

HAKEA PRISON - SECURITY

664. Mr A.J. Simpson to the Minister for Justice

In reference to comments made by the Acting Commissioner for Corrective Services, Mr Ian Johnson on Southern Cross Radio, that Hakea Prison currently has numerous “blind spots” where prisoners are not subject to either electronic surveillance or guard supervision, and I ask -

- (1) How many blind spots exist?
- (2) Do other prisons have the same problem? If so, which prisons and how many blind spots are known to exist at each?
- (3) Will the Minister commit to correct this situation and immediately install security cameras that record all prisoner activity within each facility?

Mr J.B. D’ORAZIO replied:

The Department of Corrective Services advises as follows:

- (1)-(3) The comments made by the Acting Commissioner for Corrective Services Mr Ian Johnson on Southern Cross Radio in relation to ‘blind spots’ were in response to an email forwarded to the radio station relating to an alleged incident at Hakea Prison. In response, Mr Johnson acknowledged the existence of ‘blind spots’ however, did not state that Hakea Prison ‘currently has numerous ‘blind spots’. Whilst ‘blind spots’ are inherent in the design of all prisons, it is important to acknowledge when discussing such a term what definition or interpretation is made when you consider that a prison cell or toilet cubicle/shower recess or any other place where a prisoner should not be can be defined as such. Accordingly, there is no inventory detailing such areas.

Hakea is an old design with long corridors that do not provide staff with clear lines of vision. To counter these problems Hakea management have taken a proactive approach to security and implemented a new anti bullying strategy.

- A violence reduction committee and strategy have been put in place.
- Problem areas have now been designated as “no go zones” to prisoners and are clearly marked as such.
- Corridors have been painted white to raise the ambient light levels.
- Increased patrols have been put in place.
- Staff who work in the observation towers have been moved to those towers that provide the best lines of sight across the prison.
- The security department has changed its work practices and proactively monitor known violent offenders.

Providing a total surveillance system immediately is not the solution to blind spots.

Whilst additional cameras can be useful it is staff intervention and a good violence reduction strategy that have the most impact. Cameras do not stop incidents from happening.

It would be impractical to have the high number of staff it would take to sit and watch the screens all day when they could be doing more valuable work with prisoners.

The solution of making the blind spots “no go” zones is much more practical. Blind spots are inherent in the design of all prisons and are essentially managed through proactive security and safety measures.

While every effort is made to ensure that the good government, good order and security of the prison is maintained, many offenders have been convicted of violent offences. Just because they come into prison does not mean they stop being violent.

Violence is not tolerated under any circumstances in Prisons. Staff work exceptionally hard to reduce the risk of it happening through good interpersonal skills and taking proactive steps to control those who present a risk to others.