



NSW prisons working to minimise risks for COVID-19

Thursday 19 March 2020

Corrective Services NSW has established a Central Command Post to streamline and coordinate its efforts in minimising the Coronavirus risk for staff and inmates at its 38 prisons across the state.

The post established on Tuesday operates seven days a week and includes representatives from all corrections branches as well as key areas, such as Human Resources and IT.

Commissioner Peter Severin said he was also exchanging ideas and information with his counterparts nationally and internationally to see what measures work best.

“As the response to the Coronavirus continues and the Government is communicating more advice and safety measures, it is vital we do everything we can to keep our staff and inmates safe and well,” Mr Severin said.

“At present, we have no confirmed cases of the virus within any of our correctional facilities.

“We continue to follow the expert advice from NSW Health and are working closely with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network to minimise risks for staff as well as inmates. Please be assured nothing is being left to chance.”

On Monday, CSNSW temporarily suspended social visits at all NSW prisons until Sunday 22 March after which additional processes and procedures for visitor health-screenings will be implemented.

To minimise inmate movements and third-party visits to prisons, CSNSW is exploring options to increase the use of audio-visual links for legal visits, court appearances and family contact.

Corrective Services Industries is manufacturing 20 ‘pop-up’ audio-visual studios to add to the existing 107 video-conferencing studios and pop-ups already in the system.

CSNSW also has access to 600 computer tablets. These were originally going to be rolled-out to inmates later this year as part of a pilot to improve staff efficiency and encourage inmates to take greater personal responsibility. These can now be used to facilitate video-calls, in place of contact visits.

Mr Severin thanked staff for their “professionalism and vigilance” as we continue to manage this rapidly evolving issue.

“Like the rest of the community, it’s important we minimise all potential cases of COVID-19 in our prisons,” Mr Severin said.

“Our focus remains on protecting staff and managing risks to ensure that we maintain safe and secure operations within all our work locations.”

CSNSW media inquiries: 0419 258 290 – calls only, no SMS