



COVID-19 Corrective Services Update

The Department of Justice, Corrective Services responded to the State Government's declaration of a state of emergency by implementing a range of measures aimed at protecting those in our care and our staff from the risks associated with COVID-19.

A COVID-19 Taskforce was established to lead our response to the emergency, working in collaboration with the Department of Health, Department of Communities and the WA Police Force, along with participation in the State Emergency Coordination Group.

The measures implemented by the Taskforce have carefully followed health and government guidelines for reducing the significant risks posed to the custodial estate by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key principle has been reducing and controlling any movements in and out of our facilities and adapting normal routines to follow government advice. Screening processes have been boosted and cleaning regimes and hygiene practices enhanced.

To date there have been no positive cases of COVID-19 in our prison estate.

It is recognised that this is a difficult time for prisoners and their families but the security, safety and wellbeing of staff and prisoners remains the highest priority for Corrective Services.

Normal routines will be re-established once it is deemed safe to do so in the custodial environment.

Prison Regimes

The Department of Justice, Corrective Services is maintaining 'business as usual' where possible within the context of the pandemic and the declared State of Emergency. A number of restrictions have been implemented across all sites in WA to reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering our facilities. The restrictions are consistent with those introduced to prisons across Australia for infection control. Many of these restrictions have been introduced into prisons

The COVID-19 response for Western Australia's custodial estate includes:

- Suspension of all social visits
- Official visits being adapted to comply with social distancing guidelines
- Screening all persons who enter prisons, including temperature testing
- Screening of incoming prisoners and detainees on reception by healthcare staff
- Testing for COVID-19 where required
- Establishing isolation units for the care of individuals presenting with flu-like symptoms
- Suspending Section 95 Activities, except for work supporting COVID-19 efforts
- Suspending Prisoner Employment Program (PEP) and Reintegration Leave (RIL)

- Restrictions on a non-essential movements in and out of the prison estate.
- Greater use of video conference technology for courts and legal/professional visits
- Chaplaincy and other religious support compliant with social distancing
- Sporting activities restricted to non-contact
- Enhanced cleaning of facilities and access to hand sanitiser and personal hygiene education

Hygiene and Health

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection, the Department of Justice, Corrective Services has implemented a strong, continuous regime of cleaning across prisons with a particular focus on high-traffic areas including points of entry.

There has been increased focus on hygiene education and improving the health literacy of prisoners in line with State and Federal Government advice on hand washing, social distancing where practical and coughs and sneezes etiquette.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including facemasks, gloves and hand sanitiser has been distributed across all sites and advice provides to ensure appropriate use when custodial staff are dealing with prisoners.

Vulnerable prisoners and detainees with a chronic disease or conditions associated with increased risk of a COVID-19 infection have been identified and alerts added within the Total Offender Management System (TOMS) to assist with population management.

To continue to support those in our care affected by issues of Mental Health and/or Alcohol and Other Drugs (MHAOD), plans have been developed for continued services including nursing, consultant psychiatrists, Psychological Health Services and Prison Support Services including Aboriginal Visitors Scheme.

Our Health Service Response Plan to COVID-19 ensures continued delivery of core services during the pandemic.

A Mental Health wellbeing package has been prepared to assist prisoners and detainees during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Visitations

A number of strategies were implemented to support prisoners and detainees impacted by the suspension of social visits on 23 March 2020. The strategies ensure people in our care are able to maintain contact with their loved ones.

The strategies implemented following the suspension of social visits include:

- Free telephone calls via the Prisoner Telephone System for all prisoners and detainees
- Equitable telephone access to all prisoners/detainees with particular focus on those who are most impacted by the changes
- Increased access to free mail. All sentenced prisoners/detainees can send 16 letters per month to family members and/or loved ones
- Remand prisoners continued access to unlimited mail

- The staged rollout of e-visits such as Skype and other technologies
- Increased utilisation of Video Court Conferencing

Release of Prisoners

Once a prisoner/detainee has completed their sentence in full they will be released under the standard process.

Where a prisoner/detainee is identified as having flu-like symptoms, or has tested positive to COVID-19, the Department will develop a transition plan or reintegration plan. This plan may include identification of a place where social isolation can be conducted in line with the latest Government medical advice

The Department is continuing to ensure that released prisoners are supported by service providers post release. Where a prisoner needs to return to their community, including into bio-security zones, the Department works with other agencies (WAPOL, Department of Communities and Department of Health), our contracted service providers and Aboriginal community stakeholders to manage the release. Particular care is provided to manage young people from BHDC returning to remote communities affected by biosecurity directions.

A process map has been developed in partnership with the police and other stakeholders to inform decision makers of the process for the release of prisoners and detainees into bio security regions and returning to remote communities. The Chief BIO security officer has agreed that in some circumstances adult prisoners and detainees can serve their 14 day isolation period whilst in custody subject to a number of restrictions.

Community Corrections and Youth Justice Operations

The Department continues to maintain its statutory obligations for the management of offenders subject to community orders and servicing the Courts and the Prisoner Review Board (PRB). Some variations to practice have been implemented to comply with current government COVID-19 guidelines and advice.

A pandemic management plan has been developed for both Adult Community Corrections (ACC) and Youth Justice Operations.

Measures taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection for staff and offenders in the community include:

- Offender and third party attendance at ACC centres on an “as required basis”. Attendees are asked screening questions e.g. whether they have been in contact with a known COVID-19 patient or whether they have any flu-like symptoms.
- Face to face supervision of offenders (with the relevant precautions in place) at centres in accordance with the assessed risk the offender poses to the community. Telephone contact/supervision occurs on a case by case basis for those offenders considered suitable for this type of supervision contact based upon relevant risk factors.

- Home visits undertaken for both Community Corrections and Youth Justice Services where necessary and with pre-visit assessments to determine any risk factors. PPE is provided to officers for home visits with the recommendation the offender/occupants be interviewed in accordance with social distancing guidelines.
- A number of external service program providers either reducing or temporarily suspending services to offenders while ACC continues to provide brief intervention and utilises offender worksheets to address offending behaviours.
- Program Delivery for community based service providers being reduced in BHDC and in the community while internal program delivery has been enhanced.
- Electronic Monitoring of offenders continues with no change other than the use of appropriate PPE.
- Some community work continuing in a reduced capacity in accordance with social distancing measures.

Next Steps

The security, safety and wellbeing of staff and all those in our care remains the key priority for the Department of Justice, Corrective Services.

Every prison and facility has adapted operational plans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and these plans are reviewed each day.

Measures that have been implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering the custodial estate will be maintained until it is deemed safe to return to normal operations.