



G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd

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State Coroner Ian Gray
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 12
222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear State Coroner Gray,

Inquest into the Death of Darren Parkes
Case Number: 2006/1090

We refer to the findings and recommendations in relation to the death of Darren Parkes at Port Phillip Prison ('PPP').

G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd ('G4S') is the operator of PPP pursuant to a contract with the State of Victoria, Minister for the Department of Justice.

Three recommendations arising from the circumstances of Mr Parkes' death were made. To assist with understanding this response to those recommendations G4S makes the following observations and comments:

1. PPP is a maximum security men's prison with a current capacity to accommodate 1107 prisoners.
2. St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is contracted by G4S to provide health services at PPP through its St Vincent's Correctional Health Service ("SVCHS").
3. SVCHS employs or engages Psychiatrists and Registered Psychiatric Nurses, among other health professionals to work at PPP.
4. G4S employs correctional staff at PPP as well as registered psychologists, the latter of which deliver clinical services and integration programs.

The Coroner's Recommendations and G4S' response

G4S acknowledges the Inquest findings and the recommendations. G4S continuously looks to improve its practices and maintain the secure and safe operation of PPP for prisoners, its own and partner organization staff and visitors to PPP.

We have spent some time considering the best operational response to the recommendations. We respond to each of the recommendations in turn.

Recommendation 1

All telephone calls to PPP reception should be recorded, with the option to cease recording upon transfer to particular extensions within the prison. The method used for the recording and noting phone calls should be a matter for the PPP.

G4S response – Recommendation 1

After hours calls to the main PPP telephone number are received by the PPP Control Room.

The PPP switchboard and Control Room receives a large number of calls each day. Generally those calls are administrative in nature.

The practice of the switchboard operators and Control Room staff is to ensure the transfer of any calls conveying a concern for the safety of a prisoner to the relevant Supervisor or Manager of the area where that prisoner is located. The Supervisor or Manager of the area of PPP where the prisoner is located is the best person to facilitate an investigation into the concerns relating to the prisoner.

G4S is mindful that any recording of telephone calls must be conducted lawfully in respect of recording of telecommunications and dealing with personal information. This would involve telling every caller that the call is being recorded in accordance with Commonwealth and State legislation.¹ This may impact on the candor of callers, result in calls being abandoned or may affect the quality of the information provided in the recorded portion of the call.

Given the system in place is to ensure transfer calls regarding safety concerns to the relevant Supervisor or Manager, it is difficult to appreciate how recording all incoming telephone calls to PPP would help to prevent a homicide or other significant act of violence rather to assist with gathering information after an incident as part of the ensuing investigation into that incident. While this might be of some value for a post incident investigation the quality of information recorded may vary depending on the nature and scope of the call before it is transferred to the relevant Supervisor or Manager.

Given the number of external calls, which may relate to a very wide range of subject matters, G4S believes it is impracticable to record all of those calls. Therefore, in order for this recommendation to be effective in relation to death or serious injury prevention, the recording needs to prompt action.

Bearing in mind the comments noted above, G4S confirms it is presently undertaking an upgrade of its telephone system at PPP and preparing a scope of works to tender for the purchase, installation and configuration of the new system.

The scope of works will include a specification to install an automated call referral system to a separate phone line where those calls referred to the separate line will be automatically recorded and delivered electronically when the call is transferred by the switchboard operator or Control Room personnel to appropriate recipients.

¹ *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 (Cth) and Telecommunications (Interception) (State Provisions) Act 1988 (Vic) and Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)*

Given the enquires about capacity to provide this function are under review and consideration about service delivery and compatibility, G4S cannot indicate to the State Coroner the finer details of the system which may be utilized at PPP. We can state however that while it does not appear to have been intended by the recommendation it is not possible to maintain recording calls beyond the transfer from the switchboard operator or Control Room to the relevant Supervisor or Manager.

In the interim, while this matter is under review, PPP switchboard and Control Room personnel have been instructed to email the Violence Reduction Coordinator a written record of the call, including any information provided by the caller and their contact details along with the name of the person within PPP to whom the call is transferred.

Recommendation 2

SVCHS should regularly review its policies and procedures in relation to communication with G4S. It should assess the implantation of these procedures as part of such a review. SVCHS should train each new staff member on commencement, and all staff on a regular basis.

G4S response - Recommendation 2

While this recommendation is directed to SVCHS, G4S confirms that its training program provided to new SVCHS employees includes instruction about the type of information that is important to security and reduction of violence at PPP, among other things. The evidence given at the Inquest regarding the G4S training provided to SVCHS staff was generally that it was comprehensive and understood by SVHM witnesses.

G4S recognizes that SVCHS staff members are expected to exercise clinical judgment in their assessment of information provided to them by prisoners living in a maximum security prison.

G4S considers it imperative that SVCHS staff appreciate the exceptions to maintaining confidentiality which allows health practitioners to disclose information to correctional staff where there is a concern over the prisoner's wellbeing and safety, including their risk from others to the extent it is permitted by law.²

G4S is aware that a training module is being developed by SVHM and G4S and encourages further education of SVCHS health staff employed at PPP regarding these issues as part of its delivery of health services at PPP. G4S will assist with developing the training module and take part in the delivery of the training package to help SVCHS staff understand the importance of information relevant to physical safety and security for prisoners in a maximum security correctional setting and the nature of information required to assist with managing those issues.

Recommendation 3

G4S and SVCHS should jointly prepare a short, easy to use pro forma or similar to record the transfer of critical information regarding a prisoner's wellbeing or prisoners requests which could not be easily attended to (such as a request to speak with a supervisor).

G4S response- Recommendation 3

SVCHS and G4S have developed a pro forma document to be implemented at PPP which is designed to pass on information of safety concerns relating to violence from others.

² Schedule 1, Principal 2.2(h) *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*

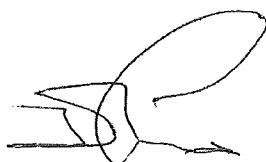
Given G4S correctional staff are not permitted to access health records it remains incumbent upon SVCHS to provide to G4S relevant information about the nature of the reported risk, and where indicated for G4S staff to enquire further from SVCHS for background information to that provided by the form.

G4S considers its general prisoner's requests process adequately responds to the myriad requests made by prisoners concerning all services at PPP. In relation to requests of prisoners to speak with Supervisors who are not immediately available G4S staff have been instructed to record the name of the prisoner in the Unit diary and for the Supervisors to review the diary when conducting their routine visit to the Unit.

G4S is conscious of its various obligations to maintain security in a dynamic prison environment.

With this response to the Coroner's recommendations, in addition to the ongoing review and development of prison operations and practices at G4S' own initiative or in combination with others, G4S strives to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of all at PPP.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ian Thomas', written over a horizontal line.

Ian Thomas
General Manager
Port Phillip Prison
169/14