



ACT
Government

A new future for custodial services

ACT Corrective Services
Blueprint for Change

March 2022

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Foreword

It has been my very great pleasure to work with the Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee members over the course of 2021 and into 2022. The level of experience and expertise brought to the table has enabled deep thinking about the issues facing the custodial officers at the Alexander Maconochie Centre and the Court Transport Unit. Similarly, the engagement of staff with this process have been fulsome and energetic, honest and forthright. Without this engagement, the Committee would not have developed the level of understanding that has been achieved.

The issues are complex and driven by many intersecting points. They are largely co-dependant and success in one area will impact the success in others. As such, the solutions are also complex, layered and will require careful sequencing to achieve the greatest effect for the efforts applied. Some of the proposed recommendations require considerable planning and groundwork, including related activities to be carefully rolled out in the right order and with the right process. I strongly recommend effective program management and the ongoing engagement of ACTCS staff Committee members in the program delivery process to ensure results have the best chance of achieving the desired effects.

I thank the Minister for Corrections, Mick Gentleman, for the opportunity to independently chair this Blueprint for Change process. I commend the work of the Committee to him for his consideration and the consideration of the ACT Government. I trust the issues considered here are treated with the respect and seriousness they warrant.



Ms Christine Nixon, AO APM

Chair, Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee

Executive Summary

The Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee was established early in 2021 to review and provide a Blueprint for Change that addressed ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) correctional officers' working conditions across both the Alexander Maconochie Centre and the Court Transport Unit sites. The Committee was given a wide remit covering engagement and leadership, strategy and training and operational service delivery. From the initial stages, the Committee was focused on ensuring that change was implemented on an ongoing basis where improvements were identified that could be immediately actioned. Successes in this approach included improvements in training provision, the staffing roster and engagement with staff and stakeholders in policy development, review and implementation.

The Committee undertook a broad-based investigation into staffing-related matters, including rosters, overtime, leave, workplace injuries, policy, training and service delivery. Active staff consultation processes occurred in July, November and December 2021 and March 2022. Staff and interested stakeholders were encouraged to contribute and engage with the Committee's investigations across the life of the Committee via email and anonymous feedback forms available on the ACTCS intranet and the Justice and Community Safety (JACS) internet.

The Committee has made six findings and fifteen recommendations with subsequent suggestive actions to provide further context and advice regarding the Committee's expectations of change. Together these create an integrated package of activity focused on addressing the most concerning and urgent issues identified by staff, evidenced through the data and shaped via expert input both within the Committee and from external sources. The findings address cultural and physical issues ranging from security and resourcing to leadership, accountability and respect over the next three years.

Finding 1: Inadequate Staffing Resources

Recommendation 1:

Engage an external expert to determine operational demand and required staffing of custodial correctional officers (including associated supports) to meet that demand within the next six months.

The review should deliver:

- *correct current operational demand for both AMC and CTU (number of posts and FTE)*
- *consider the use of "floaters" and other approaches to address issues identified around single person posts*
- *identify criteria to trigger future reviews*
- *review the recruitment process and propose improvements*

In the interim period, immediately increase funding for staffing resources for fifteen people to alleviate existing staff pressures and conduct a safety audit of all AMC posts to identify areas that require additional staffing resources to ensure staff safety.

Finding 2: Poor Staff Culture and Sense of Value

Recommendation 2:

Demonstrate commitment to staff and their safety through investment in uniforms that are fit for purpose (fire retardant, allocation of sufficient items, fit well and allow for the physicality of the job) and equipment (Personal Protective Equipment that fits, pouches, handcuffs, batons) to protect individuals in the operational environment.

Recommendation 3:

Promote a culture of trust by granting internet access, ensure post-incident debriefs focus on lessons learnt and systemic issues, and actively support staff compliance and confidence in operational decision making.

Recommendation 4:

Within three months, establish regular and effective two-way communication mechanisms and meaningful engagement opportunities that enable a tangible contribution to operational matters.

Finding 3: The service structure and lack of management skills at AMC and CTU promote negativity.

Recommendation 5:

Review the structure of custodial operations to simplify, integrate and re-align accountability of operational and strategic functions. This includes:

- *establishing a single Business lead of Custodial Services that reports directly to the Commissioner*
- *have the Director CTU report to the new Business lead of Custodial Services*
- *increase administrative support to the Business lead of Custodial Services and custodial Senior Directors*
- *re-align the operational management structure with defined roles, responsibilities (and associated delegations) and proportionate numbers of senior staff that appropriately empowers CO2s CO3s and CO4s to manage the operational environment and enables Senior Directors to support the Business lead in strategic functions.*

Note that with the proposed work program for custodial operations planned for 2022/2023, establishing stability in the senior structure of AMC early will be imperative to support longer term transition.

Recommendation 6:

Develop and implement training in both tactical leadership and operational management for senior staff and provide opportunities for emerging leaders to participate in the training.

Finding 4: Security of the environment contributes to safety concerns of staff

Recommendation 7:

Commence improvements to the security of the environment through:

- *progressing the fencing review findings*
- *seek expert advice and implement other security improvements, particularly considering camera locations and coverage, fencing not covered by the fencing review, facility repair and maintenance and other mechanisms that reduce risk in the physical AMC environment*
- *implementing the x-ray body scanners.*

Recommendation 8:

Establish a maximum capacity for the AMC and explore options to reduce detainee overcrowding and establish plans for immediate deployment of mitigation strategies in the event of capacity reaching ninety per cent and/or critical reduction in functional accommodation. In the longer term, consider accommodation solutions as a part of the JACS master planning process.

Recommendation 9:

In 2022, implement smoking cessation across the AMC and CTU facilities along following implementation of the new Detainee Property Policy and ensure staff are carefully supported in implementing these and the revised Detainee Discipline Policy and new Incentives and Earned Privileges Policy

Finding 5: Staff training and professional development is inadequate in opportunity and scope in its current form.

Recommendation 10:

Design a staffing and/or rostering solution for both AMC and CTU that enables regular and sustainable staff access to training and ensure the training program:

- *responds to the prioritised skill needs in the operational environment*
- *is of high quality of content and delivery, and*
- *has limited impact or dependency on operations.*

Recommendation 11:

Increase training resources including permanent, qualified custodial training staff, training venues and training equipment to deliver on increased demand for training and development.

Recommendation 12:

Develop a capability framework for roles across custodial operations within three years to support individual performance assessment and identification of development opportunities.

Finding 6: Detainee tension is a contributing factor to staff stress and dissatisfaction

Recommendation 13:

Establish mechanisms that promote positive detainee engagement that includes:

- *a review of the ‘structured day’ with appropriate facilities, materials and work options, with a view to provide additional opportunities for positive detainee engagement in activities that support sentence management planning goals*
- *investment in industries opportunities, reintegration services and associated resources to support the “structured day”*
- *provide opportunities for skill development in custodial officers to build a positive culture and support pro-social behaviours in detainees*
- *identify opportunities for collaboration between Custodial Operations and Offender Reintegration to positively influence detainee rehabilitation and behaviour.*
- *opportunity to build cultural understanding and capability.*

Recommendation 14:

Recognise that detainees who have a persistent, inflammatory impact on the broader detainee population and are frequently causing conflict and unrest are beyond the management capacity of a single facility and that such detainees should be considered for relocation interstate.

Recommendation 15:

Continue building on staff wellbeing services, including access to individual counselling following incidents by specialist counsellors, additional wellbeing training initiatives and establishment of a buddy system of support or similar.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The strain on ACT Corrective Services systems and processes escalated across 2019 and 2020, as a range of growing staff concerns coincided with increasing restrictions across the ACT due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many activities were paused in the first half of 2020 due to COVID-19, and the focus of the organisation was on returning to the usual operational arrangements rather than identifying and acting on improvements. Despite issues being highlighted across several reports into critical incidents from the Inspector of Correctional Services and other oversight bodies, ACTCS was slow to engage with reforms in this environment. Following the ACT election in September 2020, a new Minister for Corrections, Mick Gentleman, was sworn in. In November 2020, the AMC experienced two serious incidents: a riot and serious fire and a second serious fire. This was the most extreme expression of detainee discontent at the Alexander Maconochie Centre to date.

The Minister for Corrections, in meeting with corrections staff and the Community and Public Sector Union, was concerned about correctional officers' low morale, working conditions and associated issues, including:

- the slow rate of implementing recommendations from the Inspector of Correctional Services and other reports
- training gaps attributed to a lack of staff numbers and poor rostering resulting in staff not being able to be released for training
- poor accommodation of shift work and unsustainable levels of overtime
- turnover in upper manager levels and the management style of some senior staff.

In response, in December 2020, Minister Gentleman formed an oversight committee to bring ACTCS staff, the Community and Public Sector Union, oversight bodies and representatives from ACT's Aboriginal community together to find solutions to the range of challenges and gaps highlighted. The Committee was charged with developing a *Blueprint for Change* for the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) and Court Transport Unit (CTU) that considered the issues highlighted above and advice drawn from recent reports and inquiries.

Minister Gentleman appointed Ms Christine Nixon as the independent Chair of the Committee in February 2021. The Committee was charged with providing staff with a genuine way forward through a comprehensive review process built on investigation and consultation. The Committee was also empowered to implement immediate changes to address identified challenges, as well as to provide a report and recommendations within twelve months of establishment.

1.2. Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee

The objective of the Committee has been to look at ongoing issues around training and development, staffing levels, rosters and workforce culture and develop a blueprint for change. The functions of the Committee are to:

Provide expert leadership and advice to support the development, implementation and evaluation of a Blueprint for Change for the operations of the AMC and CTU, with a focus on:

- Engagement and Leadership:
 - Enhancing open, transparent communication and relationships between the AMC, CTU and 'head office' areas within ACTCS
 - Implementing enhanced processes to engage operational staff early in the development of policies and procedures
 - Building a culture of trust and encouraging personal growth and development
- Strategy and Training:
 - Providing appropriate levels of training and support to corrections officers
 - Ensuring policies and procedures can be implemented and embedded in practice in a timely way
 - Driving internal accountability, with a focus on improving outcomes for staff and detainees
- Operational Service Delivery:
 - Reviewing current staffing levels and rostering practices, leveraging expertise and knowledge from other jurisdictions
 - Ensuring staff are equipped with the resources and tools necessary to perform effectively in their roles
 - Developing and embedding relevant performance indicators relating to engagement, training and compliance

Committee members include:

- the President, ACT Human Rights Commission
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples representative
- a Visiting Elder representative
- Community and Public Sector Union representative
- two Official Visitors representatives
- a staff representative from the Court Transport Unit
- staff representatives from the Alexander Maconochie Centre (limited to two representatives)
- the General Manager, Alexander Maconochie Centre or his proxy, Snr Director, AMC Accommodation.
- a Senior Executive, Justice and Community Safety Directorate representative
- a Senior Executive, ACT Corrective Services representative

Members of the Committee are well placed to understand the issues that have been examined, and to provide a breadth of experience and expertise to the problems being considered. Ms Nixon as Chair has extensive experience in the NSW and Victorian police services and in heading the

Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority after the 2009 Victorian bush fire disaster. She drove significant reform programs in both police services. Oversight agency representatives and Aboriginal Elder representatives contributed expertise in ACT human rights and detainee conditions and concerns. Staff representatives and the CPSU representative were able to clarify staff experiences and provide historical context to issues for the Committee. Senior executive from the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and ACTCS provided both management and government context. Collectively, custodial staff members represent more than sixty-two years of custodial experience and expertise. The Committee met nine times between March 2021 and January 2022.

2. ACTCS Overview

2.1. Custodial Operations Snapshot

Alexander Maconochie Centre

The AMC caters for the full-time custody of male and female remanded and sentenced detainees of all security classifications within a secure and safe environment. Operating under the *Corrections Management Act 2007* and Human Rights legal obligations, the AMC is a campus-style facility comprising cottage-style accommodation and cell blocks. With a strong focus on rehabilitation, the AMC engages actively with the private and community sectors in the ACT to promote positive rehabilitative and reintegration outcomes for detainees and a safer community for all.

The AMC opened in March 2009. It was originally built to house a total of 300 detainees. Prisoner numbers were recorded in the 2009-10 Annual Report as 163 in June 2009 and 227 in May 2010. It was expected at that point that separation issues (including separating males from females, remand from sentenced, maximum, medium and low-level prisoners and those who cannot associate together) would mean that it would be rare for maximum capacity to be reached.

In June 2021, there were a total of 377 detainees at the AMC compared to 452 at the same time in 2020. The lower number in 2021 was largely due to significant decreases in detainees on remand (by 41 from 2020) and detainees serving sentences of less than two years (by 39 from 2020). It was countered by a significant increase in detainees serving more than 20 years (increase from 11 to 21 in the period).

However, in 2020-21, the average daily detainee number was 410.8, reaching a low of 358 in May 2021. The average sentenced detainee population was 261.4 in 2020-21; a decrease of, on average of 4.8 detainees from 2019-20. This decrease was mainly driven by a fall in the male population from an average of 251.8 in 2019-20 to 247.0 in 2020-21. The AMC had an average detainee on remand population of 147.4 in 2020-21, a decrease of 26.5 detainees from the 2019-20 average. This decrease was mainly driven by the non-indigenous male population, which decreased from an average of 116.1 in 2019-20 to 97.2 in 2020-21, as well as a decrease in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male population from 38.7 in 2019-20 to 35.1 in 2020-21. The significantly larger male than female population will always disproportionately drive the overall population profile.

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Detainee wellbeing is considered across the continuum of a person's interaction with Custodial Operations. At induction, the AMC operates with a dedicated policy and procedure for new detainees in their first week in custody. The Induction Program supports both women and men in their adjustment to custody by addressing their immediate needs (from the community and present situation) and supports ACTCS to complete a range of assessments that inform future accommodation placements and commence sentence management planning processes.

Regular contact with family and friends is critical to the rehabilitation of detainees and can assist with strengthening family relationships and successful reintegration into the community upon exiting the AMC. Each year, ACTCS facilitates thousands of visits to detainees in the AMC.

Programs providing services, supports and engagement with rehabilitation range from library services and book clubs, educational programs from literacy and numeracy development through to supports for higher education, chaplaincy, sport and recreational activities, industry and employment (grounds maintenance, kitchen, bakery, textiles, recycling and metal shop). Specialist activities in 2021 included the online ANZAC Day rowing challenge and a model making group.

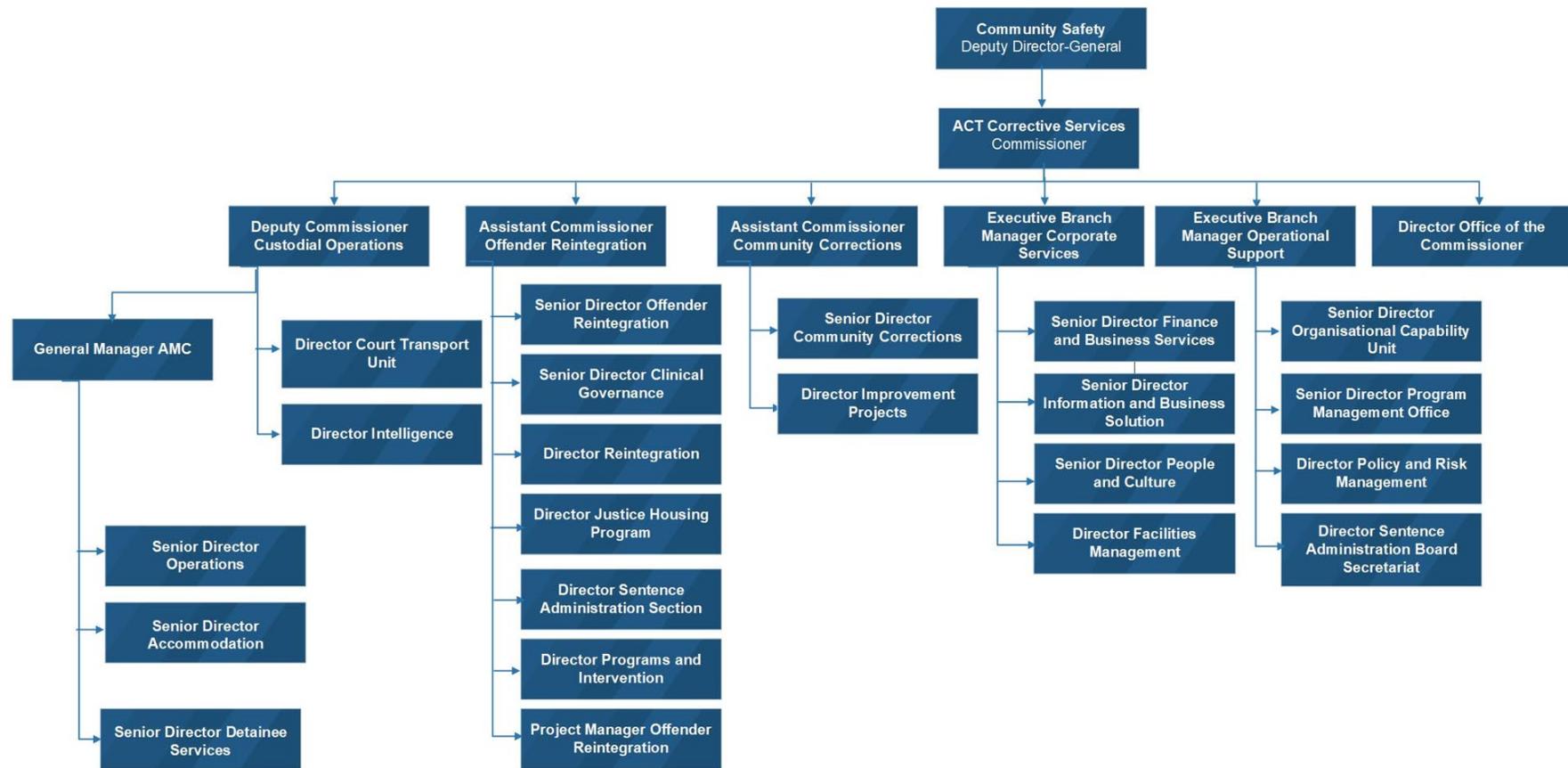
Court Transport Unit

The Court Transport Unit (CTU) has been operating in the new court facilities since late 2018. During this time staff, have settled well into the new environment. The CTU Director position was established in October 2020.

CTU has built strong stakeholder relationships with other agencies along with ACT Courts to ensure smooth delivery of service to the courts. Bimberi Youth Centre is also an important stakeholder with quarterly operational meetings taking place. The early part of 2021 saw an increase in total detainee numbers through both the Magistrates and Supreme Courts from 394 in January to 555 in March. The larger court cells area allowed for adequate separation of different category detainees easing any potential cell overcrowding.

2.2. Current structure

ACT Corrective Services has three primary streams of activity (Custodial, Offender Reintegration and Community Corrections), with two support divisions (Corporate and Operational Support).



3. Investigative Approach

Overview of Process

The Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee undertook a variety of processes to identify and understand the issues. These included analysis of human resources data, report recommendations, identification of policies which members believed could bring swift improvements to safety and effective practice, and analysis of training data and issues. This was followed by an extensive two-stage consultation process with staff. Committee members undertook a workshop at the end of January 2022 to bring together the identified actions and activities and to consider the range of recommendations the Committee should make to address the issues identified.

Initial Investigations

The Committee commenced investigations by gathering data on topics including staffing levels, the roster system, training required and completed, the policy development process and policies requiring review, unplanned leave, workplace injuries and overtime, and the nature of outstanding recommendations.

Members shared their concerns, and the basis for those concerns, which covered the above areas and issues such as:

- the effects of interactions between custodial officers and detainees and the officer's perception that the rights of detainees were given greater weight than those of officers
- inconsistent application of policy and practice, especially in detainee disciplinary matters
- the virtuous or vicious cycles driven by the interactions between officers and detainees
- staff feelings that they were not listened to or respected by senior managers, and were often blamed for situations "going wrong"
- detainees were bored and inactive and this led to poor behaviour and dangerous situations for staff
- concerns about racism across the system

By reviewing external review recommendations not yet closed, members identified areas of concern yet to be fully resolved. In addition, Ms Nixon made initial visits to the AMC and CTU to see the facilities and undertake informal discussions with staff.

3.1. Staff Consultation

Stage 1 Consultation Activities

The Blueprint for Change Committee first commenced a consultation program with custodial staff at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) and Court Transport Unit (CTU) that included the following activities:

- Consultation Forums –
 - CTU (14 and 20 July 2021) – Policy process and training

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- CTU (22 and 29 July 2021) – Policy process and training
- AMC (27 July 2021) – General feedback from staff, policy process and training
- Staff Survey – Training feedback
- Email & Online Form – Unsolicited feedback from staff

Additional open forum sessions were planned at both AMC and CTU with the Chair of the Blueprint for Change Committee, but COVID-19 restrictions prevented these from occurring.

The feedback received in stage 1 was used as a basis for engaging with staff in the stage 2 consultation activities.

Stage 2 Consultation Activities

The next phase of consultation occurred over November and December 2021 and sought to validate what the Committee understood to be the key themes and areas of concern received in the feedback from Stage 1. The Committee also hoped to identify what staff thought would be the key changes required to resolve the issues highlighted.

The Committee drafted nine focus areas (later contracted to eight as listed below) and some initial thoughts on potential changes. These formed a starting point for seeking staff thoughts in this stage of consultation.

- Focus Area 1: Adequate resourcing (Staff)
- Focus Area 2: Adequate resourcing (Equipment and other resources)
- Focus Area 3: Security of the environment
- Focus Area 4: Leadership & management
- Focus Area 5: Staff engagement & communication
- Focus Area 6: Staff wellbeing
- Focus Area 7: Staff capability & training
- Focus Area 8: Detainee management

Stage 2 consultation forums were held at both AMC and the CTU on 30 November and 7 December 2021. The Committee asked staff for feedback on whether the issues identified from all sources were the most important issues from their perspective and the most important changes that need to happen to address those issues.

All staff were invited to provide their responses by the following methods:

- In person during staff forums at AMC or CTU on 30 November and 7 December 2021
- Via email to ACTCSBlueprint@act.gov.au
- Via the anonymous feedback form on the ACTCS Intranet site [Blueprint for Change Oversight Committee \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- Written feedback on forms and deposited into the boxes at AMC and CTU

In February 2022, the Blueprint Committee sent out a brief survey to staff to seek advice on how staff perceived the priority of the proposed changes.

3.2. Data Collection

Data was drawn from ACT Corrective Services and Justice and Community Safety Directorate data sources (HR systems, Riskman, Training records, rosters, previous reviews).

Data to understand what the additional unplanned staff requirements are, was drawn from:

- incident report data received via reporting to the Operational Compliance Inbox
- daily Roster for Alexander Maconochie Centre
- daily briefings (where available) to confirm numbers relating to training and incidents
- Work Health Safety report on accidents, incidents and Workers Compensation (1 January 2011 to 30 April 2021, selected data extended to 30 December 2021)
- provisional information regarding operational requirements
- policies with resource implications
- analysis on mandatory and other training requirements
- training survey
- planned and unplanned detainee hospital /medical visits.

Human resource data included:

- average unscheduled leave at AMC and CTU over 2017-18 to 2020-21
- annual leave used at AMC and CTU over 2017-18 to 2020-21
- a summary of all leave taken, by leave type and the average number of staff this equated to
- overtime worked across 2019-20 and 2020-21
- Riskman data on workplace injuries (physical and psychological), required leave, separations and compensation.

Roster data was provided by the Rostering Team. This was greatly assisted by one of the Committee members, who during 2021 transferred to the role of Team Leader for the Roster Project. This enabled greater Committee understanding of roster structure and processes, shortfalls and issues.

Training data included:

- An overview of changes to the Organisational Capability Unit, current plans and objectives
- The number of staff who completed core courses (as identified in the Enterprise Agreement or otherwise considered essential to safe practice) over January to July 2021
- Cultural competency training – current situation and planned approaches.

The expertise and time required to fully analyse the various data sources and address the multiple data quality issues was beyond the capacity or remit of the Committee in the time available. Continuing this work will be key to understanding the number of posts and staff resources required to effectively run the two centres safely and allow for planned and unplanned duties and absences. However, the data analysis undertaken gave the Committee sufficient understanding to propose next steps. Issues that must be considered in the future analysis of this data include:

- data matching from different sources on the same topic, including validation and caveats identified
- understanding how complementary data overlaps and aligns

- identifying a greater level of detail from the escort data (including the number of people attending specific escorts, time away on escorts, etc.)
- other relevant data to be included, such as the impact of infrastructure (building works)
- linkages between HR data and the WHS data
- a method to quantify effort arising from the impact of new policy requirements on operational practice
- updated data on training needs and requests.

4. Findings

Progress to date

The work of the Committee boosted an already dynamic change environment within ACTCS, resulting in rapid improvement in targeted problem areas. Key achievements, summarised below, have fed into the Committee's deliberations when developing the findings and recommendations.

Policy

During 2021, the ACTCS Policy Unit developed and implemented a new policy review process. The process includes consultation with ACTCS staff at several stages of the development or review process, as well as with CPSU, oversight bodies and other stakeholders. The Blueprint for Change Committee identified a list of twelve priority policies for review in mid-2021. Four of these policies have been completed and notified. A further four are in final draft stage. The remaining four are currently at various stages in the drafting and consultation process and some require detailed implementation planning.

Training

Following a cessation of all training in 2020 due to COVID-19, a key focus in 2021 was to improve currency rates in mandatory officer training. An equally pressing priority was to enhance officer incident responses through operational skills training and new training programs were developed to address this. Custodial officers were trained in the use of handheld and mid-range chemical agents (OC spray) and further skilled in incident management through the introduction of crowd control training. Three Custodial Recruit Courses were also completed. Needs and gap analyses were conducted in the areas of culture and diversity, and disability, with further work planned to enhance capability. Enhancements were made to numerous existing training materials and new resources were developed and made available to staff through SharePoint.

New de-escalation training, Mental Health First Aid training and Road to Recovery Mental Health training was also made available to Custodial and Community Corrections officers and mandatory Domestic Family Violence training was also delivered to staff. Delivery of training was at times impacted by COVID-19.

Roster

Improvements made to the roster across 2021 include:

- improved coverage of posts
- better continuity of officers within areas of the AMC
- better visibility for staff of longer roster periods
- an increase to nightshift posts and staffing levels, enhancing nightshift safety and operations
- a noticeable decrease in errors, supporting improved coordination and management of the roster and
- significantly improved turnaround time for leave notifications.

These changes are promoting a more cohesive relationship between custodial staff and the Rostering team.

The Rostering team is chairing a consultative project to formally review the roster. The project has been delayed due to COVID-19 and the redirection of resourcing to manage the effects of a worldwide cyber-attack on the rostering system used by ACTCS; the latter requiring manual processes to be temporarily implemented. Questions for a staff survey which will set the groundwork for staff input to the review are currently being drafted.

Safety Equipment

ACTCS invested \$130,000 in additional safety and training equipment for custodial officers in 2021. This investment included fifty-eight new Tactical PPE kits, gas masks, helmets and shields. New OC dispersal equipment will improve officers' capability to respond effectively with OC when required and new training tools will improve the decision making of officers via enhanced scenario training. Searching, metal detection and restraints were procured for the training unit to increase hands on training time for officers in basic training.

Tuesday Lock in Trial

A limited trial of weekly detainee lock ins to release staff to attend Blueprint open forums, training and policy updates occurred on Tuesday afternoons between 1 and 4pm from 30 November through to 21 December. The sessions were very well received but had limited attendance due to scheduled medical appointments and programs for detainees that continued. There was also an incident that required the attendance of staff who had attended the lock in session that day. Over the four weeks, sessions covered:

- an overview of the new Searching policy and procedures (two sessions) including human rights legal obligations
- videoing uses of force (two sessions)
- an overview of the upcoming Detainee Property Policy and its planned implementation (two sessions)
- an overview of the new Detainee Discipline Policy (one session)
- a general policy update (two sessions)

- evidence handling (one session).

Anecdotal feedback on the sessions from staff who attended was positive with requests for them to continue being made.

In addition to the above, findings, objectives and recommended areas for change have been developed from the eight focus areas of consultation. Prioritisation of recommendations mainly relate to the necessary order of activity required for success, commencing with broad foundational or systemic elements before progressing to other changes required to realise the intended benefits. The collective order of importance reported by staff has also been reflected in the implementation advice for the recommendations.

A key feature of the findings is the high level of interdependency. As a result, information is somewhat arbitrarily assigned to a particular topic for ease of reading but will have influence across several areas.

For each of the six findings, a summary of the issues that have led to the finding is presented. This provides context to the recommendations and actions proposed. There are a total of fifteen recommendations made, and each recommendation has several proposed actions. The actions are suggested ways to achieve the objective of each recommendation based on the Committee's findings and not intended to be a strictly prescriptive set of instructions. Alternative or additional actions might be able or necessary to achieve the objective. The Committee recommends that progress towards the desired outcomes is measured and monitored, and actions modified as required to achieve the objectives.

Finding 1: Inadequate Staff Resourcing

Both the staff feedback and data collection reflected that inadequate staffing numbers contributes to several issues, including poor staff wellbeing (due to high overtime levels), lack of access to training opportunities, reduced safety on site and increased detainee tension (due to increased lock ins).

As at the end of February 2022, ACTCS had 223.74 full time equivalent (FTE) corrections officers on active duty, with another 30 on leave of various kinds, including annual and long service, personal leave without pay, compensation, recovery from workplace injuries, safe job placement and higher duties. The overtime figures for 2020-21 totalled more than 35,000 hours at AMC and included **11,442 hours** of overtime for **hospital watches**, representing almost 6 FTE daily for this activity. Overtime reduced slightly in 2021 compared with 2020 (by 1635 hours) and average FTE increased between the two years from 217.96 in 2020 to 235.05 in 2021.

At a raw data level, simply considering overtime suggests a staff shortage of at least nineteen people. However, this does not consider staff attrition, unplanned absences (especially long absences), coverage needed to release staff for training and development, or coverage for absences due to staff moving into non-custodial roles.

Justice Health Services data for the quarter August to October 2021 indicated detainee appointments were cancelled for a variety of reasons, including corrections staff shortages; competing appointments requiring triaging and rescheduling; and emergent transfers pulling corrections staff away from scheduled transfers. Up to six appointments were cancelled each month due to client refusal.

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Outstanding referrals/imaging requests awaiting triage/appointments stood at 381 in August, dropping to 359 in October.

	Appointments booked	Appointments attended	Appointments cancelled/rescheduled
August 2021	62	40	22
September 2021	101	72	29
October 2021	87	41	46

The Committee was unable to establish a clear understanding of the actual resource demand, or total funded positions. There could be many factors contributing to this lack of clarity including:

- changed detainee risk profile since AMC was established
- impact of damage to accommodation areas
- changes to agency structure and operational practice over time (e.g., changes to ‘posts’)
- impact of COVID-19 on recruitment, operational practices and available staffing.

Recruiting custodial corrections officers is a three-month process followed by twelve weeks of foundation training. ACTCS does not cap numbers per intake and relies on the natural outcome of the selection process. There are generally two or three recruitment rounds per year and approximately fifteen to twenty new recruits graduating from each course. Intakes for AMC and CTU are currently conducted separately. The recruitment process has not been reviewed in several years (though a review has now commenced) and feedback suggests there are opportunities to improve the attraction and selection of quality candidates.

Despite recruitment in the last twelve months exceeding a reported rate of attrition of six per cent, staffing levels at the AMC remain under strain, particularly with the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Areas of resource drain are evident in the high volume of hospital escorts and absenteeism, causing high levels of overtime, vacant posts and increasing cost burden of excess annual leave.

In the three calendar years 2019-2021, workers submitted six hundred and forty-eight RiskMan reports at the AMC and CTU. Twenty-one per cent of the reports related to being assaulted by a person or persons. Eighty-six per cent of all reported JACS occupational Lost Time Incidents (being absent for one or more shifts) occurred within the AMC and CTU Custodial Operations cohort. Sixty-seven per cent of injuries resulting in lost time resulted from a physical injury and thirty-three per cent from psychological injury. Eighteen per cent of psychological injury reports were classified as related to harassment and / or workplace bullying (noting that not all harassment and bullying reports go into RiskMan as there are other reporting mechanism available to staff). Sixty-nine claims (eleven per cent of RiskMan reports) were accepted by insurers for workers compensation, with a total cost of \$3,057,859 in that period.

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Prompted by the changing risk profile of the detainees and concerns for safety, ACTCS has already increased staffing posts by a small margin within the existing funding envelope. Staff feedback identified additional opportunities to improve safety and operational outcomes, with suggestions including increased K9 unit coverage on weekends, resourcing a full security team, allowing greater rotation between AMC and CTU staff and staffing the roster at 110% per day to counter absenteeism. Whilst Committee members accept that detailed analysis may require additional funding to be sourced, an initial audit of posts to assess resourcing required for safe operations is a priority element that should progress without being linked to the budget process.

Recommendation 1:

Engage an external expert to determine operational demand and required staffing of custodial correctional officers (including associated supports) to meet that demand within the next six months. The review should deliver:

- ***correct current operational demand for both AMC and CTU (number of posts and FTE)***
- ***consider the use of “floaters” and other approaches to address issues identified around single person posts***
- ***identify criteria to trigger future reviews***
- ***review the recruitment process and propose improvements***

In the interim period, immediately increase funding for staffing resources for fifteen people to alleviate existing staff pressures and conduct a safety audit of all AMC posts to identify areas that require additional staffing resources to ensure staff safety.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Conduct a safety audit of current posts to identify areas requiring extra resourcing to ensure safety (e.g., posts with only one officer on duty in a detainee area).
- Investing in a detailed analysis of custodial operational activities, which informs post structure/functions and staffing levels, and associated supporting resources (e.g., facilities, equipment, training, administration etc).
- Increase ongoing funding for staffing and associated resources consistently for a minimum of three years until target resourcing is met and found to be sustainable.
- Modify the custodial roster to match operational demand, including meeting variations in workflow, training attendance and accommodating other staff activities.
- Refreshing the custodial recruitment strategy to provide broader exposure of the career and attract applicants from other jurisdictions and overseas.
- Restructuring the recruitment process to be more focused on identifying and attracting people who will be effective correctional officers.

Outcome: AMC and CTU maintain sustainable staffing resources that meet operational requirements and promote safe practice and officer wellbeing.

Measures: Reduction in overtime and vacant posts by ten per cent and increase in staffing by ten per cent in first twelve months and then as per post analysis within three years.

Finding 2: Poor staff culture and sense of value

A constant topic of feedback received from staff was their collective perception of being undervalued and a consistent lack of respect or concern for their wellbeing. Poor culture is evidenced through the level of overtime driven by unscheduled leave and resultant understaffing. Factors that contributed to staff's perception included:

- lack of required equipment to ensure safety
- poorly designed and ill-fitting uniform items and limited allocation
- lack of communication and engagement on operational matters
- lack of trust and punitive culture from management
- disinterest and lack of action on staffing concerns by management

Staff reported that a lack of equipment and ill-fitting uniforms compromised their safety, operational effectiveness and dignity. Staff highlighted crowd control equipment, fit for purpose vehicles and standard issue of handcuff, radio and OC pouches and the current lack of ability to carry restraints during a detainee transport. The quality, colour and design of uniforms was also noted, particularly the need to consider a less traditionally styled uniform that accommodates the physical nature of the role, with fabrics that are more flexible and fire retardant. One option suggested was more flexible sourcing options where staff can purchase from a limited range of choices. The limited issue of uniform items was also perceived to be inadequate and less than that of detainees, supporting a regularly reported view that detainees matter more than staff. The issue of one pair of boots per year and the requirement to return them to get another pair was seen as petty.

A significant irritant reported by staff was the lack of access to the internet. Whilst the limited computers on site are also an issue, staff perceive the lack of access to the internet as evidence of distrust. The Committee understands there are technical complexities in installing additional computers in terms of capacity of the digital infrastructure on site. However, internet access on existing units is possible throughout the site and would only require approval. The lack of internet prevents access to online training opportunities and other correctional resources, including some information and supports for detainees that officers felt would assist with building pro-social relationships, if they were able to provide them.

Poor staff communication was a prominent issue evident in the consultation forums. In addition to the absence of a mechanism for regular staff meetings, staff were unaware of key activities underway to address learnings from previous incidents. They believed the organisation to be ignoring these events which increased their sense of anxiety and futility. Staff reported previous monthly staff meetings and weekly Tuesday afternoon lock-ins that had provided opportunities for staff communications and training.

Opportunities for staff engagement was also lacking, with staff reporting management provided little support to and demonstrated disinterest in feedback from frontline staff. An inability to contribute meaningfully to policy development was highlighted early in the Blueprint process, which prompted early action in reviewing the policy development process and prioritising policy reform in key areas of operational concern.

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Staff identified that a significant by-product of their lack of involvement in policy development was the subsequent risk presented when policies and procedures do not accurately reflect the challenges of the operational environment. This potentially compromises compliance and/or safety. Staff reported a punitive culture, with management seeking to blame staff during debriefing activities. This resulted in staff being less inclined to use force (even appropriately) as it was perceived they would be disciplined.

Despite the negative feelings described, staff engaged positively with the Blueprint for Change process, indicating an enduring commitment to service and tentative thread of hope and investment in change.

Recommendation 2:

Demonstrate commitment to staff and their safety through investment in uniforms that are fit for purpose (fire retardant, allocation of sufficient items, fit well and allow for the physicality of the job) and equipment (Personal Protective Equipment that fits, pouches, handcuffs, batons) to protect individuals in the operational environment.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Invest in, and maintain, a sufficient volume of standard operational equipment and protective equipment in a range of sizes and appropriate for both men and women for use during incidents.
- Re-imagine the design and supply of the custodial uniform, considering the physical demands of operations and flexible supply options.
- Investigate procurement options, such as “piggy-backing” off NSW or Victorian uniform procurement arrangements.
- Ensure the issue of sufficient quantity of items (shirts, jackets boots) to cover the standard set of shifts and provide some coverage against ad hoc events or incidents.

Outcome: AMC and CTU staff have ready access to the required equipment to maintain their safety in the operational environment.

Measures: Equipment deficiencies identified in incident reviews and debriefs are rectified as a priority. Uniform style and sourcing mechanism are reviewed and implemented.

Recommendation 3:

Promote a culture of trust by granting internet access, ensure post-incident debriefs focus on lessons learnt and systemic issues, and actively support staff compliance and confidence in operational decision making.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Implement immediate access to the internet for staff and increase the number of computers available to staff in custodial facilities within the next six months.
- Review the approach to, and process for, hot and cold debriefs and ensure debriefs consider issues and errors at all levels, from systemic level down.

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- Implement communications guidelines, with set timeframes, that ensure staff not directly involved in critical incidents are provided with basic information about the incident, including:
 - how it is being managed at the time
 - how learning from the event is being actioned.
- Implement activities that support staff confidence in operational practice, including objective and non-critical review of incidents and support during operational or policy changes. This may also require training in debriefing and communication approaches.
- Increase opportunities for staff to become familiar with new and revised policies and operating procedures, including understanding why changes have occurred.

Outcome: AMC and CTU staff feel trusted and empowered to contribute to operational decision making.

Measures: Compliance check results.

Recommendation 4:

Within three months, establish regular and effective two-way communication mechanisms and meaningful engagement opportunities that enable a tangible contribution to operational matters.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Reinstate monthly staff meetings and additional activities that support active staff engagement in operational matters (e.g.: the weekly 10/20 format of ten minutes of information provision and twenty minutes of questions/feedback from staff).
- Establish communication mechanisms that provide greater visibility of key management decisions (particularly in response to learnings from incidents) and enable staff to give operational feedback, make enquiries or ask for clarification (including an anonymous option).
- Senior Executives meet with staff in times of uncertainty including following incidents as a welfare type check.

Outcome: Staff share a common understanding of organisational priorities and other matters. Staff have direct engagement with Senior Executive at times of uncertainty. Staff can provide feedback without fear of repercussions and see the results.

Measures: Staff survey results, Staff forums recommenced.

Finding 3: The service structure and lack of management skills at AMC and CTU promote negativity.

Also contributing to the cultural issues highlighted in Finding 2, was negativity across all three ACTCS sites: between custodial and non-custodial staff at AMC, between AMC and CTU and also with the head office staff at 2 Constitution Avenue (2CA).

Corrections officers reported dissatisfaction with the restrictive nature of working in only one of the two sites and the pay difference of the additional composite paid to AMC staff who work rotating rosters

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over days, nights, weekends and public holidays. CTU staff felt they were the 'poor cousins' to AMC and were rarely considered in operational decision making. This perception was supported by the overt dominance of AMC specific information in policies, procedures and training materials.

Service provision at CTU is also perpetually challenged by the loss of staff to AMC which accounts for the agency's constraints on staff transfers between the two sites. Staff reported frustration with the limited opportunities and choice afforded to them whilst the agency is able to transfer staff at will (subject to staff agreement). The power imbalance between staff self-determination and agency operational need was evident and fosters negativity between the two sites and with head office at 2CA.

The separation of the two operational sites presents other issues relating to workflow management and staffing availability. Currently, recruitment and new recruit training is separated for each site, despite there being significant similarities in core skills. Each area requires some specific training and service orientation, but with the two staffing groups kept separate, opportunities to share staffing resources is limited and introduces risk where staff are working at the site that is less familiar to them.

The staff view of the head office was a fairly consistent feeling of distrust, lack of support and perception that ACTCS Executive are out of touch with the experiences and challenges of frontline operational staff. Of particular concern is the reported confusion of responsibilities between the two custodial executives in operational matters and apparent overlap of duties. This view subsequently contributes to a general lack of interest in communications coming from 2CA, particularly those of a more corporate nature that do not appear to be immediately relevant to operational issues.

Similarly, the broader management structure at AMC was thought to contribute to the perceived lack of trust and support between senior management and frontline staff. Staff reported a lack of empowerment (particularly after hours) and need to refer even minor events to senior staff (even when they are offsite). Reviewing roles and responsibilities of CO2s, CO3s and CO4s and ensuring appropriate development would provide an opportunity to reduce the operational burden on senior managers, who could in turn, better support the Senior Executive in bringing a more strategic view to operational management.

Leadership attributes and management skills was an area of concern reported by staff at all levels including the ACTCS Executive. The lack of stability in the leadership group and promotion (both temporary and permanent) of staff into more senior roles without appropriate training and development was a shared concern of all respondents, with frontline staff further perceiving active favouritism in selecting staff for acting opportunities. There was also concern about a perceived preference for external recruitment into more senior roles that fails to recognise the internal talent and complexity of working in the ACT. Furthermore, long periods of acting have occurred, preventing stability that arises from having positions permanently filled.

Various aspects of skill development were identified, particularly the operational management skills required of CO2s and above. Skill deficits in people management in relation to supporting staff, performance management, and having difficult conversations was noted. Broader training reflective of the responsibilities of CO3s, including risk management, corporate functions and operational leadership was also recommended. Staff offered many suggestions to address these issues. These included exposure to other correctional facilities, interview training to support career development, general

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management training, establishing objective selection processes for career advancement, and a demonstrated interest in personal development and advancement.

Overall, both the structure and current development of staff have contributed to confusion at the middle management level of operations. Particularly relevant to AMC, operational staff appear to be unprepared and disempowered to make operational decisions, and senior management are perceived to be more strategic, leaving a middle management void and lack of operational support for staff. This gap results in role confusion and senior staff working inconsistently and inefficiently.

Recommendation 5:

Review the structure of custodial operations to simplify, integrate and re-align accountability of operational and strategic functions. This includes:

- ***establishing a single Business lead of Custodial Services that reports directly to the Commissioner***
- ***have the Director CTU report to the new Business lead of Custodial Services***
- ***increase administrative support to the Business lead of Custodial Services and custodial Senior Directors***
- ***re-align the operational management structure with defined roles, responsibilities (and associated delegations) and proportionate numbers of senior staff that appropriately empowers CO2s CO3s and CO4s to manage the operational environment and enables Senior Directors to support the Business lead in strategic functions.***

Note that with the proposed work program for custodial operations planned for 2022/2023, establishing stability in the senior structure of AMC early will be imperative to support longer term transition.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Consider the suggested revised custodial operations structure at Appendix A and establish leadership roles as a priority (even if temporarily for 12-18 months) to give stability during the transition period.
- Identify distribution of responsibilities within the new structure.
- Identify the impact of changes proposed, including delegations, workforce planning, roster practices, policies and procedures, training, position descriptions etc.
- Undertake consultation with key stakeholders, including staff and union.
- Develop a comprehensive change program to support transition to the new structure.
- Establish greater visibility of CO3s in accommodation areas to support staff in addressing emerging issues on the day.

Outcome: Custodial service management is efficient and effective.

Measures: New leadership roles established within 4 months. New structure fully established within 18 months.

Recommendation 6:

Develop and implement training in both tactical leadership and operational management for senior staff and provide opportunities for emerging leaders to participate in the training.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Identify core skills required for tactical leadership and develop a relevant training program, including consideration of staging training for different CO levels if appropriate.
- Identify core skills required for operational management and develop a training package that draws from whole of government corporate learning and adapt as required to the correctional setting.
- Test all new learning packages with current and emerging leaders to validate that content is applicable in the operational environment and relevant to the CO level targeted.
- Implement pre and post evaluation and follow up over time to establish capability of participants.

Outcome: Custodial staff are suitably prepared and empowered to execute their role with confidence.

Measures: Pre and Post training feedback from participants.

Finding 4: Security of the environment contributes to safety concerns of staff

A significant challenge for the ACT Government is to manage the diversity of detainees within a single facility. This presents many challenges in terms of managing the security of the facility and safety of both staff and detainees, particularly in the context of minimising the limitations on human rights for different groups of detainees. There is a significant concern amongst staff that the detainee profile has changed over time, resulting in a more volatile and higher risk environment and that the facility no longer meets the more contemporary demands of operational practice. There is some support for this position in comparing ABS data for 2009 - 2010 with 2020 - 2021 data. Both the total number of counts for the top ten offences increased (almost doubling) and types of offences and their position in the list changed. For example, homicides and related offences and illicit drug offences both moved up the list, representing increases in frequency. The mean length of sentence also increased between these periods.

Despite lower numbers in 2020-2021, there were greater levels of unrest among detainees associated with longer lock-ins and many face-to-face visits being replaced with video-based online “visits”.

A key area of concern is the increasing accommodation pressures with the facility regularly operating at full capacity with limited options for detainee movement when required. This pressure has been further exacerbated by accommodation areas being non-operational following damage caused by extreme weather events or critical incidents in recent years. More recently, quarantining requirements to manage COVID-19 risk has also repurposed facilities and further strained accommodation capacity.

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The size of the facility also means there will always be limits on opportunities and programs that can be offered to detainees. Relocation of some detainees should be more broadly considered, particularly in relation to:

- violent or extremely disruptive detainees – there are limited options in the AMC to segregate these detainees and a few detainees can become a major source of resource and time engagement to the detriment of other detainees
- detainees on long sentences – relocation to NSW may offer the opportunity for change and access to programs or facilities not available in the AMC
- detainees with family in parts of NSW remote from the ACT may gain significant wellbeing benefits from being closer to them to enable more regular visits and better contact.

The 2009-10 Justice and Community Safety annual report supposed the centre would never reach capacity due to the issue of required non-associations between different categories of detainees. This has clearly been set aside in the last several years as numbers have grown considerably. The most pressing of the issues arising from this situation is housing sentenced detainees with those on remand and the limited accommodation options for female detainees. A new facility or facilities would enable many of the above issue to be addressed through separate specialist facilities rather than the current insufficient solution.

Introduction of contraband is also a perpetual issue that compromises the safety of staff and detainees alike. Staff repeatedly reported concerns about the security of the physical environment. The accessibility of the perimeter fencing to introduce contraband and poor camera placement or limited visibility was raised repeatedly. Records show that between 2020 and 2021 there was a significant increase in the incidence of contraband being introduced into the AMC over the fence. This correlates with reduced contraband being introduced via visitors for the same time period. These trends are consistent with detainee visits moving towards non-contact visits (Zoom).

There was some focus from staff on wanting to monitor activity external to the perimeter fence (which is the responsibility of the police) however several recommendations to improve internal camera coverage were also made, including upgrading the Main Control Room and increasing surveillance of the main courtyard. The Inspector of Correctional Services has previously voiced such concerns, prompting a review of the fencing at AMC. The Committee understands that the fencing review has been completed and requires funding to support implementation. Furthermore, AMC management have instigated a stronger searching program to reduce the volume of contraband on site, thereby validating staff concerns in this regard.

Staff described maintenance of the facility as a priority issue, identifying overgrown greenery blocking camera visibility and a need to upgrade door jambs and internal walkways to increase safety of movement. The Facilities Management team focus on vandalism-related reactive repairs to keep areas and cells in service to the detriment of statutory, planned and preventative works. In the six months July to December 2021, between seventy-three and ninety per cent of reactive jobs were completed each month. In this six-month period, 1,717 reactive maintenance requests were received, and as of 28 February 2022, 256 outstanding reactive maintenance requests remained unactioned. The combination of reactive works not completed and lack of resources to undertake quality preventive

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maintenance results in increased system failures which further perpetuates the cycle, so the facility is progressively becoming more vandalised and run down.

Finally, smoking in the AMC was highlighted to be a major cause of risk. Whilst the introduction of a smoking ban in the facility would need to be well planned, the frequency of detainee-lit fires, and the significant cost and disruption caused, is evidence of the clear benefits of removing lighters from the facility. Staff also identified tobacco itself as a cause of significant issues including being used as a form of currency which results in violence and standover tactics between detainees and as an aid to deescalating antisocial behaviour. Staff highlighted additional benefits associated with the removal of tobacco including simplifying the detainee buy-up process and improving discipline at the CTU. Staff also spoke about the very large amounts of property in some cells, which creates a danger to both staff and detainees and increases fire hazards. The Committee strongly supported the careful and thorough implementation of the new *Detainee Property Policy* as soon as practicable.

There are clear workplace health and safety benefits for both staff and detainees in introducing a smoke-free environment and the Committee noted AMC is one of a very small number of correctional facilities left in Australia that still permit smoking to occur. In addition, the situation is out of step with all other ACT government buildings, including the secure mental health facility. Many staff supported the cessation of smoking at both the AMC and the CTU. The Committee notes the ACT Government has previously stated the intention to cease smoking at AMC and strongly supports such an action.

Recommendation 7:

Commence improvements to the security of the environment through:

- ***progressing the fencing review findings***
- ***seek expert advice and implement other security improvements, particularly considering camera locations and coverage, fencing not covered by the fencing review, facility repair and maintenance and other mechanisms that reduce risk in the physical AMC environment***
- ***implementing the x-ray body scanners.***

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Invest in expert analysis of key security elements of the physical environment including fencing, camera placement, drone deterrent technology and ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- Establish funding to support implementation of recommended actions with completion within three years.
- Analyse the ongoing burden of facility repair and maintenance and plan a sustainable program of work with appropriate resourcing.
- Explore the value of refurbishing the Main Control Room

Outcome: Improved safety of staff and detainees through greater visibility of activity and reduction in the introduction of contraband.

Measures: Reduction in contraband found in searches

Recommendation 8:

Establish a maximum capacity for the AMC and explore options to reduce detainee overcrowding and establish plans for immediate deployment of mitigation strategies in the event of capacity reaching ninety per cent and/or critical reduction in functional accommodation. In the longer term, consider accommodation solutions as a part of the JACS master planning process.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- JACS should work across the justice sector to identify opportunities for diversion and early intervention to reduce the flow of detainees into the AMC.
- Directly address overcrowding, considering options for exit or relocation. Aim to link these two actions with other ACT Government priorities, including the [RR25BY25](#) initiative.
- Develop partnership arrangements (e.g., NSWCS, Justice agencies, NGOs) and internal procedures to facilitate immediate reduction of detainees accommodated at AMC where functional capacity exceeds ninety per cent.
- Implement internal mechanisms to support readiness for parole at earliest opportunity and successful transition into the community.
- Proactively support parole preparation to avoid adjournments by the Sentence Administration Board where key arrangements are not resolved (e.g., housing).
- Transfer detainees to NSW where the transfer would be of benefit to the detainee.

Outcome: Detainees are accommodated safely and in accordance with their human rights.

Measures: Reduction in Sentence Administration Board adjournments. AMC capacity monitoring.

Recommendation 9:

Implement smoking cessation across the AMC and CTU facilities following implementation of the new Detainee Property Policy and ensure staff are carefully supported in implementing these and the revised Detainee Discipline Policy and new Incentives and Earned Privileges Policy.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Implement a fully supported tobacco removal program, including access for detainees and staff to attend Quit programs and access to smoking cessation aids such as nicotine patches, gum and lozenges.
- Reduce fire hazards within the centre through the reduction of in-cell property.
- Review detainee fund limits in consideration of both the cessation of tobacco purchases and the purchase of cessation aids after initial cessation support ceases.
- Establish a mechanism to measure trends in incidents related to fire and tobacco use and incorporate reporting into existing executive governance mechanisms for review and action.

Outcome: Fire risk is reduced.

Measures: Reduction in fire and tobacco related incidents.

Finding 5: Staff training and professional development is inadequate in opportunity and scope in its current form.

Training for custodial officers is generally grouped into mandatory training (as determined by the Enterprise Agreement), Custodial Recruit training (twelve week course for new recruits) and specialised training (everything else). Training in the use of chemical agents and crowd control was repeatedly requested by staff, and a positive reaction to the development and implementation of this training was evident throughout the Blueprint for Change process.

However, enabling staff access to training is a consistent challenge and staff perceive an inequity in training opportunities. High operational demand, COVID-19 restrictions, limited training resources and no online operational training options have all limited training delivery. Across 112 sessions of the eight mandatory types of courses run in 2021, there were 120 instances of staff who did not attend training due to unscheduled leave. There were also 243 instances of staff scheduled to attend training, but who were recalled due to operational needs. There were 41 instances where staff were absent from training for unknown reasons or who declined to participate due to the roster change required. There were two courses where a total of five officers were sent back to work as the numbers of attendees were too low to run the course.

To reduce roster impact, the Blueprint for Change Committee requested a trial of four weeks of Tuesday afternoon 'lock-ins' to enable greater staff access to staff forums and training opportunities. However, these efforts were not as effective as hoped. Whilst most detainees were locked in, many functions continued including medical appointments, Sentence Administration Board hearings and selected program sessions. On one occasion, there was a detainee incident that also drew many staff away from the planned sessions.

Staff proposed that support for new recruits could also be an opportunity for improvement. Currently, following twelve weeks of training, new recruits are on the roster as an independent correctional officer, with no formal support in the early days of on-the-job experience. Providing some form of mentoring support and/or off roster shadowing opportunities for the first few weeks of duty would better support these new officers.

Staff also highlighted the limited expertise of some trainers. Currently, there is only one permanent custodial trainer and other staff are seconded from operations for short periods of three to six months. This rotation is offered partly as a development opportunity for officers and ensures training programs are current against operational practice. However, the risk of this model is that trainers exhibit different levels of natural talent and skill in the training environment, resulting in variations in the quality of training provided. With the requirement for greater empowerment of staff, building confidence in practice and need for capability development in tactical and operational management, training will become a key cornerstone to the success of these initiatives. Committed and qualified trainers will need to be established, with funding for appropriate training resources including venues and equipment.

Training opportunities for the Court Transport Unit are also limited, but their greater challenge is the AMC bias of the vocational programs of Certificate III and IV in Correctional Practice. Some of the evidence requested for staff to demonstrate competency is not possible to produce in the CTU work

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environment. CTU staff also reported putting forward repeated requests to receive defensive driver training and general training in driving the different escort vehicles, particularly the heavier vehicles.

With limited access to computers and no access to internet, training is limited to face-to-face. Expanding online training delivery was highlighted in the 2020 review of the Custodial Recruit Program to provide more flexible options to access the training program. Whilst improving computer and internet access will resolve one of these barriers, staff are fully occupied at their posts and cannot complete online training while on post. It is therefore imperative to design a staffing and/or rostering solution that enables regular and sustainable staff access to training that does not disable operations.

Finally, the Performance and Development Plan (PADP) process is reported to be largely tokenistic in the custodial operations context. PADPs are intended to provide an opportunity for supervisors and staff to establish shared expectations of future performance, discuss experiences of past performance and identify development opportunities that align to the individual's performance or career goals. A PADP typically identifies training or experiential opportunities specific to the individual, but this is under-utilised in the custodial environment as many training requirements are developed for mass rollout across all correctional officers or to targeted groups (e.g., all CO3s).

The Committee proposes individual career development could be better fostered by developing a capability framework that defines the key skills and personal characteristics relevant to different roles. The framework would offer a structure from which to measure performance, and also inform development needs. Where staff want to move into a role, a capability framework can help inform development needs to support the change.

Recommendation 10:

Design a staffing and/or rostering solution for both AMC and CTU that enables regular and sustainable staff access to training and ensure the training program:

- ***responds to the prioritised skill needs in the operational environment***
- ***is of high quality of content and delivery, and***
- ***has limited impact or dependency on operations.***

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Delivery of Recommendation 1 to increase custodial staffing profile.
- Determine a list of prioritised training, with revision at least every 2 years.
- In the context of available training resources, consider different training schedules such as block training, fixed training days and/or training blitz, combined with roster options that sufficiently quarantine staff for training without significantly impacting operations.
- Following a trial of the selected training solution, establish a sustainable training plan that meets staff mandatory and essential training requirements for both AMC and CTU.

Outcome: Staff can perform their role with confidence and have opportunity to extend their skills.

Measures: Currency in mandatory training meets a greater than ninety-five per cent currency threshold. Training is delivered against plan.

Recommendation 11:

Increase training resources including permanent, qualified custodial training staff, training venues and training equipment to deliver on increased demand for training and development.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Source funding for an increase to the permanent staffing profile for custodial training, with appropriate leadership and support for trainer development to ensure a quality standard of training delivery and assessment.
- Procure required training equipment as determined by the revised training plan identified in Recommendation 10.
- Explore investment in additional training facilities, considering the addition of temporary classrooms on AMC site, 2CA or another location.

Outcome: Staff can perform their role with confidence and have opportunity to extend their skills.

Measures: Currency in mandatory training >95%. Training delivered against plan.

Recommendation 12:

Develop a capability framework for roles across custodial operations within three years to support individual performance assessment and identification of development opportunities.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Identify the taxonomy of roles and functional descriptors within the framework structure.
- Consider implications for workforce planning and management, policies/procedures and training impact.
- Identify and incorporate specific role-based training requirements, such as defensive driving for CTU staff.
- Develop and execute transition plan.

Outcome: Review of staff performance is objective and structured opportunities for career development are available.

Measures: Progress against project plan.

Finding 6: Detainee tension is a contributing factor to staff stress and dissatisfaction

Heightened tension within the detainee population is evident through the volume of aggressive behaviour, damage to property and incidents (as discussed across the report). The impact of heightened detainee tension is significant. Ad hoc damage caused by detainees results in a persistent need for repairs in the facility which creates complexities in accommodation management. Staff safety is

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compromised where accommodations are less than ideal, where contraband is reasonably available and when detainees are emboldened.

Staff commonly reported the apparent power of detainees where disciplinary actions were applied inconsistently, thereby failing to influence behaviour change. Staff expressed reluctance to use force due to the belief that senior management would not support the decision. The punitive culture mentioned in Finding 2 of this report is also relevant in this context. Where incidents occur, staff felt debriefs were looking for someone to blame, rather than to identify opportunities for improvement. This further feeds the perception that detainees are favoured over staff, particularly where detainees become the victims in an incident of their own making and staff are reprimanded in some form.

Of particular concern is the lack of a structured day and not having enough meaningful activities, including work, to keep detainees occupied. Both the Human Rights Commission's *Human Rights Audit of Women's Condition of Detention at AMC* in 2014 and the Auditor-General's 2015 report *The Rehabilitation of Male Detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre*, highlight the need for a structured day. Reinstating the Transitional Release Program is a priority action for staff that also aligns with ACTCS priorities. The introduction of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model demonstrates promise in providing a more individualised sentence plan with greater opportunities for participation in programs relevant to the detainee's rehabilitative needs. However, these priorities lie within the realm of Offender Reintegration and whilst the positive potential of involving custodial officers is recognised rhetorically, there is currently no formal mechanism to engage custodial officers in the rehabilitation of detainees.

Consultation indicated staff interest in leveraging their connections with detainees to influence detainee outcomes more actively and positively. Implementing the IOM Framework provides an opportunity to enable positive involvement of custodial officers and supports stated goals of greater collaboration and integration of operations between Offender Reintegration and Custodial Operations.

Additionally, a structured day requires access to industries, programs and facilities not currently available at the AMC. Acknowledging the limitations of the AMC site, alternative solutions should be considered, including expansion of work opportunities within the current infrastructure and potential external partnerships that would support skill development and positive reintegration experiences.

In addition to more structured activities, there is clearly a need to develop and consistently implement more effective disciplinary and incentive processes. Also linked to the security classification of detainees, these policies and procedures have been prioritised for completion during the Blueprint for Change process. At the time of writing, the revised *Detainee Discipline Policy* and associated training has been completed and the *Incentives and Earned Privileges Policy* is in an advanced stage of development. Revised tools and processes to classify detainees are in development and respond to feedback from staff to include a panel assessment to complement a numerical tool. However, effective support for staff in implementing the required changes will be required for the policies to have the desired effect.

Staff expressed concern about the broader impact of the small number of detainees who are particularly emboldened and resistant to behaviour change and disproportionately affect the good operation of the centre. The single facility solution to incarceration in the ACT means there are limited internal options to control strong negative influences on the broader detainee population. Given the risk associated with such strong inflammatory influences within a single facility, the AMC arguably is

unable to effectively manage the incarceration of this type of detainee and a transfer or relocation interstate may be necessary.

The significant physical and psychological impact of working in the custodial operations environment is evidenced by the high numbers of work, health and safety reports, number of staff on light duties or staff unfit for work. Greater access to individual counselling following incidents and greater training on managing personal wellbeing were common suggestions to the Blueprint for Change Committee. In addition to the highly valued peer support program, a buddy system for all staff was also suggested.

Impact of staff competency relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture

Committee members considered how interactions between officers and detainees could have an effect on detainee behaviour, increasing staff stress and the danger for staff, or decreasing tensions and helping to maintain order. Considering the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the detainee population, cultural capability could be a significant driver in either de-escalating or escalating tensions. The impact of a workplace culture that recognises cultural and community links and ties, the effects of trauma and the relationship between trauma, spiritual wellbeing and healing was considered. Results from the staff training survey indicated a wide range of both attitudes towards cultural competency and understanding of it. This alone suggested to the Committee that a focus on building staff competencies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural matters, with the objective of supporting a broader understanding of their experiences, may help with maintaining relationships with the detainee population.

Recommendation 13:

Establish mechanisms that promote positive detainee engagement that includes:

- *a review of the ‘structured day’ with appropriate facilities, materials and work options, with a view to provide additional opportunities for positive detainee engagement in activities that support sentence management planning goals*
- *investment in industries opportunities, reintegration services and associated resources to support the “structured day”*
- *provide opportunities for skill development in custodial officers to build a positive culture and support pro-social behaviours in detainees*
- *identify opportunities for collaboration between Custodial Operations and Offender Reintegration to positively influence detainee rehabilitation and behaviour.*
- *opportunity to build cultural understanding and capability.*

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- In the development and implementation of the IOM model across detainee populations, review the ‘structured day’ and consider additional opportunities that align with IOM goals.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and mechanisms for influence between Custodial Operations and Offender Reintegration.
- Identify generic and targeted opportunities for skill development and provide training, including addition to and expansion of industries for detainees.

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- Expansion of horticultural activities at the AMC with the intent of supplying the kitchen and building a level of self-sufficiency in fresh foods.
- Partnerships with other areas of Government and non-government agencies to provide access to work opportunities in the community.
- Trial program activities and evaluate.

Outcome: Custodial officers feel more engaged, safer and detainee behaviour improves.

Measures: Staff survey results.

Recommendation 14:

Recognise that detainees who have a persistent, inflammatory impact on the broader detainee population and are frequently causing conflict and unrest are beyond the management capacity of a single facility and that such detainees should be considered for relocation interstate.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Review of relevant detainees for consideration of relocation to NSW in alignment with the *Relocating a Detainee to a NSW Correctional Centre Policy* (once notified).
- Establish reporting and review systems that would consistently provide the required evidence to validate such a decision.

Outcome: Detainee unrest within AMC is reduced.

Measures: Incidents at AMC are reduced.

Recommendation 15:

Continue building on staff wellbeing services, including access to individual counselling following incidents by specialist counsellors, additional wellbeing training initiatives and establishment of a buddy system of support or similar.

Actions that would deliver on this recommendation include:

- Explore procurement options to establish access to consistent and occupation specific counselling services to staff.
- Consider online and face to face training and wellbeing support.
- Consider additional peer support initiatives, including a buddy system.

Outcome: Staff safety and wellbeing is improved.

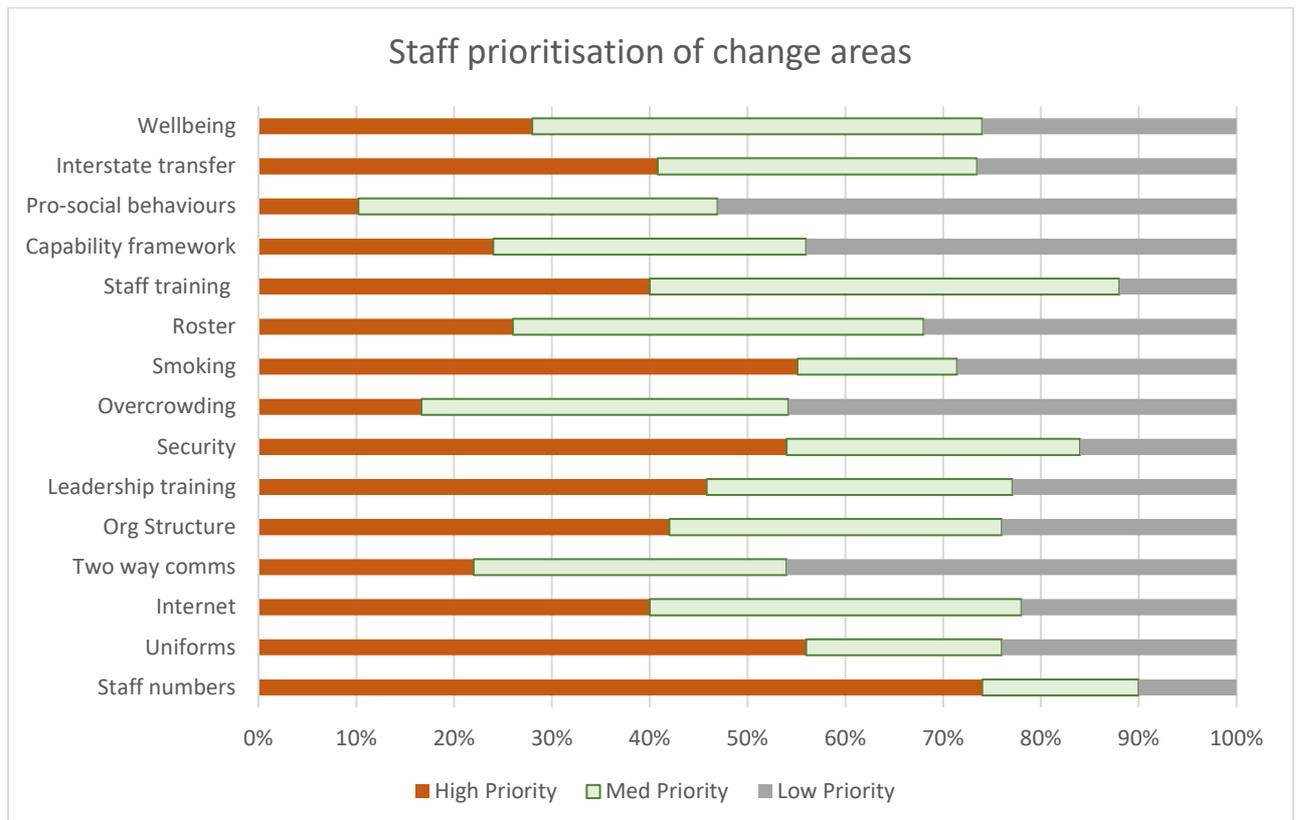
Measures: Reduction in WHS reports in Riskman. Reduction in staff off roster due to psychological injury.

5. Implementation and Monitoring Change

As areas for change and recommendations were broadly developed, staff were asked to prioritise the fifteen action areas in importance. This survey provided confirmation to the Committee of their understanding of priority issues and was undertaken as a final check of this.

The highest priority indicated was to increase staffing numbers, with addressing security, smoking and uniform issues also strongly indicated. Both leadership/management training and improving access to staff training were also prioritised by staff, as demonstrated consistently throughout the consultation process.

Systemic elements with a less immediate impact on custodial working conditions were considered a lower priority of respondents, including overcrowding and developing a capability framework. Of note was the lower prioritisation of two-way communications and pro-social behaviours which were particularly emphasised during consultations. However, this result likely demonstrates the importance of the whole program of work and difficulty in differentiating priorities. Staff were asked to rank the issues against each other. Therefore, rating an action lower priority than another does not necessarily equate to that action being of low priority in itself. Anecdotal feedback on the survey supports this position with staff commenting on the difficulty of rating the items, and more than one staff member expressing a desire to rank all fifteen items as number one.



In addition to consideration of staff priorities, the Blueprint for Change Committee also considered actions that were deemed critical to successfully effect change and address issues. In particular, the Committee considers that actions that support *organisational stability* and *staff engagement* should be

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prioritised for early action, and in advance of other, more robust changes. This Blueprint for Change proposes a large, comprehensive and complex suite of changes. Maximising stability for staff with clear guidance from senior roles to set the culture will be critical to ensuring success. Similarly, early progress will demonstrate the organisation's commitment to change and foster early engagement and build trust with staff in the change process. The following table suggests how staff priorities might be balanced with ensuring maximum stability and engagement through the change process.

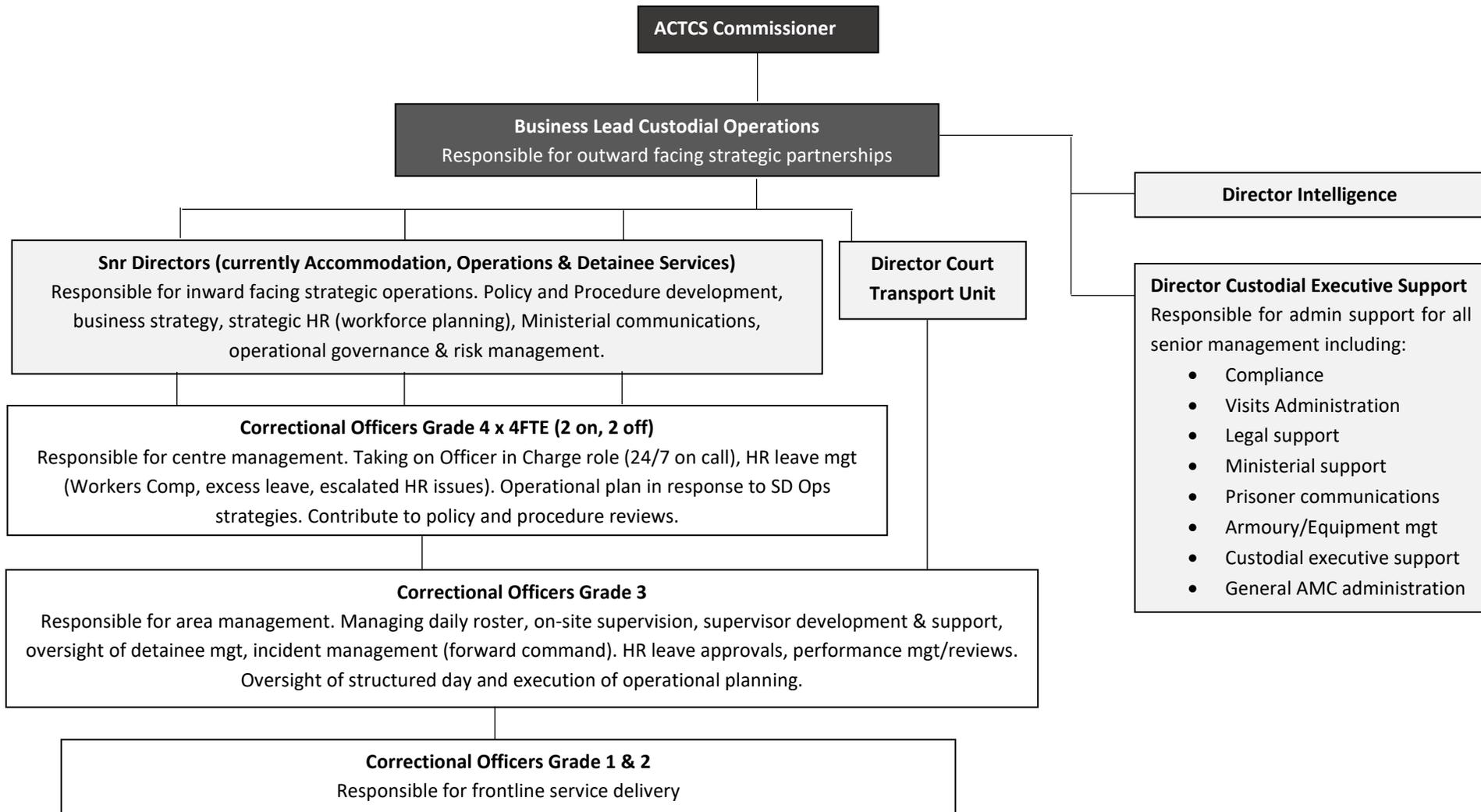
RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Organisational Restructure (Rec 5)	CRITICAL
Increase Staff (Rec 1)	CRITICAL
Two-way communications (Rec 4)	QUICK WIN
Uniforms & Safety equipment (Rec 2)	QUICK WIN
Internet & positive debriefs (Rec 3)	QUICK WIN
Smoking cessation (Rec 9)	CRITICAL

The Committee also emphasises the importance of quality in the both the planning and execution of these recommendations. Towards that goal, the establishment of appropriate governance and required resources to support the implementation of the Blueprint for Change should also be prioritised early in the implementation process. Inclusion of JACS and ACTCS Executive Committee members to oversee and drive the implementation process would further ensure the Committee's objectives and expectations are correctly interpreted.

The Committee recognises this is a large body of work, and that while some activities can be undertaken quickly, others will require up to three years to implement fully. Additionally, several of the proposed activities require specific funding to be allocated, and as a package, the funding required both initially and on an ongoing basis is considerable and in addition to the current budget of ACTCS.

The Committee expects ACTCS should see benefits arising from incremental change as they are progressed. To monitor the organisation's progress, the Committee suggests it reconvenes six months following the Government's agreement to recommendations and again six months after that meeting. This would enable the Committee to review progress, provide advice and ensure the objectives remain as the focus underpinning actions undertaken. Further activity should then be monitored by the Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services.

Appendix A – Revised structure for Custodial Operations



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