

Southern Queensland Correctional Centre inspection report

The Southern Queensland Correctional Centre (the centre) is a women's correctional facility located in Spring Creek, approximately 115 km west of Brisbane, upon the traditional land of the Ugarapul and Yuggera nation and its people.

Positive practices observed

During our inspection, the centre presented as a clean and well-maintained facility that was not overcrowded. However, the number of women detained there is increasing.

The interactions we observed between the staff and the women were respectful. We support the approach of management in using the term women instead of prisoners. We do the same in this report where possible, to reduce labelling.

The centre operates a separate Parental Support Unit for pregnant women, mothers and resident children. Specific programs and services are available for these women, including a dedicated counsellor and a children's playgroup. Keeping a young child with their mother in prison has been shown to have positive impacts on both mothers and children, such as improved mother-child relationships, mental health, quality of life and rehabilitation, and reduced reoffending.

Our inspection identified several other positive practices at the centre, including:

- the innovative use of an induction hub to provide the women with information about services, and make staff accessible
- use of a body scanner to reduce the number of strip searches
- an increase in employment positions available to the women and reduced waitlists for a position
- an evident commitment to enabling women to have their young children with them at the centre
- support and encouragement of the women to celebrate milestones and occasions with their children that would be acknowledged in the community

- the commitment to better meet the needs of women and children in prison by providing essential items which are kept by the women on release to support their reintegration and the connection created with their child in the prison.

Areas for improvement

We also identified a number of areas for improvement, including:

- a lack of individualised assessments in the use of restraints when escorting women from the detention unit
- the absence of written notification, including how to request review of a decision, when advising the women of a leave of absence application outcome
- long waitlists to see a doctor, dentist or mental health services resulting in a lack of preventive health care
- no overnight nurse for the centre
- limited or no trauma-informed training for custodial staff
- male custodial officers conducting observations in the safety and detention units
- a more gender responsive staffing mix is required as a majority of male staff at the prison impacts operational work, such as searches and the administration of urine testing
- the need to increase First Nations staffing representation with 44% of the prisoner population being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- poor hygiene and menstruation management in safety units that fails to uphold humane conditions and subjects the women held in those units to degrading treatment
- insufficient consideration of human rights when placing women on a safety order or a period of separate confinement
- long waitlists for women wanting to join various programs
- unwearable clothes are sometimes provided to women at the centre.

Southern Queensland Correctional Centre (SQCC)

SQCC is one of three women's secure prisons in Queensland and is also a placement centre. (This means it primarily holds women who have been sentenced, but it can also hold women on remand.)



Location

SQCC is located in Spring Creek, in the Lockyer Valley Region of South East Queensland, approximately 115 km west of Brisbane. This is the traditional land of the Ugarapul and Yuggera nation and its people.



Onsite inspection dates

28 November - 1 December 2023

On 28 November 2023, SQCC had:



289
prisoners



302
cells



312
beds

an operating
capacity of



308
(number of prisoners the
centre is approved to hold)



Medical

The SQCC medical centre is run by the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service



First Nations

44% of SQCC prisoners identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women (as of November 2023)