Alexander Maconochie Centre

INFORMATION BOOKLET

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMC Design Philosophy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Compliant Prison</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMC Green Credentials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security at the AMC</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structured Day</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Throughcare Model</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Community</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Release Centre</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoner Employment Program</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) is named after Alexander Maconochie (1787-1860), the commandant of the Norfolk Island convict settlement between 1840 and 1844. He is a noted reformer who focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment.

During his time as commandant, he insisted on the humane management of prisoners and introduced various innovations in penal practice which were well ahead of their time. He introduced a library, he built churches, he dismantled the gallows and he introduced musical instruments.

Maconochie is most noted for the introduction of his "marks system" in which prisoners earned marks through labour and good behaviour. These could then be used to purchase additional privileges and ultimately, freedom.

During his administration of Norfolk Island, he discharged 920 twice-convicted prisoners to Sydney and by 1845 only 2% of them had been convicted again.

The naming of the AMC not only honours the memory of Alexander Maconochie, it sets the tone for this new prison, which upholds human rights and focuses strongly on prisoner welfare, rehabilitation and community safety.

The AMC has been designed, built and operates in accordance with the ACT Human Rights Act 2007 and human rights principles.

AMC DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

The AMC caters for male and female, remand and sentenced prisoners of all security classifications in a secure and safe environment. It reflects the best thinking in prison design and operation, focussing on prisoner rehabilitation, prisoner health and well-being and human rights. It also provides a positive and safe working environment for staff and addresses the safety needs of the ACT community and complies with the highest environmental standards. These considerations underpin the design philosophy of the prison.

The AMC is a campus style 300-bed prison comprising freestanding buildings both within and outside the perimeter fence, occupying a total area of approximately 60 hectares. The area within the secure perimeter is divided into secure precincts or zones, with remand and sentenced prisoner accommodation of two types – cottage units and cells. In the cottages prisoners are able to participate fully in the running of their unit, including meal preparation and laundry.

All women prisoners are housed in single storey cottage accommodation separate from the men. The cottages have been designed to allow children up to preschool age to reside with their mothers if it is considered in the best interest of the child. A high-needs cottage is available for females requiring a higher degree of supervision.
Around a central core area known as the Town Square there are a number of buildings which house the program's centre, an activities workshop, a library, an education centre, kitchen and laundry facilities, and health services.

Other key elements include the gatehouse, reception and prisoner admission. Also within perimeter security there is a sports oval and other areas for recreation and activity.

A Transitional Release Centre is located outside perimeter security and caters for prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentence and who leave the Centre each day for work or other programs.

The application of human rights principles to the overall design of the AMC can be seen in the minimisation of the harsh, overt signs of incarceration. There is no razor wire; no bars on windows and all cells have full length windows with open views. Unlike a solid prison wall the perimeter fencing affords views of the external landscape and surrounding vistas.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANT PRISON**

**Legislation**
Designed in compliance with the ACT Human Rights Act 2004.
- Section 4 of the Act covers deprivation of liberty.
- Section 28 allows for human rights to be subject to reasonable limits.
- Section 30 requires that as far as possible, all Territory laws must be interpreted in a way that is compatible with human rights.

**Our Corrections Management Act 2007:**
- Requires in the preamble that the criminal justice system operate in accordance with the Human Rights Act;
- Requires us to protect the human rights of prisoners;
- Specific particular oversight roles for the Human Rights Commissioner.

**Overt Signs of Incarceration**
Minimises harsh, overt signs of incarceration:
- There is no razor wire;
- No bars on windows;
- All cells have full length windows with open views;
- There is no external wall and the perimeter fencing affords views of the external landscape.

**Campus Style Accommodation**
The AMC is designed as an open-campus style facility incorporating separate accommodation units around a central service or "Town Square" area.

The open "Town Square" area is surrounded by the Health, Admissions, Visits, and Education and Programmes buildings. As the focus of prison activities, it will provide regular opportunities for staff-prisoner interaction, allowing ACT Corrective Services to manage prisoners proactively.
Cells
Cells were designed to improve privacy with a separate shower and toilet in each.

Each side of the cell block has its own external exercise yard, association area, group room and laundry. Fixtures and fittings are designed to minimise potential self-harm without appearing unduly harsh or clinical.

Cottages
Male and female cottages are designed to give prisoners a high degree of autonomy over day to day decisions. Each male cottage has four units which each hold five prisoners. The female cottages are comprised of one or two five-bedroom units.

The units are fully self-contained with kitchen facilities, a laundry/shower area, a dining/association area and an external secure balcony.

Prisoners in cottages will cook their own meals and manage their own budgets with training and support from staff.

Communal barbeque facilities and basketball courts are available for use by those housed in the cottages.

Females
All females are housed in single storey cottage accommodation separate from male accommodation areas.

A high needs cottage is available for females requiring a higher degree of supervision.

Prisoner Attire
Prisoners are provided with comfortable tracksuit type uniforms in blue (male sentenced), grey (male remand) and maroon (female)

Visits
The AMC operates with generous visiting hours on 6 out of 7 days, in the mornings, afternoons and evenings.

The Visits area has been designed to have a friendly atmosphere with a coffee shop and provision for prisoners to host BBQs with their families.

It also provides hotel-like family rooms for more intimate visits.

Policies and Procedures
All operational policies and procedures are human rights compliant (e.g. the strip search procedure was developed with a focus on limiting strip searches in order to comply with human rights sensitivities)

Less-intrusive Technology /Detection Methods
ION Scanner – utilised to detect drugs entering the prison.

SOTER - Low-dosage x-ray backscatter used for internal contraband detection.
RFID - Radio Frequency Identification Devices. All prisoners and staff will wear devices which will allow prisoner movements to be routinely monitored and musters simplified.

PDA Mobile Phone Detectors

K9 Unit – 4 dogs and 4 handlers used for drug detection only. The K9 Unit also work within the Intelligence Unit.

AMC GREEN CREDENTIALS

The design of the AMC embodies Environmentally Sustainable Development principles. The building has been accredited with a four-star energy performance rating indicating environmental 'best practice'.

Some of the design and building features that have contributed to this rating include:

- 2.1 million litres of rainwater storage in tanks below ground;
- use of grey water for toilet flushing and irrigation;
- use of low lux lighting;
- low flow tapware and fittings;
- high grade floor and wall insulation in all buildings;
- solar hot water systems;
- building orientation to minimise heat gain in summer and promote free heating in winter;
- shading and light colours to reduce summer heat;
- promotion of natural airflow through high ceilings and louvers;
- individually and manually controlled air vents in all cells and rooms; and
- landscaping design conducive to low water consumption.

Natural water courses to Jerrabomberra Creek have not been interrupted and natural grassland on the AMC site has been retained as much as possible.

Approximately $3m has been spent specifically on environmental sustainability initiatives, with a pay-back period estimated conservatively of 13 years.
SECURITY AT THE AMC

The AMC is a maximum-security prison with security systems appropriate to a prison of this type. Perimeter security consists of two 4.2 metre high fences, one of them designed as an 'anti-climb fence'. Perimeter security also consists of a microwave detection system, an acoustic detection system and closed circuit TV.

Within the perimeter, security is maintained through three control rooms - a Master Control Room and two operational control rooms. Internal security consists of electric pulse fences that divide the various secure precincts of the prison. There are over 800 locks in the Centre, comprising of electronic and manual systems.

Other security and screening elements include an x-ray baggage scanner, an iris scan, ion scanning devices and a metal detection turnstile.

In addition, a K9 unit consisting of four handlers and dogs, three Labradors and one Border Collie, and the Intelligence Unit help keep contraband out of the AMC.

The AMC is the first correctional facility in Australia to install a Radio Frequency Identification System (RFID). This system requires each prisoner to wear a personal safety device which is monitored through central control. It is used to monitor physical separation and prisoners' movements through the various sections of the prison. Staff throughout the prison also wear an RFID device.

Approximately 170 core staff are employed at the Centre, which operates 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Apart from the Superintendent and senior management, there are approximately 125 custodial officers, around 10 program staff and 20 administrative, support, kitchen and maintenance staff.

The AMC has been designed so that in the event of an emergency individual precincts or the entire facility can be quickly locked down.

TECHNOLOGY

The AMC perimeter consists of two 4.2 metre high fences, separated by a six metre sterile zone. The perimeter spans 1.3 kilometres and is alarmed by microwave and microphonic technologies. The internal fence has anti-climb cowl at the top. Inside the secure perimeter is a two metre courtesy fence marking a 'no-go' zone for prisoners.

All high security locks are electronically controlled and centrally managed.

There are closed circuit TV cameras throughout the site.

Biometric identification (i.e.: iris scanners) will be used to monitor prisoners and visitors.

A SOTER Body scanner has been introduced at the AMC. The scanner allows Corrections Officers to search a person for drugs without the need for a strip search.
RFID increases prisoner safety by allowing ACTCS staff to monitor and control the location of both vulnerable and volatile prisoners.

RFID is used by staff at the AMC who wear a belt mounted device. The device includes a duress alarm that can be activated manually.

While RFID technology has been used successfully in North America and northern Europe, the AMC is the first southern hemisphere institution to implement it.

Approximately 30 PC computers are available for use in the educational centre at the AMC. Further PCs will be provided in accommodation areas. Prisoners have access to approximately 120 applications including approved internet sites containing educational and legal resources.

Helpful day to day information relating to matters including visitors, induction and timetabling, are displayed on multi-screen televisions placed in every cell, all cottage common areas and other points throughout the AMC.

THE STRUCTURED DAY

At the AMC the prisoner’s day is structured around work, programs, visits, vocational education and training (VET) and recreation. Therapeutic and criminogenic programs cover such areas as sex offender, family violence, and alcohol and other drugs. Cognitive skills programs are also provided to help change thinking patterns and encourage better judgement.

Prisoner VET programs are conducted by Auswide, a private provider. Auswide assess the learning needs of prisoners and offer a range of accredited Certificate I to Certificate IV level courses linked to prisoner employment in courses such as hospitality, horticulture, IT and construction.

While the AMC is not an industrial type prison, prisoners are provided with work opportunities that can be linked to individual rehabilitation plans and VET programs. For example, prisoners employed in the kitchen, laundry and cleaning services can study hospitality, while those engaged in landscaping and grounds management can undertake horticultural studies.

THE THROUGHCARE MODEL

ACT Corrective Services operate a ‘throughcare’ model of case management for each prisoner at the AMC. Within this model each prisoner has his or her own case manager work with them to develop an individual rehabilitation plan and a pre-release plan.

The plans look at addressing offending behaviour and map out education and training pathways to maximise employment opportunities upon release and to ease transition back into the community.

Throughcare also focuses on providing an appropriate continuum of health care, addressing substance abuse and mental health issues in particular. It also engages the prisoner’s family and the community in his or her rehabilitation.
THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

A segregated therapeutic community has been established within the AMC for male prisoners with moderate to high level drug and alcohol addiction. Plans are currently being considered for a women’s program. This approach has been utilised successfully in other prisons and provides a treatment setting in which the community itself, through self-help and mutual support, work together to heal the members. This program will be operated in partnership with the Alcohol and Drug Foundation of the ACT.

TRANSITIONAL RELEASE CENTRE

A 15-bed Transitional Release Centre (TRC), which is outside the secure perimeter of the AMC, houses low-risk prisoners in the final stages of their sentence. The TRC aims to provide a bridge between life in a correctional facility and life in the general community.

For prisoners transitioning back into our community the Transitional Release Centre (TRC) provides an opportunity to participate in work experience placements with host employers and community based organisations. The work experience placements are designed to provide an opportunity for the prisoner to demonstrate to potential employers that they would be a reliable and trustworthy addition to their workforce. The placements provide an opportunity to gain valuable experience and demonstrate practical skills that increase the likelihood of gaining and maintaining permanent employment upon release. This enables prisoners to obtain and engage in employment in the community with a view to maintaining that employment on release from prison. Host employers and community organisations participating in the NEO program also benefit through being able to access an additional skilled and semi-skilled workforce.

PRISONER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

ACT Corrective Services aim to provide a safe, secure, and humane custodial environment and an effective community corrections environment in which prisoners and offenders are effectively managed, commensurate with their needs and the risks to the community.

The links between employment and recidivism are well established. Employed people are less likely to become incarcerated. Prisoners who gain and maintain employment on release are less likely to return to custody.

ACT Corrective Services aims to reduce the risk of re-offending by providing services and program interventions that address the causes of offending, maximise the chances of successful reintegration into the community and encourage offenders to adopt a law abiding way of life.
The ultimate goal of the NEO program is for ex-prisoners to obtain and maintain permanent employment upon their return to our community.

Program Overview
Government departments, community organisations, and private enterprise employers that are willing to support the NEO program goals are identified. A matrix of suitable employment positions within the respective organisations and the relevant skills and experience requirements is developed. Generally the skill set requirements are directly related to current ACT skill shortage areas. All prisoners arriving at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) undertake skills audits and vocational assessments.

Prisoners identified as potentially suitable for the external employment positions are encouraged to undertake relevant work experience and Vocational Education and Training whilst at the AMC.

Prisoners who are deemed suitable may be transferred to the Transitional Release Centre (TRC) at the AMC. Prisoners who are accommodated at the Transitional Release Centre may subsequently attend approved work experience placements or undertake further vocational education and training in the community on a daily basis.

Program participants, including the host employers are provided with ongoing support and monitoring for the duration of the Program.

Employment on Release
National and international literature on corrections shows that prisoners, relative to the general population, are confronted with an extensive range of disadvantages. Ex-prisoners face a daunting set of obstacles to re-entry into our society as positive contributors, but securing employment post-release may be the biggest challenge of all.

The ultimate goal of the NEO program is for ex-prisoners to obtain and maintain permanent employment on their return to our community.
To assist in achieving this goal ACT Corrective Services and the ACT Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry have partnered to promote the NEO program and encourage our regional business community to support this valuable crime prevention initiative.

The NEO program has also developed linkages with Commonwealth Job Services Australia providers in the ACT area. ACT Providers include:
- Auswide
- Caloola
- Salvation Army Employment Plus
- Max Employment
- IPA
- Campbell-Page
- Habitat Personnel

Both Auswide and Caloola have employment consultants that attend Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) and provide advice to prisoners on their options and the supports available to them through their respective organisations upon their release.
Through Commonwealth Job Services Australia providers, employers are also able to access a range of assistance from training to wage subsidies.

Skill Development & Training
Prisoners received into the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) undergo skills audits and vocational assessments to identify areas for development. Through the NEO program, business-like industries operated by the AMC provide work skills and habits for prisoners in work environments that match as much as possible, a comparable industry environment outside of prisons.

The AMC has education and training facilities available to provide realistic skill development and experience in a range of Industry and Vocational areas. These include:
- building and construction
- asset maintenance
- horticulture
- hairdressing
- information technology
- business studies and
- hospitality

In addition to prisoner employment in business-like industries, prisoners are responsible for the cleaning and care of their living unit, community work, and other activities that are linked to employability skills within the Centre. These activities assist prisoners to establish work habits and skills in a work-like, but non-commercial environment.

The AMC also has a flexible workshop area (Industry Skills Centre) that can be configured to provide realistic employment experiences and to carry out a range of manual and mechanical process manufacturing or assembly activities according to enterprise business requirements. The Industry Skills Centre is supported with a range of nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training programs, courses and certificates.