

Independent Investigation into the Management and Operations of Victoria's Private Prisons

Background

On the 27th April 2000 the State Coroner, Graeme Johnstone, handed down his findings into five deaths at Port Phillip Prison.

In response to these findings, the Minister for Corrections has requested the Secretary, Department of Justice to commission an independent investigation into the management and operation of Victoria's three private prisons. The investigation will draw upon work conducted to date by the Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner.

Terms of Reference for the Investigation

Purpose

The Terms of Reference for the investigation are as follows:

- i) Examine the present legislative and contractual arrangements to determine whether they provide adequate specifications, incentives and accountabilities to achieve an appropriate standard of quality in service provision within private prisons. Recommend additional measures or changes to commercial arrangements where appropriate, to ensure quality service provision can be both achieved and effectively sustained.
- ii) Examine the contractual framework and individual contractual arrangements to identify opportunities to streamline and simplify contract management arrangements for private prisons, with a view to better support effective and timely management of service provision under the contracts including resolving issues such as service profile adjustment, performance shortcomings and emergency situations.
- iii) Consider the operation of private prisons in relation to their correctional services performance and examine the adequacy of present arrangements including security management; safety for prisoners, staff and visitors; the adequacy of training; and staffing models.
- iv) Recommend measures to ensure that the Victorian corrections system operates in a more consistent, cohesive and integrated manner particularly in relation to the provision of health services, risk identification and management, and prisoner management issues.

The investigation is to consider the Terms of Reference with due regard to:

- the Victorian Government's commitment to high standards for the delivery of correctional services;
- the Coroner's findings and recommendations arising from the Inquiry into the Deaths in Custody at Port Phillip Prison, as they pertain to the management of private prisons;
- the findings of the Audit Review of Government Contracts as they relate to private prisons;
- progress of the implementation of the recommendations of the Auditor General's report and previous Coronials.

The Investigation will include relevant consultation with key stakeholders.

Timelines and reporting arrangements

The investigation will commence on Monday 3rd July 2000 and will be completed by the end of September 2000. The Chair of the Investigation Panel will report to a Steering Committee chaired by Mr Peter Harmsworth, Secretary, Department of Justice.

Membership of the Investigation Panel

The Investigation will be conducted by an independent three person panel comprising:

- Mr Peter Kirby, Chairperson;
- Ms Vivienne Roche, Senior Policy Analyst; and
- Mr Brian Greaves, Correctional Services Expert.

Ms Liz Penter will act as Executive Officer to the Investigation Panel. The panel will also have access to other specialist and expert advice on an as required basis including legal and financial.