberon CC when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, as a supplement to in-person visits. Due to the remote location of the centre, tablet visits provide an opportunity for inmates to maintain a connection with family and friends who may otherwise not be able to visit regularly, or at all, due to cost or physical constraints. The recent introduction of AVL facilities at Oberon CC will also enable inmates, whose families and friends are unable to visit the centre or are overseas, to see their families.



Visits area



Outdoor visits area

Phone access

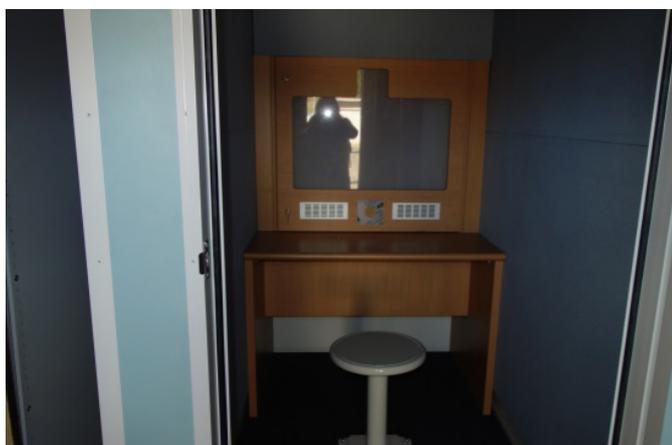
Oberon CC Centre has five phones in the compound area and one in the gym. Due to the long out of cell hours at the centre, this is an adequate number of phones to provide equitable access to inmates. Free phone calls were also made available to inmates to maintain contact with their families when in-person visits were suspended due to COVID-19. This is good practice and allowed inmates and their families to be kept informed of each other's health and safety.

⁴⁵ Commissioner's Instruction 2020/15, 'Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Interim Measure – Temporary inmate use of tablets with SIM cards in correctional centre visiting sections for social visits' 27 March 2020.

Access to lawyers and legal resources

All inmates at Oberon CC are sentenced. There is however still a need for some inmates to obtain legal advice and appear in court or before the SPA. The remote location of the centre does not lend itself to in-person legal visits and, until recently inmates could only access their legal representatives via telephone. This was because there were no AVL suites at the centre due to connectivity issues. Since the inspection two AVL suites have been constructed at Oberon CC and connectivity issues have been addressed.

The recent construction of two AVL suites (one being available for court appearances) is a welcome and necessary operational asset for the centre. The centre's ability to facilitate AVL conference calls will simplify processes and provide a confidential environment for inmates to communicate with their lawyer. It should also negate the need to transfer inmates to Bathurst CC for court or SPA appearances.



AVL Suite



AVL Suite

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW explore the continued use of tablets at Oberon CC to facilitate family contact and support.

Complaints

Inmates are able to collectively raise issues through the Inmate Delegate Committee (IDC). The IDC consists of an inmate representative from each accommodation unit and an Aboriginal delegate. It meets regularly with management representatives and appeared to be functioning well. However, a review of IDC minutes indicated a number of concerns remained unresolved for lengthy periods. Unresolved IDC issues and other individual complaints can also be raised with the Official Visitor or NSW Ombudsman.

Oberon CC is visited monthly by an Official Visitor. Inmates knew of and understood the role of the Official Visitor. During COVID-19 additional services were put in place by the ICS, with the cooperation of CSNSW, for inmates to contact the Official Visitor, through the ICS, via the free call phone known as the Common Auto Dial List (CADL) and by mail. Inmates also have free phone contact with the NSW Ombudsman via the CADL.

Employment, Programs and Education

The Young Adults Offender Program

The YAOP has operated at Oberon CC for over 30 years. The YAOP is central to the operations of Oberon CC and is an integral part of CSNSW's plan to manage young offenders. The YAOP is a three stage program that is based around vocational education; industries and employment; programs addressing criminogenic needs⁴⁶; custodial behaviour and the Gurnang Life Challenge (GLC). The GLC core elements include:

- Wilderness expeditions which take place at each stage of the program. They are 'Kick Start' (level C) and 'Carpe Diem' (level B) which are both 2 day overnight camps and 'Motivator' (level A) which is a 3 day 2 night camp.
- Experiential learning of 10 half day sessions called Co-Operation (CO-OPS). Inmates are invited to participate in various adventure challenges including high ropes and abseiling. Participants determine their level of involvement in any challenge.
- Personal Growth involving 8 half day theory sessions.
- Health Information Workshop or Health Survival Tips.

The YAOP is a 16 week program. A new intake group is received monthly with four intakes operating at any one time. During the 16 weeks participants will be required to progress through three program levels and complete three wilderness expeditions. Participants cannot progress to the next program level until they have successfully completed the level in which they are enrolled. Program levels commence at C and finish at A. On completion of each level a report is prepared and participants are assessed on their work ethic, GLC core elements, vocational education, responsibility and criminogenic program undertakings. Reports are discussed with participants and they are either progressed to the next level or required to repeat the level.

The Manager of Services and Programs (MOSP) at Oberon CC assists CSNSW Classification and Placement in identifying young adult offenders who are suitable to undertake the YAOP. Participants must be sentenced, aged 18-25, have a C2 classification and a minimum period of five months to serve before being eligible for release. Despite the program's longevity there appear to be some challenges around inmate selection and completion rates.

The EQUIPS suite of programs is the principal source of intervention for addressing inmates criminogenic needs consisting of EQUIPS Addiction, EQUIPS Aggression and EQUIPS Foundation. The EQUIPS suite of programs have been adapted for the YAOP. Program intervention is determined at an inmate's induction interview to the YAOP and is further detailed in their case plan. Table 4 details the offender programs currently delivered at Oberon CC.⁴⁷

46 Criminogenic needs are crime associated factors which are strongly correlated to the risk of offending eg substance use, unemployment, social connections.

47 Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020 (Table A10).

Table 4: Offender Programs delivered at Oberon CC from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020

Program	Participants
Addictions support group	53
EQUIPS Addiction	48
EQUIPS Aggression	52
EQUIPS Foundation	193
Gurnang Life Challenge GLCv2015	208
Health Survival Tips	140
NEXUS v13	11
Positive lifestyle program	60

As part of the YAOP inmates must also participate in work at the centre. YAOP participants currently work two days per week and earn minimal wages. There is limited, if any, opportunity for vocational training (see discussion earlier in 'Education and Training'). If inmates are unwilling to work or are dismissed they are counselled and case managed into a suitable work environment. Most inmates return to work. Those who do not can fail the program.

Another important component of the YAOP is mentoring. The YAOP employs older inmates in the position of an Adult Nucleus (NUC) or an Adult Nucleus in training (NUT) to mentor the younger men and support them through each stage of the YAOP. There are two resident NUCs or NUTs in each accommodation unit in the main compound. The program seeks to provide a safe, supportive and encouraging environment and NUCs/NUTs play an essential role in providing this to participants.

The ICS reviewed YAOP completion rates over 12 months from January 2019 to February 2020. During that period there were 11 intakes to the YAOP. The total number of participants were 168 inmates of which just under half graduated (44%; n=75). The other participants either failed or did not complete the program. Further analysis of completion rates is required to identify the reason for failures and non-completions.

The MOSP is responsible for planning and co-ordinating the day-to-day provision of all services and programs to inmates in the YAOP. The MOSP is based at Lithgow CC and assisted at Oberon CC by two Services and Programs Officers (SAPO) who are based at the centre. The SAPOs facilitate many aspects of the YAOP. Those duties include conducting induction sessions, inmate program assessments, program delivery, interviews and associated reports for all participants on completion of each of the three stages. Other staff involved with the YAOP includes case managers, educators, industry overseers, adventure facilitators, classification and correctional officers. The multi-disciplinary nature of the YAOP requires coordination and direction to ensure success and continued improvement of the program. This was commonly referred to throughout the inspection as important and in need of attention. The Inspector concurs that responsibility and accountability for the YAOP needs to be clearly articulated. To assist with co-ordination of the YAOP CSNSW propose to create a Senior SAPO position at Oberon CC. A senior officer is required to coordinate all aspects of the YAOP. It is essential for the position to be based at Oberon CC to manage daily operations and resolve issues as they arise.



Gurnang Life Challenge



High ropes challenge

Despite overwhelming support for the YAOP from inmates and staff at Oberon CC, there was acknowledgement of the need to review the program. The core components of the YAOP appear to be valid and there is anecdotal evidence of change among inmates. Notwithstanding this, it is important that the program is reviewed to ensure its philosophy is clear, its core elements remain valid and it is achieving desired outcomes. A review of the YAOP would also allow for operational alignment with High Intensity Program Units and other therapeutic programs in CSNSW correctional facilities. Other matters for consideration include eligibility and suitability, inmate participation payments, and the division between program time, education and employment and measures of success.

It is also important to review program offerings to ensure that offending behaviour is being adequately addressed and in a culturally appropriate manner. Some inmates felt the YAOP did not address their drug and alcohol issues and a domestic abuse program is not offered. CSNSW has commenced a review of the YAOP since the inspection. This is supported by the ICS.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the YAOP and establish an Oberon CC based coordinator role for the YAOP.

Case Management

Oberon CC has three Case Management Unit (CMU) officers (one Senior Case Management Officer, and two Case Management Officers) who have individual caseloads of up to 55 inmates. Their role is to develop individualised case plans and assist inmates to engage in programs and meet the goals listed in their plan. Inmates are allocated a CMO within two business days of arrival at Oberon CC. Many inmates arrive at the centre without a case plan, which requires the attention of the CMU. This is a concern as many inmates have been in custody for some time before being transferred to Oberon CC. CMU use the Planning for Adjustment, Responsivity, Reintegration, Criminogenic Needs and Communication (PARRCC) assessment tool to identify inmate needs and assess the extent of intervention required.⁴⁸ Challenges for the CMU in developing comprehensive case plans include shortfalls in opportunities for job readiness qualifications for inmates at Oberon CC.

Case plans are also required for the cohort of older inmates at Oberon CC who are not participating in the YAOP. These inmates are generally focussed on employment, either in the centre or through work release arrangements in the local community. The inspection found that some of these men reach Oberon CC, a minimum security centre, without having been previously identified as needing to complete programs that

⁴⁸ PARRCC is an OIMS based assessment tool consisting of 30 face-to-face questions that assess inmates' functional needs. CNSW informed ICS the PARRCC assessment has been revised as part of Intervention Pathways and will be operational in the second half of 2020.

address particular criminogenic needs. Problems occur when it is identified that their criminogenic needs have not been adequately addressed and that they must complete a particular program before being eligible for parole.⁴⁹ This is because there are no programs available at Oberon CC outside of the YAOP. Thus inmates who may have already progressed to working in the community are required to transfer to another correctional centre to complete a program. Many are transferred to Mannus CC or Dawn de Loas CC and it is not uncommon for them to exceed their earliest possible release date. This is a system failure and should be addressed by either ensuring inmates have completed their programs before they are placed at Oberon CC or delivering programs at Oberon CC.

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW consider the provision of programs for adult inmates at Oberon CC.

Employment

Oberon CC encourages all inmates to participate in work. The centre operates several CSNSW industries (CSI) which provide 75 inmate employment positions. Those industries are timber production, agriculture, afforestation, kitchen/ laundry and building maintenance. In addition there are work release opportunities for approved inmates. The centre is also keen to pursue community projects which will provide supervised work environments for inmates.

Timber production is managed by an overseer and a senior officer. It employs 30 inmates and has a number of local contracts. Inmates are trained in the operation of machinery, warehousing of materials and can also attain a forklift licence. The centre recently secured a new contract that will provide more employment and traineeship opportunities for inmates in IT software for the design and cutting of timber. Inmates will also have opportunities to participate in work release with the contractor. The former gym and activities building will be repurposed to provide an additional timber production site.

Agriculture has one overseer who holds qualifications in horticulture and employs 15 inmates. The centre has a herd of 45 Angus cattle and grows Sebago potatoes. Other produce includes herbs, cucumbers and tomatoes. Inmates are able to participate in a horticulture traineeship program and graduate with a certificate II in horticulture. There are currently 13 inmates enrolled in the 12 month training program which is overseen by TAFE.

The centre has submitted capital grants applications for fencing to protect horticulture crops and upgrade equipment. Achieving those grants will help secure further work contracts for the centre and allow further work opportunities and skills training for inmates.

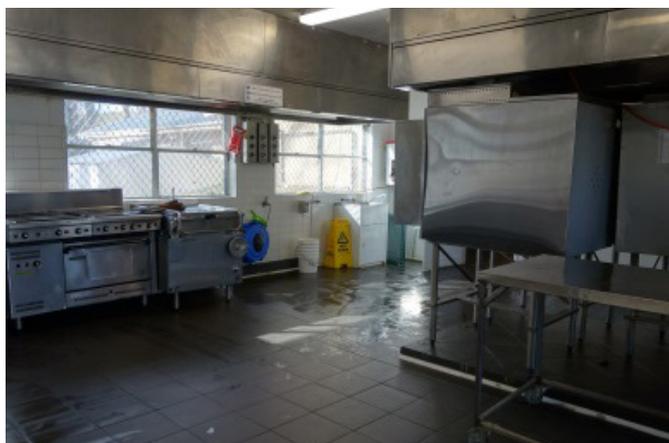
Afforestation employs 15 inmates and has one overseer. Afforestation work includes road side pruning as part of the fire trail maintenance for Forestry Corporation NSW. Inmates also receive chainsaw training and can attain a qualification.

The kitchen and laundry operates seven days per week and provide employment opportunities for 15 inmates. The kitchen overseer is a qualified chef. Kitchen employees prepare lunches and reheat evening meals for all inmates at Oberon CC. The kitchen also operates a recycling service and worm farm to assist with waste management. Building maintenance employs 15 inmates to assist with maintenance requests around the centre.

At the time of inspection there were no community projects at Oberon CC. Community projects could provide another source of employment and help with fire prevention measures in the district. Consideration

⁴⁹ Figure 1 shows 16.7% (n=17) of inmates in the period 1/2/19 to 31/1/20 were transferred out of Oberon CC due to program needs.

has previously been given to the establishment of a community project unit at Oberon CC.⁵⁰ The proposal was unable to be supported at the time due to inadequate funds to meet the creation of an additional staff member to supervise inmate workers, purchase suitable tools and equipment and provide adequate transportation.⁵¹ The creation of community projects should be considered as another source of employment for inmates at the centre.



Kitchen



Kitchen



Horticulture green house



Potatoes

Education and Training

The Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia require education programs to ‘be matched to prisoners’ educational level and learning needs, and aligned with vocational training that assists them in gaining employment post release’.⁵² This is why education and training is a core element of the YAOP and should also form part of older workers’ case plans at Oberon CC.

CSI manages correctional industries within NSW correctional centres and is also responsible for education services. The Education Services Officer (ESO) at Oberon CC is based at Lithgow CC and an assistant education officer is based at Oberon CC. The ESO identifies, and manages, external service providers

⁵⁰ CSNSW informs that discussions occurred in 2018 between CSI, CSNSW benchmarking team and Oberon CC. Information received from CSNSW 28 October 2020.

⁵¹ Information received from CSNSW 28 October 2020.

⁵² Clause 5.1.11 Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia 2018.

(BSI Learning and TAFE) to deliver education and vocational training courses to inmates. BSI Learning is contracted to deliver literacy and numeracy, digital literacy, food safety and traffic control courses at Oberon CC.

It was reported that education and industry staff, together with TAFE and BSI Learning, work collaboratively to deliver education and training to inmates. However the remoteness of Oberon CC was raised as an issue that can impact on program offerings and delivery.

During the 12 month period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020 147 vocational certificates were attained by inmates at Oberon CC. The most awarded vocational accreditation was for a forklift licence (n=45; 30%), followed by chainsaws (n=29; 20%) and food safety (n=26; 18%). Certificates were also awarded for first aid (n=10; 7%), white card (n=10; 7%) and test and tag (n=8; 5%). See table 5 for details.⁵³

Table 5: Oberon Correctional Centre – Offender Vocational Training Certificates attained by inmates. Period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020.

Training certificate	Number	%
VTP - Chainsaws	29	20
WPT - First Aid	10	7
WPT - Food Safety	26	18
WPT - Forklift	45	30
WPT - Skidsteer	19	13
WPT - Test and Tag	8	5
WPT – White Card	10	7
Total Vocational Certificates	147	100%

The BSI literacy and numeracy course runs for a set 10 week block which once commenced does not allow further participants to join until after completion of the 10 week period. Those inmates can join the next 10 week program set. This contributes to lower completion rates and can create issues for inmates trying to synchronise course completion within the 16 week timeframe of the YAOP. It would be beneficial to the YAOP if literacy and numeracy courses operated on a rolling cycle of continuous enrolments.⁵⁴ This should be considered as part of the review of the YAOP.

Vocational training opportunities were reported to have reduced in recent years. Earlier offerings at the centre included certificates for back hoe, excavator, brick laying and asbestos removal. In 2020, white card and test and tag were removed from the offender vocational training offered at Oberon CC and warehouse logistics was introduced.

There was acknowledgement that vocational education and training assists inmates obtain employment opportunities on release. Increasing the employability of inmates, through delivering opportunities to attain vocational skills whilst incarcerated, will help CSNSW meet the NSW Premier’s priority to reduce recidivism

⁵³ Data provided NSW Corrective Services Research and Evaluation Services (CRES) 25 February 2020 (Table A11.1).

⁵⁴ John Morony CC has rolling enrolments. Silverwater Women’s CC has staggered enrolments for Digital Literacy classes. Information received from CSNSW 28 October 2020.

by five percent by 2023.⁵⁵ Industry overseers at Oberon CC were clearly committed to supporting inmates to gain skills that will help their employability on release. Oberon CC offers vocational education courses to support timber, afforestation, horticulture, kitchen/ laundry and building maintenance. Many of these courses were offered to older adult workers as they were employed in industries at the centre.

It is important for education services to support self-directed tertiary learning, and distance education is supported at Oberon CC. However problems in accessing web based learning and assessments have deterred inmates. Inmates must have external support from family or friends to pursue distance education. Recent advice from CSNSW indicates that internet connectivity issues at Oberon CC are being addressed. This will greatly benefit distance education.

Overall the inspection found it was unclear how education and employment was meant to be incorporated as a core element of the YAOP other than participants should work two days per week. Greater clarity is required in this regard and should be addressed in the review of the YAOP.

Classification

All inmates are classified to determine their security rating and the centre at which they are best placed and managed. Classification is reviewed annually and where appropriate an inmate's security rating is changed and/ or they are transferred to another centre.

Being a minimum security centre, Oberon CC accommodates only inmates who hold either a C2 or C3 classification and therefore need not be confined by a physical barrier and require little or no supervision.⁵⁶ At the time of inspection there were 107 (83.6%) C2 inmates and 21 (16.4%) C3 inmates.⁵⁷

Classification and placement at Oberon CC is managed by the Classification and Placement Officer (CAPO). Two administration officers at Oberon CC who have completed classification training are able to assist with the classification and placement process. The CAPO is responsible for monitoring, listing and producing documentation for annual classification reviews considered by the Classification and Placement Team (CPT). The CAPO is also intrinsically involved in the YAOP. This is unique to Oberon CC. The CAPO oversees GLC inductions, and inmate assessments at each stage of the YAOP. Inductions involve interviewing inmates and preparation of information for GLC facilitators. Stage assessments include preparing all documents for inmate reviews on completion of each of the three stages of the YAOP. Each stage is four weeks and reports must be prepared by the responsible officer around work performance, custodial behaviour, GLC core elements, program participation and vocational education. The dedication and commitment of the CAPO and classification team is commendable however greater clarity is required in relation to the basis of assessment of each stage of the YAOP. As discussed this should form part of the review of the YAOP.

The CPT considers applications for early classification, change of placement or review of 'escape' classification and makes a recommendation as to the grant or refusal of a change of classification. The recommendation requires ratification by the MOS at Oberon CC and final approval from the CSNSW Deputy Manager Classification and Placement who approves, varies or declines the recommendations of the Oberon CPT.

55 Premier's Priorities; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/reducing-recidivism-prison-population>

56 C2 inmates need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times, and have some supervision. C3 inmates need not be confined by a physical barrier at all times and who need not be supervised, CSNSW Policy for Inmate Classification and Placement EDRMS D19/0476100 Version 1.0 25 October 2019, page 8.

57 Information provided by CSNSW 25 February 2020.

In the twelve months 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020 the CPT at Oberon CC considered 128 classification reviews and 102 changes of placement. A little over a third of the inmates (34.4%; n=44) were successful in reclassification from C2 to C3, almost a third (31.2%; n=40) were regressed in classification (in conjunction with a change of placement) and a little over a third (34.4%; n=44) maintained their C2 classification.⁵⁸

The inspection found that Oberon CPT will not recommend a review of classification from a C2 classification to a C3 unless an inmate has been granted a section 6(2) off complex order⁵⁹ and completed all requirements of the YAOP. The section 6(2) order prerequisite may stem from a misapprehension that C3 classifications are only to be given to inmates to participate in work release and that availability and eligibility for work release determines the numbers of C3 classifications at Oberon CC.

Classification decisions should be based on consideration of information around an inmate's institutional behaviour, response to programs, risk and likelihood of escape and should not include arbitrary prerequisites. It is not a requirement of CSNSW for an inmate to have a section 6(2) order prior to consideration for a C3 classification.⁶⁰ CPT staff would benefit from training to address any misunderstanding in the interpretation and delivery of CSNSW Inmate Classification and Placement policy and procedures. CPT would also benefit from the training of senior correctional officers to enable their participation in CPT hearings. CPT hearings cannot proceed without the attendance of a senior correctional officer. At times classification hearings have been delayed due to the absence of suitably trained officers.⁶¹

In addition to classification reviews, the CPT reviews applications for change of placement. Applications are generally considered and determined around graduation of inmates from the YAOP. Due to the limited capacity of Oberon CC, inmates are assessed for transfer to an appropriate centre to make room for incoming participants of the YAOP. Data provided on inspection indicates that in the twelve months from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020 several change of placement applications per month have been for reasons other than completion of the YAOP. Some are attributable to inadequate screening processes where inmates who have mental health or chronic health issues have been inappropriately assessed for placement at Oberon CC. Other reasons relate to safety and the need to separate and transfer inmates from Oberon CC to another centre. During the twelve months from 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020 there were 102 unscheduled transfers from Oberon CC.⁶² The most common reason for transfer was attributable to an inmate's institutional behaviour (37%; n= 38). The second most common reason was an inmate being at risk of assault or harm if they remain at Oberon CC (28.4%; n=29). See Figure 1 for details.

58 Data provided by Oberon CC – 2019 and 2020 Classification Register statistics.

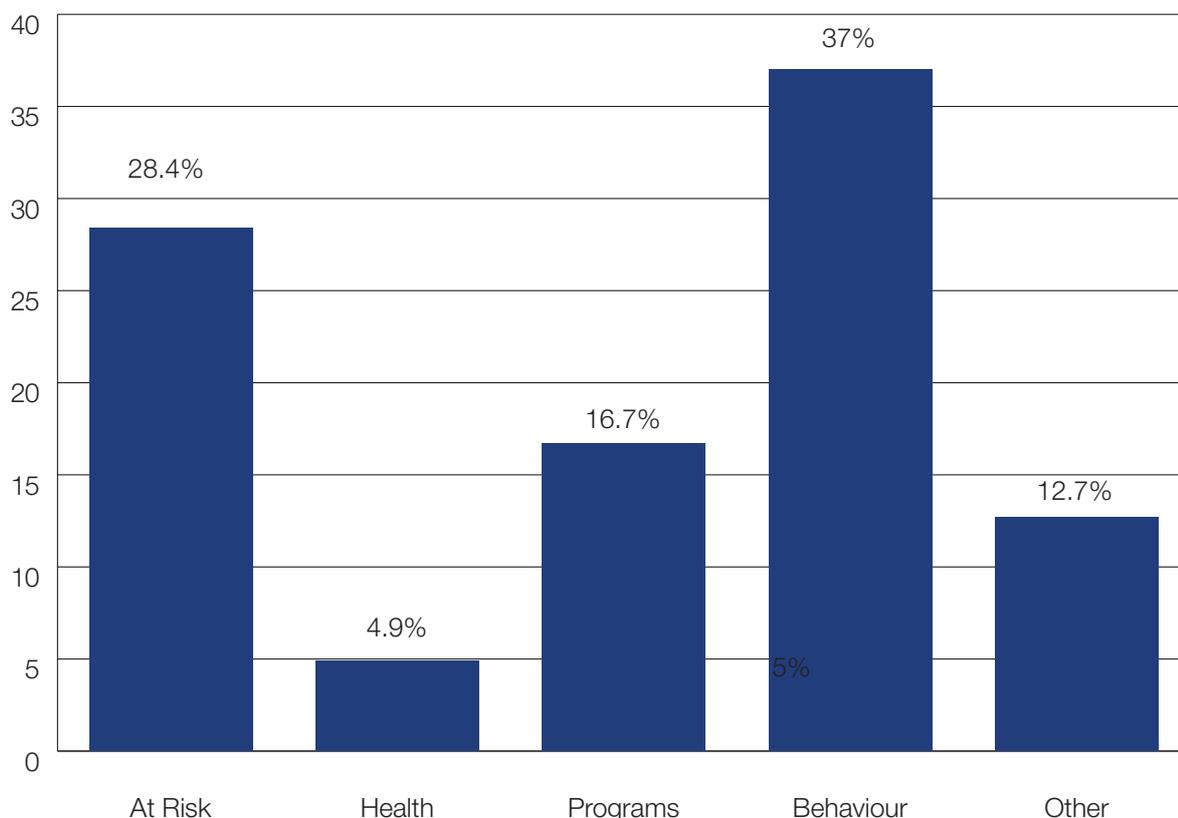
59 A section 6.2 order is made in accordance with the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, directing an inmate to carry out work in or outside the centre, as the Governor considers suitable.

60 Clause 12-14A Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014; Offender Management and Services, CSNSW Inmate Classification and Placement – Progression to C3 and Category 1, and External Leave Programs (ELPs) at page 20, 25 October 2019, EDRMS: D19/0525999.

61 In the 12 month period (1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020) 207 CPT applications were listed of which 7 did not proceed.

62 Data provided by Oberon CC.

Figure 1 Oberon CC Change of Placements (including early reviews) – Period February 2019 - January 2020



At Risk – inmate at risk of assault or harm; Health – General health and MH issues unable to be accommodated at Oberon CC; Behaviour – inappropriate institutional behaviour, offence in custody etc; Other – eg compassionate reasons, appeal, fail YAOP, management direction,

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW review the adequacy of training of all Classification and Placement staff and senior officers at Oberon CC.

Preparation for release

Oberon CC is responsible for preparing a mix of young adult offenders and mature older inmates for release and return to the community. This is why it is so important to ensure both younger and older inmates at the centre are participating in programs, education, employment, and pro-social activities while maintaining strong family connections.

Many young offenders who complete the YAOP at Oberon CC are transferred to other correctional centres before they are released from custody. Approximately one quarter of YAOP participants are released from Oberon CC. These young offenders and the older inmate cohort often require assistance in planning for their return to the community.

Community Corrections at Oberon CC work collaboratively with the CMU and SAPOs at Oberon CC to ensure that adequate pre-release planning occurs through the NEXUS program. NEXUS is an offender-centred approach to reintegration, during which staff assist inmates to plan their release back into their community. With the assistance of a SAPO and community corrections, a service plan is developed with the inmate. It addresses reintegration needs such as housing, finances, transport, education, support, education and employment, health, property and clothing, parole and immigration. External service providers are identified and connections are established with the inmate. During the twelve months 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020 eleven inmates completed the NEXUS program at Oberon CC. This

is a low completion rate for a pre-release centre and indicates that not all inmates completed the NEXUS program before being released.

For older inmate workers at the centre, work release and community projects are a key element of their pre-release strategy. Oberon CC provides several opportunities for inmates to participate in work release. Work release allows selected inmates to attend employment in the community prior to their release from custody. There are five local businesses providing work release opportunities for inmates and a cap of 15 positions at Oberon CC. The local bus company drives inmates to and from their work locations. Inmates pay a fee for the service.⁶³

Work release was suspended across NSW in March 2020 during the inspection, to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to correctional centres. This has impacted inmates at Oberon CC (and other centres) who are preparing for release. Several inmates at Oberon CC were intending to continue working at local businesses upon release. With unemployment rates increasing in the general community, it will be important to maintain and secure work release opportunities for inmates when it is safe to do so.⁶⁴

Recommendation: Corrective Services NSW maintain work release opportunities and consider the creation of community projects at Oberon CC.

63 Section 7A of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* allows for inmates to contribute to the costs of administering their work release and their imprisonment during the employment period.

64 Trading Economics *Australia Jobless Rate Highest Since 1998* 'Australia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged up to 7.5% in July 2020 from 7.4% in June and compared with market consensus of 7.8%. This was the highest jobless rate since November 1998, amid the severe impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The number of unemployed increased by 15,700 to 1,009,40.' 13 August 2020.



**Inspector of
Custodial Services**

Produced by Inspector of Custodial Services

Level 3, 50 Phillip Street
Sydney NSW 2000

P: 02 8061 9387

W: www.custodialinspector.justice.nsw.gov.au