



Ref: QCS-04325-2024

19 NOV 2024

Ms Helen Gabriel  
Director  
Detention Services Inspection Unit



Dear Ms Gabriel

*Helen,*

Thank you for your email of 9 October 2024 about a request for further information to inform the finalisation of your inspection report on Southern Queensland Correctional Centre (SQCC). The further information requested related to recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which were funded and being progressed by Queensland Corrective Services (QCS).

QCS is committed to improving services and supports for women in the correctional system, and respecting, protecting and promoting their human rights.

As part of the Government's response to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Hear her voice – Report Two – Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system (Report Two) in 2022–23, QCS was provided a total of \$57.685 million over five years and up to 56.5 FTE to deliver several key initiatives, with \$14 million and 38.5 FTE ongoing from 2026–27. This funding includes centrally held funds. The funding committed by the Queensland Government in response to Report Two will assist QCS to implement some of the recommendations to improve services and supports for women in the correctional system.

QCS continues to progress work on the recommendations made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. In 2023, QCS established the Women's System Reform Program Management Office and the QCS Women's (and Domestic and Family Violence) Strategy Steering Committee to plan and execute the implementation of 34 recommendations made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce that QCS has the responsibility to deliver.

As of 25 October 2023, six recommendations have been closed, three recommendations are ready to deliver, 24 recommendations are in progress, and one recommendation is not yet commenced.



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Please find further details on the progress of Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations in the enclosed document.

If you require further information regarding this matter, please contact Ms Josephine Tait, Acting Director, Women's System Reform Program Management Office on telephone [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED]

I trust that this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Stewart', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Stewart APM  
**Commissioner**

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## Women's System Reform Program

### Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Recommendations

#### Background

Queensland has continued to experience high growth in female prisoner numbers increasing the demand for more effective, gender responsive and trauma informed service delivery<sup>1</sup>.

The QCS *Women's Strategy 2023–2025 (Interim Strategy)* aims to implement cultural change to place women at the centre of QCS' efforts to break the intergenerational cycles of trauma and social disadvantage associated with imprisonment. The Interim Strategy captures work underway across QCS to respond to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report recommendations and provides a roadmap to position QCS as a forward-thinking, top-tier public safety agency in its response to women in its custody and care<sup>2</sup>.

To reduce crime and make a difference to domestic violence victim-survivors, QCS needs to consider the underlying causes of offending and take an evidence-informed approach which provides women with the opportunity to remain with their children and family, in their community.

The two-year Interim Strategy provides a framework for driving system-based reforms for the management of women in QCS' custody and care. The focus of this reform agenda will be equitable access to individualised care and support, empowering First Nations women and listening to the voices of women to understand better practice approaches to turning lives around<sup>3</sup>.

In 2023, QCS established a dedicated Women's System Reform Program Management Office (Women's PMO) and a Women's Strategy Steering Committee to plan and execute the implementation of 34 recommendations made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce that QCS has lead or co-lead responsibility to deliver. The proceeding information outlines 19 recommendations with outcomes that will directly improve the services and supports available to women in the correctional system.

Recommendations arising from Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce reports include several QCS-led actions. In 2023–24, QCS:

- introduced trauma informed, gender responsive DFV practice training into the community corrections training program with custodial officer training to follow in 2025

<sup>1</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p23

<sup>2</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p31

<sup>3</sup> QCS Interim Women's Strategy 2023-2025

- continued to work collaboratively with government and non-government organisations to improve women's access to rehabilitation programs and services
- allocated Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce funding to deliver Her Time trauma-informed group and individual counselling at Brisbane Women's and Numinbah correctional centres
- continued to facilitate the Women's Advocacy Service to support partners and families of prisoners undertaking the Disrupting Family Violence Program<sup>4</sup>.

In 2023–24, as recommended by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, QCS reviewed a range of operational policies and practices across the women's correctional system including:

- management of mothers and children in custody
- rehabilitation programs including education and support services available to women in the correctional system
- issues impacting the time women and girls spend in police watchhouses
- removal of clothing search practices
- a range of cross agency service enhancements to improve access to work development orders, identifying documents, property storage and information about services available<sup>3</sup>.

QCS commissioned a new state-wide women's reintegration service following significant redesign undertaken in consultation with women with lived experience and incorporating a range of service enhancements. In partnership with Griffith University, QCS introduced Phase 2 of the Transforming Corrections to Transform Lives (TCTL) Program in southern Queensland and Townsville to better support women in custody who are mothers and their children<sup>3</sup>.

### Recommendations 117 and 151

QCS is developing technical and contractual specifications for implementation of in-cell technology to inform commercial viability. This will provide opportunities for prisoner in-cell technology in correctional centres with self-service capabilities and alternatives for service delivery will be explored<sup>5</sup>.

### Recommendation 130

QCS is working towards improved sentencing processes and outcomes for women. A project plan and evaluation framework have been developed for expanding court advisory services, and service delivery design for a pilot program is underway. The

<sup>4</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p23

<sup>5</sup> QCS Business Plan 2023-24 p10

government is providing increased funding of \$7.7 million over three years from 2023-24, \$7.4 million (held centrally), and a further \$883,000 is being met internally by the department. This includes to assist with the design and evaluation of a trial of dedicated court advisory services<sup>6</sup>.

### **Recommendations 132, 133 and 134**

QCS is working towards improved health, wellbeing, prenatal and postnatal care and birth experiences for women in prison.

In 2023, the Queensland Government advocated for the Australian Government to make changes which enable eligible women and girls in custody to access Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Queensland Government will continue to advocate for the Australian Government to make changes through the work of Ministerial Councils<sup>7</sup>.

QCS is working on expanded options to provide culturally appropriate family and parenting support to women and girls in custody who are mothers. QCS continues to consider options for the provision of essential items and services required for the care and wellbeing of children and mothers in custody<sup>7</sup>.

The government is providing additional funding of \$4.3 million over five years from 2022-23 and \$1.1 million per annum ongoing to support health, wellbeing, prenatal and postnatal care and birth experiences in prison and detention. This includes the design and implementation of culturally appropriate family and parenting support to women and girls in custody who are mothers; and to better meet the needs of women and girls in custody who are pregnant, and the needs of children living in custody with their mothers<sup>8</sup>.

### **Recommendations 136, 137 and 139**

As part of the whole-of-government investment in Women's Safety and Justice Reform, \$3.355 million over four years from 2022-23, including \$1.025 million ongoing and \$11 million capital, has been provided to implement body scanning technology across all three secure female centres across the state. An initial proof of concept commenced in 2024 at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre. To determine the effectiveness of the technology and the impact of body scanners in an operational environment, the proof-of-concept trial will undergo a rigorous evaluation to ensure that QCS continues to maintain its commitment to safety and trauma-informed practice and human rights<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Budget Measures 2023-24 p137

<sup>7</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p96

<sup>8</sup> Budget Measures 2023-24 p130

<sup>9</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p15

In addition to this, the *Corrective Services (Emerging Technologies and Security) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* gained assent on 2 June 2023. This Act amended the *Corrective Services Act 2006* to provide a clear authority to use body scanners within correctional facilities. A review of policy, practices and procedures regarding the removal of clothing searches in Queensland's women's correctional centres has been conducted by QCS in partnership with the Queensland Human Rights Commission<sup>10</sup>.

QCS is also identifying options for developing a practice framework which ensures staff have the necessary skills and competencies required to effectively and appropriately manage female prisoners<sup>11</sup>.

### **Recommendation 147, 148, 152, 153, and 154**

QCS is undertaking a review of existing rehabilitation programs and services for women in custody, a review of incentives for prisoners to participate in rehabilitation activities, and a review of the employment, wages and working conditions for incarcerated women<sup>12</sup>.

The government is providing increased funding of \$31.2 million over five years from 2022-23, held centrally, and \$9.2 million per annum ongoing to support rehabilitating women in prison and girls in detention. This includes for the improvement of the provision of rehabilitation programs; and improved access to quality education programs, including online programs<sup>13</sup>.

### **Recommendations 156 and 158**

QCS is working in partnership with the Queensland Revenue Office (QRO) to improve access to Work and Development Orders for individuals in the correctional system.

QCS reviewed and has published new Custodial Officer Practice Directives which are designed to increase access by women in custody to Work and Development Orders to reduce fine-related debt with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER)<sup>14</sup>.

QCS is working collaboratively with QRO and SPER on data sharing options to respond to recommendation 158. This could enable enforcement action on SPER debt to be suspended in a timely manner and support notification to the individual of an opportunity to apply for a Work and Development Order<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p97

<sup>11</sup> QCS Business Plan p14

<sup>12</sup> QCS Business Plan p18

<sup>13</sup> Budget Measures 2023-24 p137

<sup>14</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p107

<sup>15</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p108

## Recommendation 162, 167 and 168

QCS is working to improve processes and outcomes for women reintegrating into the community.

Processes relating to collection and storage of personal belongings of prisoners are being reviewed. Resources, including digital platforms, are being reviewed and enhanced to ensure women, care providers and other stakeholders have access to information regarding services and supports<sup>16</sup>.

For women in custody, QCS has reviewed Memorandums of Understanding between relevant agencies and ensured funding for enhanced women's reintegration services include dedicated brokerage to support women to apply for identification documents. A data matching trial has commenced, and work continues to identify opportunities to enhance services to support women to apply for identification documents prior to release<sup>17</sup>.

The government is providing increased funding of \$7.4 million over four years from 2023-24 (including \$6.1 million held centrally) and \$1.9 million per annum ongoing to support reintegrating women and girls into the community. A further \$379,000 over four years from 2023-24 and \$99,000 per annum ongoing is being met internally by the department<sup>18</sup>. This is to:

- implement a scheme to enable safe storage of personal belongings of women and girls in custody
- develop options to better identify girls and women who are at risk of being refused bail and women eligible to apply for parole, to assist them to access accommodation, services and to support their transition from custody
- implement a process to enable women and girls in custody to apply for identification documents so they can have them prior to their release.

## Recommendation 169

QCS has delivered an enhanced statewide Women's Reintegration Service for women in custody. This model provides for trauma-informed and gender specific reintegration support for all women exiting custody. The new model was fully implemented at the end of June 2024<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> QCS Business Plan 2023-24 p19

<sup>17</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p109 and 111

<sup>18</sup> Budget Measures 2023-24 p130

<sup>19</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p112

## Recommendation 172

QCS continues to partner with Griffith University and women in custody to co-create the Transforming Corrections to Transform Lives (TCTL) initiative.

Research has shown that imprisoning mothers contributes to a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and that recognising and addressing the needs of mothers requires the transformation of approaches in corrections to reduce recidivism and disrupt this cycle<sup>20</sup>.

This program provides comprehensive and integrated support to a small number of incarcerated mothers, their children and families. The first intake of this program occurred at the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre in January 2024, and the program expanded to the Townsville Women's Correctional Centre in mid-2024<sup>21</sup>. In 2023–24, the TCTL initiative has already begun improving how QCS responds to women and children through intensive coaching and system change<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p31

<sup>21</sup> Women's Safety and Justice Reform Annual Report 2023-24 p113

<sup>22</sup> QCS Annual Report 2023-24 p31