

# Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing

## *A consumer perspective*

Queensland’s peak health consumer body, Health Consumers Queensland, (HCQ) were engaged by Queensland Health (QH) to provide a consumer perspective on the provision of health services in correctional centres.

In 2018, HCQ conducted consultation with prisoners in seven correctional centres to inform the Offender Health Services Review Report. In 2021, the Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing engaged Health Consumers Queensland to revisit the same seven correctional centres to learn from prisoners what has changed and what needs to be improved.

### How a consumer's perspective was obtained:



A total of **112 prisoners** were consulted in **19 group sessions** during **March to May 2021**.

Each consultation was for up to an hour, during which Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC) members were given an opportunity to express their views about their experiences with prisoner health services, with a focus on access and delivery, and to provide suggestions about what could be done to improve services. The feedback provided to QH was not attributed to any individual prisoner.

### What they said and suggested:

**Overall:** Prisoners understood the constrained environment in which health staff are working, and the impact COVID-19 restrictions have had on service delivery in correctional centres. They identified an on-going need for continuous service improvements and requested an increased focus on preventative healthcare services. Six key themes emerged, and a number of suggestions were made under each theme.

## 6 key themes emerged



Medication Management



Dental – Access and Treatment Options



Health Requests – Access and Response



Communication and Culture



Mental Health – Access and Treatment Options



COVID and flu vaccinations



## Medication Management

- Improve access to pain relief medications such as Panadol as these are currently only being provided at scheduled medication rounds.
- Provide an explanation or education on why prescription medication has been ceased.
- Expand access to self-managed medications.
- Provide 'sleep' medications closer to the time for sleep.
- Consider making Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) available at all correctional centres.
- Reduce Hepatitis C cases and re-infection rates.



## Dental – Access and Treatment Options

- Reduce waiting times and provide earlier treatment options to avoid extractions
- Provide appropriate and timely pain relief and treatment for tooth ache
- Include dentures as part of a dental care plan or replace when broken
- Provide routine check-up and cleaning to reduce decay and gum diseases



## Health Requests – Access and Response

- Treat all prisoner health requests with respect and as genuine in the first instance.
- Provide a timely response to a health request and inform prisoners of the outcomes of the request.
- Redesign the health request process in conjunction with patients, including improve processes to support those with lower literacy levels to obtain access to care
- Provide more medical staff to deal with the increasing numbers of prisoners
- Improve access to Allied Health services including optometry, podiatry, dietitians, and physiotherapy
- Improve access to preventative healthcare services such as breast, bowel and prostate cancer screening
- Increase access to Telehealth to reduce need for transfer to hospital
- Pay more attention to older and disability patients and their needs



## Communication and Culture

- Improve communication between health staff and prisoner patients.
- Regularly meet with PACs to improve communication and understanding of service challenges



## Mental Health – Access and Treatment Options

- Consider the impact of lockdowns, isolation and lack of stimulation due to COVID-19 that lead to the increase of anxiety and distress levels for prisoners
- Provide clear information of the services available in correctional centres including who, what, and how to access these services
- Reduce waiting times for access to mental health services
- Consider the location of prisoners with significant mental needs to improve access to care and support
- Provide a consistent mental health service across all correctional facilities



## COVID and flu vaccinations

- Improve access to timely information, communication and education on COVID-19 and vaccinations, including access to the Chief Health Officer videos on TV channels
- Provide timely communication and information on flu vaccinations and availability.

## What will be done

In response to this feedback the following **actions will be taken over the next 12 months:**

1. Expand access to the prisoner self-managed medication process including access to basic analgesics (pain relief)
2. Implementation of Opioid Substitution Treatment in the remaining correctional centres
3. Improve the management of the dental waiting list
4. Re-design the medical request process
5. Expand access to telehealth
6. Encourage health staff to regularly attend Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings to provide information about services and a forum to identify service improvements.