

Prisoners Forum Report Quarter 4 | October to December 2020

1. Meeting of members of the Prisoners Forum and new members

The Prisoners Forum met on Thursday 29 October 2020. In response to the expansion of the Terms of Reference to include issues affecting young persons in detention in NSW, the Children's Legal Service and Youth Justice NSW were welcomed as new member organisations, having accepted NLAF's invitation to join the Prisoners Forum.

2. Presentation on the Inmate Early Assessment Scheme

Wilma Falcone, Director of Housing Statewide Services, Department of Communities & Justice, attended as Guest Speaker and gave a presentation on the Inmate Early Assessment Scheme (IEAS). The IEAS is based on key findings from a pilot run by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) and the Department of Communities & Justice Housing (DCJ Housing) and involves six key changes to the practices for supporting inmates exiting custody on parole. The presentation provided members with details of the steps involved in inmates applying for housing, which they can now do up to three months from their release date in a process that has been streamlined and aims to improve access to support for inmates, as well as communication between services. Wilma agreed to return and present an update on progress at the first meeting in 2021.

3. Prisoners Legal Information Team update

There was an update at the meeting on the Prisoners Legal Information Team (PLIT). The PLIT members continue to work with CSNSW on the in-cell technology pilots and will soon be able to share with members a list of websites available to inmates on the trial in-cell tablets. The PLIT is also working on a review of the Legal Information Portal and will provide an update to the Prisoners Forum at the next meeting.

4. CSNSW and Youth Justice NSW updates on resumption of in person social visits for inmates

The suspension of in person social visits for inmates has been part of the CSNSW response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of session, Jeremy Tucker, Director Corrections Strategy and Executive Services, provided an update and information to members about preparations for the resumption of in person visits from 23 November 2020. Detailed COVID-Safe measures have been put in place for the resumption of in person visits. Video visits will continue to be available and will still be encouraged. Key information about social visits is on the CSNSW [website](#). An out of session update was also provided by Candice Neilson, Director Strategy & Engagement, Youth Justice NSW, on COVID-Safe protocols for the resumption of in person visits at Youth Justice Centres, also effective 23 November 2020.

5. Watching brief – s78A

There was further discussion of the policies and procedures around separation of prisoners and the role of s78A of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 (NSW). Members appointed a small group to further investigate and collaborate on preparation of a formal request to CSNSW seeking clarification on the operation of this provision.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is on **Thursday 11 February 2021, from 9:30am to 11am.**

Nadine Miles | **Chair, Prisoners Forum** | November 2020