

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Inmates

19 May 2020



What is happening with visits?

In response to COVID-19, we have suspended all in person social visits to our prisons.

Why has this decision been made?

This decision was made to reduce the risk of COVID-19 coming into our prisons.

We all play an important role in stopping the spread of the virus, and decisions are being made with the latest medical advice and state and federal measures in mind.

What if there are exceptional circumstances?

There is a process in place to consider personal visits in exceptional circumstances.

How long will this go on for?

Social visits will resume as soon as it's safe to do so. We will keep you updated on the situation and if any changes to these arrangements are needed.

COVID-19 is an evolving situation and all preventative measures are reviewed regularly.

How can I contact my family or friends?

Our priority is keeping our staff, and you safe. Family and social connection is very important and we want to do what we can to make sure you are able to speak to and communicate with your family and friends.

- *Phone Calls*

While social visits are suspended, we have provided three free phone calls per week for the next month and are doing our best to increase your access to phones.

- *Video visits*

More than 16,000 video visits have already taken place. Information on how to book is available at correctional centres and online for your family and friends

What about professional visits?

At this stage, visits are not suspended for professional visitors. They are subject to screening before entering the centre and as much as possible we recommend they use AVL to reduce the risk.

Will I still be able to get buy-ups?

Yes, you can still get buy-ups. The weekly buy-up limit, the value of buy-ups in cells and monthly deposit limit have all been temporarily increased.

Will CSI employment continue?

Yes. Work programs are a key component of structured day activities in all correctional centres, in this regard a business as usual approach is currently in place. With the health and wellbeing of staff and inmates being the primary concern you will be advised of any changes if/when they occur in the future.

Will I still get paid?

Yes. There will be no change to the current inmate wage structure whilst normal operations continue. Should a change occur in relation to attendance at work further advice on wages will be provided.

The unemployment payment has been temporarily increased.

Will programs still run?

Yes, however there may be circumstances where the set-up of programs changes to ensure the safety of you and staff. Some external providers have made a decision to advise their staff to stop working for a period of time.

Will I still be able to attend education?

Yes. There may be some changes to the timetable and there will be smaller number of people in each group but literacy and numeracy classes and computer classes will continue to be delivered.

Vocational courses delivered in the CSI workplace are being reviewed but essential courses will continue to be delivered.

I am doing a traineeship. Will there be any changes?

There may be a requirement to suspend the traineeship if there are changes to your work. Ask to see the education staff if you have any questions.

I am enrolled in a distance education course. Will I be able to continue to study?

If you are enrolled in distance education course the education staff will keep you up to date with any changes.

What about external work and/or education programs?

To address the risk of transmission of COVID-19, as of 26 March 2020, external activities and programs have been temporarily suspended. This includes:

- Any community work outside the correctional complex
- Any education and training outside the correctional complex
- Any employment outside the correctional complex
- All day and weekend leave

Some centres have exemptions. Exemptions are risk assessed and processed on a case by case basis.

Will Chaplaincy Services still be available?

Yes. Chaplains continue to be available in correctional centres. In many cases, they are still running or facilitating chapel services and Friday prayers (though with smaller numbers).

They continue to run programs in small groups. In many centres, chaplains continue to run programs including Seasons for Growth and the Positive Lifestyle Program. We are considering other ways to provide opportunities for you to contact a chaplain.

Testing new inmates for COVID-19

As an additional precaution, all new inmates are housed separately to the rest of the prison population for a period of 14 days and tested for COVID-19 before being cleared to enter the mainstream.

I've heard some people might be released early.

The NSW Government has announced changes that provide authority for the Commissioner for CSNSW to conditionally release some low risk and vulnerable inmates from prison under certain circumstances.

You don't need to apply to be considered. If conditional release is implemented Corrective Services will contact you if you are eligible.

I've heard people can access their superannuation.

This is true, the Government is allowing individuals affected by the Coronavirus to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in 2019-20 and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21.

I'm due to be released in the next few weeks. Is there anything I should know?

The restrictions on social movements are changing often. To ensure you have the latest information, you will be provided with an up to date fact sheet when you are released.

Community Corrections continue to manage and provide services to people on a court or parole order.

To protect the safety of staff, offenders and the community, some changes have been made to normal services. For example, due to safe distancing policies, community work has been temporarily suspended.

The following still applies:

- If you have been released from custody you must attend your local Community Corrections Office within 24 hours.
- You must maintain contact with your Community Corrections Officer.