

NLAF Prisoners Forum Report to NLAF – February 2017

The NLAF Prisoners Forum met on 23 February 2017. Key issues discussed included:

Inspector of Custodial Services

An overview was provided to the meeting of the findings and recommendations within the Inspector of Custodial Services 2015 [Old and inside: Managing aged offenders in custody](#) report. The Inspector also reported that Women in Remand is one of their research priorities for 2017. A report on this will be provided at the next meeting.

Justice Health Specialist Mental Health Services for Older People (SMHSOP)

The Clinical Nurse Consultant with SMHSOP provided an overview of their service including the special needs of older people in correctional settings, the units available to support these special needs and a case study on how the Service assists older people whilst in custody and also when released in terms of referrals into suitable arrangements.

Prisoner Calls

Whilst Legal Aid NSW and LawAccess NSW have seen a decrease in prisoner calls due to new systems implemented in 2016, the Aboriginal Legal Service continues to have a significant number of calls each month. All calls come to their Redfern office and are then directed to the relevant office. In 2017 they are planning on addressing this through the introduction of a new telephone system and internal database. They hope the new systems will be in place by August.

Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Indigenous incarceration

It was noted that Judge Matthew Myers had been appointed as Commissioner for this Inquiry and the terms of reference released. The Inquiry report is to be provided to the Federal Attorney-General by 22 December 2017. CLCNSW and Legal Aid NSW indicated they would be preparing separate submissions for this Inquiry.

Justice AVL Project

Research has been undertaken in regards to allowing AVL to be used for first court appearances but no final recommendations have been released as yet. Spaces where prisoners are held for AVL appointments have been reviewed (noise, privacy, light) guidelines created for new builds. The AVL booking system will be integrated with OIMS to address ongoing complaints regarding the system, for example the person making the AVL booking will be alerted if a prisoner is moved.

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is 25 May 2017.

Richard Funston

Acting CEO, Legal Aid NSW

Chair NLAF Prisoners Forum, February 2017