



OFFICE OF THE CUSTODIAL INSPECTOR TASMANIA

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Capacity Utilisation Review 2021

Capacity calculations and reporting in Tasmania's prison system are masking the true extent of prisoner overutilisation according to the Custodial Inspector of Tasmania.

Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock said that the current calculation used by TPS to determine capacity utilisation across Tasmania's prison facilities is not reflective of the true state of affairs due to the omission of beds considered as 'temporary' accommodation.

"On face value, TPS facilities seem to be coping relatively well and managing to stay below the maximum utilisation threshold of 95 per cent however, upon closer inspection, there are concerns that reporting used by the TPS may actually be masking the true extent of facility overutilisation", he said.

"The issue comes down to the use of temporary beds that are not calculated in the overall capacity due to their current classification," said Mr Connock.

"Many temporary beds, installed to accommodate growing prisoner numbers, have remained as permanent arrangements and have effectively become permanent bed installations yet are not calculated in overall capacity utilisation," he said.

"The report identifies that 85 temporary beds have been excluded from numbers used by TPS to calculate and report on either total design capacity or total current capacity." said Mr Connock.

"In the case of the Risdon Prison Complex, 28 cells in the maximum-security unit originally intended for single occupancy have been reconfigured to double cells, whilst in the medium security unit 18 have been converted to double cells and 14 to triple occupancy. Overall there are 106 temporary beds across all Tasmanian custodial facilities that have been added to rooms designed for single occupancy" said Mr Connock.

"While including temporary beds in design and total current capacity calculations would actually lower the utilisation rate, it hides the fact that some prison units in maximum security for example are well over capacity." he noted.

"In addition, some units such as Division 8 in Ron Barwick Prison are not actively used for prison accommodation but are included in the design and total current capacity calculations, which makes the utilisation rate for Ron Barwick Prison appear better than it is."

Mr Connock said the Inspectorate has special functions to report on any particular issue or general matter relating to the functions of the Inspector if, in his or her opinion, it is in the interest of any person or in the public interest to do so.

"My office has been aware for some time of issues associated with overcrowding in Tasmanian custodial centres, in particular the Risdon Prison complex," said Mr Connock.

"In January 2021, my office conducted a review of prison cells at all five Tasmanian adult custodial facilities to assess the extent of overcrowding and whether the floor area in cells at the five facilities meet the prescribed dimensional requirements as set out in the *Standard Guidelines for Prison Facilities in Australia and New Zealand (SGPFANZ) 1990* recommended guidelines for habitable rooms," he said.

"The review confirms that the majority of prison cells at the five custodial centres do not meet the SGPFANZ minimum cell area for single and double cells with ablutions and that no formal risk or profile assessment is performed by TPS when determining which prisoners should be housed in multiple occupancy cells," said Mr Connock.

Mr Connock said the national maximum limit for prison utilisation rate is 95 per cent to allow for proper operation of custodial facilities with regard to the safety and welfare of both prisoners and staff.

"If custodial centres are operating above the maximum threshold of 95 per cent, the capacity of TPS to manage risk is materially jeopardised," he said.

"Utilisation rates at TPS are in danger of exceeding the maximum threshold with utilisation rates increasing from 73.1 per cent in 2012-13 to a high of 95.1 per cent in 2017-18 before decreasing marginally to 94.7 per cent in 2018-19 (latest data)," Mr Connock stated.

"The utilisation rate for Risdon Prison reported by TPS at 30 June 2021 based on operational capacity was 98 per cent (without including temporary beds) including 113 per cent for maximum security and 91 per cent for minimum security," said Mr Connock.

"Not only do the current utilisation rates at Risdon Prison Complex breach the threshold they also do not include temporary bed numbers hence distorting the utilisation rate significantly," he said.

"Often, single or double cells have been converted to multiple occupancy cells that have considerably reduced the accommodation and living standards for prisoners in terms of mobility, privacy and dignity, mental health and storage/security of private possessions," he said.

"Single cell design is not configured to house multiple prisoners and hence is not currently meeting SFPGANZ standards as these cells were not initially designed for this purpose," Mr Connock said.

Mr Connock stressed that while the new Southern Remand Centre and northern prison will alleviate overcrowding, the impacts of overcrowding are occurring now and TPS must review its strategies to address the doubling and tripling of prisoners in double or triple cell accommodation.

[Capacity Utilisation Review 2021 \(link\)](#)

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