

## NLAF Prisoners Forum Report to NLAF – May 2018

The NLAF Prisoners Forum met on 24 May 2018. We congratulated Richard Funston on his appointment as a Magistrate, and thanked him for his contribution to and leadership of the Prisoners' Forum over the past years. Key issues discussed at the meeting included:

### **Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network Patient Health Survey Reports 2015**

In 2015 Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (**Justice Health**) conducted patient health surveys. These surveys are the most comprehensive of their kind, both in Australia and internationally. The reports of these surveys were published in November 2017. There are three separate [reports](#) - the [2015 Network Patient Health Survey](#), the [2015 Young People in Custody Health Survey Report](#), and the [2015 Network Patient Health Survey - Aboriginal People's Health Report](#). Three members of Justice Health's Research and Evaluation Service; Dr Courtney Field, Dr Julia Bowman and Dr Sharlene Goodhew, attended the meeting to present on the Reports. Some notable statistics and issues for adult prisoners included that prisoners have overall poor education, and a high rate of homelessness prior to incarceration. Prisoners also have a high level of chronic disease, although it was noted that it is unclear whether this high level occurs prior to or during incarceration. Young people in prison aged 14 – 21 years of age have overall low ongoing health conditions, however, there is a high prevalence of a past head injury and of psychological conditions. Young people also tended to under report health conditions and disabilities, which is an issue on release relating to NDIS support, and also while in custody as it may mean young people do not receive the educational and health supports they need.

### **WDOs in custody and Victims Restitution Order (VRO) Debts**

We have been advised that WDOs cannot currently be undertaken for VRO debts in custody. A letter has now been sent to Corrective Services regarding this issue by the acting Chair of NLAF, asking that this policy be reviewed.

### **Driver License Disqualification Reforms**

An issue has been raised by Jenny Lovric from CLSD relating to the driver license disqualification reforms. This has been raised as part of work undertaken at Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, but relates to prisoners throughout NSW. An MOU exists between Roads and Maritime Services and Corrective Services NSW to assist prisoners to exit custody with a drivers license. This does not address, however, the legal issues that arise where the prisoner's license has been disqualified. Prisoners also have to have a birth certificate to obtain a drivers' license. I have suggested that a working group of the Prisoners' Forum and the Fines and Traffic Law Forum be established to look at the issue.

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is 23 August 2018.

**Camilla Pandolfini**

Chair NLAF Prisoners Forum, June 2018