



Alexander Maconochie Centre Healthy Prison Review 2022

The ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, Neil McAllister tabled the second Healthy Prison Review (HPR22) of the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) today in the Legislative Assembly. This follows from the inaugural review in 2019 and enables tracking of progress over time. Drawing on extensive consultations with detainees, staff and working with experts with lived experience, the report makes 29 recommendations to Government.

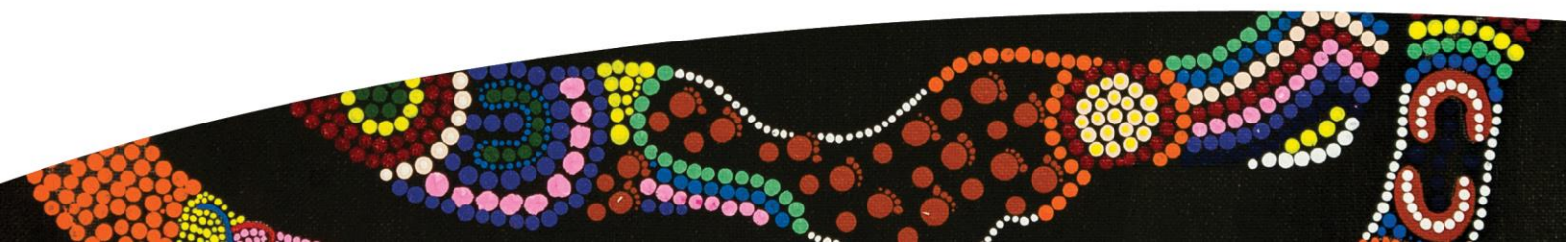
The Review finds there has been pockets of progress and areas of promise for systemic improvements, but overall, a decline in conditions for detainees since 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted operations including causing significant staffing pressure, and for detainees reduced time out of cell and reduced access to programs and visits. However, the big issues of detainee boredom, lack of any education, and a perceived decline in staff/ detainee relations are chronic and cannot be attributed to the pandemic alone.

The most glaring issue is the widespread boredom experienced by detainees. Staff and detainees alike told us that detainee boredom contributes to unrest and detainee/staff tensions. Of detainees surveyed, 79% reported feeling bored due to a lack of meaningful activities, an increase of 15% from 2019.

Of deep concern to OICS is that there has been no education at all and limited training provided in the AMC for over a year due to ongoing delays in securing a new education provider. This matter remains unresolved and meanwhile detainees are missing out.

Rehabilitation is maximized when detainees are spending their days completing programs, engaging in education and training, working and staying active. The limited opportunities for rehabilitation over the past three years at the AMC has let down detainees and the ACT community alike. There has been a significant shortfall in programs. It is however pleasing to see new programs coming online. The Transitional Release Centre, which is intended to provide individualised support for reintegration into the community, is currently only operating at 20% of its 20-bed capacity after being completely closed for 11 months due to COVID-19. It is only available to male detainees. It is imperative that the promise of the TRC as a means to a smooth transition back to the community is realised. Support in preparing for release is important to reduce risks of reoffending after release.

We were pleased to note broad improvements in recreation opportunities being more accessible and gender responsive.



The review noted the excellent practice of Winnunga Nimmityjah as an Aboriginal community controlled health service providing primary care in AMC. However this is tempered by limited capacity, with only about 30% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees are able to access this service at any one time. The review has also identified a pressing need to improve relationships between Winnunga and Justice Health as significant clinical risks were identified resulting from siloing of services.

Women make up around 7% of the AMC population and women are essentially existing within a men's prison rather than a small diverse group with diverse needs. Current accommodation options for women do not enable staff to appropriately manage needs including protection, segregation or intensive support in a gender responsive way.

Significant work has been done since the 2019 review to make AMC more disability aware. The creation of a Disability Liaison Officer working in the jail has improved support and detainees with disability spoke positively about the care they receive from staff in the Assisted Care Unit, though there is more work to do including making induction processes more accessible.

OICS trust the recommendations will be given careful consideration by the ACT Government.

The Summary Report and Full Report can be found at www.ics.act.gov.au

Office of the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services (OICS)
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For more information

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