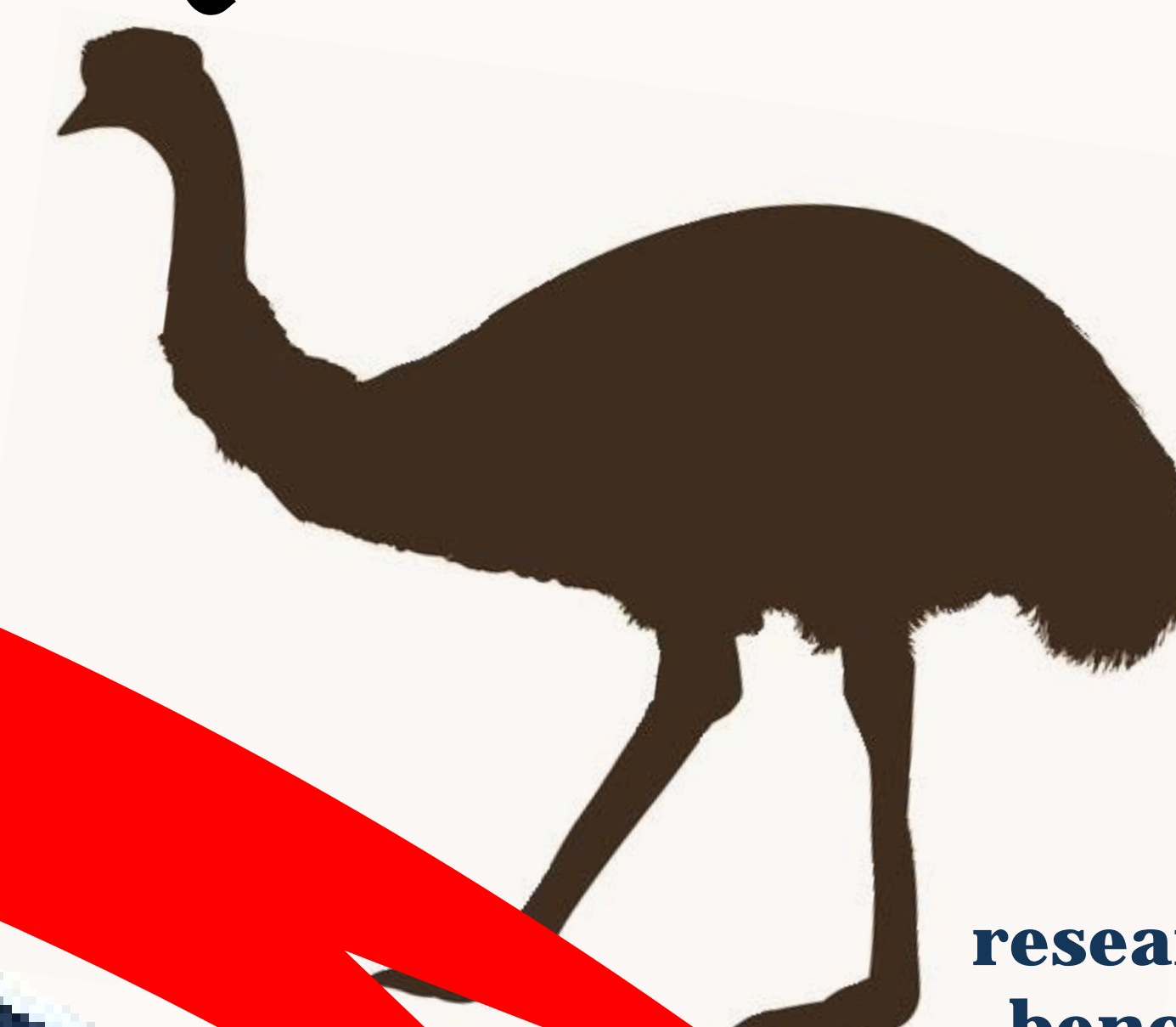


Review and Development: Minimum Benchmarks of Queensland Prisons

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Aim: to create a succinct referenced list of minimum benchmark entitlements for QLD prisons and prisoners.

Problem: the lack of insight and research to form and develop minimum benchmarks and entitlements for QCS.

To what extent do best practices and minimum benchmark standards inform the construction, implementation and enforcement of prisoner entitlements in Queensland Prisons?

Key Recommendations

QCS must allow 1 extra phone call to family members if the visitor is unable to attend their contact or non-contact visit with valid reason.

QCS is not to deprive prisoners of any visits, phone, or mail access as a form of punishment regardless of prisoner classification.

QCS must provide additional staff training to help workers learn to identify and make early interventions on prisoners with mental health concerns.

The OCI must include a new assessment schedule into the inspection programme that deals directly with the quality and timely delivery of health services

QCS must provide stronger opportunities to earn money that will provide a liveable wage whilst in prison to assist in prisoners resettlement after release.

QCS must have compulsory literacy and numeracy education for all inmates up to a 10th grade level for those assessed with low level or elementary ability, who are serving a sentence longer than three years.

QCS must allow prisoners with low level safety risk to participate in, and have access to equipment for, team sports during exercise hours.

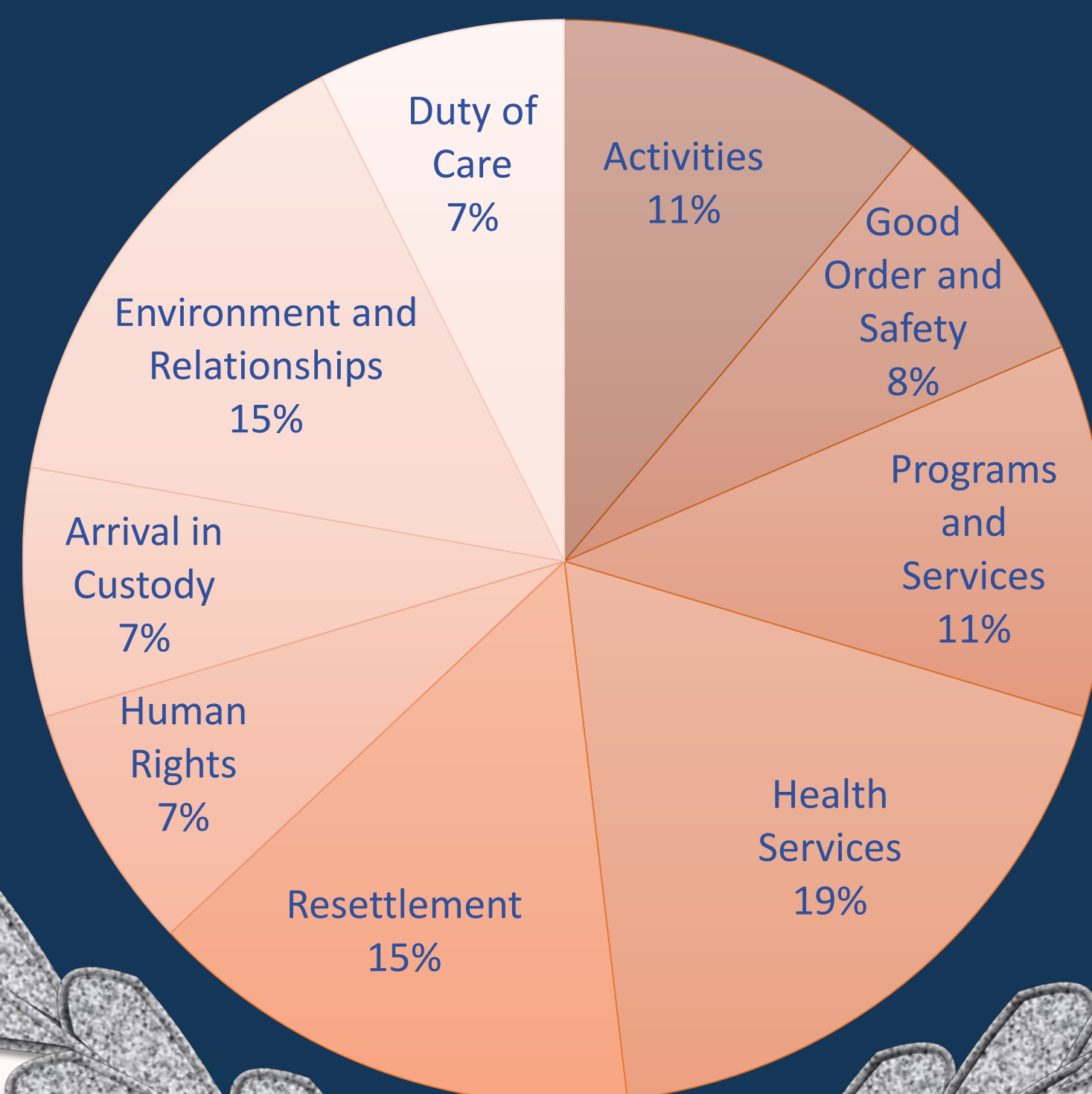
QCS must provide unrestricted access to condoms for all prisoners permitted to make prison 'buy up' purchases.

QCS must outline which human rights instruments they do not observe and provide a sound justification for the reasons against.

The Office of the Chief Inspector must include a structured assessment in their inspections for the proper implementation of identified human rights standards in Queensland prisons.

QCS must outsource the certification of vocational training and employment skills development for prisoners, to educational institutions recognised by the government.

Recommendations by Quantity



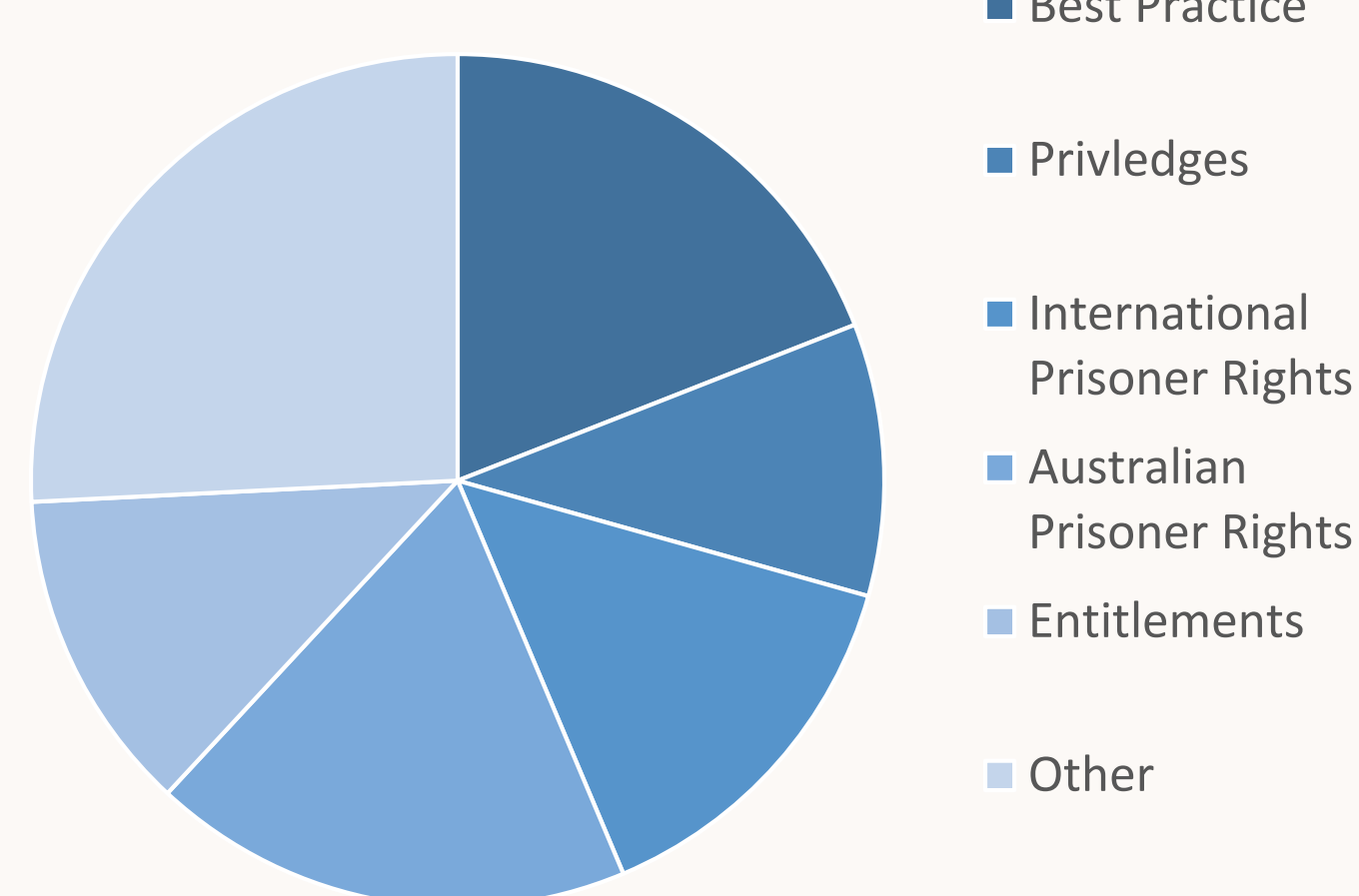
BACKGROUND

Queensland Correctional Services is a criminal justice agency in Queensland, Australia that provides a role in community safety and crime prevention through the humane containment, supervision and rehabilitation of offenders. There are current systems of operation in QCS that are in need of updating and improvement. Inspectoral reviews conducted by the QCS Office of the Chief Inspector confirm this position. The problem that this research project addresses is the need for a greater insight into the **formation and development of minimum benchmarks and entitlements of prison inmates**. The final product of this project is a **succinct referenced list of minimum entitlements** based on a systematic desktop review of academic literature and data. This project provides an in-depth assessment into what extent best practices and minimum benchmark standards inform the construction, implementation and enforcement of prisoner entitlements in Queensland Prisons. It will also investigate what the accepted minimum standards of prisoner rights are in prison in an **international context**. Furthermore it will address what impediments there are to the effective implementation, or application of these developed standards in Queensland Prisons.

METHODS

Our research project is based around a desktop review of academic literature and data, considering this a purposive sampling method is used. This method most effectively fits our research design, as it will allow us to address our research problem logically and explicitly by allowing us to selectively choose our data. The team identified specific themes that best framed our research; therefore a thematic search was the most fitting. This allowed us to pinpoint, analyse and examine patterns in data and relevant research. This also allowed for the team to easily categorise our specific areas of interest that fell under each theme allowing for an in depth and extensive look into all our found literature. Our themes included : Best Practices, Entitlements, International Human Rights, Australian Human Rights and Privileges (See graph below) The team reviewed over 250 sources, and as can be seen in the two graphs above where most/least information under the corresponding theme was found and recommendations by quantity as based off our literature matrix.

Prevalent Themes



THEMES

Our themes are guided by two forces, firstly by the key areas of investigation directed by the Office of the Chief Inspector and secondly by the issues that emerged in the research. In terms of what explicit areas of QCS needed investigation the main themes of focus were: arrival in custody, environment, relationships, duty of care, activities, good order, safety, programs, services, resettlement and health services. Within these categories however we noticed themes that grew out of the literature. Human rights became a significant area of investigation as well as best practices, the concept of entitlements and privileges. Human rights were especially significant as Australia lacks a bill of rights there are no express rights afforded to citizens, which directly impacts QCS ability to adhere to or implement human rights instruments. This directly affected the concept of what prisoners rights were, what they were entitled to and how these standards are developed. As such observing internationally accepted human rights was an important part of establishing what prisoners are entitled to and what minimum benchmarks QCS should be adhering to.

DATA

The data gathered from the Chief Inspectors Full Announced Inspection Reports and the Follow Up Inspection Reports assisted in pin-pointing problem areas for relevant data analysis. In turn, this revealed where the prisons were performing well against the current policies, where they could be applied better, and where progress for better policies could be built. Further qualitative data was coded and analysed from the literature matrix, in order to determine best practices with evidence to support recommended policy changes. Extensive data covered the categories affecting the internal operations of a prison, the strongest of which was included in our research to create a full picture of progressive prison tactics.

FINDINGS

Our findings were comprehensive and well distributed amongst our themes. We discovered that there are many areas within QCS that require attention regarding policy; especially concerning health services, environment, relationships and the process of resettlement for prisoners. For example, health services are one of the most complex and multidimensional areas of the criminal justice system, prisoners have diverse needs and require specialised attention and programs to assist them in recovery and rehabilitation. This area specifically will require ongoing work and monitoring of progress with new and reformed practices. Most prisons are found to be performing well against the current policies and benchmarks when inspected. Some facilities have the opportunity to learn from the prisons that are performing best, on how to effectively apply current and future rules for positive progress.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Using this research as a spring board, there are many areas of research that could be expanded on. Further research will need to be conducted on the status of prisoners and their rights, the creation of a charter for prisoners rights, the experiences and special circumstances of indigenous peoples and other minorities or the life building experiences offered in prisons to help them reenter the outside world post release. In the future each of us hopes to further investigate the impact of the research we have conducted here and attempt to quantify its impact.

LIMITATIONS

The research we have completed has been very thorough, although there are limitations to what has been presented. In many of our themes the gaps in the literature were quite wide, studies had not been conducted on very specific areas of prison life. For example, very little research performed on the procedures and impacts of 'buy up' on prisoners. We have yet to fully understand how the purchasing of items whilst in prison can effect prisoners experiences or capacity for rehabilitation. Therefore, in areas where we could make more solid recommendations we are limited to what we can suggest due to the lack of information at hand as to what the best practices are.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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