

Prisoners Review Board of Western Australia



**PRISONERS
REVIEW
BOARD**

Annual Report

For the year ended 30 June 2008





PRISONERS REVIEW BOARD

Foreword

Christian Porter MLA

In accordance with section 112 of the *Sentence Administration Act 2003*, I present to you the Annual Report of the Prisoners Review Board of Western Australia for the year ended 30 June 2008.

Judge Valerie French
Chairman
Prisoners Review Board

Cover Page

The header is the same as the Board's website and depicts the Board's role in the sentencing process. It starts with the Chairman of the Board the Hon Judge Valerie French followed by the gatehouse of Casuarina Prison; representative of persons incarcerated, with the Board sitting as is required and the community into which prisoners are released. This is surrounded at each end by the floral emblem of the State of Western Australia and to the right the outline of the State.



PRISONERS REVIEW BOARD

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All of the above requirements are bounded by the statement "during the previous financial year".

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Profile

Our Objective

Our objective is to meet our statutory obligation under the Sentence Administration Act 2003 having the safety of the community as our paramount consideration at all times.

Who we are

On 28 January 2007 the Sentence Administration Act 2003 was proclaimed and the Prisoners Review Board began operation.

What we do

The Prisoners Review Board has the authority to grant, defer or refuse parole, taking into account factors affecting the offender, victims of crime and, most importantly, the safety of the community.

The Board also considers re-entry release orders, makes recommendations about re-socialisation programs and reports to the Minister in relation to the release of specified categories of prisoners.



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Chairman and Board Members

Chairman

Judge Valerie French - is a graduate of the University of Western Australia and has practised law as a solicitor and barrister since 1973. A Judge of the District Court since 1994 and President of the Children's Court from 1999 to 2001, Judge French was formerly a Stipendiary Magistrate and Children's Court Magistrate. Whilst appointed as the Chairperson of the Prisoners Review Board, Judge French retains her appointment as a District Court Judge.

Deputy Chairpersons

Denzil McCotter - retired in 2003 after 25 years in the public service with notable appointments as the Director of Prisons, Director of Community Corrections and the Executive Director of Corrective Services. She is currently a member of the Board of RUAH, Chairperson of the Child Death Review Committee, member of the Public Housing Review Panel and is an Adjunct Research Fellow of Curtin University of Technology.

Guyatt Hall - is the Associate Dean (Research) School of Law, Murdoch University, with many years experience as a clinical and forensic psychologist. He is involved in research on high risk violent offending, and has published papers in this area.

Sandra De Maio - is a legal practitioner experienced in family law and, more recently, as a prosecutor with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, in criminal law. Sandra has a real understanding of the difficulties and cultural barriers that face non-English speaking migrants. Sandra resigned from the Board effective from 30 May 2008

Community Members

Georgia Prideaux - was a member of the former Parole Board. She is an advocate for victim's issues and holds the position of Director, Harm Effected Rescue Organisation (HERO). She is studying psychology and justice as part of a degree. She is also a representative on the Supervised Release Review Board (SRRB) for juveniles.

Barbara Hostalek - is an Indigenous person and practising veterinary surgeon operating her own business. She brings to the Board knowledge, experience and insight in culturally sensitive issues.

Edward Casley - is an Indigenous person of Yamatji descent. He has experience working in the criminal justice system and knowledge of programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Men Without Hats and sex offender counselling. He brings to the Board a broad experience in the area of cultural diversity.



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Stuart Flynn - has extensive qualifications, training, knowledge and experience in the fields of health and community care services. He was the first Western Australian to be awarded the Menzies Scholarship by the Australian-Britain Society which enabled him to travel to the United Kingdom to study services to victims of crime.

Merrilee Garnett - is a legal practitioner who has experience working with Aboriginal people while working as a native title lawyer throughout Western Australia. She has an awareness of Aboriginal cultural issues and a broad understanding of issues such as unemployment, substance abuse, mental illness and housing.

John James - is a psychologist who was appointed to the Mental Health Review Board in January 2006. He is also a senior sessional member of the State Administrative Tribunal providing him with experience in the objective determination process.

Gretchen Lee - is a counsellor and mediator and in her final year of a Bachelor of Psychology at Edith Cowan University. She has extensive knowledge of issues relating to victims of crime, domestic violence and gambling addiction and their effects in the community.

Janine Phillips - is a horticulturalist. As an employer, she has managed a culturally diverse workforce which has given her an understanding of Indigenous and overseas cultures, religions and customs.

Department of Corrective Services and Police Representatives

Additional to the members mentioned above, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Corrective Services; being the Public Sector agency administering *Part 8 of the Sentence Administration Act 2003* will appoint as many officers as are necessary to deal with the workload of the Board.

Appointments from this agency are representative of the Adult Custodial and Community Justice divisions.

The Commissioner of Police is also required to appoint as many police officers as are necessary to deal with the workload of the Board.

It is acknowledged that these officers bring to the Board extensive knowledge and experience in law enforcement and an understanding of criminal behaviour.

The Sentence Administration Act 2003 charged the Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons with the responsibility of directing and developing the training, education and professional development of the Board members. A schedule was developed and continues to be followed in this regard.



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All except one community member were replaced and this appears to have impacted on the release considerations. This impact will be more readily assessed at the next review in 5 years.

During the year the composition of the Board changed with the resignation of Deputy Chairperson Sandra De Maio and Community Member Rosa Lincoln. Guyatt Hall also resigned as a Community Member to take up his appointment as a Deputy Chairperson.

Message From The Chairman



The Prisoners Review Board (the Board) makes decisions affecting the release of prisoners who have been made eligible for parole by the courts or, in the case of short sentences, by operation of Statute. Decisions are informed by the release considerations in the *Sentence Administration Act* that focus on the assessment of the risk of re-offending and the risk to the safety of the community. In the past year the Board has worked on developing strategies to assist in that difficult task. One of the strategies identified was to conduct interviews with some prisoners before decisions were made in relation to any release on parole.

When an independent parole board was established in Western Australia in 1964, most reviews of cases were conducted by the Board inside metropolitan prisons. The Board members could personally interview prisoners prior to reaching a decision. This was a wide-spread practice in comparable jurisdictions and still continues in some Australian states and New Zealand.

Unfortunately because of an increase in numbers of prisoners over the years, and the distances required to be travelled, these personal interviews became impracticable and all cases were reviewed 'on the papers'. Personal interviews were restricted to rare interviews with prisoners who made a special request and who had applied to the Board for a reconsideration of a decision to deny or defer parole.

Soon after the Prisoners Review Board was established in January 2007, a practice of regular prison visits to metropolitan and regional prisons to interview prisoners was introduced. However, it soon became apparent that frequent visits to interview prisoners were impracticable because of the time and distance involved. A process of conducting video link interviews was substituted in most cases.

There are significant benefits in interviewing prisoners personally, either through prison visits or by video link. Interviews provide an opportunity to hear what the prisoners have to say about their plans for parole, and what benefits they may have gained from any rehabilitation programs that they have participated in whilst in



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prison. Board members can ask questions in relation to offending patterns and explore any issues that arise from the reports and other information provided to the Board. The Board can speak to prisoners about what is required of them while on parole and the importance of strict adherence to parole conditions.

From the feedback that the Board has received from prisoners and Department of Corrective Services staff, many prisoners welcome the opportunity of personally engaging with the Board and the opportunity to explain or elaborate on their offending history or personal circumstances. A system that allows prisoners an opportunity to 'put their case' before important decisions are made affecting their liberty is more likely to be respected, not only by the prisoners but by the community generally. If a parole system is regarded by prisoners as unfair or unreasonable it will not be successful.

If the Board had unlimited time and resources there is much merit in a system that allowed for a personal interview with every prisoner whose case was to be reviewed by the Board. As this is not possible at this stage the Board has attempted to explore extending the use of personal interviews for particular categories of prisoners. In March 2008 the Board initiated a six month trial of conducting interviews with every prisoner at Casuarina Prison whose case was coming up for review by the Board. Although this trial is still in the process of being evaluated, it has become apparent that most benefit would be obtained by focussing the personal interviews on particular classes of offending. At the conclusion of the trial the Board proposes to conduct personal interviews for all prisoners who are serving significant terms of imprisonment for serious violent and/or sexual offences and for prisoners whose particular circumstances appear to constitute a risk to the safety of the community. In addition the Board will continue to endeavour to conduct personal interviews at the request of prisoners and where the circumstances appear to warrant such a process.

The Board has maintained the practice of regular visits to all prisons in Western Australia. In the past year the Members of the Board have visited all metropolitan and regional prisons. When conducting visits to regional prisons the Board have taken the opportunity to visit Community Justice Offices, prison work camps and local communities that provide accommodation or have other interaction with prisoners on parole. The Board has also taken advantage of these regional visits to speak with agencies and local employers who have an interest in fostering employment initiatives for prisoners. The current economic and mining boom in Western Australia has meant that there are unprecedented opportunities for prisoners to obtain employment on release. The Board actively encourages all employment programs and has adopted a practice of imposing employment conditions as a parole requirement for many prisoners. Prisoners who are able to engage in employment are required to do so or to satisfy their parole office that they are actively seeking employment. If they are unable to comply with this condition they may be required to complete community work as an alternative. There is a considerable body of evidence that supports the intuitive belief that a job, as well as a place to live, and some community support is the best way of achieving successful completion of parole and reducing the risk of reoffending. In this way the safety and security of the community can be enhanced.



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Unfortunately some prisoners are unable to obtain work because of a lack of basic education and vocational training. Some prisoners are also significantly hampered by chronic substance abuse and mental health problems. Despite the fact that efforts have been made by the Department of Corrective Services to improve the availability of rehabilitation and vocational programs, there is still a critical shortage both within the prison and the community.

Suitable accommodation is also a critical factor in successful parole completion. The good economic conditions have created a favourable job market but they have also contributed to difficulties in obtaining accommodation particularly in regional areas of Western Australia. While this continues to cause difficulties for the general community it is a particular problem for prisoners who have been in prison for lengthy periods of time and who have little family or community support. There are a number of non-government agencies who are committed to assisting prisoners with accommodation and other supports, but they have very limited resources and there are long waiting lists to access accommodation and assistance programs.

In the 2007 Annual Report I commented that there are a number of prisoners who find it difficult to return to mainstream community life because of mental health problems or chronic drug dependence. Those prisoners require accommodation that provides more than just a roof over their heads. Some level of ongoing support and supervision is essential. Suitable facilities are either non-existent or in extremely short supply. While it is not the role of the Board to advocate for prisoners, it is obliged to advise that these significant shortcomings are one of the factors that contribute to a high, and in some cases unnecessary, imprisonment rate. The financial costs and in some cases the risks to the safety of the community, when prisoners are released at the end of a sentence, should not be underestimated.

Throughout the year the Board has continued to maintain a policy of transparency and accountability through the Board's website, media outlets and public speaking engagements. The website regularly publishes details of the Board's decisions and information in relation to the Board's processes and initiatives. As Chairman, I have always tried to respond to enquiries from the community through media outlets. The Board has been proactive in seeking opportunities through the print media and public affairs programs to explain to the community how the Board functions, how it approaches its decision-making and to provide general information in relation to the parole process in the criminal justice system.

When a prisoner is released on parole they are still under sentence. Parole can be suspended or cancelled and the prisoner returned to prison if parole conditions are not complied with or if the prisoner re-offends. While the Board has always exercised the Statutory functions of suspending and cancelling parole it has recently adopted a more 'hands on' or interventionist approach for some prisoners. In cases where the Board considers a prisoner may benefit from close scrutiny, it will order regular 'progress reviews' on a prisoner's performance on parole. In some cases this may simply involve checking the computer data to ensure the prisoner is reporting as directed. In other cases, when the Board is concerned that there may be some problems, it will require the prisoner to appear before it by video link from a Community



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Justice Services office. The Board can then speak to the prisoner about any problems that may have arisen and generally enquire about the prisoners progress. These prisoners are aware that they are being watched carefully and any signs of non-compliance can result in an immediate return to prison. Although the Board is aware that high risk prisoners are closely supervised by Community Corrections Officers it considers that this additional oversight by the Board is effective.

I would like to take the opportunity of thanking the Deputy Chairpersons and Members of the Board and the staff of the supportive Secretariat for their commitment to the work of the Board throughout the year.

Judge V French
CHAIRMAN

Executive Manager's Report

This has been the first full year of operations for the Prisoners Review Board and the supporting Secretariat. It has been an exciting year in which the Secretariat has continued to improve the processes implemented following changes to the establishing legislation.

The media have been actively encouraged to investigate and report on the work of the Boards rather than just on the cases that excite public attention. In June Channel 7 Perth, broadcast a news program over 2 nights of the Board conducting a scheduled agenda of hearings.

There has been an increase in the number of decisions released to the Board website and there has been an upgrade in the website itself with subscriptions being made available for news articles as well as decisions.

There has been an improvement of access to the Board with 71 visitors from other agencies observing the Board in action and with the Chairman attending 7 functions as an invited guest. I, the Registrar and other Board members have addressed groups of interested parties.

During the year, the Board has made 6 regional visits, convening meetings at each regional prison. The circuits have also had the added benefit of encouraging local business to participate in the rehabilitation of offenders. The local print media have been encouraged to attend and have generally provided their communities with information on the Board's operational processes.

The work of the secretariat is complex and has been made more difficult with the restrictions placed on other agencies in relation to service provision. Alternative solutions have been co managed with the affected agencies and the use of available electronic data bases.



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The changes and subsequent training of external stakeholders has further increased the workload of the secretariat, however it will ultimately reduce the need for the Board to call for reports. The work completed by the Registrar in developing and implementing training has drawn praise from the agencies and is highly commended.

The branch suffers from the same issues as all Government agencies in times of high state productivity in that it is difficult to retain staff. We will continue to implement staff development strategies to support staff and foster leadership qualities in those employed.

We are strengthening our cross agency and community partnerships and this is being supported by the development and implementation of electronic information systems that will interface with other service providers whilst maintaining a high level of confidentiality of information. The move towards the use of electronic systems and use of video links has had cost savings whilst enhancing the decision making capability of the Boards.

A research program is being developed with a view to providing support and direction for the Boards decision making processes.

The Board has participated in providing data for an international study and the members of the Board and the staff of the Secretariat continue to be actively involved in seeking out information that will enhance the outcomes for the clients and the community.

Dianne Bateman
EXECUTIVE MANAGER



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The Year at a Glance

The performance of the Board's functions.	2007	2008
The number of prisoners who became eligible to be released under a parole order.	2483	2732
The number of prisoners who applied to be released under a re-entry release order.	251	172
The number of prisoners who were refused an early release order by the Board or the Governor. <i>This figure incorporates 'Deny Parole', 'Deny Re-Entry Release Order' and 'Deny release on Short-Term Parole.'</i>	682	493
The number of prisoners released under an early release order by the Board or the Governor.	1937	2323
The number of prisoners who completed an early release order.	492	708
The number of release orders suspended or cancelled and the reasons for suspension or cancellation. <i>There is an increase in the number of suspensions or cancellations. This figure also includes a variable in the data base from which the figures were extracted after it was discovered last years figures included suspensions which were generated by Community Justice Services.</i>	455	530
<p>In most cases suspensions or cancellations occur as a result of breaches of parole conditions or re-offending. Where it is a consequence of breach of conditions, they usually involve one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fail to attend for urinalysis testing;Fail to report for supervision;Fail to attend for counselling;Continued use of illicit substances;Fail to comply with conditions; andFail to attend programs.		
The number of prisoners for whom participation in a Re-socialisation program was approved by the Board or the Governor.		16



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The number of prisoners who completed
Re-socialisation programs

8

The operation of this Act and relevant parts of the
Sentencing Act 1995 so far as they relate to early release orders
and to the activities of CCOs in relation to those orders during
the previous financial year:

This requirement appears to be directed to an evaluation on a statistical basis of the
operation of early release orders. At this stage the Board does not have access to
sufficient statistical data to be able to provide that evaluation.

The Board is currently in the process of developing its own data base to address this
situation and it is scheduled to be on line during the 2008/2009 year.

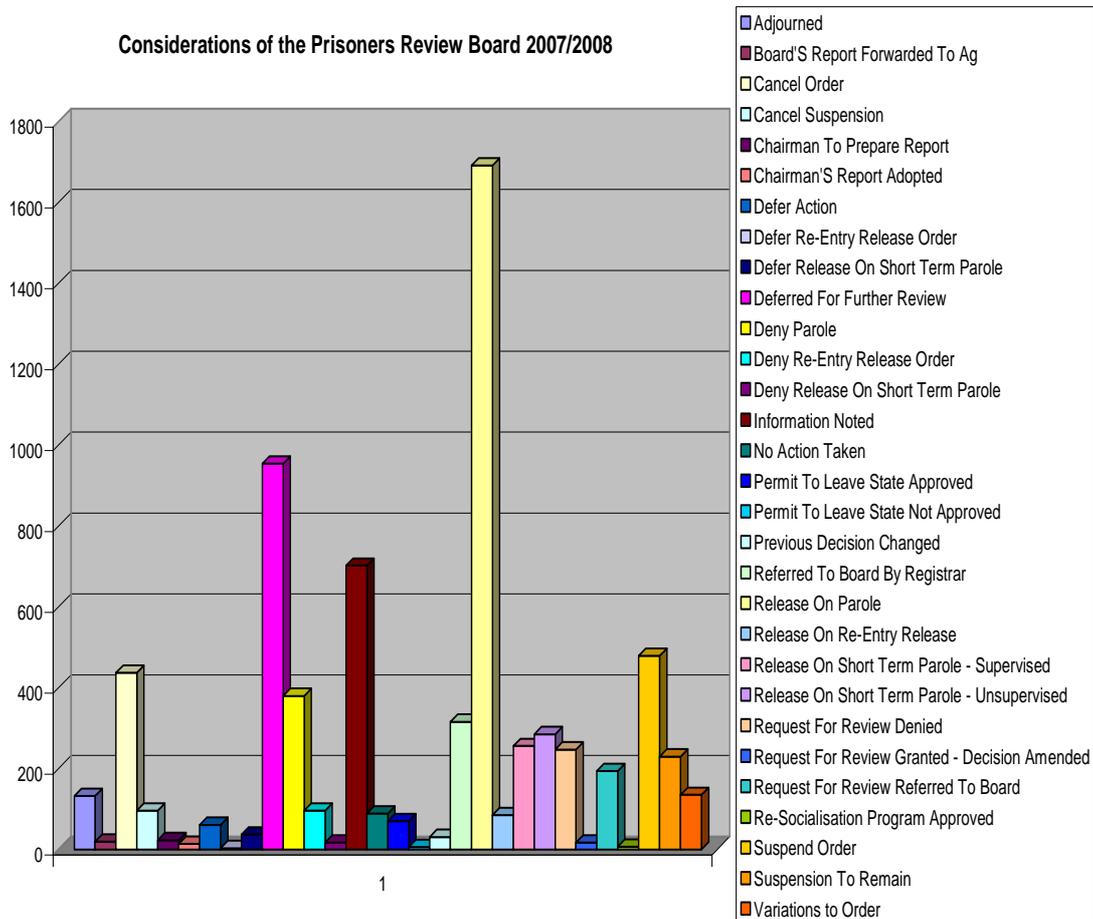
TOTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS PRISONER REVIEW BOARD 2007-2008

Adjourned	132
Cancel Order	437
Cancel Suspension	96
Suspend Order	479
Suspension To Remain	230
Request For Review Denied	247
Request For Review Deferred To Board	194
Request For Review Granted – Decision Amended	17
Deferred For Further Review	954
Release On Re-Entry Release	85
Defer Re-Entry Release Order	3
Deny Re-Entry Release Order	96
Information Received And Noted	702
Chairman To Prepare Report	23
Chairman's Report Adopted	14
Boards Report Forwarded To Ag	19
Referred To Board By Registrar	316
Defer Action	61
Deny Parole	380
Release On Parole	1691
No Action Taken	89
Pre Release Programme Approved	7
Permit To Leave State Approved	70
Permit To Leave State Not Approved	6
Previous Decision Changed	31
Release On Short Term Parole – Supervised	256
Release On Short Term Parole - Unsupervised	285
Defer Release On Short Term Parole	37
Deny Release On Short Term Parole	17
Variation to order	135
TOTAL CONSIDERATIONS	7109



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Considerations of the Prisoners Review Board 2007/2008



The information data bases from which these performance indicators are derived, do not belong to the Board and are subject to change as parameters are impacted on by data entry variables which are outside the control of the State Review Board Secretariat.

Deloitte, Touche, Tomatsu , were engaged by the Board to undertake a process review of the State Review Boards Secretariat and the impact on the Prisoners Review Board's operations.

The work flow analysis identified some areas, specific to work practices, which were able to be re-engineered and refined, resulting in some streamlining and the development of time saving processes. It became apparent, that utilising another agency's software systems was not efficient as reports and research, that inform the Board decision making process, were not readily available and were subject to variations.

A purpose built data system for use by the Board is currently being developed under the guidance of the Courts technology group. This will interface with existing systems but will allow specifically for the capture and reporting of factors and trends which impact directly on the success of the prison to parole processes.



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Sittings

Section 5 of Schedule 1 of the Sentence Administration Act 2003, Provisions applying to the Prisoners Review Board states:

- The chairperson is to decide when and where the Board meets.
- The Board, constituted in accordance with this clause, may meet and perform its functions even if and at the same time the Board, constituted in accordance with this clause but by different individuals, is also meeting and performing the Board's functions.

The Board convened on 263 occasions during the year. For the first time, the Board continued to convene through the Christmas period. The majority of sittings occur from Mondays to Thursdays at the office of the State Review Board Secretariat in Wembley.

By virtue of their appointment to this Board, community members are also appointed as members of the Mentally Impaired Accused Review Board. That Board sits in the same office, on Fridays.

Prison Visits / Video links

In the 2007 Annual report the chairman indicated that it was desirable to hold meetings at each of the State's Adult Custodial facilities. Following negotiation with the Department of Corrective Services, a schedule of visits was developed. Each of the six Regional Prisons received one visit during the year, whilst each of the seven metropolitan prisons were scheduled to be visited every two months.

The schedule of metropolitan prison visits was altered during the year to take into account the individual needs of each facility based on population and security rating of the prisoners. The longer term prisoners are generally housed in maximum and medium security facilities and therefore these receive more visits than the lower security institutions.

Although the Board has for some time conducted video interviews when a prisoner has requested a review, it had assumed that there may be benefits if a prisoner is able to address the Board directly.

This has clearly been demonstrated with the prisoners being able to speak directly to the Board about their rehabilitation and commitment to adopting a law abiding lifestyle. The members of the Board are able to address issues of concern particularly in relation to plans and possible victim contact.



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The Board has also been able to look at the impact of custody and treatment intervention on attitude and behaviour and what progress the prisoner had made in any educational or vocational training they had undertaken.

As well as hearing applications, the Board has been able to interact directly with staff at each of the facilities. It is able to address issues relating to its general operation and processes, whilst informing itself of matters pertinent to the specific institution or region.

It is the isolation of Regional Prisons and vastly different local factors that have to be taken into account as part of the release considerations which make it important for the Board to maintain its regional visits program.

In May 2008 the Board commenced a pilot program where all prisoners incarcerated at Casuarina prison, come before the Board to be interviewed in person. There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that being interviewed by the Board, either via a video link or at the prison, may encourage the prisoners to behave in a more socially acceptable manner, during their parole period. This program is subject to evaluation by students from Murdoch University, under the supervision of a Deputy Chairperson, and will inform the Board's future direction.

Visits to the Board

The Board has received over 70 visitors during the year.

Although the Board's meetings are not conducted in public because of its processes, the Board, in its commitment to greater transparency of operation, encourages the attendance of visitors and observers. These attendances are subject to confidentiality agreements.

This approach has been warmly received by students and justice stakeholders, in particular enabling them to gain a clear understanding of the Board's role and responsibilities in the sentencing and releasing processes.

In pursuing its objectives in encouraging open communication, the Board was delighted to host the news team from Channel 7 Perth. The subsequent news program was aired over two consecutive nights in June. This is the first time in the history of this releasing authority in Western Australia that the visual media have had access to a formal hearing.

In November 2007 the Board invited Professor Hilde Tubex to speak on Restorative Justice as part of a professional development day. Professor Tubex's fields of expertise involve "penological research" especially in international comparative studies.



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It was interesting that although Professor Tubex identified Belgium, England and France as the current leaders in this field, there was some suggestion that restorative justice started somewhere in Australia.

Other visitors included Professor Bill Marshall from Canada who addressed the Board on the sexual deniers program used in Canada. This program is to be modified and implemented by the Department for Corrective Services for use in West Australian custodial facilities. Professor Anne Worrell from Keel University in the United Kingdom who's special research interests centre around 'women in prison' also visited with the Board and observed a scheduled agenda



Pictured is Professor Tubex addressing the Board

Regional Visits

In conjunction with its commitment to prison visits, previously mentioned, the Board visited each regional prison at least once. As part of this commitment the Board meets with as many regional government agencies and community groups as is possible within time and budgetary restraints.

Community Relationships

The chairman has continued throughout the year to address the legislative responsibilities of the Board with 'the justice system', and the general community providing an informed perspective about the role of the Board and the Secretariat.

This has been supported with the Executive manager, Registrar and other board members Board visiting with interested parties and various members of the Department of Corrective Services management team.

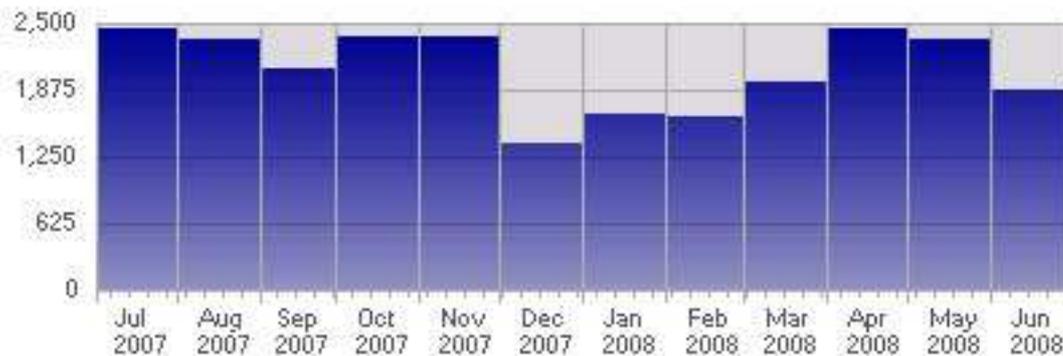


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Website

The website has continued to grow with an increase in the number of decisions released during the year and the inclusion of a subscription provision for both news and decisions.

The following depicts the number of times per month the website has been accessed.



Aboriginal Issues

The high number of Aboriginal prisoners continues to present problems to the Prisoners Review Board. In the 2005, 2006 and 2007 Annual Report's, the following concerns were noted:

- Aboriginal prisoners do not move through the prison system to the same extent as non-Aboriginal prisoners and they tend to endure the worst prison conditions.
- Re-entry issues for Aboriginal prisoners, including getting home after their imprisonment has ended are more acute than for non-Aboriginal processes.
- Lack of detailed evaluations in core areas (including treatment programs).
- The need to consider new forms of program development rather than attempting a peripheral *ex post facto* "indigenisation" of generic programs.
- Program delivery has been poor over a sustained period in some prisons, especially in regional prisons.
- Many Aboriginal prisoners live in remote areas and are unable to access community rehabilitation treatment programs.



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- Many Aboriginal prisoners are unable to be released on parole because of lack of suitable accommodation.

Little has changed at the writing of this report affecting those issues which specifically address indigenous needs in the prison to parole processes and therefore, seem to be as relevant today.

Programs

The Board has continued to express concerns throughout the year that the situation around the lack of appropriate rehabilitative and vocational programs both in the prison system and the community continues to grow:-

- Prisoners in regional prisons can often only access programs if they are transferred to other locations.
- The transfer of prisoners to another prison often means that they are further removed from their families and Communities.
- Prisoners in protection units and those serving short sentences are particularly disadvantaged by the lack of available programs.
- The Board reiterates it is concerned that there are currently not enough programs in regional areas, which are Aboriginal “specific”. It is encouraging that some Aboriginal specific programs are being developed within regional prisons. However more work needs to be done in this area.
- In regional prisons, there is a significant shortage of officers who can make assessments and facilitate programs for prisoners.

The Board understands that this is not simply a matter of too many prisoners and not enough resources to fund programs.

As a result of policy changes in the delivery of programs, there is a critical shortage of properly trained facilitators to conduct the programs.

Vital programs for violent offending, domestic violence and substance abuse have been cancelled or postponed because of this shortage. This means that in some cases a prisoner’s release on parole is denied or deferred to enable them to complete a program.

The Board is also conscious that the Department of Corrective services is working hard to correct this situation.

The Board acknowledges that there has been a focus and some success in bringing to the table, programs which address those high end offences such as violent and sexual offences.

It is of the view however, that much more needs to be done in the area of assisting prisoners to gain the skills to secure work on release. A positive outcome in this area, reduces the risk of re offending and enhances the prospect of a successful parole



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completion. The strong labour market in Western Australia has also made employment a realistic and important goal for prisoners.

Vocational program development should therefore be about providing prisoners with basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy together with addressing cognitive deficits thereby enabling entry into further training programs or employment

Nevertheless in cases where the Board considers that the prisoner does pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of the community, the prisoner will not be released.

The Board is conscious of the direct result being an increase in prison musters and the growing frustration amongst prisoners when their parole is denied or delayed because of the lack of rehabilitation programs.

The Board continues to reiterate its concerns which were expressed in its Annual Reports of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 that many of the prison-based treatment programs have not been subject to systematic evaluation in terms of their impact on recidivism or other measures of effectiveness.

Victim Issues

The Prisoners Review Board is committed to providing effective and relevant advice to victims of crime about the decisions made in relation to the release of offenders on parole orders.

The advice and resulting communication is generally conducted through the victim agencies, Victim Mediation Unit and Victim Notification Register, although submissions have been sent directly to the Board.

The Board does stress the need for flexibility and cooperation between the Board and the agencies in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for victims.

Each submission is considered by the Board and is treated with the highest level of confidentiality to protect the victim's identity and interests.