



# AVENUES FOR INMATE INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

## FACT SHEET

Formal avenues through which inmates can make inquiries, complain, or raise issues of concern are set out in both legislation and Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) policies and procedures.

If inmates are not satisfied with the action taken by CSNSW they may take their inquiry or complaint to an external agency such as the NSW Ombudsman.

Inmates can make inquiries, complain, or raise issues of concern in the following ways:

- locally, with correctional centre staff;
- by telephone, to the Corrective Services Support Line;
- in person, with an Official Visitor;
- in writing, to the Commissioner or Minister.

## LOCALLY

To Correctional Centre Staff



Within correctional centres, inmates should raise inquiries or complaints in the first instance directly with correctional centre staff, or through the inmate request system. This may include:

- speaking to their Wing or Case Officer;
- putting in a "bluey" (Inmate Request Form) or a white Inmate Application Form;
- speaking to the Senior Assistant Superintendent / Principal Correctional Officer.

## BY TELEPHONE

To the Corrective Services Support Line (CSSL)



The CSSL is a free telephone support service available to inmates in correctional centres and

transitional centres. It is not available to inmates' families or to other members of the public.

The CSSL operates Monday to Friday (other than public holidays) between 9.00am and 3.30pm. The CSSL telephone number is programmed into the Controlled Telephone System (#1). Calls to the CSSL are free.

Other than in a genuine emergency, before calling the CSSL inmates should have tried to have the matter resolved locally (see above). Inmates will be asked if they have done this when they call the CSSL. Calling CSSL will not speed up or by-pass local complaint procedures.

In the case of a genuine emergency the CSSL will arrange prompt assistance for the inmate.

Inmates calling the CSSL need to verify their identity by providing their MIN, full name and date of birth. An inmate may call on behalf of another inmate (eg if an inmate does not speak English) provided the inmate who wants to make the inquiry or complaint is present when the call is made.

The CSSL will take details of the inmate's complaint or inquiry. If it is a general inquiry, the CSSL may be able to provide an immediate answer. If not, CSSL will email the details to staff at a designated email address at the inmate's correctional centre for response and/or action. The CSSL can also refer matters to other areas such as Justice Health and the State Parole Authority.

Once a matter has been actioned by the correctional centre staff, they will advise the CSSL of the action they have taken. They should also advise the inmate of the outcome. Inmates may also telephone the CSSL again to find out what action has been taken.

The CSSL has no authority to resolve matters or make decisions on behalf of a correctional centre.

The CSSL does not provide information to inmates on the nature of their offences or the outcome of classification reviews or parole hearings.

The CSSL will however follow up with correctional centres if an inmate advises they are having difficulty getting this information.

## IN PERSON

To an Official Visitor



Official Visitors are appointed by the Minister responsible for corrective services and are independent of CSNSW. At least one Official Visitor is assigned to each correctional facility. In larger correctional centres more than one Official Visitor may be assigned.

Official Visitors generally visit centres fortnightly. The General Manager of the centre must ensure inmates (other than Category AA, Category 5 and extreme high risk restricted inmates) are advised when the Official Visitor is at the centre and are given an opportunity to speak to the Official Visitor.

Inmates may also make a request to register to see the Official Visitor on their next visit. Discussions between inmates and Official Visitors are confidential.

Official Visitors generally are able to resolve the majority of inquiries and complaints locally, by speaking to the General Manager, Manager of Security, and medical, programs and administration staff.

If the Official Visitor is unable to resolve inquiries or complaints locally they will bring them to the attention of the Commissioner or Minister in their quarterly and half yearly reports.

The statutory requirement for the appointment of Official Visitors, and requirements of the role are set out in the section 228 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* and clauses 155-157 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008*.

CSNSW, through the Manager, Official Visitor Support, has responsibility for ensuring Official Visitors have the support and resources they need to do their work.

## IN WRITING

To the Minister or Commissioner



The right of inmates to make inquiries, or complain to the Minister or Commissioner about their treatment while in a correctional centre, and/or the administration or management of a correctional centre, is set out in clause 160 of the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008*.

If the General Manager of the centre can deal with the matter the inmate must first raise the matter with them. Inmates' letters to the Minister or Commissioner must be delivered unopened.

The NSW Ombudsman also refers written inquiries or complaints to the Commissioner on behalf of inmates. These inquiries and complaints, together with those made directly to the Commissioner and to the Minister are received in the Ministerial Liaison Unit (MLU).

The Corrective Service Support Line, administrative support for Official Visitors, and the Ministerial Liaison Unit form the Executive Services Branch in the Office of the Commissioner.

Any inquiries about this Fact Sheet may be directed to [mlu@dcs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mlu@dcs.nsw.gov.au).