

# AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT

### Prisoner Rehabilitation Department of Corrective Services



The Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

The Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

In accordance with section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I present a report titled **Prisoner Rehabilitation: Department of Corrective Services**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R J Sendt'.

R J Sendt  
Auditor-General

Sydney  
May 2006

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## **Foreword**

Prisons help us feel safe by removing offenders from our streets. They send a message that society will not tolerate crime and deter would-be offenders from breaking the law.

Prisons also provide an opportunity for offenders to rehabilitate themselves. This not only gives them the chance to lead a life free of crime once released, it can have major benefits for the community in reducing crime and its associated costs.

Currently NSW has over 9,000 people in prison and this number is rising. Rehabilitating prisoners is not easy. Many come from some of the most disadvantaged and underprivileged sectors of our society. Many have complex needs arising from antisocial thinking, drug use, poor work skills and limited education.

The Department of Corrective Services aims to address these factors while offenders are in prison. However crime is more than a corrective services issue. Many of the factors that influence offending are outside the department's immediate control. Government and community agencies must work closely together to tackle these complex social issues.

This report highlights some of the challenges faced by those working to rehabilitate prisoners.

Bob Sendt  
Auditor-General

May 2006



## Executive summary

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## The focus of our audit

Currently NSW has over 9,000 people in prison and this figure is growing. It costs about \$174 a day to keep a prisoner behind bars, and the government is planning more prisons.

Prisons help us to feel safe by removing offenders from our streets. But are they rehabilitating prisoners? Do they help address factors associated with crime, such as antisocial thinking, drug abuse, poor work skills, and limited education? And do they stop prisoners from offending again? The Department of Corrective Services has this challenging task.

We wanted to find out whether the department:

- knows if it successfully rehabilitates prisoners
- matches prisoners to programs that best meet their needs
- has an effective reintegration strategy in place.

## Audit opinion

In recent years the department has significantly changed its approach to rehabilitating prisoners. It has introduced programs to address offending behaviour based on evidence of what works. It has also formed partnerships with other agencies to help reintegrate prisoners into the community. We believe the department is on the right path and should continue building on these initiatives.

Despite these efforts, almost one in two prisoners return to prison or community supervision within two years of release, which is similar to other states. Most of these return to prison. While the return to prison rate has increased by 25 per cent during the last ten years, it has fallen slightly since 1999-2000.

In our opinion there is a risk that the department releases prisoners who have not addressed their rehabilitation needs. The department appears to address immediate health and welfare concerns. But it does not formally assess the education and work needs of all prisoners. It is currently rolling out a risk assessment tool to measure their risk of reoffending and identify key rehabilitation needs.

Prisoners do not always access or complete rehabilitation programs. The reasons are many and varied including they refuse to participate, are on a waiting list, or are only in prison a few months. The demand for intensive violence and sex-offender programs exceeds available places. And while they can access work, health services and education, there are no offence-based programs for prisoners with sentences of six months or less. Yet they account for more than half the prisoners released each year.



Reintegration is a key factor in reducing reoffending and requires a multi-agency response. Yet staff report significant problems accessing services for former prisoners, particularly high risk areas such as housing, work and drug use. The department is developing a formal reintegration strategy to clarify what it wants to achieve in this area. While it funds various community agencies and supervises offenders on parole, it does not provide community support to prisoners released after fixed sentences.

We accept that many of the factors that affect reoffending are outside the department's immediate control. Crime is more than a justice issue, it is a social one too. These complex issues will only be resolved with a whole-of-government approach.

The department recognises these challenges and has projects underway to address many of these issues. Successful prisoner rehabilitation will make our communities safer and help reduce the cost of crime.

## Recommendations

We recommend that the department:

- |                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Defining and measuring success                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ set rehabilitation goals or targets (page 16)</li> <li>▪ measure outcomes which aid rehabilitation such as its contribution to improving job skills and housing, and reducing drug use (page 16)</li> <li>▪ publicly report information on its performance including key measures and targets, and the results of programs and activities aimed at rehabilitating prisoners (page 19)</li> <li>▪ summarise how well prisoners achieve their case plan goals at the end of their sentence (page 20)</li> <li>▪ develop a reintegration strategy that clearly outlines the results it wants to achieve and how it will measure this (page 33)</li> </ul> |
| Identifying risks and needs                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expedite the use of a standard risk assessment tool to help identify prisoner needs (page 24)</li> <li>▪ improve access to community information and legal records by prison staff so they can better assess prisoner needs and risks (page 26)</li> <li>▪ introduce whole-of-sentence planning to clearly identify prisoner needs, and how and when to address them (page 27)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Access to programs and services                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ continue to improve prisoner access to offence-based programs (page 29)</li> <li>▪ routinely monitor and report on the proportion of sentenced inmates in prison for the first, second, and third time and so forth (page 29)</li> <li>▪ with other justice and welfare agencies, develop strategies to reduce reoffending by prisoners with short sentences (page 29)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Working with other agencies to improve reintegration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ continue to explore options for supporting prisoners released without parole who are at high risk of reoffending (page 34)</li> <li>▪ with other government and community agencies, continue to workshop possible collaborative solutions for improving access to community services (page 35).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Key audit findings

Chapter 1  
What is  
rehabilitation?

The public expects that the department will try to rehabilitate prisoners. This means changing an offender's behaviour by addressing particular social, psychological, welfare or other factors.

The department bases its approach to reducing reoffending on international evidence of 'what works'. This evidence shows that it is possible to reduce reoffending by delivering the right programs in the right way to the right people.

The department also helps prisoners to prepare for programs and to better cope with life. This includes help with health, welfare, education and job skills.

Chapter 2  
Are prisoners  
rehabilitated?

This is a difficult question to answer. While the department monitors prisoners' individual achievements, it has limited information on overall rehabilitation outcomes other than reoffending. We were unable to find out the extent to which prisoners as a group improved their health, employability, and education skills.

Currently one in two prisoners return to corrective services within two years of release, which is similar to other states. Most of these return to prison. The return to prison rate has risen by nine percentage points over the last ten years. It is now about 44 per cent, having fallen from a peak of 46 per cent in 1999-2000.

Out-of-cell hours and participation rates for work and education have been declining although some improved slightly in 2004-05. These are indicators of program accessibility and delivery.

The department needs good information on rehabilitation outcomes to find out whether it is delivering services in the most effective way and target areas that bring about the best outcome.

Chapter 3  
Are prisoners  
matched to  
programs?

There is a risk that the department releases prisoners who have not addressed their rehabilitation needs. To reduce this risk the department has been improving program access, how it assesses prisoners, and selects and delivers offence-based programs.

Despite these initiatives, the department still has some way to go to address this issue. It interviews all prisoners on entry to identify immediate health and welfare concerns and flag possible rehabilitation needs. But it does not formally assess the education and work needs of all prisoners. As a result we could not work out whether the department identified all rehabilitation needs. It is currently rolling out a risk assessment tool to measure their risk of reoffending and identify these key risk areas.

Prisoners do not always access or complete rehabilitation programs. They might refuse to participate, be on a waiting list, or be in prison for only a few months. Demand for offence-based programs far exceeds supply. And while they can access work, health and education programs, prisoners with sentences of six months or less cannot access offence-based programs designed to reduce reoffending. Yet they account for more than half the prisoners released each year.

Chapter 4  
Is there an effective  
reintegration  
strategy?

The department is introducing new processes to help prisoners prepare for their release. It has also developed partnerships with other justice and welfare agencies to help reintegrate former prisoners into the community.

Despite this, staff still have significant problems accessing community services for former prisoners. And we were unable to find out whether reintegration is successful, particularly in key risk areas such as housing, work and drug use. This is because the department has yet to finalise a reintegration strategy which clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve. While the department funds various community agencies and supervises offenders on parole, there are no support arrangements in the community for offenders released after fixed sentences.

Without effective support arrangements in place for prisoners on release, there is an increased risk that they will reoffend.

## Response from the Department of Corrective Services

*Thank you for providing me with a copy of the performance audit report on Prisoner Rehabilitation and for inviting comment on the report. I welcome the report as a valuable contribution to the informed discussion about prisoner rehabilitation which is a critical area in the administration of corrections.*

*I am pleased that the audit report recognises the complexity of the task of rehabilitating prisoners. The audit quite correctly notes that many factors that affect reoffending are beyond the control of the Department of Corrective Services and points to the need for government and community agencies to work together to tackle the challenges posed by a difficult and needy population. The audit also acknowledges that the Department has recognised these challenges and has put in place strategies and developed partnerships that will ultimately make the community safer.*

*The Department has made extensive efforts to improve approaches to treatment and reintegration. It is therefore pleasing that an independent performance audit has recognised this and concluded that the Department has made significant and positive changes along the right path with programs and services that will contribute to a reduction in the risk of reoffending.*

*The Department's strategies have been informed by the growing body of international evidence on 'what works' to reduce reoffending. Having regard to this literature, the Department has opted to focus resources on those offenders who pose a moderate to high risk of reoffending and also to address only those needs that can be directly related to reoffending or that are required to keep offenders safe in custody. This means that by design we do not attempt to meet all needs of every offender. The literature also shows that low intensity programs of limited duration are ineffective for targeting moderate to high risk offenders. For this reason the Department does not place all offenders in treatment programs, neither do we offer abridged treatment programs for high risk violent and sexual offenders who are in custody on short sentences. This would constitute an ineffective use of resources. The audit report does not appear to have appreciated the full implications of this literature and its impact on our strategic approach. This is also reflected in the emphasis that the report places on longer term health, employment and housing outcomes and the desirability of the Department developing performance measures for these.*

*The audit report suggests that we offer no 'offence-based' programs for offenders sentenced to less than six months. This could be misleading. In fact short term offenders can participate in a range of appropriate programs including drug relapse prevention, anger management, personal effectiveness, gambling, education, employment and life skills programs.*

*The report also suggests that the Department does not formally assess the education and work needs of all prisoners. The Department has opted instead for a more hierarchical approach to assessment whereby detailed assessments are only completed when indicated by screening and where it has been demonstrated that the offender can benefit from the available interventions and services. An inmate education profile is completed for targeted offenders which in turn identifies those offenders who require more comprehensive assessments. These are mapped to nationally recognised competencies in literacy, numeracy and oracy. The success of this approach is reflected in the participation rates of NSW prisoners in the equivalent of secondary education which is significantly higher than any other state.*

*The report includes repeated misplaced emphases on the return to prison rate as an inferred measure of our success at reducing reoffending. This is an incomplete measure as it does not include repeat offenders who receive sanctions other than custodial sentences. In NSW, the Government, community and Judiciary have a low tolerance for repeat offenders which ensures that if successfully apprehended and prosecuted a custodial sentence is likely to be imposed. An outcome of this is that the return to prison rate is higher in NSW than most other states. Variations in the return to prison rate over time are a response to a complex interplay of factors and cannot be attributed to the Department's actions alone. Increases in policing, changes in sentencing legislation, improved monitoring and supervision of offenders on parole and interactions between offenders and the community will all influence the return to prison rate.*

*A more meaningful measure is that of 'return to corrective services'. This includes repeat offenders who are given community based orders as well as those given custodial sentences. In the 2006 Report on Government Services the rate of 'return to corrective services' was similar across all Australian states, suggesting that the rate of reoffending was similar across all states. However the rate of return to custody in NSW was higher, suggesting that the difference is in the disposition of sentences in NSW rather than the level of repeat offending. The Report on Government Services in fact reported this measure as an indicator for the Justice Sector, not for correctional agencies alone, reflecting that the issues are broader than correctional practice. Notwithstanding this, the rate of return to corrective services for prisoners released from custody in NSW is high and the Department is committed to making a significant and measurable contribution to reducing the risk of reoffending.*

*The recommendations for action by the Department of Corrective Services will be closely examined by my officers. My preliminary assessment suggests that the recommendations are sensible and to a great extent confirm the direction already being taken by the Department.*

*In particular I am committed to achieving integration between the custodial and community activities of my organisation. I have already taken steps to ensure that the communication of information, the distribution of resources and the organisational structure are realigned to improve community safety and deliver the best outcomes for offenders whether they be in the community or custody. The Department has also already taken steps to increase retention in programs and to expand provision in education, violent offender treatment and programs targeting antisocial thinking that may address some of the perceived deficits identified in the report.*

*It is my intention to publish a detailed analysis of the report and any actions that arise in response to its recommendations on the Department's internet site at [www.dcs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dcs.nsw.gov.au).*

*I would particularly like to thank the audit team for their consultative approach and for taking on board the Departments perspectives in finalising the report.*

*(signed)*

*Mr Ron Woodham  
Commissioner*

*Dated: 17 May 2006*

# 1 What is prisoner rehabilitation?

---

## 1.1 Why do we imprison offenders?

People go to prison because a court has found them guilty of an offence. Removing them from our street provides a safer community. Other reasons to imprison offenders are:

- to punish them for their crime by taking away their freedom
- to deter them and other would-be offenders from similar crimes
- to make a public statement that society will not tolerate crime.

Society also expects that some attempt will be made to rehabilitate prisoners. This means changing an offender's behaviour by addressing particular social, psychological, welfare or other factors.

## 1.2 What is the Department of Corrective Services' role?

### **Mission to reduce reoffending**

The Department of Corrective Services manages offenders in prisons and in the community. Its mission is to reduce reoffending through secure, safe and humane management of offenders.

The department's key roles include:

- managing remand and sentenced offenders in prison, including those on periodic detention
- supervising offenders in the community on home detention, parole, and other community service orders
- providing pre and post sentence advice to courts, and pre-release advice to the State Parole Authority.

In June 2005, the department had over 28,000 offenders under its management. Of these, about one third were in prison.

The department bases its approach to reducing reoffending on international evidence of 'what works'. This evidence shows that it is possible to reduce reoffending by delivering the right programs in the right way to the right people.

The department also helps prisoners to prepare for programs and to better cope with life. This includes help with health, welfare, education and job skills.

### **Rehabilitating prisoners is difficult**

Rehabilitating prisoners is no easy task. Although generally willing to accept help with health and welfare, prisoners are not always receptive to programs that address their offending behaviour. They are encouraged to take part in programs, but it is not compulsory in prison and can be difficult to enforce during parole.

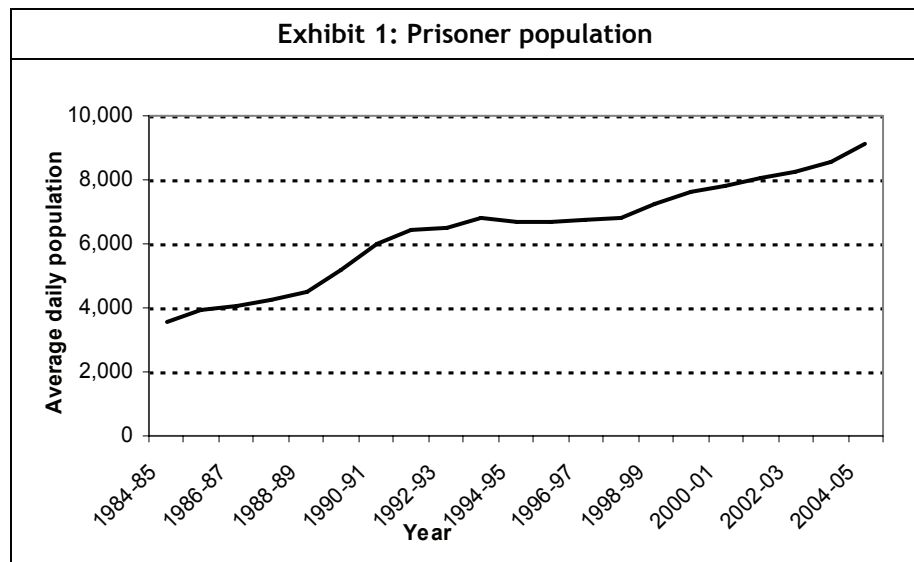
Many prisoners are drug and alcohol dependent, display aggressive tendencies, and show poor impulse control and decision making capacity. Two in three have been in prison before, and many serve short sentences.



We recognise that many of the factors that influence reoffending rates, such as sentencing practices and policing strategies, are beyond the department's control. Therefore these rates measure the effectiveness of the community's approach to law and order generally.

The daily average prisoner population has more than doubled in the last 20 years to over 9,000.

Prison numbers  
9,000 and rising



Source: Department of Corrective Services 2004-05 statistical report

More prisons  
are planned

To cope with increasing prison numbers, the department is planning extra capacity for 1,500 prisoners, including new 500 bed prisons at Wellington and on the south coast.

The cost of supervising an offender in prison has also risen over the years. Currently averaging \$174 per day, it is significantly higher than the \$11 per day it costs to supervise an offender in the community.

The department is trying to rein in prison costs. Two NSW prisons are operating under a new agreement with unions, allowing the department to manage them more efficiently. The department will operate new prisons under this agreement, and gradually implement this 'Way Forward' model in other prisons.

### 1.3 What is the focus of the audit?

This audit examined whether the Department of Corrective Services has effective programs and strategies in place to rehabilitate prisoners and aid their reintegration into the community.

The audit did not examine:

- sentencing practices
- the reasons for growth in the prison population
- the appropriateness of the department's approach to rehabilitation.

See Appendix 1 for further information on the lines of enquiry, scope, criteria and audit approach.



## **2 Are prisoners rehabilitated?**

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**At a glance**

**The key question we wanted to answer was:**

Does the Department of Corrective Services know whether it successfully rehabilitates prisoners?

**Our assessment:**

This is a difficult question to answer. While the department monitors prisoners' individual achievements, it has limited information on overall rehabilitation outcomes other than reoffending. We were unable to find out the extent to which prisoners as a group improved their health, employability, and education skills.

Currently one in two prisoners return to corrective services within two years of release, which is similar to other states. Most of these return to prison. The return to prison rate has risen by nine percentage points over the last ten years. It is now about 44 per cent, having fallen from a peak of 46 per cent in 1999-2000.

Out-of-cell hours and participation rates for work and education have been declining although some improved slightly in 2004-05. These are indicators of program accessibility and delivery.

The department needs good information on rehabilitation outcomes to find out whether it is delivering services in the most effective way and target areas that bring about the best outcome.

**2.1 Are performance measures and targets in place?**

**Our assessment**

The department still has some way to go to clarify what it means by success. It has developed some key performance measures, but it needs to set targets and measure factors which aid rehabilitation such as improvements in education, health, and employment.

**Key performance measures are in place**

The department has recently established two key performance measures for prisoner rehabilitation:

- reoffending rates for offenders released from prison
- the percentage of accredited program modules successfully completed by prisoners.

It developed these as part of its draft corporate plan for 2005-2008. The performance measure on accredited programs is new and therefore we have no data on it yet.

The department's Results and Services Plan (RSP) for 2006-07 also includes reoffending rates for prisoners. They are:

- the rate of prisoners returning to prison
- the rate of prisoners returning to corrective services (ie supervising offenders in prison or the community).

**One in two prisoners return to corrective services**

About 44 per cent of prisoners return to prison within two years of release. The rate of prisoners returning to corrective services is slightly higher at almost 47 per cent.

The department's corporate plan and RSP do not yet include outcome measures for other factors which aid rehabilitation such as improvements in education, health, and employment.

In its annual report the department provides data on the number of education modules completed by prisoners. Each time a prisoner completes a module he or she achieves a competency level not previously held. However it does not report the extent to which these address poor literacy, language and numeracy skills.

The department has also started to measure the results of its offence-based programs, such as those for sex and violent offenders. It does pre and post program testing to analyse changes in attitude and will review the impact on reoffending.

**Other agencies measure various rehabilitation outcomes**

Correction agencies in Australia and overseas measure success in various ways. Some measure reoffending, while others measure factors which aid rehabilitation such as work and housing.

<b>Exhibit 2: How do other agencies measure success?</b>	
<b>Reoffending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Return to prison within 12 or 36 months of release</li> <li>▪ Reduced reoffending by program participants</li> <li>▪ Reduced reoffending risk level during sentence</li> <li>▪ Rate of parolees charged with major offences</li> </ul>
<b>Offending behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completion rate for offending behaviour programs</li> </ul>
<b>Education and employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of unemployed entering prison who subsequently keep a job or vocational training for more than four weeks after release</li> <li>▪ Rate of prisoners in custody over six months whose literacy and numeracy increased between admission and discharge</li> <li>▪ Rate of approved programs completed</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate of positive drug screening tests</li> <li>▪ Rate of prisoners in custody whose physical fitness assessment increased between entry and discharge</li> <li>▪ Drug treatment program completions</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate of offenders with suitable housing to go to on release</li> </ul>
<b>Classification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate of prisoners whose classification level is reduced without problems</li> </ul>
<b>Unescorted release</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate of release days completed without problems (work release, day leave)</li> </ul>

Source: Audit Office research of other agencies, see Appendix 1

**Other agencies set targets**

Some agencies set targets expressed as a percentage decrease from a base year. Others set a specific target they wish to meet.

Agency 1                      Reduce the reoffending rate by five per cent in 2007-08 compared to 2002-03.  
Complete 3,900 drug treatments in 2004-05.

Agency 2 85 per cent completion rate for offending behaviour treatment programs for 2005-06.

We think that it would be useful if the department clearly defined what it wants to achieve in rehabilitating prisoners. This would help staff to understand what results the department wants and encourage them to work towards a common goal.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department clearly define success by:

- setting rehabilitation goals or targets
- measuring outcomes which aid rehabilitation such as its contribution to improving job skills and housing, and reducing drug use.

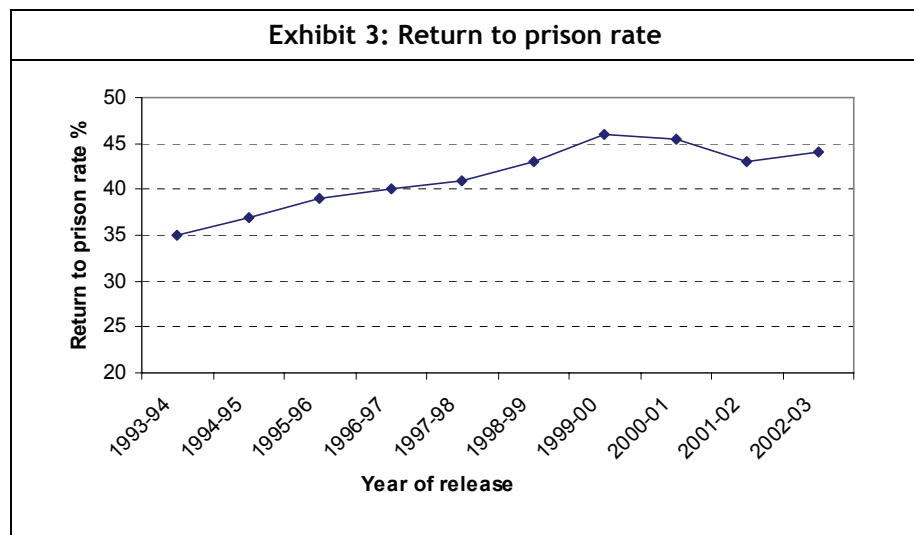
## 2.2 Is performance improving?

**Our assessment** Key rehabilitation measures show that trends are worsening. However the department improved or maintained performance in some areas last year. It needs to sustain this effort to increase the likelihood of rehabilitation.

**Performance targets yet to be developed** The department has not established performance targets for prisoner rehabilitation, therefore we do not know whether it is meeting its goals. By examining trends over time we can see whether performance has improved.

As shown below, the rate of offenders returning to prison within two years has risen by nine percentage points over the last ten years. It is now about 44 per cent, having fallen from a peak of 46 percent in 1999-2000.

The return to prison rate has fallen since 1999-2000



Source: Department of Corrective Services

Note: The department measures data two years after release. For example, in 2004-05 it reported data for prisoners released in 2002-03.

The department does not have comparable data on trends over time for the rate of prisoners returning to corrective services.

The department monitors prisoners' individual achievements. But it has limited information on overall rehabilitation outcomes such as the extent to which prisoners as a group improved their health, employability, and education skills.

The department monitors activities such as participation rates and out-of-cell hours. These are indicators of program accessibility and delivery. For example if word is out that a program is useful and well run, prisoners are more likely to volunteer for it. So if these measures are increasing it means opportunities for rehabilitation are also increasing.

Decreasing participation trends

Exhibit 4: Participation rates and out-of-cell hours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employment participation rate: ↓ trend since at least 2001-02</li> <li>▪ Work release participation rate: ↓ trend since 2000-01 (although slight increase in 2004-05)</li> <li>▪ Education participation rate: ↓ trend since at least 2000-01 (although slight increase in 2004-05)</li> <li>▪ Out-of-cell hours: ↓ trend since at least 2000-01 (although slight increase in 2004-05)</li> </ul>	

Source: Department of Corrective Service annual reports, Audit Office data request

So although overall participation trends are worsening, education and work release rates improved slightly last year, which is encouraging. The department reports that prisoner numbers, resource availability, and security measures influence these rates.

In addition, the total number of education modules prisoners completed increased over the last two financial years.

### 2.3 Is performance information monitored and compared with other agencies?

Our assessment

The department regularly monitors information on its activities, and compares its performance with other agencies to seek better ways of doing things.

Regular monitoring of activity data

The department collects and monitors operational data on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis. The Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics Unit also prepares a weekly overview of offenders supervised by the department.

Information collected is generally activity based. It fills a necessary role in helping management monitor the level of resources needed and used.

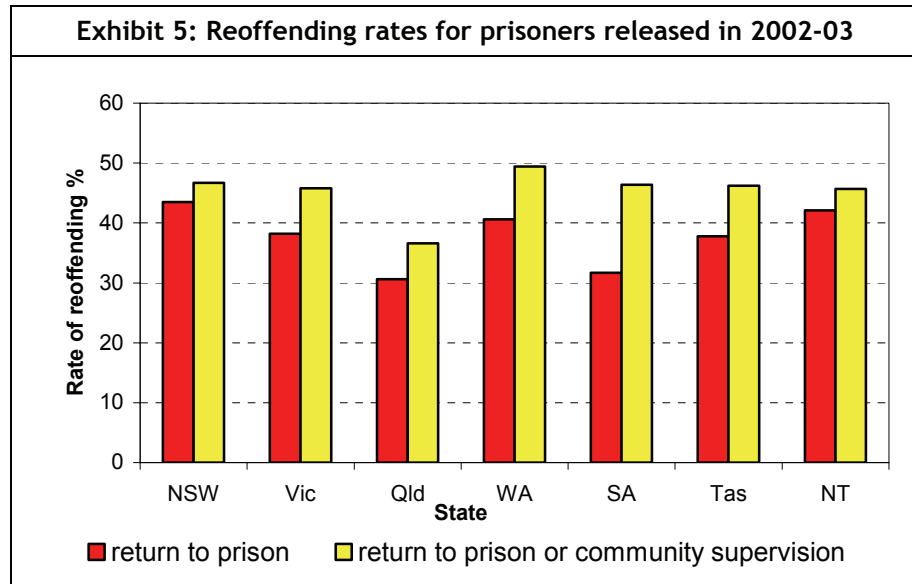
The department calculates the reoffending rate annually. This is a key outcome measure in assessing how well the department is achieving its mission.

Performance is benchmarked with other agencies

The department benchmarks its performance with other agencies in Australia and New Zealand. Representatives of each agency meet as members of the National Corrections Advisory Group.

This group develops activity and performance measures. It releases some benchmarking data through the annual *Report on Government Services* prepared with the Productivity Commission.

NSW has the highest rate of offenders returning to prison in Australia. However the rate of prisoners returning to corrective services, either prison or community supervision, is similar to other states.



Source: Justice preface, Report on Government Services, 2006

The department advises that the return to prison rate is higher in NSW due to differences in the judicial and policing environment. This includes:

- more punitive sentencing practices
- mandatory sentences for some offences
- increases in police numbers
- police targeting known offenders.

While we accept that these factors might affect the return to prison rate, some are relevant to other states. For example, other states are also increasing police numbers.

## 2.4 Is performance information publicly available?

### Our assessment

The department needs to make more information available to the public on rehabilitation outcomes.

### Limited reporting of results

The department releases information to the public mainly through its annual report, and in papers and reports accessible through its website. Information on prisoner rehabilitation tends to describe activities rather than results.

For example, the department did not include reoffending data in its annual report for 2004-05. Yet this is a significant outcome within its mission, one which is of public interest. In previous years it reported reoffending in an appendix. The department instead reports reoffending data on its website in a separate statistical report.



The department is putting in place many initiatives to improve the way it rehabilitates prisoners. Reporting on the results of this activity would allow the public to find out whether it has achieved its goals.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department publicly report information on its performance including key measures and targets, and the results of programs and activities aimed at rehabilitating prisoners.

## 2.5 Are rehabilitation goals set for each prisoner and is progress monitored?

**Our assessment** The department has been improving the way it sets and monitors rehabilitation activities for each prisoner. But it needs to do more to better track and assess progress through the system.

**Rehabilitation activities recorded and monitored** Each prisoner has a case plan which records rehabilitation activities and programs he or she must complete while in prison. Case plans are dynamic. Staff review and update them every six months to reflect latest needs and risks.

**Whole of sentence planning required** There is no whole-of-sentence plan which clearly identifies prisoners' risks and how and when they will address them, both in prison and in the community. The department is currently removing some of the obstacles to sentence planning. This includes improving access to information and introducing a standard risk assessment tool. See sections 3.2 and 3.3 for more on this issue.

Other agencies also use whole-of-sentence planning.

### Exhibit 6: Sentence planning

The UK National Offender Management Service completes a sentence plan as part of its induction process or within eight weeks of sentencing. It also refines the goals within the plan during a prisoner's sentence. By 2008 prisoners will also have an Offender Manager appointed to manage their plan and access rehabilitation resources within prison, and later in the community.

Correctional Service Canada prepares a correctional plan for each prisoner as part of its intake assessment process. Prisoners are then located in prisons that can provide the programs to meet the correctional plan by the time they are eligible for parole.

Source: UK Home Office, Correctional Service Canada

**Limited end of sentence assessment** The department does not formally assess the success of interventions at the end of a sentence, either in prison or later in the community.

Prison staff prepare a discharge summary only if an offender returns to prison. This includes comments on the prisoner's previous behaviour or management concerns. This means there is limited information on those who do not return to prison, the possible success stories.

Staff who work with parolees must prepare a discharge summary at the end of parole supervision. But this appears to occur on an ad-hoc basis, with some staff using a standard form while others use case notes. The department does not collate or analyse the results.

Staff could assess interventions in a number of ways such as:

- whether activities in case plans show results
- prisoners address or reduce their risk of reoffending.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department summarise how well prisoners achieve their case plan goals at the end of their sentence.

### **3 Are prisoners matched to programs that meet their needs?**

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**At a glance**

**The key question we wanted to answer was:**

Does the Department of Corrective Services match prisoners to programs that best meet their rehabilitation needs?

**Our assessment:**

There is a risk that the department releases prisoners without addressing their rehabilitation needs. To reduce this risk the department has been improving program access, how it assesses prisoners, and selects and delivers offence-based programs.

Despite these initiatives, the department still has some way to go to address this issue. It interviews all prisoners on entry to identify immediate health and welfare concerns and flag possible rehabilitation needs. But it does not formally assess the education and work needs of all prisoners. As a result we could not work out whether the department identified all rehabilitation needs. It is currently rolling out a risk assessment tool to measure their risk of reoffending and identify these key risk areas.

Prisoners do not always access or complete rehabilitation programs. They might refuse to participate, be on a waiting list, or be in prison for only a few months. Demand for offence-based programs far exceeds supply. And while they can access work, health and education programs, prisoners with sentences of six months or less cannot access offence-based programs designed to reduce reoffending. Yet they account for more than half the prisoners released each year.

### **3.1 Is there a rehabilitation strategy in place?**

**Our assessment**

The department has made some progress towards developing an overarching rehabilitation strategy, but it still needs to clarify what it wants to achieve and outline its approach to interventions.

**Rehabilitation strategy being developed**

The department reports that it has several projects underway to develop an overarching framework for rehabilitating prisoners. This is important step towards clarifying what it hopes to achieve in this area. It is a good idea for the department to clearly outline:

- its rehabilitation aims
- its approach to interventions
- how various approaches link together
- how it defines success.

**New approach to prisoner rehabilitation in place**

The department has significantly changed its approach to rehabilitating prisoners in recent years. It has introduced programs to address offending behaviour based on evidence of what works. This approach asserts that interventions must match an offender's risk of reoffending and that targeting medium to high risk offenders produces the best results.

In 2003 the department established principles for reducing reoffending, called 'throughcare'. They include providing seamless support to offenders in prison and the community, sharing information, promoting community links, and using interventions proven to reduce reoffending.

While staff support these principles, most reported that throughcare was not working in practice. We believe the department still has some way to go to meet its throughcare objectives. We discuss relevant limits and challenges in chapters 3 and 4.

### 3.2 Are prisoners assessed to determine their rehabilitation needs?

**Our assessment**

The department is improving the way it assesses rehabilitation needs, however it has some way to go before it fully implements its new approach.

**Possible rehabilitation needs flagged**

Staff interview prisoners to identify immediate health and welfare concerns and flag possible rehabilitation needs. They use this information to develop a case plan to address specific problems with psychology, education, alcohol and other drugs (AOD), work, and welfare. For example, a case plan for a prisoner suffering from substance abuse might state that he or she should attend an AOD course.



Source: The Department of Corrective Services

**Routine health assessment in place**

At present the only routine assessments are for general health and initial screening. Staff do not formally assess all prisoners to determine their education and work needs, or their risk of reoffending.

Exhibit 8: Assessing rehabilitation needs and risks				
	All prisoners	On referral	Self referral	Comment
Initial screening	✓			Staff interview prisoners to flag possible rehabilitation needs.
General Health	✓	✓	✓	Assessments by Justice Health.
AOD		✓	✓	Specialist assessments used for entry to offence-based programs.
Psychology		✓	✓	Specialist assessments used for entry to offence-based programs.
Education: - education profile interview (EPI) - literacy and numeracy		✓ ✓	✓	Staff may interview prisoners to determine their education profile. Literacy/numeracy tested if problem identified in EPI.
Employment (Correctional Service Industries or CSI)				Staff do not formally assess work needs, however they may interview prisoners to find out about their work goals and history. CSI staff assess prisoners work readiness competencies every six months.
Risk of reoffending (Level of Service Inventory - Revised or LSI-R)		✓		Staff use the risk assessment tool for entry to some offence-based programs. They are extending its use to all sentenced prisoners in custody for two or more months.
Welfare				Staff do not formally assess welfare needs other than at initial screening.

Source: Staff interviews and file review

We recognise that prisoners may not need all these detailed assessments. But as staff do not routinely use the department's key risk assessment tool (the LSI-R) for case management, there is a risk that they might overlook some rehabilitation needs.

**Risk assessment is being rolled out to prisons** Until recently staff only used the LSI-R for parolees or prisoners assessed for specialist programs. The department is improving its IT system so it can use it for more prisoners and provide a more objective measure of prisoner needs.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department expedite the use of a standard risk assessment tool to help identify prisoner needs.

### 3.3 Do staff have sufficient information to develop case plans?

**Our assessment** While staff have information on program options, the department needs to do more to improve access to legal documents and information on community supervision. These are important to more fully assess prisoner needs.

**Adequate information on program options** Staff reported that they had enough information on the different program options available. Each prison has an annual program schedule in place, and the department has developed a compendium of programs run in the community and prison.

**Some problems accessing legal and community information** Staff developing initial case plans tend to rely on information derived from prisoner interviews or the current prison file. They do not have timely access to information on prisoners' supervision in the community, or legal documents such as police fact sheets and judges' sentencing comments.

This means that unless a prisoner is frank and open, staff may be unaware of key information vital to his or her rehabilitation needs. Some staff who work with parolees attend classification meetings, although this is not routine practice.

<b>Exhibit 9: Accessing information on community supervision</b>
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A case management team classified a prisoner at the lowest security rating so that they could transfer her to a transitional centre and give her opportunities to work or study in the community. A community staff member later uncovered psychological reports which showed that the prisoner was severely depressed and isolated before going to prison. If this information had been available at the case management meeting, staff may have sent her to a different prison.
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Source: File reviews

Staff need legal documents such as police fact sheets and judges' sentencing comments for detailed assessments such as the LSI-R and psychological reviews.

<b>Exhibit 10: Accessing legal information</b>
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To complete the reoffending risk assessment (LSI-R), staff must have information on a prisoner's offence history, including community sentences, warnings or fines. Judges' sentencing comments often include a detailed account of the crime. This means that staff can more easily find out the causes of offending behaviour. For example, a prisoner convicted of aggravated assault may have underlying drug and alcohol, or sex-related behavioural issues.
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Source: Staff interviews, file review

The department reports that projects to improve access to information are underway, including electronic-case management. It will also be setting up an assessment information unit, whose staff will track and follow-up outstanding information.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department improve access to community information and legal records by prison staff so they can better assess prisoner needs and risks.

### 3.4 Do programs and services match prisoners' needs and risks?

**Our assessment** The department readily identifies some rehabilitation needs. But as it did not fully assess all prisoners, we found it difficult to work out whether case plans addressed all risks and needs.

Determining the best course of action is an important part of casework. Getting this right means interventions are more likely to rehabilitate prisoners. We reviewed 31 case plans across five correctional centres to find out whether staff matched prisoners' needs and risks to relevant programs and services.

**Health and welfare needs appeared to be addressed** Case plans generally addressed key health and welfare issues. Staff also appeared to identify rehabilitation needs relating to drug use, violence, and sexual behaviour.

<b>Exhibit 11: Addressing violence, sex offences and drug use</b>
<p>The department runs three intensive programs at Long Bay Correctional Centre for prisoners with offending behaviour relating to violence, sex, or drug use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Violent Offenders Therapeutic Program (VOTP) targets high risk offenders convicted of a violent offence. It has up to 35 participants at anytime. The department will soon run a medium intensity program at three other correctional centres.</li> <li>▪ Custody Based Intensive Treatment (CUBIT) targets medium to high risk sex offenders. It has up to 40 participants at any one time. Prisoners must have a C classification, the lowest security rating. The department runs a low intensity program at one other correctional centre.</li> <li>▪ Drugs and alcohol: Ngara Nura is a pre-release drug and alcohol program. Prisoners must have a C2 or C3 classification. Up to 100 participants complete the program each year.</li> </ul> <p>Staff identified prisoners as candidates for one or more of these programs, and noted this in the case plan.</p>

Source: Staff interviews, Department of Corrective Services annual report 2004-05, Audit Office document request

**Work, education or reoffending risks unclear** It was sometimes difficult to assess whether case plans addressed key risks because prisoner files did not always have LSI-Rs, EPIs, or assessments of work needs.



**Whole of sentence planning required**

We think it would be useful if the department developed a whole-of-sentence plan for prisoners which clearly list their rehabilitation needs, and how and when they should address them. This will make it easier for staff to monitor and track prisoners' progress through the system.

Staff will be in a better position to do this when they routinely use the LSI-R to drive case management. The department is also developing an electronic scheduling system which will allow staff to put prisoners on a priority waiting list for programs.

**Recommendation**

We recommend that the department introduce whole-of-sentence planning to clearly identify prisoner needs, and how and when to address them.

### **3.5 Can prisoners access relevant programs?**

**Our assessment**

The department has made some progress in improving access to programs but still has a long way to go to ensure prisoners address their rehabilitation needs before release.

**Program access is improving**

The department has projects underway to improve access to programs. For example, it will be developing a program for sex offenders who deny any wrong doing. It has introduced open-ended programming which means prisoners can join at any time. It is also examining ways to increase places for Ngarā Nura.

It is only in the last few years that the department has provided programs to address offending behaviour and it is still in the process of managing this change. Its new Offender Programs Unit is responsible for developing programs, staff training, quality assurance and evaluation. The department's vision is to provide offence-based programs of varying intensity to cater for prisoners at different risk levels.

**Prisoners do not always access or complete programs**

The department still has some way to go. Prisoners are not always able to access or complete rehabilitation programs. The reasons for this are many and varied, and sometimes beyond the department's control.

<b>Exhibit 12: Reasons a prisoner may not access or complete a program...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ the prisoner refuses to participate or denies any wrong doing</li><li>▪ the prisoner is appealing his or her conviction</li><li>▪ the prisoner is not of the correct classification or reoffending risk level</li><li>▪ there are limited places available particularly in offence-based programs such as CUBIT, VOTP and Ngarā Nura</li><li>▪ the prisoner has been transferred to another prison due to accommodation pressures or behavioural problems</li><li>▪ the prisoner has to attend court for other offences</li><li>▪ the prisoner's sentence is too short to complete a program, particularly intensive offence-based programs</li><li>▪ the program or service may not be available at his or her prison</li><li>▪ the prisoner has spent the majority of his or her time on remand.</li></ul>

Source: File reviews and staff interviews

**Demand far exceeds places**

Access to intensive offence-based programs is of particular concern. While not all prisoners may need these programs, demand far exceeds available places. For example in 2004-05:

- 900 identified sex offenders were in prison but only 10 completed relevant sex offence programs
- about 50 per cent of prisoners had been convicted of a violent offence but only 43 inmates completed the intensive violence program
- about 75 per cent of prisoners had drug problems, but only 96 inmates completed Ngaru Nura intensive AOD program.

**Prisoners not addressing their rehabilitation needs**

Staff working with parolees reported that the department released prisoners without addressing their rehabilitation needs. We also found examples of this in our file review.

<b>Exhibit 13: Difficulties addressing rehabilitation needs</b>
<p>1. John is serving a sentence of two years nine months for detaining a person, with a non-parole period of 13 months. John only spent two weeks in prison as a sentenced inmate because the judge backdated his sentence to when he first entered prison on remand. Community staff upgraded his LSI-R risk assessment from low to medium-low because he had not yet addressed his offending behaviour.</p> <p>2. Jack is serving a sentence of four years, six months for a sex related offence, with a non-parole period of two years six months. He applied for CUBIT but then refused to attend the course as it would impinge on his release date. The parole authority refused parole twice because he had not addressed his offending behaviour. The department will release Jack as an untreated sex offender after four and a half years in prison.</p> <p>3. Jill is serving a seven year sentence for manslaughter, with a non-parole period over four years. The parole authority refused parole because she had not addressed her violence and AOD issues. She also needs a psychiatric assessment which is not available at her current prison. Staff are trying to transfer her to another prison so she can access relevant services.</p>

Source: File review

**Many prisoners spend less than six months in prison**

We recognise that it is difficult to rehabilitate prisoners who have complex needs. They represent some of the most disadvantaged and underprivileged people in society. Many are simply not interested in seeking help to improve their situation. Rehabilitation takes time. Yet many prisoners have short sentences, often six months or less, making it increasingly difficult for the department to address their offending behaviour.

During 2004-05 over 50 per cent of prisoners had six months or less to serve in prison at the time of sentencing. Yet at any one point in time only about eight per cent of prisoners had a sentence of six months or less. This shows the high volume of people moving through the system with short sentences.

**Hard to address offending behaviour of prisoners with short sentences** For this group, the department focuses on factors which aid reintegration into the community. For example, it will address prisoners' immediate health and welfare needs, provide access to education programs, and expect prisoners to work. However, due to their short time in prison, they do not access the more intensive offence-based program designed to reduce reoffending.

Research suggests that without targeted interventions, this group is 'churned' in and out of prison as short sentences constantly destabilise their housing, work and social links. This increases their likelihood of reoffending.

As two thirds of inmates have been in prison before, it is probable that a large part of this group represent 'churn' rather than new offenders. And as sentences of less than six months do not include parole, this group is more likely to be released without parole support.

The department says that it does not have the funds to manage this group. Funding relates to the number of prisoners at a given time, which is currently about 9,000. Yet the department manages about 16,000 receptions in its prisons each year.

**Other strategies needed to manage offenders with short sentences** We think that it would be useful if the department, along with other justice and welfare agencies, developed strategies to reduce the likelihood of this group reoffending. Other states have tried to manage this by abolishing sentences of less than six months, strengthening community alternatives, and providing community support to prisoners released without parole. See section 4.1 for more information on this issue.

Some industry experts also argue that it is possible for prisoners to start offence-based programs during short sentences, continue them in the community or later if they return to prison. The department says that it will address this as part of its new approach to programs.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department:

- continue to improve prisoner access to offence-based programs
- routinely monitor and report on the proportion of sentenced inmates in prison for the first, second, and third time and so forth
- with other justice and welfare agencies, develop strategies to reduce reoffending by prisoners with short sentences.

### 3.6 Do programs help prisoners fit back into society?

**Our assessment** The department has made good progress in improving the way it selects and reviews offence-based programs. It also reviews education and work proposals to check they remain relevant and help prisoners fit back into society.

**New program framework in place** In 2003 the department introduced an accreditation process for programs addressing offending behaviour. Its aim is to deliver effective, targeted interventions based on evidence of 'what works'. Before this there were up to 1,000 programs with few checks of potential benefits. Once the department fully implements the new process it will be able to review and compare results service wide.

The department also requires all accredited offence-based programs to have arrangements in place to review their effectiveness. For example, prisoners may be required to complete pre and post program surveys to assess improved awareness or knowledge.

The department has also reviewed programs including:

- Violent Offenders Therapeutic Program
- Young Offenders Program
- Ngarā Nura (intensive drug and alcohol program)
- Mothers and Children's Program.

Some of these reviews include results analysis such as the impact on reoffending, or changes in attitude.

**Some prison industries reflect community work**

The Correctional Industries Consultative Council (CICC) reviews proposals for new prison industries. The Council includes business, union, and community members. It aims to find work for prisoners without taking jobs from the local community.

Prison industries staff reported that some industries have changed in recent years to better reflect work opportunities in the community. For example, one prison closed down a box making plant, and now runs a furniture workshop. Dillwynia, a new women's prison in Windsor, operates a call centre and Gloria Jean's coffee shop.

**Exhibit 14: Prison work reflecting opportunities in the community**

Prisoners staff a Gloria Jean's Coffee shop in Dillwynia Correction Centre. To work at the coffee shop prisoners must submit a resume and be interviewed for the job. One prisoner we spoke to said she enjoyed working at the coffee shop. It had given her the skills and confidence to seek similar work in the community after release.

Source: Department of Corrective Services annual report 2004-05, prisoner interviews

Other industries, particularly those run in maximum security prisons, do not necessarily reflect work opportunities in the community. For example, industries such as cable or textile manufacturing. However staff report that prisoners learn other important workplace skills like teamwork, problem solving, occupational health and safety. They also develop a better work ethic. The department has also started a work readiness program to provide prisoners with the generic skills required to get a job in the community.

**External review and accreditation of education courses**

Education staff advised that they consider the current job market when selecting TAFE programs and traineeships. The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI) is a registered training organisation within the department which aims to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of prisoners. An external body accredits and reviews AVETI courses, and its certificates and awards are recognised nation wide.

## **4 Is there an effective reintegration strategy?**

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**At a glance**

**The key question we wanted to answer was:**

Does the Department of Corrective Services have an effective strategy to support prisoners when it releases them into the community?

**Our assessment:**

The department is introducing new processes to help prisoners prepare for their release. It has also developed partnerships with other justice and welfare agencies to help reintegrate former prisoners into the community.

Despite this, staff still have significant problems accessing community services for former prisoners. And we were unable to find out whether reintegration is successful, particularly in key risk areas such as housing, work and drug use. This is because the department has yet to finalise a reintegration strategy which clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve. While the department funds various community agencies and supervises offenders on parole, there are no support arrangements in the community for offenders released after fixed sentences.

Without effective support arrangements in place for prisoners on release, there is an increased risk that they will reoffend.

#### **4.1 Is there an effective reintegration strategy in place?**

**Our assessment**

The department has improved its pre-release processes recently. But it needs to do more to develop a reintegration strategy which sets out what it hopes to achieve, including strategies for supporting prisoners released without parole.

Reintegration is an important factor in reducing reoffending. Some international research suggests that work can reduce the risk of reoffending by a third to a half, and housing by one fifth.

**New pre-release processes are being introduced**

The department is introducing new processes to help prisoners prepare for release. Prior to this there was no formal pre-release system in place. The new process is being put in place for all prisoners, and includes:

- a section on 'exit planning' in case plans
- a pre-release booklet for prisoners with an exit checklist of things to do to prepare for release
- an electronic version of the checklist with links to relevant external agencies
- a pre-release program to be delivered with the checklist
- case reviews aligned with the earliest possible release date.

The department also recently restructured its offender management division to better integrate staff working with offenders in the community and prisons. The aim is to strengthen their relationship and improve whole-of-sentence planning.

Other arrangements to help former prisoners reintegrate include:

- two transitional centres for women to provide work and study opportunities in the community
- work release and day leave programs for prisoners who reach the lowest security classification rating, C3.

**Few prisoners reach the lowest security classification**

Few prisoners reach C3 classification. In 2004-05 the department released nine per cent of prisoners as C3. Only 1.4 per cent of the total prison population participated in work release programs, and the participation rate has been declining since 2000. Yet staff agree that leave programs play an important role in helping prisoners reintegrate.

**Reintegration strategy needed**

The department reports that it is developing a reintegration strategy which clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve. Without this, we were unable to find out whether reintegration is successful, particularly in key risk areas such as housing, work, and drug use.

**Recommendation**

We recommend that department develop a reintegration strategy that clearly outlines the results it wants to achieve and how it will measure this.

**Post-release support for parolees only**

The department supervises offenders on parole, however there are no support arrangements in the community for offenders released after fixed sentences.

The department is piloting a new position in Dillwynia women's prison to address this issue. The throughcare support officer will identify and coordinate community support arrangements for reoffenders with short sentences released without parole.

Other states in Australia have also tried to address this issue.

**Other states provide intensive community support**

**Exhibit 15: Post release support for prisoners released without parole**

Corrections Victoria funds non-government organisations to provide intensive support to offenders, particularly housing, work, and community links to drug and alcohol services. Providers go into prisons three months before inmate release to establish contact, and identify needs and possible solutions. Support continues for six months after release. The program targets prisoners who are medium to high risk of reoffending.

The Department of Corrective Services Western Australia has recently introduced a similar scheme to support prisoners and their families. Eight community groups provide support for three months before release and six months in the community. The scheme targets prisoners released without parole.

Source: Interviews with Corrections Victoria, WA DCS annual report 2004-05

The department says that it does not have the funds or authority to provide community support for prisoners released without parole. It prefers to form partnerships with community agencies that provide support. It reports that it is piloting a scheme with a community job provider which will work more intensively with prisoners 90 days pre and post release.

We think it is important that the department explore further support arrangements for this group. Prisoners without parole typically serve shorter sentences, and are therefore at high risk of ‘churning’ in and out of the system. Effective interventions for this group should therefore help to reduce reoffending.

**Recommendation** We recommend that the department continue to explore options to provide support for prisoners released without parole, who are at high risk of reoffending.

#### **4.2 Has the department formed partnerships with other agencies?**

**Our assessment** The department has made good progress in forming partnerships with other agencies, but still has significant problems accessing community services for former prisoners.

**Partnerships in place** The department has high level partnerships with key government agencies such as Housing, Centrelink, Justice Health, TAFE and Juvenile Justice. In 2005 it convened a workgroup examining ways to reduce the justice system’s reliance on prisons. The department also funds various community programs and services and runs programs with community groups.

Staff have also developed informal partnerships and networks with local community services. For example, they may participate in interagency forums or set up links to local health and welfare services. Prisons also hold pre-release expos involving local community and government agencies.

**Problems accessing community services** Yet despite these initiatives, staff advised that they have significant problems accessing services for former prisoners. The most difficult to access were housing, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, domestic violence and mental health. Some services, such as domestic violence programs for offenders, are simply not available in the community. Other services are reluctant to accept parolees with complex needs, particularly if they are unwilling to be treated.

We recognise these complex issues will only be resolved with a whole-of-government approach. Some cross-agency projects are already underway.



<b>Exhibit 16: Cross agency rehabilitation project</b>	
<b>Cross agency solutions</b>	<p>In 2006 a Compulsory Drug Treatment Correctional Centre will open at Parklea in NSW. Magistrates can send offenders with significant drug and alcohol problems to a purpose designed centre which focuses on drug treatment and rehabilitation. The program has several phases including intensive programs, work release, home detention, parole, and voluntary mentoring. Several agencies will deliver the program including the Department of Corrective Services, Justice Health, Department of Housing, TAFE and Centrelink.</p> <p>Source: Department of Corrective Services annual report 2004-05, staff interviews</p> <p>While this is an important initiative, only 40 places are available at the Centre. Yet the department estimates that at least three in four prisoners have drug and alcohol problems. It is important that the department continue developing collaborative solutions to help reduce the social cost of reoffending.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend that the department, along with other government and community agencies, continue to workshop possible collaborative solutions for improving access to community services.</p>
<b>4.3 Do offenders' case plans address their reintegration needs?</b>	
<b>Our assessment</b>	<p>The department is making some progress in ensuring case plans address reintegration needs. Prisoners' case plans now include a section on reintegration, and parolee plans appear to address these needs.</p>
<b>New exit planning checklist in place</b>	<p>In October 2005 the department introduced an 'exit planning' page in case plans which staff complete six months before releasing prisoners. Before this, case plans did not specifically address reintegration needs although prisoners could speak to welfare officers for advice about their release.</p>
<b>Some prisoners have two case plans</b>	<p>Community staff develop separate case plans for prisoners due for release by the State Parole Authority. They base these plans on risk factors identified in the LSI-R and must show how prisoners intend to address their offending behaviour before parole. It runs concurrently with the custodial case plan. But there is no formal process to align activities and make sure prisoners complete these programs.</p> <p>The department is aware of this anomaly and advised that it will introduce a single case plan after changes to its IT system and e-case management come into effect.</p>
<b>Parolee case plans appear to address needs</b>	<p>We reviewed the case plans of 36 parolees to find out whether programs and services in plans matched their reintegration needs. Staff based case plans on parole conditions and the risk of reoffending. Most appeared to address key needs such as work, family, housing, money, and drug use.</p>

In April 2005 the department changed its approach to managing parolees to cope with increased workload. Community staff working in prisons do not monitor an inmate's progress until he or she is closer to release. Staff also reported that they no longer supervise parolees assessed at a low risk of reoffending, although this varied in practice.

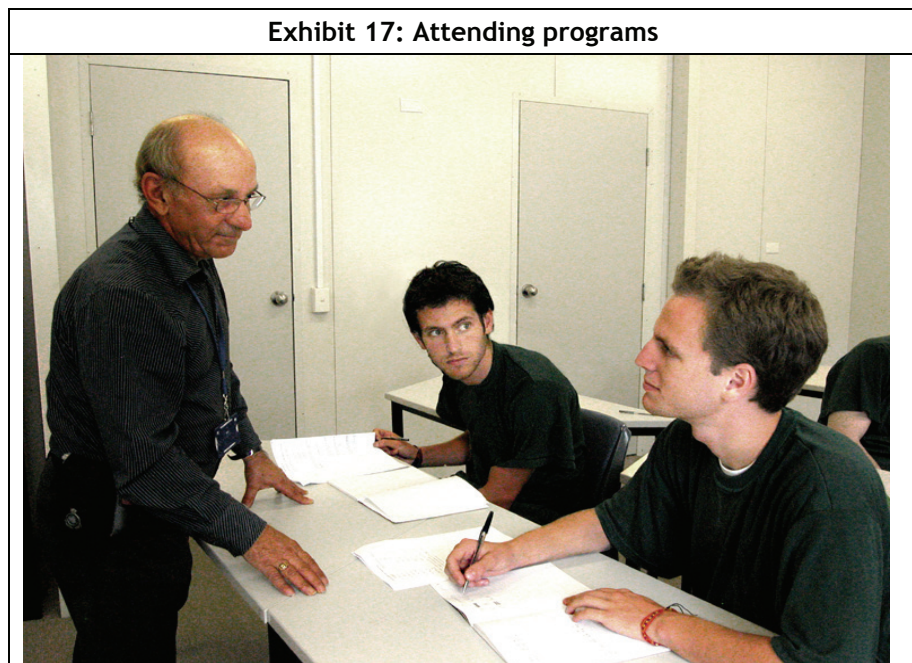
#### **4.4 Does support provided on release build on programs in prison?**

**Our assessment**

The department is improving the links between offence-based programs, but still has some way to go to ensure all community programs build on the support provided in prison.

**Links in place between some offence-based programs**

The department runs community maintenance programs for several of its intensive offence-based programs, including CUBIT and VOTP. This means that the community program builds on the knowledge inmates gain in prison. The department also runs Think First, a program to address criminal attitudes and behaviour, in the community and prison.



Source: Department of Corrective Services, photo library

At present there are no clear links between the non-therapeutic programs the department provides in the community and prison. This includes educational programs on living skills, health, social and personal development, drug use, and anger management. This means that staff might not place parolees on programs that build on skills taught in prison.

**Better links needed for other programs**

Some community staff advised that they had limited knowledge of custodial programs. For example they did not know about program content, intensity or expected outcomes. Therefore staff found it more difficult to recommend relevant community programs. Others reported that they knew about these programs, but did not believe they addressed a prisoner's rehabilitation or reintegration needs. For example, there were too many short educational courses, rather than offence-based programs.

The department reports that it will address these issues once it implements the new program framework. It has also set up an Offender Programs Unit responsible for developing programs, staff training, quality assurance and evaluation.

#### **4.5 Is reintegration progress regularly monitored?**

**Our assessment**

The department regularly monitors parolees' reintegration progress so it can respond to new concerns as they arise. It does not monitor the progress of prisoners released after fixed sentences.

**Monitoring is based on risk of reoffending**

Community staff monitor parolees' progress through regular meetings and home visits. Parolees are encouraged to discuss any issues that might prevent them from completing the activities in their case plan. Supervisors review case plans regularly to check that interventions are appropriate. Staff use the LSI-R risk assessment to work out how often they should monitor parolees. They monitor high risk offenders more frequently.

If parolees breach their parole orders or fail to follow their case plans, staff may recommend that the parole authority revoke parole. This means that parolees go back to prison.

For reasons discussed in section 4.1, the department does not monitor the progress of prisoners released after fixed sentences.



## Appendices

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## **Appendix 1      About the audit**

**Audit objective**      This audit examined whether the Department of Corrective Services (DCS) had effective programs and strategies in place to rehabilitate prisoners and aid their reintegration into the community.

**Lines of inquiry**      In reaching our opinion against the audit objective, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. Does the department know if it successfully rehabilitates prisoners?
2. Does the department match prisoners to programs that best meet their rehabilitation needs?
3. Does the department have an effective strategy to support prisoners when it releases them into the community?

**Audit criteria**      In answering the lines of inquiry, we used the following audit criteria (the ‘what should be’) to judge performance. We based these standards on our research of current thinking and guidance on better practice. They have been discussed, and wherever possible, agreed with those we are auditing.

For line of inquiry 1, we assessed the extent to which:

- DCS has established performance measures and targets for prisoner rehabilitation which align with its objectives
- DCS monitors and reviews performance information on a regular basis, including trends over time
- DCS compares its performance with like jurisdictions and strives to achieve best practice
- Performance information on prisoner rehabilitation is readily available to the public
- DCS is meeting its performance targets and performance is improving over time
- DCS establishes rehabilitation goals for individual prisoners and tracks their progress through the corrections system.

For line of inquiry 2, we assessed the extent to which:

- DCS has established a rehabilitation strategy which sets out how to determine the most appropriate interventions for prisoners
- All prisoners are assessed to determine their rehabilitation risks and needs
- Prisoners are matched to and can access appropriate rehabilitation programs
- Staff have access to all relevant prisoner information at the time of assessment
- Staff preparing assessments and case plans receive relevant training and have access to information on available programs
- Programs are regularly reviewed to check that they remain relevant and will help prisoners fit back into society.

For Line of inquiry 3, we assessed the extent to which:

- DCS has established a reintegration strategy which sets out the results it hopes to achieve, and how this will be measured and achieved
- DCS has formed partnerships with other justice and welfare agencies in the community to aid reintegration
- Each prisoner has a case plan that addresses reintegration needs such as health, housing, employment, education, finance and family issues
- Support provided on release builds on the activities and programs undertaken while in prison
- DCS staff regularly monitor prisoners' progress and respond quickly to new concerns.

#### **Audit scope**

The audit focused on activities, services and interventions for sentenced prisoners that addressed:

- the risk of reoffending
- health and welfare
- education and training
- reintegration needs.

Where available, we reviewed performance data for the last 5 - 10 years.

This audit did not examine:

- sentencing practices
- the reasons for the growth in prison population
- the appropriateness of the department's approach to rehabilitation.

#### **Audit approach**

We acquired subject matter expertise by:

- engaging the services of a consultant
- interviewing staff involved in performance reporting
- interviewing staff responsible for preparing assessments and case plans for prisoners
- interviewing staff responsible for preparing and supporting prisoners on release
- interviewing prisoners and parolees
- reviewing corporate planning and performance reporting documents
- reviewing a sample of assessment forms and case plans for prisoners
- reviewing a sample of reintegration plans
- analysing performance data.

We also researched rehabilitation strategies in other jurisdictions to identify best practice examples. We examined the following jurisdictions:

- Australian states
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Canada
- United States (Washington, Massachusetts, Maryland).

We visited six correctional centres and community offender service (COS) offices. They represented a cross-section of centres in metropolitan and regional areas including a ‘Way-Forward’ centre which reflects the department’s new management approach.

Correctional Centre	Max	Med	Min	Female	Way Forward	COS Office
Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre	✓					Newtown
Lithgow	✓	✓				Bathurst
Bathurst		✓	✓			Bowral
Kirkconnell			✓			Penrith
Dillwynia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Windsor
Long Bay (Special Programs)	✓		✓			Long Bay

**Audit selection** We use a strategic approach to selecting performance audits which balances our performance audit program to reflect issues of interest to Parliament and the community. Details of our approach to selecting topics and our forward program are available on our website.

**Audit methodology** Our performance audit methodology is designed it to satisfy Australian Audit Standards AUS 806 and 808 on performance auditing, and to reflect current thinking on performance auditing practices. We produce our audits under a quality management system certified to International Standard ISO 9001. Our processes have also been designed to comply with the auditing requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

**Acknowledgements** We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided by the Department of Corrective Services. In particular we wish to thank our liaison officers Luke Grant and Rhonda Booby, and staff who participated in interviews, assisted with file review or provided other material relevant to the audit.

We also thank the prisoners and parolees who participated in interviews or agreed to our presence during their case management meeting.

**Audit team** Our team leader for the performance audit was Tiffany Blackett, who was assisted by Brian Holdsworth. Sean Crumlin provided direction and quality assurance.

Mr Bill Cullen from the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services in Western Australia provided expert advice throughout the audit.

**Audit cost** Including staff costs, printing costs and overheads, the estimated cost of the audit is \$296,600.



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## Appendix 2      Glossary

Accredited programs	These are programs run by Department of Corrective Services which are designed to reduce reoffending and are based on evidence of ‘what works’.
Case plan	A document that outlines the rehabilitation programs and activities an offender must undertake.
Classification	This is a prisoner’s security level. For men this ranges from AA (maximum security) to C3 (minimum security). For women it is Category 5 to 1 respectively.
Cognitive program	This refers to programs that aim to change offenders’ behaviour by changing thoughts, emotions, and behaviours associated with drug use and criminal acts.
Fixed sentence	A sentence requiring prison only, ie without parole on release. Sentences of six months or less do not include parole.
LSI-R	The Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) reviews prisoner’s risk of reoffending. It includes sections on offence history, education, work, family, housing, attitudes, finances and drug use. Where available, it is the primary method to collect information for case planning purposes.
Offence-based programs	This refers to programs based on evidence of ‘what works’ which are designed to reduce reoffending.
Rehabilitation	This means changing or reducing factors which cause or contribute to offending behaviour. This includes criminal attitudes, drug and alcohol abuse, inadequate education, poor work skills, and other social welfare problems.
Reintegration	This refers to processes which help prisoners fit back into the normal social and economic structure of the community. It includes addressing needs with health, welfare, education, and employment.
Remand	The means keeping a person in custody or on bail before the court decides guilt or innocence.
Therapeutic program	A program designed to address underlying performance issues to facilitate a positive change.



## **Performance Audits by the Audit Office of New South Wales**

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## Performance Auditing

### What are performance audits?

Performance audits are reviews designed to determine how efficiently and effectively an agency is carrying out its functions.

Performance audits may review a government program, all or part of a government agency or consider particular issues which affect the whole public sector.

Where appropriate, performance audits make recommendations for improvements relating to those functions.

### Why do we conduct performance audits?

Performance audits provide independent assurance to Parliament and the public that government funds are being spent efficiently and effectively, and in accordance with the law.

They seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government agencies and ensure that the community receives value for money from government services.

Performance audits also assist the accountability process by holding agencies accountable for their performance.

### What is the legislative basis for Performance Audits?

The legislative basis for performance audits is contained within the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, Part 3 Division 2A*, (the Act) which differentiates such work from the Office's financial statements audit function.

Performance audits are not entitled to question the merits of policy objectives of the Government.

### Who conducts performance audits?

Performance audits are conducted by specialist performance auditors who are drawn from a wide range of professional disciplines.

### How do we choose our topics?

Topics for performance audits are chosen from a variety of sources including:

- our own research on emerging issues
- suggestions from Parliamentarians, agency Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and members of the public
- complaints about waste of public money
- referrals from Parliament.

Each potential audit topic is considered and evaluated in terms of possible benefits including cost savings, impact and improvements in public administration.

The Audit Office has no jurisdiction over local government and cannot review issues relating to council activities.

If you wish to find out what performance audits are currently in progress just visit our website at [www.audit.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/)

### How do we conduct performance audits?

Performance audits are conducted in compliance with relevant Australian standards for performance auditing and operate under a quality management system certified under international quality standard ISO 9001.

Our policy is to conduct these audits on a "no surprise" basis.

Operational managers, and where necessary executive officers, are informed of the progress with the audit on a continuous basis.

### **What are the phases in performance auditing?**

Performance audits have three key phases: planning, fieldwork and report writing.

During the planning phase, the audit team will develop audit criteria and define the audit field work.

At the completion of field work an exit interview is held with agency management to discuss all significant matters arising out of the audit. The basis for the exit interview is generally a draft performance audit report.

The exit interview serves to ensure that facts presented in the report are accurate and that recommendations are appropriate. Following the exit interview, a formal draft report is provided to the CEO for comment. The relevant Minister is also provided with a copy of the draft report. The final report, which is tabled in Parliament, includes any comment made by the CEO on the conclusion and the recommendations of the audit.

Depending on the scope of an audit, performance audits can take from several months to a year to complete.

Copies of our performance audit reports can be obtained from our website or by contacting our Office Services Manager.

### **How do we measure an agency's performance?**

During the planning stage of an audit the team develops the audit criteria. These are standards of performance against which an agency is assessed. Criteria may be based on government targets or benchmarks, comparative data, published guidelines, agencies corporate objectives or examples of best practice.

Performance audits look at:

- processes
- results
- costs
- due process and accountability.

### **Do we check to see if recommendations have been implemented?**

Every few years we conduct a follow-up audit of past performance audit reports. These follow-up audits look at the extent to which recommendations have been implemented and whether problems have been addressed.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) may also conduct reviews or hold inquiries into matters raised in performance audit reports. Agencies are also required to report actions taken against each recommendation in their annual report.

To assist agencies to monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations, the Audit Office has prepared a Guide for that purpose. The Guide, *Monitoring and Reporting on Performance Audits Recommendations*, is on the Internet at [www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/better\\_practice/better\\_practice.htm](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/better_practice/better_practice.htm)

### **Who audits the auditors?**

Our performance audits are subject to internal and external quality reviews against relevant Australian and international standards. This includes ongoing independent certification of our ISO 9001 quality management system.

The PAC is also responsible for overseeing the activities of the Audit Office and conducts reviews of our operations every three years.

### **Who pays for performance audits?**

No fee is charged for performance audits. Our performance audit services are funded by the NSW Parliament and from internal sources.

### **For further information relating to performance auditing contact:**

Stephen Horne  
Assistant Auditor-General,  
Performance Audit  
(02) 9275 7278  
email: [stephen.horne@audit.nsw.gov.au](mailto:stephen.horne@audit.nsw.gov.au)

## Performance Audit Reports

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
78	State Rail Authority (CityRail) State Transit Authority	<i>Fare Evasion on Public Transport</i>	6 December 2000
79	TAFE NSW	<i>Review of Administration</i>	6 February 2001
80	Ambulance Service of New South Wales	<i>Readiness to Respond</i>	7 March 2001
81	Department of Housing	<i>Maintenance of Public Housing</i>	11 April 2001
82	Environment Protection Authority	<i>Controlling and Reducing Pollution from Industry</i>	18 April 2001
83	Department of Corrective Services	<i>NSW Correctional Industries</i>	13 June 2001
84	Follow-up of Performance Audits	<i>Police Response to Calls for Assistance The Levying and Collection of Land Tax Coordination of Bushfire Fighting Activities</i>	20 June 2001
85*	Internal Financial Reporting	<i>Internal Financial Reporting including a Better Practice Guide</i>	27 June 2001
86	Follow-up of Performance Audits	<i>The School Accountability and Improvement Model (May 1999) The Management of Court Waiting Times (September 1999)</i>	14 September 2001
87	E-government	<i>Use of the Internet and Related Technologies to Improve Public Sector Performance</i>	19 September 2001
88*	E-government	<i>e-ready, e-steady, e-government: e-government readiness assessment guide</i>	19 September 2001
89	Intellectual Property	<i>Management of Intellectual Property</i>	17 October 2001
90*	Intellectual Property	<i>Better Practice Guide Management of Intellectual Property</i>	17 October 2001
91	University of New South Wales	<i>Educational Testing Centre</i>	21 November 2001
92	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning	<i>Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Projects</i>	28 November 2001
93	Department of Information Technology and Management	<i>Government Property Register</i>	31 January 2002
94	State Debt Recovery Office	<i>Collecting Outstanding Fines and Penalties</i>	17 April 2002
95	Roads and Traffic Authority	<i>Managing Environmental Issues</i>	29 April 2002
96	NSW Agriculture	<i>Managing Animal Disease Emergencies</i>	8 May 2002

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
97	State Transit Authority Department of Transport	<i>Bus Maintenance and Bus Contracts</i>	29 May 2002
98	Risk Management	<i>Managing Risk in the NSW Public Sector</i>	19 June 2002
99	E-Government	<i>User-friendliness of Websites</i>	26 June 2002
100	NSW Police Department of Corrective Services	<i>Managing Sick Leave</i>	23 July 2002
101	Department of Land and Water Conservation	<i>Regulating the Clearing of Native Vegetation</i>	20 August 2002
102	E-government	<i>Electronic Procurement of Hospital Supplies</i>	25 September 2002
103	NSW Public Sector	<i>Outsourcing Information Technology</i>	23 October 2002
104	Ministry for the Arts Department of Community Services Department of Sport and Recreation	<i>Managing Grants</i>	4 December 2002
105	Department of Health Including Area Health Services and Hospitals	<i>Managing Hospital Waste</i>	10 December 2002
106	State Rail Authority	<i>CityRail Passenger Security</i>	12 February 2003
107	NSW Agriculture	<i>Implementing the Ovine Johne's Disease Program</i>	26 February 2003
108	Department of Sustainable Natural Resources Environment Protection Authority	<i>Protecting Our Rivers</i>	7 May 2003
109	Department of Education and Training	<i>Managing Teacher Performance</i>	14 May 2003
110	NSW Police	<i>The Police Assistance Line</i>	5 June 2003
111	E-Government	<i>Roads and Traffic Authority Delivering Services Online</i>	11 June 2003
112	State Rail Authority	<i>The Millennium Train Project</i>	17 June 2003
113	Sydney Water Corporation	<i>Northside Storage Tunnel Project</i>	24 July 2003
114	Ministry of Transport Premier's Department Department of Education and Training	<i>Freedom of Information</i>	28 August 2003
115	NSW Police NSW Roads and Traffic Authority	<i>Dealing with Unlicensed and Unregistered Driving</i>	4 September 2003
116	NSW Department of Health	<i>Waiting Times for Elective Surgery in Public Hospitals</i>	18 September 2003

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
117	Follow-up of Performance Audits	<i>Complaints and Review Processes (September 1999)</i> <i>Provision of Industry Assistance (December 1998)</i>	24 September 2003
118	Judging Performance from Annual Reports	<i>Review of Eight Agencies' Annual Reports</i>	1 October 2003
119	Asset Disposal	<i>Disposal of Sydney Harbour Foreshore Land</i>	26 November 2003
120	Follow-up of Performance Audits NSW Police	<i>Enforcement of Street Parking (1999)</i> <i>Staff Rostering, Tasking and Allocation (2000)</i>	10 December 2003
121	Department of Health NSW Ambulance Service	<i>Code Red:</i> <i>Hospital Emergency Departments</i>	15 December 2003
122	Follow-up of Performance Audit	<i>Controlling and Reducing Pollution from Industry (April 2001)</i>	12 May 2004
123	National Parks and Wildlife Service	<i>Managing Natural and Cultural Heritage in Parks and Reserves</i>	16 June 2004
124	Fleet Management	<i>Meeting Business Needs</i>	30 June 2004
125	Department of Health NSW Ambulance Service	<i>Transporting and Treating Emergency Patients</i>	28 July 2004
126	Department of Education and Training	<i>School Annual Reports</i>	15 September 2004
127	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care	<i>Home Care Service</i>	13 October 2004
128*	Department of Commerce	<i>Shared Corporate Services: Realising the Benefit</i> <i>including guidance on better practice</i>	3 November 2004
129	Follow-up of Performance Audit	<i>Environmental Impact Assessment of Major Projects (2001)</i>	1 February 2005
130*	Fraud Control	<i>Current Progress and Future Directions</i> <i>including guidance on better practice</i>	9 February 2005
131	Follow-up of Performance Audit Department of Housing	<i>Maintenance of Public Housing (2001)</i>	2 March 2005
132	Follow-up of Performance Audit State Debt Recovery Office	<i>Collecting Outstanding Fines and Penalties (2002)</i>	17 March 2005
133	Follow-up of Performance Audit Premier's Department	<i>Management of Intellectual Property (2001)</i>	30 March 2005
134	Department of Environment and Conservation	<i>Managing Air Quality</i>	6 April 2005
135	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Sydney Water Corporation Sydney Catchment Authority	<i>Planning for Sydney's Water Needs</i>	4 May 2005



No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
136	Department of Health	<i>Emergency Mental Health Services</i>	26 May 2005
137	Department of Community Services	<i>Helpline</i>	1 June 2005
138	Follow-up of Performance Audit State Transit Authority Ministry of Transport	<i>Bus Maintenance and Bus Contracts (2002)</i>	14 June 2005
139	RailCorp NSW	<i>Coping with Disruptions to CityRail Passenger Services</i>	22 June 2005
140	State Rescue Board of New South Wales	<i>Coordination of Rescue Services</i>	20 July 2005
141	State Budget	<i>In-year Monitoring of the State Budget</i>	28 July 2005
142	Department of Juvenile Justice	<i>Managing and Measuring Success</i>	14 September 2005
143	Asset Management	<i>Implementing Asset Management Reforms</i>	12 October 2005
144	NSW Treasury	<i>Oversight of State Owned Electricity Corporations</i>	19 October 2005
145	Follow-up of 2002 Performance Audit	<i>Purchasing Hospital Supplies</i>	23 November 2005
146	Bus Transitways	<i>Liverpool to Parramatta Bus Transitway</i>	5 December 2005
147	Premier's Department	<i>Relocating Agencies to Regional Areas</i>	14 December 2005
148	Department of Education and Training	<i>The New Schools Privately Financed Project</i>	8 March 2006
149	Agency Collaboration	<i>Agencies Working Together to Improve Services</i>	22 March 2006
150	Follow-up of 2000 Performance Audit	<i>Fare Evasion on Public Transport</i>	26 April 2006
151	Department of Corrective Services	<i>Prisoner Rehabilitation</i>	May 2006

\* Better Practice Guides

#### Performance audits on our website

A list of performance audits tabled or published since March 1997, as well as those currently in progress, can be found on our website [www.audit.nsw.gov.au](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au).

If you have any problems accessing these reports, or are seeking older reports, please contact our Office Services Manager on (02) 9275 7116.