

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Portfolio:	Corrections
Witness:	Mr Ben Carroll
Committee member:	Mr Tim Richardson
Page/s of transcript:	7

Relevant text:

Mr RICHARDSON: I might run out of time for this last one, so this might be on notice, but this is going to women prisoners, budget paper 3, pages 81 and 90, which you have outlined, and mental health support for women. We know women prisoners experience a number of specific issues, including complex and varied mental health issues. You might have to take this on notice, but can you tell us how the investment in the correction system responds to these needs?

Answer:

The Government has invested significantly in improving the provision of mental health services in the women's prison system in recognition of the fact that women within the corrections system have high prevalence rates of severe psycho-social distress and mental health issues.

This investment includes the establishment of:

- a Health and Wellbeing precinct at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre that contains the new Marmak unit – a 20-bed specialist inpatient mental health unit with two additional independent living areas; and
- the new 48-bed Rosewood unit, accommodating women with mental health needs, those requiring more intensive out-patient mental health support, and women with a cognitive impairment or personality disorder. The unit has a range of design features, including a sensory room, therapeutic outdoor areas and single cells, tailored for the needs of female prisoners with complex needs including mental health issues and cognitive impairment.

In addition, in the 2019-20 Budget, Government has invested almost \$5 million to increase the provision of mental health services to women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. This will provide for additional services in the form of psychiatrists as well as forensic and primary mental healthcare nurses.

Portfolio:	Corrections
Witness:	Dr Cassar
Committee member:	Mr Riordan
Page of transcript:	11

Relevant text:

Mr RIORDAN: My question to the commissioner is: you have got accommodation pressures, we have got projects that the minister says he is talking about, he has got programs to try and slow the intake. Can you guarantee to the community that, under rule 11 of the Mandela rules outlining basic minimum standards for prisoners, at all times you are going to be able to maintain the separation between untried prisoners and convicted prisoners?

Dr CASSAR: We have a detailed strategy in terms of what we are going to do to meet the growth and sustain ourselves for the next three years. The minister spoke about the expansion at Chisholm Road. There are also a range of infill beds which we are fast tracking and which will be designed through —

Mr RIORDAN: But can you make that public guarantee that you will at all times be able to keep untried prisoners separate from convicted prisoners?

Dr CASSAR: I can say confidently now we do not meet that standard —

Mr RIORDAN: You do not?

Dr CASSAR: and we have not for years. What we are trying to do is make sure that we have the systems and processes in place and the strategies to ensure that going forward in the next three years we can return the system and have the separation of sentenced and —

Mr RIORDAN: So it has been quite a long time since you have been able to maintain that basic standard?

Dr CASSAR: I would have to come back to you with the dates, but —

Mr RIORDAN: If you could, that would be good, take that on notice.

Answer:

It has not been the practice to fully separate remanded from sentenced prisoners in Victoria for over at least the last twenty years.

The Mandela Rules are non-binding rules that provide the minimum standards for the incarceration of people in prisons and other custodial settings. Preliminary observation 2 of the Rules states that “... it is evident that not all the rules are capable of application in all places and at all times.”

The Victorian prison system has almost 40 per cent of prisoners on remand. While it is not always possible to separate untried from convicted prisoners, the priority is to ensure that vulnerable prisoners (whether sentenced or unsentenced) are, where possible, kept separate from those who might wish to negatively influence them or cause them harm.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee | Inquiry into the 2019-20 Budget Estimates

Portfolio:	Corrections
Witness:	Mr Ben Carroll
Committee member:	Mr Sam Hibbins
Page of transcript:	15

Relevant text:

Mr HIBBINS: Can I get an understanding in terms of the new prison build, the expansion I think to the women's prison and the men's prison [systems]? Is that a public-private partnership? What is the funding arrangement?

Mr CARROLL: No, that is essentially a straight from the state investment, that \$1.8 [billion] for that 1550 male and just over 100 female [beds]. At the moment, given the growth in our prison system, we are managing a range of cohorts throughout our prison system. I can get the Commissioner to supplement my answer. But in terms of the public-private partnership, if, Mr Hibbins, you are asking if that applies to Chisholm Road, that is not the case. It is a straight government build, and we are in the middle of that procurement process right now.

Mr HIBBINS: Do you have the annual cost, once that is completed, of what will be the actual cost of running those existing beds?

Mr CARROLL: Once the beds become operational? That will be — [*Time expired*]

Answer:

Corrections Victoria has commenced work on developing a detailed operating model for Chisholm Road prison. The operational costs of running the prison, informed by this work, will be the subject of a future budget submission.