

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON THURSDAY,
19 MAY 2005.**

PRISONS INFRASTRUCTURE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, STAGE C.

Mr PETER HOULT, SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE **MR JIM OVENS**, PROGRAM MANAGER, **MR MIKE KING**, JOHN HOLLAND FAIRBROTHER JOINT VENTURE CONSULTANTS, AND **MR ROY CORDINER**, CONSULTANT, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Thank you very much gentlemen. As you are all familiar with the process that we follow, we will now take your evidence in whichever way you think it is most appropriate.

Mr HOULT - Thank you, Mr Chairman. I believe there are three main reasons why the Government has agreed to the request of the Department of Justice for additional capital works within the PIRP stage C contract. The first of these relates to the continued increase in the numbers of sentenced and unsentenced prisoners within the Tasmanian Prison Service. The second of these relates to the opportunity to create additional flexible use accommodation that can be used to increase the separation of different types of inmates particularly remandees, protection inmates, and vulnerable younger men. The third is the acceptance that there would be a very high cost penalty in commencing the additional construction, at a later date, when the perimeter security in PIRP stage C was completed and the new prison facility was populated.

In expectation of this funding the Prison Service has worked up its new operating model with the new facilities within that model and the necessary changes to the operating model and to staffing arrangements have been made.

In essence what has occurred since July 2004 has been a major increase in the number of prisoners, sentenced and unsentenced, managed by the Prison Service. The increase since July 2004 to the present time is about 25 per cent and, as of Monday this week, the Prison Service was managing 559 inmates. While the additional works were not originally planned, the Government has responded to the increase in numbers in what I believe is a very sensible way in terms of facilities developments, and it has meant that we can now use the old Risdon maximum security prison post-mid 2006 solely for minimum prisoner accommodation, rather than the alternative which would have been that we were required to use at least some of the old Risdon maximum prison for medium as well as minimum security prisoners.

The Prison Service has been very conscious of the need to improve the physical separation of various categories of prisoners. The current prison facilities make that difficult to do, and seeing the only kind of accommodation available on the Risdon site at the moment is maximum, there is no variation in the style of accommodation available. Once the new prison is completed with these additional 80-plus medium security beds we will much better be able to address the needs of prisoners for separation, particularly

the groups I spoke about. Hopefully we can change the current system whereby people remanded in custody are automatically classified as maximum security, and we will have the opportunity to do rapid risk assessment and classify some remand and unsentenced prisoners as medium security while having them remain within the secure compound itself.

So I commend the works to the committee. We have available to us today people who can give information or answer questions relating to the project timing, to the nature of the construction plans, to its impact on the current project timetable. I am hoping to take questions from the committee.

CHAIR - Thank you. Peter, do any of the other members of your delegation want to make a contribution now in terms of explanation?

Mr HOULT - No. I think it would be best if we followed up on the committee's questions, and if there is anything left at the end that we feel we haven't covered, perhaps we could do it then.

CHAIR - Sounds fine, okay. Committee members, questions flowing from the submission which we have had for a few weeks now, and we have had the opportunity to familiarise ourselves with the proposal. There certainly was not any need for a further site visit, otherwise we would have pursued that. At this stage that was not seen as necessary.

Mr STURGES - Chairman, I will open the batting, if I may, and just follow on from Mr Houl. What sort of impact is this going to have on the development time frame?

Mr HOULT - We are proposing to get all the major works done on the three additional medium security blocks and the related infrastructure around that - the workshop and the extension of the secure spine - before the closing of the wire, and complete the new works by December 2006. There is about a 16-week period after the closing of the secure perimeter where we will be required to bring a work force in on a daily basis. That has been costed into the process and the new facilities, which will be being finished, particularly the internal works and finishing works, will have a temporary secure perimeter around them to separate them off from the remainder of the prison population. The cost of that security is also costed into the \$9.01 million.

Mrs NAPIER - So what you are saying is that basically you will do the groundwork and have the foundations done -

Mr HOULT - And we will have it up, the walls, the roof, everything.

Mrs NAPIER - Right, so it is just an internal finishing job that you will be doing under those interim security plans?

Mr HOULT - That is correct.

Mr OVENS - The envelopes will be up.

Mr HOULT - And this was our last opportunity to do that obviously because we could not slow down the main works for this. I think that is why the Government realised that if

they were going to do this it was the most cost-effective time to do it. There is a cost penalty already of doing it while we have an operating prison; we accept that cost penalty, but it is nowhere near as great as if we had to spire up a project in 12 months' time and start the heavy earthworks and pouring from scratch.

Mr OVENS - That applies to the three accommodation blocks. The new workshop and an extension to the secure spine will be complete and ready for operation by 25 July next year, which is the practical completion date for the existing contract.

Mrs NAPIER - So that workshop that is highlighted on our diagram is in green next to the laundry, will actually be ready when the majority of the prison is ready.

Mr HOULT - When the secure perimeter is closed and the rest of the prison is ready to be handed over.

Mr BEST - The only question I really have is in relation to, I suppose, the design. We have discussed the design before, but I wanted to clarify a couple of points. I am looking at page 2 of the report, 'Current PIRP state: see project scope' where it talks about phase 2. The fourth item there, 'Reception and Lease Facilities - what is the layout likely to be in relation to prisoner or staff records and all that sort of thing? Is that going to be held in that area or is that separate? I am probably asking the wrong question here but I am interested in making sure that doesn't happen.

Mr HOULT - Firstly, that timetable that you see there on page 2 was the time frame given in the original submission. To answer your question about the way in which prisoners' information is dealt with, this small section here with the 'P' on it prisoner processing. This is part of the common-use facilities and prisoners will be brought in a secure vehicle around here so they can park in a secure area, then they will be taken into that building, which is seen as a maximum security building. They will be processed there and their possessions will be stored. The recording of their time in this prison will commence from that point.

Mr BEST - So that is a more secure facility obviously than what you have now in relation -

Mr HOULT - There is no comparison. That prison we are building ensures that no maximum security prisoners will be moved en masse as they are in the current Risdon Prison because of where the showers are.

Mr BEST - Right.

Mr HOULT - All of the cells have individual shower facilities in maximum security cells, there is no mass movement of prisoners at all. Yes, you are quite right, it is much more secure and the movement is controlled within the controlled spine - the completely shielded walkways - controlled by electronic doors so we do not have that kind of mass movement anymore.

Mrs NAPIER - Apparently some of the concern that may be part of the risk that you had at the old prison is associated with the cook-chill method of providing the single not often hot meal that prisoners were after. It is not your position to comment on that, I accept that.

Mr HOULT- I am willing to comment on that!

Mrs NAPIER - I then asked myself, if we are going to use the new cook-chill method with the new prison, what systems are in place to make sure the prisoners get a hot meal when they are supposed to?

Mr HOULT - The heating of the meals will occur within the actual prisoner units so the meals are not transported out to heating; they are heated at the point where they are delivered.

Mrs NAPIER - So you are saying it is actually going to occur in each of these units in which they are accommodated?

Mr HOULT - In the maximum security units, yes. There will be partial self-catering in many of the medium security units because they have to have greater freedom to do that - there is a kitchen facility within there - but there will be some main meal retherming there as well.

Mrs NAPIER - But it will actually be in the units where they are living which presumably doesn't happen now?

Mr HOULT - At the moment no the retherming occurs within the Risdon maximum prison. There is a distribution system down to the accommodation yards except for divisions 1, 7 and 8.

Mrs NAPIER - But we should not have the same source of concern as we have apparently at the moment?

Mr HOULT - There have been some concerns about the food. However the independent reviews by the Ombudsman and the official visitor said that those had been highly exaggerated.

But heating of the food in the new facility will be closer to point of consumption.

Mr CORDINER - I think that self-catering part of the plan too makes a terrific difference to the medium security facilities as each cell unit has a small kitchenette. Very often they will be able to do their breakfast or make snacks so they have more control over their food production.

Mrs NAPIER - That is good.

As I understand it, there is to be a much stronger emphasis on rehabilitation programs as part of the new prison which the existing prison does not allow quite so much.

I know there is an education room, but the workshop still looks fairly small to me for the kinds of activities that we hope might be available. It is now quite a numbers of years since I have visited inside the main prison. I remember there were quite a few workshop areas where there was woodwork, metalwork and a whole combination of things. There

used to be some great programs operating there. Is it envisaged that the same kind of programs will continue and will they be here or back in the other prison?

Mr HOULT - We will continue for the medium term to operate the workshops and the kitchens in the current Risdon maximum and the 100 or so minimum security prisoners who will be located there will have access to all of those industries and jobs.

We will run two workshops and a laundry. A full commercial laundry is now being placed within the secure perimeter which Jim can point out. That will be equipped as a full commercial laundry and there will be a seamless move from the old laundry in the old prison across because it is completely new equipment so we don't have to do a transfer.

We are trying to maximise the number of jobs inside the new wire, as well as outside, and we are hoping to establish - we have consultant working at the moment - woodworking and furniture industry in the workshops within the new prison with an additional workshop.

Mrs NAPIER - It seems to me and from what I have read some of the programs that really seem to work for prisoners are those that give them some of the building, construction, electricity and other practical skills which are now in high demand. One of the key things seems to help a prisoner get a job when they get back into the community and if we relate that to the skill shortage - they say it is going to get worse and I have no reason to deny that - then it does seem to me a very constructive way to swing a lot of the facets of the training. That is why I wondered when I looked at that size of that workshop, especially compared to the accommodation unit, and thought that it was not very big.

Mr OVENS - The commercial laundry and the new workshop both total 400 square metres.

Mrs NAPIER - I wasn't so much worried about the laundry, I was thinking about the workshop area.

Mr STURGES - Combined or each?

Mr HOULT - Each is 400, and we will still have access to all the other industry spaces in the old prison and they will remain equipped and operating as industry spaces.

Mrs NAPIER - But is it envisaged that people from the main prison will be commuting to the new -

Mr HOULT - No.

Mrs NAPIER - That is why I raised the question because we are assured that you are going to keep the workshops going for the minimum security area and that is very logical. You are going to put an extra 84 people potentially into this prison and you already have capacity for 400, is it? What are we putting in this one?

Mr OVENS - The current program is 400 mediums, as well as all the maximums.

There are 93 maximum security beds and with this increase there will be 196 medium security beds.

Mrs NAPIER - For that reason I thought that it did not seem to provide enough practical skill rehabilitation space for the number of people you are saying it will have.

Mr HOULT - Can I briefly explain what we are planning to do? We will introduce what is called a structured day. Nobody will work full-time in a job. We are splitting the day into two parts and each industry job will service two prisoners. The remainder of the day will be about education, training and personal matters. They will either work on morning shift in an industry and have the afternoon for education and other training, or they will do an afternoon shift in industry and have the mornings for the other stuff. We will actually have more access per prisoner to an industry than we do now.

Mrs NAPIER - We would need to though, wouldn't we, with due respect.

Mr HOULT - Yes, absolutely. I don't disagree with you at all. That is why we are trying to maximise those and link them to training. I had discussions with TAFE as recently as yesterday about how we could access more TAFE training hours to try to make that a more structured training.

Mrs NAPIER - So has scoping been done? You are saying there are 200 prisoners who will be in the medium security compound. Are we saying that the maximum security prisoners will not be going to the workshop and the laundry?

Mr OVENS - No, we are not saying that because one of the core principles of the planning of this prison is that this secure spine allows every prisoner who is eligible to have access to every facility. That is why this is set up this way so that no-one is necessarily denied an opportunity.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay. That was going to be my next question: What facilities are available for the people in the maximum security area? And you are saying, 'Well, some of the maximum security areas may well access the education and training workshop.'

Mr HOULT - They may, but the structured day for maximum security prisoners is a very different event than the one for medium security prisoners. I am sure if you would like to we could, at a different place, take you through the planning for this. Theirs is much more a focus on of their offending behaviours, their assessment of criminogenic need than it is towards basic industries. The idea is to get them out of maximum and into medium as soon as they are able to be got at and increase the amount of industry training and other training available. The people who are in maximum - will be far fewer than we have now in maximum - will be people who are receiving treatment programs for their criminogenic behaviour and very basic level training in behaviours and other things before they are going to be allowed out to use power tools or other pointed objects. There will be completely different structured days for maximum security prisoners than for the mediums, who will be focused on work and training.

Mrs NAPIER - So if I come back to the medium - and I accept what you are saying in terms of maximum - has scoping been done to ensure that all of those 200 people will be able to have daily work experience and training in that workshop/laundry area?

Mr HOULT - That is the target; whether we do it for everybody, we don't know yet because we are still doing the consulting on the industries we will put into the second industry space. That is the work we have going on at the moment around woodwork trades and furniture trades.

Mrs NAPIER - I probably can't see that because I am not someone who can design a workshop anyhow, but I guess the question I had was that, given the number of people who are there, especially with the expanded capacity, then it is a reasonable question to ask about the size of the workshop area. I absolutely fully support the increased move towards rehabilitation of prisoners - it is a nonsense if we don't - and that is why this new prison is quite exciting. I just thought that the workshop area was pretty small.

Mr HOULT - It is a very substantial space and I am happy to have you come out and have a look at the area when we have got some walls up and things to show you.

Mrs NAPIER - I would be happy to do that.

Mr CORDINER - With 100 in the morning and 100 in the afternoon, I think works out to about 4 square metres if you have a full rail out, which is unlikely. If the whole 100 were in that one workshop alone that would not be counting the other programs that may be running.

Mrs NAPIER - So you would not want intrusion on space, you have got more potential for -

Mr OVENS - Each of the maximum security accommodation blocks has separate treatment rooms and interview facilities. They are like consultancy rooms.

Mrs NAPIER - Actually in those blocks?

Mr OVENS - Actually within the accommodation blocks. There is a central services core to each block, so that allows a number of things and it also means that the highest risk prisoners can receive services within that block without having to take them elsewhere.

Mr HALL - A question, Mr Chairman, to Mr Hoult. In regard to the existing maximum security area, which is going to become minimum, could you briefly describe what is being done in terms of refurbishment or anything else in that area to accommodate those minimum security prisoners?

Mr HOULT - We are proposing fairly minimal works. The division 1 model where they are largely self-catering, has open space and prisoners will be allowed to move around. We will in fact introduce a similar regime into Hayes - they will not be locked in; they can move around; they can access the canteen area and things like that on a normal basis. Basically, the front door will be locked at night, and we will have excess capacity in there which we just will not use, touch wood!

Mr HALL - That's good, so it basically stays as it is structurally, with some minor interior work.

Mr HOULT - Yes, and we are doing some new facilities for the custodial officers as well outside the wire to give them a bit better accommodation. We are already doing the works on the kitchens and the catering facilities in the prison in order to keep them running for several years.

Mr STURGES - To follow on that line of questioning, as far as facilities go for custodial officers, I must say I went over there about 12 months ago and I was a little shocked when I saw the environment in which the officers were being trained. What sort of environment are you creating within the confines of this new prison for training of newly-recruited and current officers for retraining?

Mr HOULT - I am pleased to say that we have already done that.

Mr STURGES - Have you? I will go and have a look at it.

Mr HOULT - In this area up here we have developed new training facilities, which is all separate, single refurbished buildings that we moved from the road and they have been done up. We have now completed the custodial officers' gymnasium area, and we have now nearly completed the hard pan training area and the mock-up cell that they do all their training in as well. So if you would like to come and have a look at that some time, you will see that their training facilities are now very good.

Mr STURGES - I will take you up on that invitation, thank you, as I was somewhat shocked at the environment in which they were being based.

Mr HOULT - We have recycled the building. Using a lot of prison labour, we have repainted and refurbished the buildings.

Mr STURGES - Thank you for the invitation, I will take you up on it.

Mr HOULT - We will arrange that for you.

CHAIR - With regard to the costing for the job, given what is in the report, I can only presume that the original, or the current works, are operating under a rise and fall contract and hence the 27 per cent escalation in price. Do I take it that this proposal will be a fixed price contract, that you have been able to negotiate that, given the favorable circumstances of tacking this project onto what is already done?

Mr HOULT - The current contract, the rise and fall contract, was renegotiated at the front end when the consortium said to us, 'We cannot build it for that fixed price'. The Government agreed to a new fixed price and that was locked in at the commencement of the works in late 2004 and a variation was executed for the contract with the new price. That has remained a fixed price right through and will remain to the end of the works. We asked our contractor for a quote for the additional works that is the subject of this submission and they have delivered a fixed-price quote for that work.

Mr OVENS - I might add that we then took that price that we were given to an independent expert of cost planning and had independent verification of the value-for-money status.

Mr HOULT - Which he gave as good value for money.

CHAIR - Certainly when I had a cursory look at the matter and saw an escalation of price to the extent of 27 per cent over such a short period of time, I was surprised. I know that reflects the buoyancy in the industry at the moment and the access to contractors and so on, but that nonetheless is a significant increase.

Mr HOULT - It was actually less than the building price index increase for the period between the original tender and the finalisation of contact.

CHAIR - It says something about the buoyancy at the moment.

Mr HOULT - It is the downside of a good economy.

CHAIR - Indeed. I do not have any other questions.

Mrs NAPIER - The secure mental health area, is that on the contract?

MR OVENS - Yes, it certainly is

Mrs NAPIER - When is that likely to be completed?

Mr OVENS - The construction will be completed on 17 November this year, absolutely to the date.

Mr HOULT - Health are talking about having it operating by February.

Mr OVENS - It will take them three months to go through their training commissioning. They have a whole new operational model.

Mr HOULT - It is racing along.

CHAIR - Thank you, gentlemen, for your attendance today.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.