

## Dr Vanessa Goodwin MLC

Shadow Minister for Corrections

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### Damning report points to the need for an Independent Prisons Inspectorate

The Ombudsman's Risdon Prison Complex Tamar Unit and Behaviour Management Program Investigation Report tabled in Parliament today identifies systemic failures that are thoroughly unacceptable in a modern prison system.

This report is damning and identifies incidents where the fundamental, basic human rights of prisoners within the unit have been breached and sometimes over sustained periods.

The Ombudsman identifies a number of key failures that the Minister for Corrections must immediately respond to and take steps to remediate. The points raised by the Ombudsman include (emphasis added):

- There is no formal practice for informing prisoners of the reasons for their placement in the unit and that the management of the unit *does not comply with national or international standards* in this regard;
- That prisoners are not adequately informed about the rules and conditions which apply to them in the unit, and that *this is not compliant with national standards*;
- That prisoner have been held in the unit for indeterminate periods of time, on the basis of perceived dangerousness, and that *this is incompatible with national standards* and standards observed in other jurisdictions;

- That the BMP (Behavioural Management Program) has not always been applied consistently and objectively;
- That the monthly reviews of a prisoner's performance under the BMP are not carried out with procedural fairness
- That not only are prisoners in the unit locked down in solitary confinement for most of the time, but they have nothing constructive to do, since no programs or industry activities are available to them. The principal distraction is television. *This circumstance is not humane, and does not meet standards adopted in the United Kingdom or standards promulgated by the Inspector of Custodial Services in WA, which in my view are indicative of proper process.*

Access to sunlight, some form of exercise and social interaction are basic human needs that this report shows are not always met for detainees of this unit. This is unacceptable and needs to change.

The Tasmanian Liberals believe it is a necessity that an independent prisons inspectorate is established to ensure the standards for prisoners and staff at our correctional facilities are suitable and meet accepted contemporary prison practices.

Although the Ombudsman's report is comprehensive and thorough, significant time has elapsed since the investigation was commenced in September 2008. The fact that it has taken so long for the report to be finalized is a real concern and in my view demonstrates the need for a dedicated prisons inspectorate responsible to Parliament to provide ongoing independent insight of the prison system as the Ombudsman has to juggle many competing priorities.

I am calling on the Minister for Corrections to add another re-write to the State Budget to allow for the establishment of an independent prisons inspectorate as a matter of urgency. We cannot allow situations such as this to continue.