



# Research Publication

## **Intergaol Comparison Study: Attitudes of Prison Officers to their work at Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea**

**Kathy McLennan**  
Research Officer Bathurst Goal

**Angela Gorta**  
Senior Research Officer

**Diana Simmons**  
Research Officer Bathurst Goal

**Research Publication No. 15**  
**October 1987**  
**ISSN 0813 5800**

**NSW Department of Corrective Services**

# Research Publication



Material published by the  
Research Division includes  
Research Digests, Research  
Bulletins, and Research  
Publications.

## INTERGAOL COMPARISON STUDY: ATTITUDES OF PRISON OFFICERS TO THEIR WORK AT BATHURST, CESSNOCK AND PARKLEA

Kathy McLennan  
Research Officer  
Bathurst Gaol

Angela Gorta  
Senior Research Officer

Diana Simmons  
Research Officer  
Bathurst Gaol

Research and Statistics Division

Department of  
Corrective Services

Research Publication No. 15

October, 1987

N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services

ISSN 0813 - 5800

# **INTERGAOL COMPARISON STUDY: ATTITUDES OF PRISON OFFICERS TO THEIR WORK AT BATHURST, CESSNOCK AND PARKLEA**

Kathy McLennan  
Research Officer  
Bathurst Gaol

Angela Gorta  
Senior Research Officer

Diana Simmons  
Research Officer  
Bathurst Gaol

Research and Statistics Division

Research Publication No. 15  
October, 1987  
N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services  
ISSN 0813 - 5800

## Table of Contents

	Page No.	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4	
SUMMARY	5	
INTRODUCTION	6	
METHODOLOGY	8	
Subjects	8	
Method of sampling	8	
Problems encountered in interviewing prison officers at Cessnock and Parklea	9	
Summary of questions	9	
RESULTS	10	
I. Aspects of the job which officers felt assisted them or made their job more difficult	10	
II. Officers' work area and whether they felt they had a say in running that area	11	
III. Officers' reactions to and relations with inmates	12	
IV. Officers' opinions on local gaol and Departmental policy	15	
V. Support from fellow officers and executives	17	
VI. Particular issues which officers feel are important in their job	18	
VII. Special problems of unit officers	23	
		DISCUSSION 26
		1. Evaluation of Bathurst Gaol Management Plan 26
		2. Problems shared by officers at the three gaols 27
		3. Communication between prison officers and executive officers 27
		RECOMMENDATIONS 28
		REFERENCE 28

## TABLES

No.	Title	Page No.		
1.	Demographic data	8		
2.	Prison officers interviewed at three N.S.W. gaols	8	12.	How inmates address officers 15
3.	Aspects of the job seen as worthwhile	10	13.	Officers who stated that internal gates and yards are necessary for day-to-day prisoner control 15
4.	Aspects of the job which make it more difficult	10	14.	Officers who stated that they would feel justified in taking a stress day 16
5.	Consistency in rostering and preference for job rotation	11	15.	Opinions on the sick leave policy 16
6.	Those who have a say in their work area	12	16.	Officers who felt they had support of fellow officers and executives 17
7.	Officers who reported relating differently to inmates at their current gaol	12	17.	Problems which are most important to officers 18
8.	Reaction to recent situation where prisoner was angry and aggressive	13	18.	Suggestions for change 19
9.	Reaction to recent situation where a prisoner was emotionally upset	14	19.	Comparison of frequency of problems experienced by officers from three institutions 20
10.	Verbal interaction	14	20.	Comparison of attitudes between Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea officers 22-23
11.	How officers address inmates	15		

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on information obtained from interviews with prison officers from Bathurst Gaol, Cessnock Corrective Centre and Parklea Prison. The authors would like to thank those officers who were willing to be interviewed and the Superintendents and union representatives at each of these institutions who facilitated the interviews.

The specific research contributions are outlined below:

- the study was designed by Diana Simmons, Kathy McLennan and Angela Gorta;
- interviews were conducted by Kathy McLennan and Diana Simmons;
- data were analysed primarily by Kathy McLennan with assistance from Angela Gorta, Joanne Knight and Sylviane Mariasson;
- the report was written by Kathy McLennan and Angela Gorta.

## SUMMARY

As part of the evaluation of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan, the responses of prison officers from Bathurst Gaol were compared to the responses of prison officers from Cessnock Corrective Centre and Parklea Prison. Prison officers at each of these three gaols were interviewed concerning: aspects of their job which they felt assisted them or made their job more difficult; their work area and whether they felt they had a say in running that area; reactions to and relations with inmates; opinions on local gaol and Departmental policy; support from fellow officers and executive officers; particular issues which they felt are important in their job. The study was able to identify ways in which Bathurst prison officers differed from their Cessnock and Parklea colleagues in their attitudes to their work, and specific issues which were of concern to officers at all three gaols.

On the whole, Bathurst officers appear to have a more positive outlook towards the gaol in general. More specifically, for example, Cessnock and Parklea officers were more likely to state that the job was not worthwhile at all than were Bathurst officers. Bathurst officers were more likely to report relating differently to inmates at their current gaol than were Cessnock or Parklea officers. Bathurst officers were more likely to address inmates by their first name, and to be addressed by inmates by their first name. They were also more likely to report that, when a prisoner is emotionally upset they 'spent time, show acceptance and understanding, gave acceptable help and advice'. Bathurst officers were more likely to agree that "officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at their gaol more than at other gaols" and that "to manage prisoners effectively, it is important to discuss their ideas and feelings with them" than were officers at Parklea or Cessnock. Also, officers at Bathurst were more likely to state that internal gates and yards are unnecessary for day-to-day prisoner control.

However, because of the nature of the Bathurst Management Plan, Bathurst officers

placed more emphasis on problems which did not arise at Cessnock or Parklea. For example, Bathurst officers saw 'lack of communication/ cooperation within the gaol' as an important problem.

Problems shared by officers at all three institutions included: difficulties with executive officers; feeling that the new sick leave policy was unjustified; dissatisfaction with the promotional system; feeling they are not being paid well enough; feeling they don't get sufficient support from the Commission; and being kept in the dark, not knowing what is going on.

On a more positive note, most officers felt they had support from their fellow officers.

More officers agreed with the following statements:

- "unit living allows prisoners to be responsible for themselves";
- "prisoners should make specific decisions for themselves after they have been given broad guidelines by officers";
- "prison officers don't know from one day to the next how the Department expects them to act";
- "rules for prisoners' behaviour should be strictly enforced";
- "prisoners will take advantage of an officer who does not keep his/her distance from them".

On the other hand, most officers disagreed with the following attitude statements:

- "most executive officers are interested in their prison officer morale";
- "prison officers who do good work get recognition for this".

## INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan commenced soon after the gaol re-opened in August 1982. Until early 1987, research officers at Bathurst had concentrated on studies within the gaol. This was due, not only to the fact that interest from the Department centred on the new, experimental programme at Bathurst, but also because none of the other twenty-one gaols and afforestation camps in N.S.W. is directly comparable to Bathurst Gaol. Gaols throughout N.S.W. differ in many ways including: security classification of inmates held; number of prisoners held; country versus city location; management strategies of the institution; educational opportunities available for the prisoners and prison industries.

However, after four years of process evaluation internal to the gaol, it was considered desirable to compare the management of Bathurst with that of other gaols. When comparison gaols had to be chosen, it was decided to select Parklea Prison and the Cessnock Corrective Centre, since these appear to hold the closest similarities to Bathurst. Parklea, although it has a maximum security classification, is similar to Bathurst in its size (Parklea has capacity for 218 prisoners, Bathurst 209) and that it has unit living, which allows prisoners to live in small groups. Although Cessnock is a larger gaol (holding 400 prisoners) and has traditional wing accommodation for inmates, it is similar to Bathurst in that both gaols have a medium security classification. Cessnock also has a relatively large education component within the gaol, which is comparable to Bathurst.

When Bathurst Gaol first re-opened, it was intended that it be managed differently from other gaols, especially in the eleven main areas outlined below.

### *a) Unit accommodation and management system*

It was anticipated that unit management would have affected the relationship between prison officers and inmates at Bathurst. Structured meetings, as well as informal interaction, were planned to evolve between unit inmates and officers to deal with unit issues, and to involve inmates in decision-making. The eight units at Bathurst were opened in stages during 1983. Early problems included the realistic attainment of participatory decision-making for inmates, the clarification of desirable objectives for officer-inmate relations, and the reduction of unit staff from two to one officer per unit. This last problem decreased an officer's mobility from the

office area and reduced involvement in unit activities.

Formal unit meetings were being held regularly in two of the eight units with more informal discussion regarding unit issues occurring in some units. From interviews with both officers and prisoners it has been found that units were seen as more relaxed and less tense than a wing. Greater involvement in group activities and increased personal security were also reported by both Bathurst staff and inmates. By 1986, with units largely empty during the day because the inmates were at work or attending education classes, some Bathurst unit officers expressed dissatisfaction with their work, citing boredom as their main criticism.

### *b) Team Management*

It was planned that team management was to evolve with specific teams and team leaders responsible for Accommodation, Security, Prisoner Processing and Staff Development. The Gaol Management Team was to involve executives from the various teams, the Superintendent and professional staff, and was to operate as the overall organizing body within the gaol. While still retaining the chain of command, team management aimed to enable officers at all ranks to participate in decision-making related to their area of involvement. However, the security team was disbanded in mid-December, 1983, so that officers manning security posts are now rostered under general duties. There are now only four teams: Accommodation, Prisoner Processing, Education (this has only recently become a team) and Industries, with the Gaol Management Team as the governing body.

### *c) Staff Training and Selection*

The aim of staff training at Bathurst was to provide orientation to, and assist in the implementation of, the Management Plan. At present, however, although new officers are given a general orientation to the gaol, no training specific to the Management Plan is offered. In addition, mixed staffing was to be a feature of the new Bathurst Gaol Management Plan. A target level of 25% female custodial officers was proposed. However the highest level of female custodial staff at Bathurst Gaol has been 6.4%. This includes female officers at X Wing which is being used as a women's minimum security institution since it re-opened in December, 1984.

### *d) Physical Structure*

The lack of gates within the gaol has always been one of the most positive aspects of the

Bathurst Gaol Management Programme. These major points of conflict between officers and inmates at other gaols, do not exist at Bathurst. Informal observation by research officers has found that this freedom of movement continues to maintain reduced tension and a feeling of ease within the gaol. It has not resulted in a loss of control.

**e) Job Rotation**

Job rotation was to be introduced to enable officers to gain experience in different areas of the gaol for a set, rostered period. However, it has not been formally implemented. Some senior officers have been rotated but this is as a result of agreement between certain groups, rather than a formal job rotation system.

**f) Other**

Other proposed differences in management practices for the new Bathurst Gaol included: development of industries and employment for inmates; education and trade training; activities; reception; visits and internal credit book system. Each of these proposed differences related directly to inmates. It is not clear how they would have affected the prison officer work role, which is the focus of the current study. (For further information on the implementation of the Bathurst Management Plan refer to Crouch, Gorta, Mahony, McLennan, Porritt and Simmons (1987).)

This study was initiated in order to assess, from prison officers' opinions, whether the management of Bathurst Gaol has made a difference to the work role of the officer. The purpose of this study was to compare the prison officers' opinions on aspects such as: work

problems; prison officer/ inmate relations; different work areas; and suggestions for change. Reasons for doing this study were:

1. as part of the Bathurst Gaol evaluation:
  - a. we felt it was important to measure the success of the Bathurst programme by comparing Bathurst to other gaols;
  - b. in particular, the results of the recent Unit Management Study at Bathurst Gaol showed that some unit officers were bored and dissatisfied with their work role. It was considered important to ascertain why this boredom occurs, and whether it is unique to Bathurst or occurs at other gaols, especially Parklea where unit accommodation is also available;
  - c. to determine how Bathurst officers feel about their work and what problems they might have, and whether these problems are more prevalent at Bathurst than at other gaols;
2. to attempt to provide the Department with information which could be used to develop greater job satisfaction for prison officers in general by outlining specific problems common to the majority of officers and highlighting successful policies in each gaol;
3. previous research studies have noted a communication gap between junior and senior officers. Since the Bathurst Management Plan was designed to help close this gap, it would be beneficial to find out if relations between junior and senior officers were different at Bathurst than at other gaols.

## METHODOLOGY

### Subjects

The subjects in this study were prison officers at three N.S.W. gaols. They included 23 prison officers from the medium security Cessnock Corrective Centre; 23 from the maximum security Parklea Prison, and 27 from the medium security Bathurst Gaol.

The distribution of average years of service, rank, average age, percentage of officers who had some experience of the different security classifications in other gaols and average time at their present gaol, is shown in Table 1 below.

Prison officers' stated areas of work in all three gaols covered most of the areas which bring officers into contact with prisoners, such as Industrial overseers, Reception, Activities, and wing/unit officers.

### Method of Sampling

The criteria for selection of officers in each institution was Senior Prison Officer rank and below with at least three months service at that institution as well as some service at another gaol. Another criterion was prison officers whose work involved most contact with inmates. Prison

officers who only worked in towers or stores positions were excluded.

The roster clerks at each gaol were contacted and asked to supply a list of eligible officers. The Bathurst list of all prison officers was the sampling frame for the Bathurst Gaol prison officer sample. The interviewers worked full-time at Bathurst Gaol and had more flexibility in arranging interviews there. However, it was not practical to use the Cessnock and Parklea staff lists as sampling frames because we did not know if the officers chosen would be on duty on the interview days. The Cessnock and Parklea prison officer samples were taken from the work rosters for the selected interview period.

A systematic random sample was taken for each gaol by determining a random starting point and taking every third name at Cessnock and Bathurst, and every fourth name at Parklea.

Table 2 indicates the number of eligible officers at each institution, the proportion contacted for interview, and how many officers were actually interviewed.

Interviews were conducted in January and February, 1987: at the Cessnock Corrective Centre on 27-29th January; at Parklea Prison on 17-19th February and at Bathurst Gaol during February, 1987. Each interview took approximately thirty minutes.

Table 1: Demographic Data

Institution	Average years in service	Rank (%)			Average age (years)	Average years at present gaol	Other gaol experience (%)		
		SPO	1/C	3/C			Min.	Med.	Max.
Cessnock	7.2	4%	43%	52%	35.3	4.3	52%	-	100%
Parklea	6.5	22%	39%	39%	36.3	2.1	26%	7%	100%
Bathurst	6.2	19%	44%	37%	34.8	3.0	35%	-	100%

Table 2: Prison officers interviewed at three N.S.W. gaols

Institution	No. of eligible prison officers	Percentage contacted	Number Interviewed	Number Refused **
Cessnock Corrective Centre	115	27.0	23	8
Parklea Prison	194	14.4*	23	5
Bathurst Gaol	102	32.4	27	6

\*NB: A smaller proportion of officers were contacted at Parklea because that institution had a much higher number of eligible staff than did the other two gaols.

\*\* : This number includes those who were unable to find time to be interviewed as well as those who did not wish to be interviewed.

## **Problems encountered in interviewing prison officers at Cessnock and Parklea**

A condition of approving the study was that no overtime could be incurred in relieving prison officers for interviews. Interviews had to be arranged in the prison officer's own time or during a shift changeover when there were some extra prison officers on duty. This caused some problems for the interviewers at Cessnock and Parklea as there were only a couple of hours during the day when prison officers could make themselves available. In a few cases, the interviewers gained permission to interview at work locations, but the majority of prison officers were interviewed during their twenty minute meal breaks or a shift changeover.

A few prison officers volunteered to come to work earlier or stay on for an interview when their shift finished. However, at Cessnock most prison officers lived out of town and had organized car pools which prevented them coming earlier or staying after their shift.

## **Summary of questions**

Questions asked of prison officers covered six main areas:

1. aspects of the job which officers felt assisted them or made their job more difficult;
2. officers' work area, and whether they felt they had a say in running that area;
3. officers' reactions to and relations with inmates;
4. officers' opinions on local gaol and Departmental policy, in particular, the new sick leave policy;
5. support from fellow officers and executive officers;
6. particular issues which officers feel are important in their job.

The special problems of unit officers were analysed separately and comprised a seventh section of the results.

Some of the questions had previously been used in studies of prison officers' attitudes to the new Management Plan at Bathurst Gaol. These covered areas such as attitudes towards executive officers, female officers, and greater freedom of movement within the gaol.

## RESULTS

### I: Aspects of the job which officers felt assisted them or made their job more difficult

Officers were asked a general question regarding what parts of their job they saw as worthwhile. Their responses were varied and are listed under broad headings in Table 3 below.

The aspect most frequently mentioned by officers at Bathurst and Parklea as making their job worthwhile was 'interaction with inmates'. Some examples of the sorts of things they mentioned are:

"Seeing inmates ... make something of themselves" (Bathurst);

"Listening to inmates' queries and problems, seeing how I can help them" (Bathurst);

**Table 3: Aspects of the job seen as worthwhile**

Response	Bathurst n=27		Cessnock n=23		Parklea n=23		Total n=73	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
1. Interaction with inmates (e.g. teaching, helping)	10	(37)	4	(17)	7	(30)	21	(29)
2. All aspects are worthwhile	7	(26)	5	(22)	4	(17)	16	(22)
3. Job satisfaction	4	(15)	2	(8)	-		6	(8)
4. Secure/safe containment of inmates	4	(15)	5	(22)	2	(9)	11	(15)
5. Specific duties (e.g. searching, wing duty).	3	(11)	3	(13)	2	(9)	8	(11)
6. Working conditions (e.g. shift-work, money).	2	(7)	3	(13)	3	(13)	8	(11)
7. Not worthwhile at all.	2	(7)	5	(22)	6	(26)	13	(18)
8. Other	1	(4)	1	(4)	3	(13)	5	(7)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>(122)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>(121)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(117)</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>(121)</b>

*\*NB: Total percentages are higher than 100% since most officers reported more than one aspect which made their job worthwhile.*

**Table 4: Aspects of the job which make it more difficult**

Responses	Bathurst n=27		Cessnock n=23		Parklea n=23		Total n=73	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
1. Executive Officers	10	(37)	12	(52)	14	(61)	36	(49)
2. Lack of communication/co-operation within the gaol	7	(26)	-		-		7	(10)
3. Physical aspects (lack of funding, stores, maintenance etc).	5	(19)	-		-		5	(7)
4. Inconsistency from other officers	6	(22)	-		-		6	(8)
5. Lack of peer support	4	(15)	4	(17)	4	(17)	12	(16)
6. Prisoner lack of discipline	3	(11)	4	(17)	6	(26)	13	(18)
7. Local gaol policy	3	(11)	3	(13)	1	(4)	7	(10)
8. Problems with inmates	3	(11)	-		-		3	(4)
9. Boredom	2	(7)	-		-		2	(3)
10. Departmental policy	-		5	(22)	9	(39)	14	(19)
11. Other	11	(41)	4	(17)	8	(35)	23	(32)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>(200)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>(139)</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>(182)</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>(175)</b>

*\*NB: Total percentages are more than 100% since officers stated more than one difficulty.*

"Giving my knowledge of trade skills ... to inmates" (Parklea);

"Working in wings, dealing with inmates more" (Parklea).

Officers at Cessnock placed more emphasis on the secure/safe containment of inmates than on interaction with inmates. For example: "Keeping inmates off the streets for as long as I'm permitted. Rehabilitation doesn't come into it much." (Cessnock).

Also at Cessnock, an equal proportion of officers (22%) stated that all aspects of the job were worthwhile as stated that the job was not worthwhile at all. A substantial proportion of officers at Parklea also stated that the job was not worthwhile at all (26%).

Bathurst officers were more likely to state that all aspects of the job were worthwhile (26%) and less likely than officers at the other two gaols to state that the job was not worthwhile at all (7%).

Officers were also asked what aspects of the job made it more difficult for them. Once again, responses are listed according to the broad headings to which they relate (see Table 4).

Problems with executive officers appear to be the main concern for officers at all three gaols. The majority of all officers (49%) stated that executive officers caused them difficulty in their jobs, with the proportion of officers who responded this way being higher at Parklea than at Cessnock which was in turn higher than Bathurst. Some examples of reasons why officers gave this response are:

"Lack of knowledge of executive officers, they're not sticking to policies laid down by the Department." (Bathurst);

"Inconsistency - executive officers saying you can do one thing and next day they change it." (Cessnock);

"Exec's are unwilling to communicate with us - they distance themselves" (Parklea).

For officers at Bathurst, the second most frequently reported difficulty was "lack of communication/co-operation within the gaol". This was not reported to be a problem by officers at Cessnock or Parklea.

Officers at Parklea and Cessnock saw 'Departmental policy' as their second most important difficulty. While the new sick leave policy was the predominant reason for this response, other policies, such as the promotional system, were also mentioned.

## II: Officers' work area and whether they felt they had a say in running that area

In order to determine whether job rotation occurred in the three gaols, or if officers wanted job rotation, we asked officers about their present work area and if they would like to work in other areas.

From Table 5, below, we can see that Bathurst officers tend to experience more consistent rostering than officers at the other gaols. Slightly less than half of the officers working in the same work area would like the opportunity to work in another area of the gaol. Some reasons given for not wanting to move included:

"I've found what I want to do. I was given the opportunity to work in other areas". (Bathurst);

**Table 5: Consistency in rostering and preference for job rotation**

Category	Bathurst n=27		Cessnock n=23		Parklea n=23		Total n=73	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
Number who worked mainly in the same area	17	(63)	10	(43)	8	(35)	35	(48)
Number who would like an opportunity to work in another area	7	(41)*	5	(50)*	4	(50)*	16	(46)*

\*NB: These percentages are taken from the number of officers who worked mainly in the same area.

"I know I'm going to be there from day to day - the decisions I make I have to wear." (Cessnock).

"Maybe later, but not now. I'm quite happy in this job." (Parklea).

When asked in which other areas they would like to work, officers' responses covered almost all work areas in each gaol. These included Accommodation (3 officers), Reception (3 officers), Gate/Control (2 officers), Activities (2 officers), and Probation and Parole (2 officers). Six months in each new area was the most popular time span mentioned by officers who would like an opportunity to work in another area. Six officers gave this response.

Officers were also asked if they felt they had a say in how things were run in their work area. Thirty-six of the seventy-three officers (49%) reported having a say. See Table 6 below.

Gaol	Number who feel they have a say (%)
Bathurst	14 (52)
Cessnock	12 (52)
Parklea	10 (43)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36 (49)</b>

It is encouraging to note that approximately half the officers interviewed at all three gaols felt they have a say in how things are run in their work area. Some examples of occasions when they have had a say were:

"I generally try and contribute suggestions in my work area" (Bathurst);

"I get a say in which inmate comes into my unit." (Bathurst);

"I'm in charge of the area. I run it the way I want - if I want to change something, I can change it." (Cessnock);

"Decisions about meals or inmate employment." (Cessnock);

"On security problems." (Parklea);

"We get a say, but whether anyone takes notice is another thing. A few of us put in a report requesting second prison officer at the compound gate. We did finally get one." (Parklea).

### III: Officers' reactions to and relations with inmates

Officers were asked if they felt they related differently to inmates at their current gaol, than with inmates at other gaols. The percentages of officers who stated that they did relate differently to inmates, are listed below.

Gaol	(%)
Bathurst	74
Cessnock	52
Parklea	35

Bathurst officers were more likely to report relating differently with inmates than were officers from Cessnock or Parklea (see Table 7). When describing the difference in the way they relate officers described Bathurst as being "more relaxed", having "more openness" and more communication and discussion. For example, Bathurst officers said:

"More relaxed atmosphere and attitude here. Other gaols have yards, here there's no restrictions like that, less tension. I treat them how they treat me, you have more rapport with them.";

"More relaxed at this gaol. At a more personal level without bridging gap of officer/inmate. A lot of this is brought about by Management Plan".

Cessnock officers who reported relating differently gave a variety of reasons for doing so, ranging from the inmates being less abusive at Cessnock than at other gaols to having less to do with prisoners at Cessnock than one would have at Maitland or at a camp. For example:

"You can talk to inmates face to face without being abused.";

"You don't associate with them as much as at Maitland, you have to be more of a diplomat here.";

"Breakdown of old values in this gaol, more room to move around here; inmates can see light at end of tunnel here.";

"More relaxed atmosphere here. Some people are even on first name basis."

The responses of the eight Parklea officers who reported relating differently can be subdivided into those who did so because of their specific work role (four officers) and those who noted improved relationships with prisoners at Parklea in comparison to at Long Bay (three officers). For example:

"We are in a special situation in our shop because we have to develop rapport to get the job done, whereas if we worked in the wing area it would be less contact.";

"Down 'the Bay' you are 'at each other' because of all the gates. Here I get on much better - they treat me like a human and I treat them like a human."

**Examples of actual interactions with inmates**

Officers were asked to relate an example of what they did in a recent situation when a prisoner was angry and aggressive. Reported actions

taken by the officers were divided into six categories.

Of those officers at Bathurst and Cessnock who had encountered this situation and gave an example, the majority stated that they had talked to the inmate in order to calm him/her down. Some examples were:

"...inmate was told he was going on escort, he didn't want to go and got aggressive, I gave him a guitar from his property to sit down with and calm down, I talked to him. By the time the escort came, he was ready to go." (Bathurst);

"A prisoner was knocked back on Parole, he was frustrated more than aggressive. I talked with him for 10-15 minutes" (Cessnock).

Officers at Parklea gave more examples of situations in which they 'stood firm'. For example:

"Prisoner going on escort and wasn't allowed a phone call. I told him to go and see the Boss. He called me a few names and cleared off".

It is encouraging to note that a very low percentage of officers (3%) reported what could be considered "inappropriate aggression".

In addition, officers were asked to report what they did in a recent situation where a prisoner appeared very worried or emotionally upset. These responses, also were categorized.

A high percentage of officers at all three gaols stated that they had not encountered this situation. However, of those officers who did give 'spent time, showed acceptance and

**Table 8: Reaction to recent situation where prisoner was angry and aggressive**

Reaction	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Total
	no.=27 %	no.=23 %	no.=23 %	no.=73 %
Has not encountered situation	22	30	30	27
Verbal/active (talk to calm down)	41	35	13	30
Passive withdrawal	11	22	4	12
Stand firm	15	13	35	21
Disciplinary action	7	9	13	10
Inappropriate aggression	3	0	4	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>103</b>

*NB: Total percentage for Cessnock is higher than 100% since two officers were coded in two categories.*

**Table 9: Reaction to recent situation where a prisoner was emotionally upset**

Reaction	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Total
	no.=27 %	no.=23 %	no.=23 %	no.=73 %
-Has not encountered situation	30	39	48	38
-Showed blame, criticism or open hostility	-	-	-	-
-Showed indifference, lack of concern	-	4	4	3
-Gave quick advice without listening enough	-	9	-	3
-Showed concern, but little understanding	11	22	22	18
-Spent time, showed acceptance and understanding. Gave acceptable help and advice	59	30	26	40
-Helped the prisoner work out what he/she was willing and able to do (Joint problem solving)	3	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>103</b>

*NB: Total percentages for Bathurst and Cessnock are higher than 100% since one officer in each gaol was coded in two categories.*

understanding, gave acceptable help and advice'. Some examples were:

"...inmate was upset about another inmate being mucked about with classification etc. We followed through classification and got it all straightened out." (Bathurst);

"...last night an inmate's child had had his thumb chopped off. He asked me for an extra 'phone call - I talked to him for 10 minutes and told him to go to an exec. about it." (Cessnock);

"...a little thing to us is a big thing to inmates - for example, vegetarian food didn't get delivered, inmate was getting

agitated, I rang up and assured inmate that everything was sorted out." (Parklea).

**Verbal interaction with inmates**

In order to examine day-to-day relations between officers and inmates, we asked officers to describe their verbal interaction with inmates. Responses are shown below in Table 10.

Since the second category, 'mixture of formal and informal', is relatively neutral, it is understandable that the majority of officers at all gaols would use this category to describe their interaction with inmates. We also asked officers how they addressed inmates, and how inmates addressed them. These responses are shown in Tables 11 and 12.

**Table 10: Verbal interaction**

Interaction	Bathurst		Cessnock		Parklea		Total	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
Mainly formal	3	(11)	3	(13)	5	(22)	11	(15)
Mixture of formal and informal	17	(63)	19	(83)	15	(65)	51	(70)
Other	7	(26)	1	(4)	3	(13)	11	(15)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>(100)</b>

**Table 11: How officers address inmates**

Form of address	Bathurst (n=27)		Cessnock (n=23)		Parklea (n=23)		Total (n=73)	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
First name	18	(67)	5	(22)	4	(17)	27	(37)
Surname	6	(22)	9	(39)	14	(61)	29	(40)
Mixture of first name and surname	3	(11)	7	(30)	1	(4)	11	(15)
Other	-		2	(8)	4	(17)	6	(8)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(99)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(99)</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>(100)</b>

**Table 12: How inmates address officers**

Form of Address	Bathurst (n=27)		Cessnock (n=23)		Parklea (n=23)		Total (n=73)	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
First name	13	(48)	-		3	(13)	16	(22)
Surname	1	(3)	2	(8)	1	(4)	4	(5)
Mr/Miss	10	(37)	9	(39)	13	(56)	32	(44)
Boss	13	(48)	17	(74)	17	(74)	47	(64)
Other	5	(18)	4	(17)	8	(35)	17	(23)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>(154)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(138)</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>(182)</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>(158)</b>

*NB: Many officers reported that inmates addressed them in several different ways.*

The majority of Bathurst officers (67%) stated that they called inmates by their first name, while the majority of Parklea and Cessnock (61% and 39% respectively) stated that they addressed inmates by their surname.

The majority of officers at all three gaols (64%) stated that inmates addressed them as 'Boss'. However, at Bathurst the proportion of officers who stated that inmates called them "Boss" equalled the proportion reporting they were called by their first name (48%). No officers at Cessnock and only three officers at Parklea stated that inmates addressed them by their first name.

was much lower than the proportion at either Cessnock or Parklea.

Some reasons given by Bathurst officers as to why internal gates and yards are not necessary for day-to-day prisoner control, included:

"The way this place is running is an example that they don't need gates.";

"The guys up here are given more responsibility, and if you put a gate up in front of them, that's just contradicting it";

#### IV: Officers' opinions on local gaol and Departmental policy

##### *Are internal gates and yards necessary?*

Officers were asked if they thought internal gates and yards were necessary for day-to-day prison control. It is important to remember that Bathurst and Cessnock have virtually no internal gates, while Parklea has very few in comparison to other maximum security gaols. Responses to this question are shown in Table 13.

The proportion of officers at Bathurst who felt that internal gates and yards were necessary,

**Table 13: Officers who stated that internal gates and yards are necessary for day-to-day prisoner control**

Gaol	Those who felt gates and yards necessary	
	no.	(%)
Bathurst	5	(18)
Cessnock	16	(69)
Parklea	15	(65)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>(49)</b>

"If a gaol can offer more to inmates, as in this gaol, yards would ruin it";

"As long as inmates are safely within the compound, internal yards make for confrontation."

Some officers from the maximum security Parklea Prison stated that internal gates and yards were not even required for maximum security.

For example:

"Not here at Parklea; it only causes hassles, but they would be useful here only if there was a riot.";

"This gaol (Parklea) proves it.";

"Relaxed atmosphere in compound here - you have not as many problems. Pressure doesn't build up as much.";

"It's a much more peaceful gaol without yards - you are not up and down all the time opening gates. In yards (you) get very bored."

#### **Sick Leave and stress days**

The concept of 'stress days' refers to an employee taking a day off when they are under stress in their job, even though they may not be physically ill. Although this policy has not been adopted by the Department of Corrective Services, following pilot work and discussions with officers we decided to ask prison officers at Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea if they would feel justified in taking a stress day and claiming it as sick leave.

The majority of all officers (71%) stated that they would feel justified in using sick leave for the purposes of having a stress day (see Table 14).

This may reflect the amount of stress prison officers are under, by demonstrating their willingness to alleviate that stress by taking a day off.

**Table 14: Officers who stated that they would feel justified in taking a stress day**

Gaol	No. who would take stress day (%)
Bathurst	20 (74)
Cessnock	14 (61)
Parklea	18 (78)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52 (71)</b>

Over the last few months, the introduction of a new sick leave policy appears to have caused great concern among prison officers. Officers were asked for their opinions on the new sick leave policy, and their responses were divided into four categories. Responses are shown below in Table 15.

The majority of officers (80%) at all gaols saw some reason for the policy, but felt it was unjustified. The main reasons for the policy as seen by these officers were:

- to cut down on the abuse of the sick leave (13 comments);
- to cut down on overtime (6 comments);
- to save some money for the Department (5 comments).

However, some examples of why officers felt the policy was unjustified were:

"Fair enough, some people overdo it, but I think with shiftwork you do tend to get sick from overtime, early starts, etc." (Bathurst);

**Table 15: Opinions on the sick leave policy**

Category	Bathurst n=27		Cessnock n=23		Parklea n=23		Total n=73	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
1. Officer sees no reason for the policy	3	(11)	3	(13)	3	(13)	9	(12)
2. Officer sees some reason but feels policy is unjustified	22	(81)	19	(83)	17	(74)	58	(80)
3. Officer thinks policy is justified	2	(7)	1	(4)	3	(13)	6	(8)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>(99)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>(100)</b>

"Fair enough, some people overdo it, but I think with shiftwork you do tend to get sick from overtime, early starts, etc." (Bathurst);

"You should be able to take sick leave you're entitled to." (Bathurst);

"It's an easy way for them to bludgeon everyone into not taking too many 'sickies'. They have made no effort to find out what the stresses and strains are." (Cessnock);

"It's not solving anything. The few good officers are getting fed up." (Cessnock);

"They say they recognize the job is stressful, but then want to take away 'sickies' because they don't think you need them." (Parklea);

"Now we've all been tarred with the same brush - that's not fair." (Parklea).

#### V: Support from fellow officers and executives

Officers were asked if they felt they had the support of their fellow officers and of their executive officers. This was to test results of previous studies which had shown that officers mostly felt they did not have the support of executive officers. Table 16 below, shows the proportion of officers who felt they had the support of their fellow officers and their executive officers.

The majority of officers at each gaol stated that they had support from their fellow officers and the majority from Bathurst and Cessnock stated that they had support from their executive officers. Overall, the proportion of all officers who stated they had support from executive officers was much lower than those who reported support from fellow officers (58% compared to 81%). It is

interesting that officers at Parklea were less likely to report that they had support from their executive officers.

Examples of those who felt they had support from their fellow officers include:

"If I make decisions, they back me up, they're usually very supportive." (Bathurst);

"They back up in situations where there's verbal disagreements with inmates, you always know they're around, they're always in sight." (Cessnock);

"If you've got a problem, you can always go and talk to someone and get a straight answer." (Parklea).

Examples of those who felt they had support from executive officers include:

"If you have new ideas, they'll give you a good hearing, won't just ignore you." (Bathurst);

"Providing you've done the right thing, they back your authority, e.g., if you give an inmate an order and he refuses, they will back you up." (Cessnock);

"They ask me my suggestions for solving a problem, and sometimes agree which gives me more of a say." (Parklea).

Examples of those who felt they did not get support from their executives officers include:

"Not consistent support - they are not interested in the overall running of things." (Bathurst);

Table 16: Officers who felt they had support of fellow officers and executives

Gaol	Those who had support of fellow officers (%)	Those who had support of executives (%)
Bathurst	22 (81)	18 (67)
Cessnock	17 (74)	17 (74)
Parklea	20 (87)	7 (30)
TOTAL	59 (81)	42 (58)

"We're told to take things away (from inmates) and then executive officers give them back (e.g., excess furniture in cells). Then inmates know they can get away with it." (Cessnock);

"You can never get an answer or rely on exec's acting in the same way twice. There's no similarities or consistency in the way they do their job." (Parklea).

## VI: Particular issues which officers feel are important in their job

Officers at the three gaols were given a list of potential problems in their work area. They were then asked which two problems they felt were the most important to them. The percentages of officers who stated each problem as one of the two most important, are listed below in Table 17.

Table 17: Problems which are most important to officers

Statement	Bathurst		Cessnock		Parklea		Total all gaols	
	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)	no.	(%)
1. Feeling that you are not being paid well enough	8	(30)	5	(22)	16	(70)	29	(40)
2. Feeling you don't get sufficient support from the Commission	5	(19)	7	(30)	6	(26)	18	(25)
3. Feeling that the current promotional system is not fair	6	(22)	6	(26)	5	(22)	17	(23)
4. Being kept in the dark, not knowing what is going on	6	(22)	3	(13)	5	(22)	14	(19)
5. Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you	2	(7)	3	(13)	3	(13)	8	(11)
6. Having prisoners challenge your authority	1	(4)	4	(17)	3	(13)	8	(11)
7. Having ideas considerably different from those of your executive officers	5	(19)	2	(9)	-		7	(10)
8. Having too little say in decisions affecting your job	2	(7)	1	(4)	3	(13)	6	(8)
9. Having executive officers who are not willing to listen to your problems	2	(7)	1	(4)	2	(9)	5	(7)
10. Having to put up with uncomfortable surroundings (e.g. too hot, cold, noisy, unpleasant appearance)	3	(11)	2	(9)	-		5	(7)
11. Discrimination due to your sex, age, sexual preference or ethnic background	1	(4)	2	(9)	2	(9)	5	(7)
12. Not having enough chance to get ahead	2	(7)	2	(9)	1	(4)	5	(7)
13. Feeling that you have to do things in your job which are against your better judgement	4	(15)	-		-		4	(6)
14. Having insufficient control over what happens on the job	1	(4)	3	(13)	-		4	(6)
15. Finding people generally having little respect for your job	2	(7)	2	(9)	-		4	(6)
16. Feeling that you are not fully trained to handle the job	3	(11)	-		-		3	(4)
17. Not having sufficient support from your colleagues in doing your job	-		1	(4)	-		1	(1)
18. Having to put up with being treated badly by superiors	1	(4)	-		-		1	(1)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>(200)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>(191)*</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>(200)</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>(198)</b>

\*NB: Total percentage is slightly lower, as one person at Cessnock did not complete this question.

It is interesting to note that the four problems which the highest percentage of officers at each gaol stated were most important to them, related to work conditions and communication and support from above. Problems relating directly to inmates or to fellow officers were not generally seen as the most important to officers at all three gaols.

#### *Suggestions for change*

Officers at all three gaols were asked to make suggestions for changes to their job. Bathurst officers made, in all, forty-nine suggestions, Cessnock officers made thirty-five, and Parklea officers made fifty-eight suggestions. The main

categories (suggestions made by more than one officer) are listed below.

Officers at all three gaols suggested changes to the promotional system within the Department. There were a variety of reasons given for why the system should change, including:

"...stop putting unqualified, inexperienced people in management positions" (Bathurst);

"...if you have a female officer applying for a position, then you should have at least one female prison officer

**Table 18: Suggestions for change**

Suggestion	No. of officers making suggestion			
	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Total
1. Improve promotional system	2	7	4	13
2. Better pay	1	3	9	13
3. Increase discipline				
More discipline for inmates	2	2	4	8
More discipline for officers and inmates	3	0	1	4
More discipline among officers	0	0	3	3
More discipline in gaols (generally)	0	0	2	2
4. Communication				
Better communication from 'top to bottom'	3	0	3	6
More staff meetings	1	0	0	1
5. Variety in work				
Use skills more/give more variety to do	1	0	5	6
Job rotation	2	1	2	5
6. Increase local authority				
More authority to officers	1	1	2	4
More local autonomy	2	1	0	3
Superintendent should have more authority	1	2	0	3
More control/authority for both officers and inmates	1	0	0	1
7. Improve training				
More training for officers	2	0	1	3
Better training for executive officers	0	0	3	3
More on-the-job training	0	0	2	2
Training, other	2	0	0	2
8. Change sick leave policy	0	0	4	4
9. Improve recruiting system	1	1	2	4
10. Change shiftwork	2	0	1	3
11. Have set of guidelines for operation of area	2	0	1	3
12. More support from Commission	0	2	1	3
13. Change prisoners' visiting hours	2	0	0	2
14. Have a smaller prison population	1	1	0	2

**Table 19: Comparison of frequency of problems experienced by officers from three institutions**

STATEMENT	% Not Often			% Often			Statistical Significance
	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	
<b>Lack of authority/control in the job</b>							
1. Feeling that you have to do things in the job which are against your better judgement	30	35	30	7	4	4	N.S.
2. Having insufficient control over what happens on the job	44	44	26	15	44	26	$X^2=9.66$ $p < .0466$
3. Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you	67	52	35	7	26	44	$X^2=9.14$ $p < .0578$
4. Having too little say in decisions affecting your job	33	22	9	22	39	48	N.S.
5. Feeling you are not fully trained to handle the job	82	74	91	4	0	0	N.S.
6. Being kept in the dark, not knowing what is going on	30	22	17	41	52	61	N.S.
<b>Relations with other officers/the Department</b>							
7. Having executive officers who are not willing to listen to your problems	48	48	22	19	13	30	N.S.
8. Having ideas considerably different from those of your executive officers	19	17	4	15	13	22	N.S.
9. Not having sufficient support from your colleagues in doing your job	67	48	74	11	13	4	N.S.
10. Feeling you don't get sufficient support from the Commission	15	13	17	48	48	61	N.S.
11. Having to put up with being treated badly by superiors	85	57	44	4	4	22	$X^2=13.06$ $p < .0110$
12. Discrimination due to your sex, age, sexual preference, or ethnic background	93	78	78	4	13	9	N.S.
<b>Relations with inmates</b>							
13. Having prisoners challenge your authority	63	22	39	7	44	44	$X^2=13.75$ $p < .0081$
<b>Career opportunities</b>							
14. Feeling that the current promotional system is not fair	41	13	13	33	74	48	$X^2=12.70$ $p < .0128$
15. Not having enough chance to get ahead	67	48	57	11	17	22	N.S.
<b>Work conditions</b>							
16. Feeling you are not being paid well enough	22	9	4	52	65	74	N.S.
17. Having to put up with uncomfortable surroundings (e.g., too hot, cold, noisy, unpleasant appearance)	52	57	30	22	26	17	N.S.
<b>Job prestige</b>							
18. Finding people generally having little respect for your job	15	11	10	33	44	44	N.S.
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	

*Notes:*

1. Not often = "Never" + "Seldom"
2. Often = "Usually" + "Always"
3. %s for "Sometimes" can be obtained subtracting the sum of % not often and % often from 100%
4. N.S. = the responses of officers from the different gaols are not statistically significantly different
5. All chi-square values quoted have 4 degrees of freedom

on the selection committee - not a female independent who doesn't know." (Cessnock);

"... selecting officers on performance at interviews is not a fair assessment of people." (Parklea).

With the exception of improving the promotional system, suggestions seemed to differ from gaol to gaol. Other main suggestions for change included more discipline for both officers and inmates, and better pay for prison officers. Officers at Bathurst and Parklea felt that both inmates and officers needed more discipline. Also, Parklea officers were concerned about the pay structure, while this was only mentioned by a small number of officers at Cessnock, and one Bathurst officer.

#### ***Problems experienced by officers at three N.S.W gaols***

Officers at Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea were given a list of problems they may experience during their work. They were then asked to state how often they found each problem to be of concern to them, using the categories 'never', 'seldom', 'sometimes', 'usually' and 'always'. Table 19, summarises the extent to which officers at each gaol found each item to be a problem for them by combining 'never' and 'seldom' responses into a 'not often' category and 'usually' and 'always' responses into an 'often' category.

On average, fewer Bathurst officers (20%) experienced these problems "often" than did Cessnock (30%) or Parklea officers (32%). For most statements, attitudes between Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea officers did not differ significantly. However, in five statements statistically significant differences were noted. With regard to 'Lack of authority/control in the job', Cessnock officers were more likely to say they had "insufficient control over what happened on the job", than did Bathurst or Parklea officers. Bathurst officers were more likely to state that "having too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them" was not a problem, than were officers at Parklea. In terms of 'Relations with other officers/the Department', Bathurst officers were less likely to say that they had "to put up with being treated badly by superiors", than either Cessnock or Parklea officers. With regard to 'Relations with inmates', Bathurst officers were less likely to state that "having prisoners challenge their authority" was a problem for them, than officers at either Cessnock or Parklea. Bathurst officers were also more likely, in the category of 'Career

Opportunities', to state that they did not feel the current promotional system is unfair than were officers from Cessnock.

Frequencies of problems were combined for all officers where there were no significant differences between the gaols. Problems which were reported as occurring "always" or "usually" by more than half of all officers interviewed included: "feeling you are not being paid well enough" (63%); "feeling you don't get sufficient support from Commission" (52%) and "being kept in the dark, not knowing what is going on" (51%).

Also, officers were given a list of statements and asked to state whether they "strongly agreed", "agreed", "neither agreed nor disagreed", "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with each statement. The percentages of officers at all three gaols who agreed or disagreed are listed below, in Table 20.

It is interesting to note that, in the statements which showed significant differences between the attitudes of officers at each gaol, Bathurst officers tended to have a more positive attitude to most statements than did officers at Cessnock or Parklea.

With regard to 'Prisoner Management/Officer - inmate relations', Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that "the relationship between officers and prisoners at (their) gaol was the same as at any other gaol", than were officers at Parklea. Bathurst officers were more likely to agree that "officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at their gaol more than at other gaols", and that "to manage prisoners effectively, it is important to discuss their ideas and feelings with them", than were officers at Parklea or Cessnock. Also, Cessnock officers were more likely than Parklea officers to agree that "getting to know prisoners helps officers to manage them with less trouble."

Bathurst officers were less likely than Cessnock or Parklea officers to agree that "prisoners must be kept under constant watch to prevent trouble". In addition, Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that "prisoner movement around the gaol needs to be tightly controlled", and that "prisoners should always do as they are told without asking questions".

With respect to 'Officer support from above/knowledge of expectations', Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that their "Superintendent didn't know what happened in the gaol", than were Cessnock and Parklea officers. Also, both Bathurst and Cessnock officers were more likely to agree that "when a problem arises between an officer and a prisoner, the Superintendent and other administrators normally support the officer".

Table 20: Comparison of attitudes between Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea officers

STATEMENT	% Agree			% Disagree			Statistical Significance
	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	
<b>Prisoner management/Officer-inmate relations</b>							
- Getting to know prisoners helps officers to manage prisoners with less trouble	89	100	74	4	0	22	X <sup>2</sup> =10.24 p< .0366
- The relationship between officers and prisoners in this gaol is the same as that in any other gaol	7	13	35	33	23	16	X <sup>2</sup> =9.52 p< .0494
- Rules for prisoners' behaviour should be <u>strictly</u> enforced	59	78	74	22	13	17	N.S.
- Prisoners will take advantage of an officer who does not keep his distance from them	48	74	65	33	13	26	N.S.
- Prisoners must be kept under constant watch to prevent trouble	33	74	74	37	17	17	X <sup>2</sup> =11.96 p< .0177
- Prisoner movement around the gaol needs to be tightly controlled	11	18	29	52	22	4	X <sup>2</sup> =21.49 p< .0003
- Officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at this gaol more than at other gaols	30	12	11	7	22	44	X <sup>2</sup> =17.55 p< .0015
- To manage prisoners effectively, it is important to discuss their ideas and feelings with them	29	12	11	0	10	14	X <sup>2</sup> =16.76 p< .0021
- Prisoners should always do as they are told without asking questions	15	52	48	63	44	39	X <sup>2</sup> =10.32 p< .0353
<b>Officer support from above/knowledge of expectations</b>							
- Prison officers don't know from one day to the next how the Department expects them to act	59	65	83	30	22	17	N.S.
- <u>Most</u> executive officers in this gaol are interested in their prison officer morale	30	30	4	48	52	83	N.S.
- The Superintendent doesn't know what happens in this gaol	4	12	7	29	14	15	X <sup>2</sup> =9.79 p< .0442
- In general, executive officers are more sympathetic to the problems of prisoners than to the problems of junior officers	14	19	18	4	8	6	N.S.
- When a problem arises between an officer and a prisoner, the Superintendent and other administrators usually support the officers	52	57	9	30	17	61	X <sup>2</sup> =15.49 p< .0038
<b>Employment of female officers</b>							
- We need more female custodial officers in this gaol	30	22	0	41	52	78	X <sup>2</sup> =9.92 p< .0418
- If a female officer applies for a promotion, she is sure to get it because female officers are in a minority in Custodial Services	0	35	44	63	52	39	X <sup>2</sup> =15.84 p< .0032
<b>Officer participation</b>							
- Prison officers are never asked for ideas about their job	26	52	65	52	26	26	X <sup>2</sup> =9.08 p< .0591

Table 20: Continued

STATEMENT	% Agree			% Disagree			Statistical Significance
	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	Bathurst	Cessnock	Parklea	
<i>Officer recognition/promotion</i>							
- Prison officers who do good work get recognition for this	26	30	4	48	44	78	N.S.
- Selection committees are too inclined to give promotions to younger prison officers with theoretical knowledge rather than to prison officers with more on-the-job experience	44	65	30	33	30	39	N.S.
<i>Officer role</i>							
- My role in this gaol is the same as at any other gaol - a prison officer is a prison officer no matter which gaol he is at	41	74	78	48	22	22	$\chi^2=10.05$ p< .0396
<i>Inmate responsibility</i>							
- Unit living allows prisoners to be more responsible for themselves	85	61	78	7	17	17	N.S.
- Prisoners should make specific decisions for themselves after they have been given broad guidelines by officers	74	65	39	7	22	35	N.S.
- Allowing prisoners more say in conducting their own affairs does not cause any more problems than giving them no say	52	39	35	26	26	35	N.S.
<i>Notes:</i>							
1. Agree = "Agree" + "Strongly agree"							
2. Disagree = "Disagree" + "Strongly disagree"							
3. %s for "Neither agree nor disagree" can be obtained by subtracting the sum of % agree + % disagree from 100%							
4. N.S.= the responses of officers from the different gaols are not statistically significantly different							
5. All $\chi^2$ values quoted have 4 degrees of freedom							

Concerning 'Employment of female officers', Bathurst and Cessnock officers were more likely to agree that they "need more female officers at their gaols", than were Parklea officers. Also, Bathurst officers were more likely than Cessnock and Parklea officers to disagree that "if a female officer applies for a promotion, she is sure to get it because female officers are a minority in Custodial Services".

In the category of 'Officer Participation', Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that "prison officers are never asked for ideas about their job". With regard to 'Officer Role', Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that their "role at the gaol was the same as at any other gaol", than were Cessnock and Parklea officers.

For the statements which showed no significant difference in attitudes between the three gaols, more than half of officers interviewed agreed on these statements:

- "Unit living allows prisoners to be more responsible for themselves." (75%);
- "Rules for prisoners' behaviour should be strictly enforced." (70%);
- "Prison officers don't know from one day to the next how the Department expects them to act." (69%);
- "Prisoners will take advantage of an officer who does not keep his distance from them." (62%);
- "Prisoners should make specific decisions for themselves after they have been given broad guidelines by officers." (60%).

Officers at Bathurst, Cessnock and Parklea tended to disagree that:

- "Most executive officers are interested in their prison officer morale." (60%);
- "Prison officers who do good work get recognition for this." (56%).

## VII: Special problems of unit officers

One of the reasons for conducting this study was to determine whether the boredom, which had been expressed by some unit officers in a study of Unit Management at Bathurst Gaol in 1986, was unique to Bathurst or occurs at other gaols, especially Parklea where unit accommodation is also available. Of the prison officers interviewed for this study, four Parklea officers and seven Bathurst officers worked in the accommodation units and four Cessnock officers worked in the accommodation wings.

When describing aspects of their job which officers felt assisted them or made their job more difficult, one unit officer from each of Bathurst and Parklea mentioned boredom:

"Boredom - no way you can beat that in this job. I feel that that's more my fault than the job's fault" (Bathurst);

"Its a boring job now, not worthwhile" (Parklea).

The other unit officers from both Bathurst and Parklea appeared to express a high degree of job satisfaction. For example:

"The whole lot of it (is worthwhile). Wouldn't be here otherwise. Main part is supervision and training of inmates - try and change their ideas" (Bathurst);

"Opportunity to work closely with inmates and build up a rapport, liaison with professional group, Education and Welfare" (Bathurst);

"When you see inmates improving in the unit. Some, when they come in, are a dead loss and after a while you see they are going to get somewhere" (Bathurst);

"Satisfaction from Drug Unit - not just putting people in cages" (Parklea);

"Dealing with inmates" (Parklea);

"Day to day interaction with prisoners and officers, can look at family structure sometimes" (Parklea).

Wing officers at Cessnock were not as positive, for example:

"I don't think any of its worthwhile at the moment, only maintaining security" (Cessnock);

"Not a job with a lot of satisfaction. Some satisfaction in getting paper work done" (Cessnock);

"All of it (worthwhile), or it used to be. Got to have someone to keep crims here. All interest going out in the way the Department treats officers" (Cessnock).

When asked whether they thought they got a say in the way things are run two of the four Parklea unit officers, five out of seven Bathurst unit officers and all four of the Cessnock wing officers said that they thought they did.

All four of the Cessnock wing officers and six out of the seven Bathurst unit officers interviewed stated that they were consistently rostered in the same work area. In contrast, all four Parklea unit officers reported moving around all the time. Those who were working consistently in the same area were asked whether they would like to work in other parts of the gaol. Two of the four Cessnock wing officers and four of the six Bathurst unit officers who were consistently rostered to the one area, stated that they would like to work in other parts of the gaol. One of the Cessnock wing officers stated a preference for Search and Escort, the other stated a preference for Activities. Two of the Bathurst unit officers stated a preference for Reception work, one for wing work and the other suggested all areas for variation. Each of these officers said that six months working in the one area was a good period.

All seven of the Bathurst unit officers said that they usually called inmates by their first name and/or nickname. Three of the four Parklea unit officers said they called inmates by their surname, the other said he used a mixture of first name and surname; while two of the Cessnock wing officers used the prisoner's surname, one a mixture of first name and surname and the other wing officer used the prisoner's first name. When asked how inmates usually addressed them, four of the Bathurst unit officers said that inmates usually called them by their first name, two said they were usually called "Mr" and one said he was usually called "Boss". Of the four Parklea unit officers, two said they were called by their first name, one said he was called "Mr" and the fourth said he was called "Sir" or "Boss". None of the Cessnock wing officers said that they were called by their first name. Three said they were called

"Boss" or "Mr"/"Miss" and the other said he was only called "Mr".

Bathurst unit officers were more likely than Parklea unit or Cessnock wing officers to disagree with the statements:

"Prisoners will take advantage of an officer who does not keep his distance from him" (Bathurst four officers disagreed; Cessnock one officer, Parklea no officers disagreed; and

"Prison officers are never asked for ideas about their job" (Bathurst five officers disagreed; Cessnock one officer; Parklea no officers disagreed).

On the other hand, Bathurst unit officers were more likely than Parklea unit or Cessnock wing officers to agree with the statement:

"Prison officers who do good work get recognition for this" (Bathurst three officers agreed, Cessnock one officer, Parklea no officers agreed).

Both Bathurst and Parklea unit officers were more likely than Cessnock wing officers to agree with the statement:

"Officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at this gaol more than at other gaols" (Bathurst five officers agreed, Cessnock no officers agreed, Parklea three officers agreed).

When asked what aspects of their job they would change if they could, none mentioned specific aspects of unit or wing work. Suggestions were more general, for example: changes to promotional system; changes to recruitment system; reduce number of executives; improve communication with executive officers (Parklea); stop discrimination against women; better pay; change priorities - not sure how; and no changes necessary (Cessnock); improved communication; provide more incentives (wages, promotions); more input into workplace policies; improve treatment by Head Office; do away with overtime; and more flexibility in shift changes (Bathurst).

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Evaluation of Bathurst Gaol Management Plan

The major purpose of this study was to provide an external comparison against which to measure the effect of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan on the prison officer work role. In the Introduction, the five aspects of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan most relevant to prison officer work role (i.e., unit accommodation and management; team management; staff training and selection; physical structure of the gaol and job rotation) were described. Each of these areas will be discussed below. As was pointed out in the Introduction, however, since no gaol in NSW is directly comparable to Bathurst Gaol, while it is possible to examine the differences, it is not possible to determine whether differences found between officers at Bathurst and officers at Cessnock or Parklea are directly attributable to the Bathurst Management Plan or to other factors.

#### *(a) Unit accommodation and management:*

It was anticipated that unit management at Bathurst would have affected the relationship between prison officers and inmates. The responses of the prison officers reported in this study indicate that Bathurst officers do clearly differ from officers at the other two institutions in the way they manage and relate to prisoners. For example, Bathurst officers were more likely to agree that "officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at their gaol more than at other gaols" and that "to manage prisoners effectively, it is important to discuss their ideas and feelings with them" than were officers at Parklea or Cessnock. Bathurst officers were less likely to report having prisoners challenge their authority and less likely to agree that "prisoners must be kept under constant watch to prevent trouble" and that "prisoners should always do as they are told without asking questions". Bathurst officers were also more likely to report relating differently with inmates at their current gaol than were officers from Cessnock or Parklea. When describing the difference in the way they related, officers described Bathurst as being more relaxed and having more openness and communication. Bathurst officers were more likely to address inmates by their first name and to be addressed by inmates by their first name.

While the unit accommodation at Parklea did not appear to produce similar effects on the relationship between officers and prisoners,

officers at both Bathurst and Parklea stated that interaction with inmates made their jobs worthwhile. Boredom with unit work was not as pronounced in this study as in the earlier (1986) study of unit management at Bathurst Gaol. Unit officers from both Bathurst and Parklea appeared to express a high degree of job satisfaction compared to Cessnock wing officers. Bathurst officers tended to experience more consistent rostering than officers at the other two gaols. Perhaps it is this more consistent rostering which also contributes to the different way of relating to and managing prisoners.

Officers from all three gaols appeared to be in favour of unit accommodation with the majority of officers agreeing that "unit living allows prisoners to be more responsible for themselves."

#### *(b) Team management*

Team management at Bathurst Gaol aimed to enable officers at all ranks to participate in decision-making related to their area of involvement, however, the teams at Bathurst have not been having regular meetings. While Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree with the statements: "(my) role in this gaol is the same as at any other gaol - a prison officer is a prison officer no matter which gaol he is at" and "prison officers are never asked for ideas about their job" than were Cessnock and Parklea officers, there was no difference between the proportion of officers from each gaol who felt they had a say in how things are run in their work area. While it was encouraging that approximately half of all the officers interviewed felt they had a say, it is discouraging that the proportion was not higher still for the Bathurst officers.

#### *(c) Staff training and selection*

The aim of staff training at Bathurst Gaol was to provide an orientation to and assist in the implementation of the Management Plan. While the success of staff training in assisting to implement the Management Plan can be gauged by differences in other areas of the operation of the Management Plan (e.g., differences between Bathurst officers and officers in other gaols in prisoner management), it is encouraging to note that "feeling you are not fully trained to handle the job" was not a frequent problem for the majority of officers interviewed at any of the three gaols.

In addition, mixed staffing was to be a feature of the new Bathurst Gaol Management Plan. When asked about female officers, Bathurst and Cessnock officers were more likely to agree that they needed "more female custodial officers in this gaol" than were Parklea officers and Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that "if a

female officer applies for a promotion, she is sure to get it because female officers are a minority in Custodial Services" than were Cessnock and Parklea officers.

*(d) Physical structure of the gaol*

The proportion of officers at Bathurst who felt that internal gates and yards were necessary was much lower than the proportion of Cessnock and Parklea officers. Some officers from the maximum security Parklea Prison, however, stated that internal gates and yards were not even required for maximum security.

*(e) Job rotation*

Job rotation was to be introduced at Bathurst to enable officers to gain experience in different areas of the gaol for a set period. Slightly less than half of the officers consistently rostered in the same work area would like the opportunity to work in another area of the gaol. When asked in which area they would like to work, officers' responses covered almost all work areas in each gaol. Six months in each new area was the most popular time span mentioned by officers who would like an opportunity to work in another area.

## **2. Problems shared by officers at the three gaols**

Another reason for conducting this study was to attempt to provide the Department with information which could be used to develop greater job satisfaction for prison officers in general by outlining specific problems common to the majority of officers and highlighting successful policies in each gaol. Successful policies related to the Bathurst Management Plan are outlined above. Few other successful policies were identified.

Problems which were reported as occurring "always" or "usually" by more than half of all officers interviewed included: "prison officers don't know from one day to the next how the Department expects them to act" (69%); "feeling you are not being paid well enough" (63%); "feeling you don't get sufficient support from Commission" (52%); and "being kept in the dark, not knowing what is going on" (51%). Communication with executive officers was another commonly mentioned problem. Officers

at all three gaols tended to disagree that "most executive officers are interested in their prison officer morale" (60%) and that "prison officers who do good work get recognition for this" (56%).

## **3. Communication between prison officers and executive officers**

A third aim of this study was to examine the communication difficulties prison officers report having with executive officers. Since the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan was designed to help close this gap, it was of interest to determine whether relations between junior officers and executives were different at Bathurst than at other gaols.

While problems with executive officers appear to be a main concern for officers at all three gaols, the proportion of officers who responded this way was higher at Parklea than at Cessnock which was in turn higher than at Bathurst. Unlike Parklea officers, the majority of Cessnock and Bathurst officers stated that they had support from their executives. "Having executive officers who are not willing to listen to your problems" and "having to put up with being treated badly by superiors" was more frequently a problem for Parklea officers than either Bathurst or Cessnock officers.

Bathurst officers were more likely to disagree that their "Superintendent did not know what happened in their gaol" than were Cessnock and Parklea officers. Also, both Bathurst and Cessnock officers were more likely to agree that "when a problem arises between an officer and a prisoner, the Superintendent and other administrators usually support the officer".

Hence while the communication between prison officers and executive officers at Bathurst appears to be better in some aspects than at Parklea, this is not necessarily a result of the Bathurst Management Plan since communication between prison officers and executives at Cessnock was also better than that at Parklea. Despite the differences between gaols, the fact that problems with executive officers was reported to be a major problem at all three gaols, indicates that improvement is still needed in this area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The views of these officers about their jobs be disseminated widely throughout the Department by circulating copies of this report to all Divisional heads and all superintendents.
2. Unit accommodation be included in the construction of any new institution and in the remodelling of existing institutions.
3. Where unit accommodation exists, custodial staff be consistently rostered to a unit for at least six months before any rotation to allow the officers to become more familiar with the unit inmates and the unit inmates to become more familiar with the officers.
4. Team management be persisted with at Bathurst Gaol and team management at Bathurst be re-evaluated after team meetings have been consistently held for six months.
5. Consideration be given to minimising use of internal gates within institutions, being aware that such physical changes would need to be supported by changes in prisoner management.
6. Job rotation programmes be introduced to gaols throughout the state so that interested officers could increase their experience in the different areas of the gaol, with the following limitations:
  - a) the rotations would need to be staggered in such a way that the majority of officers in any work area were experienced in that area;
  - b) rostering to specific areas be consistent for a period of at least six months in order to enable maximum development and utilisation of skills.
7. Communication be improved:
  - a) between executive officers and prison officers by drawing the perceived communication difficulties to the attention of the executive officers. The findings of this study could be used as a basis of discussion of the communication difficulties, as perceived by the prison officers at a Superintendents and/or Deputies conference. Suggestions could be sought for ways in which to minimise perceived inconsistencies, etc.
  - b) between head office and prison officers by drawing the perceived communication difficulties to the attention of senior officers and the Commission, through this report.

## REFERENCE

Crouch M., Gorta A, Mahony K., McLennan K., Porritt D. and Simmons D. Implementation of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan: Research Findings, January 1983 - January 1986. NSW Department of Corrective Services, Research Publication No. 12, 1987.