



# Research Publication

## An Evaluation of Programme Review Committees

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by

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## PREFACE

Evaluation of the delivery of services to prisoners is a major focus of the research carried out by the Research and Statistics Division. The studies have repeatedly identified problems in letting prisoners know what is available, encouraging them to overcome the many barriers to self development intrinsic to secure prisons, and co-ordinating the requirements of different services with each other and with security procedures.

These issues have often been discussed by senior officers as part of the corporate planning process. Repeatedly, Programme Review Committees were identified as the mechanism which could, by bringing each prisoner together with representatives of the disciplines concerned with security, care and development, overcome the barriers and achieve effective co-ordination. Also, following the enquiry into temporary absence programmes by Judge Muir, Programme Review Committee Administrative Assistants were appointed to support the work of the Committees. Given this background, it appeared timely to evaluate how the Committees were in fact operating and whether and how they could achieve more integrated delivery of services.

The study commenced in April 1986, just after Judge Martin commenced a further formal enquiry into classification procedures. The study has thus been carried out just as the content of Programme Review Committee operation was undergoing a searching reappraisal. This has created a climate where real change is possible.

The results of the study were discussed at a seminar convened for the purpose, and draft conclusions and recommendations were widely circulated. Also, as part of the overall strategic planning process, the research team developed with me a draft action plan for creating from Programme Review Committees effective case management systems to ensure co-ordinated delivery of services. The views expressed in the report are, however, those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Corrective Services Commission or of the Minister for Corrective Services.

Provision of opportunities to prisoners for care and development is a major commitment of the Commission. This report will, I believe, make a useful contribution to implementing that commitment.

DON PORRITT  
Chief Research Officer

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The principal findings, organised under the headings for the six main areas investigated, were as follows:

### 1. Need assessment and programme planning

- (1) The onus was mainly on the inmate to initiate contact with Programme Review Committee (PRC) members.
- (2) Forty-six out of 50 non-custodial staff used interviews as the main source of information when assessing a prisoner's need for their expertise.
- (3) There was no consistent interpretation by PRC members of the phrase "a prisoner's programme".
- (4) Although 44 out of 61 (72%) PRC members stated they design a programme for prisoners, there seemed to be little evidence of this in some goals as indicated by PRC forms and prisoner interviews.
- (5) While most PRC members view programme design essentially in terms of need assessment, 25% of those who stated they design programmes said they did so in a purely advisory capacity, that is, based on what the prisoner wants.
- (6) The majority of PRC members who planned programmes reported difficulty in designing programmes for Aboriginal prisoners most frequently due to a perceived lack of interest or motivation on behalf of the Aboriginal prisoner.
- (7) The vast majority of PRC members who planned programmes reported difficulty in designing programmes for prisoners from diverse ethnic backgrounds most often due to communication problems.
- (8) About one-quarter of PRC members who planned programmes reported difficulty in designing programmes for women.

### 2. The operation of Programme Review Committee meetings

- (1) A random sample of 212 warrant files for prisoners not observed in PRC meetings indicated that all of these inmates had been seen by a PRC at some time during the previous six months.
- (2) Interviews with PRC members and observations indicated that little information is uniformly distributed prior

to meetings. The agenda is the only piece of information circulated to all members beforehand.

- (3) Eighty per cent of PRC members received their agendas at least one week prior to the meeting.
- (4) Prior circulation of reports was requested by half of the members interviewed.
- (5) Only 28% of PRC members stated they were always able to interview all prisoners before the PRC meeting.
- (6) Both observations and interviews indicate variation in interview procedures for prisoners. Nine of 12 persons who stated it was unnecessary to interview prisoners before the meeting were custodial officers (either Chairmen or Industries Officers).
- (7) Overall an average of 65% of the reports were submitted at the meetings.
- (8) Although information incorporated in the reports was available at the majority of meetings, it was rarely presented. Non-custodial PRC reports and previous PRC forms were discussed infrequently.
- (9) The Chairman was the most vocal member in PRC meetings. Calculated as a percentage of total possible occasions to comment, the Chairman's discussion involved: prisoners' length of sentence (67%), work programmes (65%), behaviour in prison (63%) and prisoners' wishes (55%).
- (10) Observations indicate that PRC members tended to restrict participation to their own areas of expertise.

### 3. Co-ordination between PRC members

- (1) The majority of respondents either "sometimes know" or "never know" what other members have planned for the prisoner.
- (2) A small percentage of PRC members had prior discussions with their PRC colleagues about what decisions should be made at the PRC meeting.
- (3) The majority of respondents (77%) had at some time consulted with representatives of other divisions when they were working out a prisoner's programme.
- (4) The occurrence of these consultations mostly ranged from "always" (27%) or "usually" (16%) to "sometimes" (35%).

classification or later in their sentence. Only 29% of these 82 prisoners said that someone had helped them make plans.

- (5) Prisoners generally had no clear idea how to get a lower classification, how to progress through the gaol system or the purpose of a PRC.
- (6) Ten per cent of the prisoner sample stated that they did not know what the PRC was supposed to do.
- (7) Over half the prisoners interviewed (54%) believed there were problems with the present PRC system. A substantial percentage of prisoners (45%) stated they had problems interacting with PRC members at the meeting.
- (8) Seventy-six per cent of the prisoner sample were doing or had done educational courses in gaol.
- (9) Eighty-seven per cent of the prisoners interviewed reported that they either currently had a job in the gaol (84%) or had had one previously (3%). Most prisoners believed that work experience in prison would not help them obtain employment upon release.
- (10) Within the prisoner sample, work experience and education courses were rarely related.
- (11) Fifty-five (55) of 104 prisoners interviewed reported that they currently were serving sentences for drug and/or alcohol related offences.
- (12) Thirty-eight (38) of 55 persons admitting drug-related or alcohol-related offences were not receiving help in these areas. The majority of this group (51%) stated they were not interested in receiving help.
- (13) Prisoners' responses indicate that practical assistance with accommodation, employment and finances are areas of special demand.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Responsibility for initial prisoner assessment and programme design be assessed. Either the initial Classification Committee be given access to more detailed information on prisoners or responsibility for assessment and programme design be given to the staff at the first gaol of classification subsequent to initial reception.
2. Within the constraints of available resources, Programme Review Committees ensure that opportunities for subsequent assessment, programme development and review are made available to all prisoners with a minimum sentence of three months.
3. A PRC manual containing information concerning responsibilities of PRCs; the role of members; departmental policy on classification; and facilities available at various institutions be distributed to PRC members through PRC Administrative Assistants.
4. Training programmes be developed for PRC members which address issues such as how to effectively chair and conduct a meeting.
5. Reports to PRC members be completed in a standardised, structured format.
6. The current PRC form be redesigned in order to eliminate existing duplications and to provide additional categories covering Probation and Parole and the Classification Sub-Committee information.
7. A PRC file be constructed. It should include the initial classification form, all previous PRC forms and reports and any other information relevant to the prisoner's programme. This file should be the responsibility of either the PRC Administrative Assistants or the Probation and Parole Service.
8. The Classification Sub-Committee provide PRCs with detailed reasons for each case where a PRC recommendation is not ratified.
9. Staff at each gaol assess how, in preparation for meetings, communication and information flow between PRC members and inmates can be improved.
10. Co-ordination between different departmental divisions be improved through: effective, locally developed case management system at each institution; effective overall programme management and co-ordination at each institution; and effective team development to improve programme management and co-ordination at Head Office.

## INTRODUCTION

### The need for co-ordinated services to prisoners

Since the commencement of the Corrective Services Commission in 1979, much thought and effort has been invested in improving the services to assess and meet the educational, vocational, welfare and psychological needs of prisoners. The effort has been constrained by many factors, including the effects of security procedures, the design of old gaols, overcrowding and lack of sufficient staff with the appropriate training. The reluctance of many prisoners to trust staff and the help offered, and the prisoners' own doubts about their ability to benefit also block effective services.

Another major constraint which has repeatedly been documented is the lack of co-ordination, both between disciplines and between prisons as inmates are moved through the system. In many discussions of how to use more effectively the resources which are available, Programme Review Committees (PRCs) have been identified as the only organisational arrangement which can integrate services to prisoners. The reasoning leading to this conclusion was that the PRCs are the only mechanism by which prisoners are regularly seen and their activities reviewed by a multi-disciplinary group. Following one review of classification procedures (to which PRCs contribute), new positions were set up to support PRC operations.

The decision to evaluate PRC operations through a detailed research study was based on a clear recognition that problems in co-ordinated service delivery to prisoners had not been solved; that the constraints limiting what could be achieved, although great, could be dealt with more effectively; and a concern to assess the impact of the additional resources which had been invested in supporting PRCs.

Before describing the study, it is necessary to describe PRCs and how they are related to other major elements of the system of classification and placement of prisoners.

### The classification system

There are four types of committees concerned with prisoner classification: (1) the Classification Committee; (2) the Classification Sub-Committee; (3) the Reception Committee; and (4) the Programme Review Committee. It is this fourth type of committee, the Programme Review Committee (PRC), which is the focus of this report.

### (1) The Classification Committee

The initial classification of long-term prisoners is made by the permanent Classification Committee based at the Central Industrial Prison, Malabar. Long-term prisoners are those serving life sentences, those detained at the Governor's Pleasure, and those expected to serve at least twelve months before release. The Classification Committee is chaired by the Director of Prisoner Classification, or in his absence, by the Deputy Director. The other members are the Deputy Superintendent (Classification), a senior Industrial Officer (Custodial), a Probation and Parole Officer, a Psychologist, an Education Officer and a Welfare Officer.

The *Report of Judge A.G. Muir, Q.C., into Temporary Leave Programmes* (1984) outlined the role of the Classification Committee for all long-term prisoners:

- a) to ensure that each prisoner is placed at the lowest appropriate security level;
- b) to ensure that each prisoner is given proper protection...;
- c) to ensure that the immediate welfare needs of each prisoner and those of his family are satisfied;
- d) to begin preparing each prisoner for his earliest proper release by outlining and implementing an initial programme, with social/educational/ psychological/ industrial components as necessary" (1984:5).

### (2) The Classification Sub-Committee

Recommendations on a prisoner's classification are ratified by the Classification Sub-Committee at Head Office. The recommendations are first considered by the Deputy Superintendent (Classification) and the Education Officer who sit on the Classification Committee at Malabar. The final decision is made by the Director of Prisoner Classification.

### (3) Reception Committees

The initial classification of short-term prisoners is conducted by a Reception Committee.

The Muir Report (1984) states that Reception Committees have the same role as the Classification Committee for the security level of prisoners, the protection of prisoners and the welfare needs of prisoners.

### (4) Programme Review Committees

Prisoners' classifications are reviewed by Programme Review Committees (PRCs). PRCs review all long-term prisoners, except for life

sentence prisoners and Governor's Pleasure detainees. They also review short-term prisoners, with sentences of three months or more. Prisoners are reviewed at least every six months.

The Muir Report (1984) states that the PRC should be chaired by the Superintendent or his nominee. The other members of the PRC include a Principal Industries Officer, a Probation and Parole Officer, a Psychologist, an Education Officer and a Welfare Officer.

The role of the PRC is outlined in the Muir Report. With regard to the security level and protection of prisoners, the role of the PRC is the same as that of the Classification Committee. In relation to a prisoner's programme the report states that the role of the PRC is to "prepare the prisoner for his/her earliest proper release, by reviewing the prisoner's programme... updating and implementing this where necessary" (1984:6). In addition the PRC is to "actively consider prisoners for special leave/programmes" (1984:6). The role of the Committee for short-term prisoners also is "to ensure that the prisoner's immediate welfare needs and those of his family are satisfied" (1984:7).

The recommendations of Programme Review Committees are subject to approval by the Classification Sub-Committee and the Director of Classification.

### **Literature on Programme Review Committees**

Over the past few years Programme Review Committees have received considerable attention. This project started just after Mr. T.J. Martin, Q.C., commenced a formal enquiry into classification procedures.

Associated problems with PRCs also have been documented in three other recent reports: Report of Judge A.G. Muir, Q.C., into Temporary Leave Programmes (1984); R. Steele, "Review of Programme Review Committees" (1983); and F. Hill and R. Hogan, "Comments on the Operation of Prisoner Programme Review Committees" (1985). The problems outlined in these latter reports can be grouped under three headings: procedure and administration; members' behaviour; and external factors.

#### **(1) Problems relating to procedure and administration**

The literature identifies six problems relating to procedure and administration:

- a) The procedure is inadequate (Muir, 1984; Steele, 1983). There is lack of operational procedures for PRC meetings (Hill and

Hogan, 1985).

- b) PRC members are uncertain in what form they are accountable for monitoring a prisoner's programme (Muir, 1984; Steele, 1983). There is a lack of clear guidelines as to the responsibility and duties of PRC members (Hill and Hogan, 1985).
- c) Some PRCs are guided by local rules (Muir, 1984; Steele, 1983; Hill and Hogan, 1985).
- d) Review of classification forms indicates they are not always completed. At times they have not been signed by the prisoner (Muir, 1984; Steele, 1983).
- e) There is lack of detailed information on a prisoner's progress during imprisonment (Hill and Hogan, 1985).
- f) There is lack of follow-up after the prisoner arrives at his/her goal of classification (Hill and Hogan, 1985).

#### **(2) Problems relating to PRC members**

Two issues were identified:

- a) Lack of member participation as a result of lack of preparation (Muir, 1983; Steele, 1983).
- b) PRC members often react to a prisoner's programme rather than review it creatively and constructively (Muir, 1984; Steele 1983).

#### **(3) Problems relating to factors external to PRCs**

The literature focuses on three problems:

- a) There has been a perceived lack of commitment by the Commission to the philosophy of classification and the role of PRCs (Hill and Hogan, 1985).
- b) The initial Classification Committee is not defining a proper programme, but relying on staff at the classification goal to make programme decisions (Hill and Hogan, 1985).
- c) There is lack of feedback from the Classification Committee, particularly when PRC recommendations are rejected (Hill and Hogan, 1985).

### **Literature on prisoner programme assessment**

Findings from literature reviews conducted by the Research and Statistics Division for other research projects were pertinent to the evaluation of PRCs. Studies concerning offenders' perceptions of assessment programmes were of particular interest. The review of literature in this area demonstrated the advantages of both decentralised programme



- (5) The consultation and co-ordination network appears to be more defined between non-custodial PRC members than between different custodial PRC members or between custodial and non-custodial PRC members.
- (6) All PRC members generally considered these consultations were beneficial.
- (7) The main benefits in consulting were thought to be: sharing information (68%); sharing ideas and responsibilities (18%); co-ordinating progress (16%); verifying information from prisoners (12%); and influencing others' thinking (5%).
- (8) Data highlighted the irregular, informal and limited nature of consultation between PRC members when designing and monitoring a prisoner's programme and the co-ordination of services and resources necessary for the implementation and maintenance of a prisoner's programme.

#### **4. Co-ordination with other related committees**

- (1) Very little detailed PRC information is available on warrant files, initial classification forms or PRC forms.
- (2) Sixty-four per cent of PRC members stated that when prisoners were transferred from other gaols their previous programmes were rarely or never known.
- (3) A total of 51% of prisoners had no work programme specified at initial classification.
- (4) Although the first PRC forms after initial classification contained information on the type of job a prisoner had done or was doing in gaol, there was rarely any information on progress made or potential for development.
- (5) There was little detail concerning education on either PRC or initial classification forms. Thirty-one per cent of prisoners (n = 104) had no specific educational programme recorded at initial classification.
- (6) A total of 40% of prisoners (n = 104) had no psychological problem or service mentioned on their first PRC form.
- (7) Forty-seven per cent of initial classification forms and 62% of first PRC forms contained no information on social aspects.

- (8) The majority of forms contained no information on welfare aspects or prisoners' recreation activities or interests.
- (9) The design of both the initial classification and PRC forms prevents the inclusion of detailed information.
- (10) A majority (78%) of PRC recommendations in the sample were accepted by the Classification Sub-Committee and the Director of Classification.
- (11) The flow of information between PRCs and Classification Committees is often informal and inconsistent.

#### **5. Members' understanding of the function of PRCs**

- (1) PRC members had varied and even contradictory ideas on the specific role of the PRCs.
- (2) Thirty-seven per cent of PRC members thought the PRC should be responsible for actively designing and implementing programmes. Thirteen per cent saw the role of the PRC as concerned only with security classification and placement.
- (3) When members were asked how PRCs could be improved, 31% mentioned clearer guidelines from Head Office.
- (4) There was considerable variation among PRC members on how they perceived their roles and the roles of other members.
- (5) The majority (76%) of PRC members stated that some training connected with PRCs would be beneficial.

#### **6. Prisoners' understanding of the function of programmes and PRCs**

- (1) According to the prisoners (n = 104), the provision of information at initial classification was incomplete across a whole range of services.
- (2) Almost two-thirds (62%) of the prisoners interviewed had plans when first classified about how they would occupy their time.
- (3) Nearly half (48%) of prisoners who had made plans said they would have liked more help.
- (4) Eighty-two of 104 prisoners interviewed had made plans either at the time of initial

planning in gaols and of inmate participation in decision-making procedures.

A reception project outlined several studies about inmate response to reception procedures. One 1978 work cited indicated that for prisoners: "There could be danger of creating destructive cynicism if the reception process promised too much" (Koenig and Cheron-da Costa, 1986:13).

A 1977 study by Foley-Jones and Boyes: "...developed and evaluated a programme in direct contrast to the 'pseudo-medical paternalism' which they found in reports on the majority of U.S. based reception and assessment programmes. They argued that the paternalistic approach of these programmes constituted an interference with individual freedoms and focussed excessively on individual pathology. The primary aims of their programme were to:

- i) decentralise assessment; and
- ii) switch from the 'diagnostic' approach to providing inmates with information and thus encourage them to select the way in which they might most profitably serve their sentence.

The programme had been in operation since November, 1975 and was accepted enthusiastically by prison officers and inmates" (Koenig and Cheron-da Costa, 1986: 13-14).

In sum, the literature review for the reception project indicated that empirical literature on attempts to conduct effective assessment and programme planning as part of the process of initial reception justifies considerable scepticism about such procedures. Attempts have been found either to degenerate into assigning a prisoner's security classification and placement or to generate plans which were so unrealistic that they were counter-productive. Decentralized procedures with the active involvement of local custodial staff showed more promise. The advantages of both decentralised programme planning in gaols and of inmate participation in decision-making procedures were stressed.

### **The purpose of this evaluation report**

The *Report of Judge A.G. Muir, Q.C. into Temporary Leave Programmes (1984)* stated that Programme Review Committees are to review both long-term prisoners (with the exception of life sentence prisoners and Governor's Pleasure detainees) and short-term prisoners (with a minimum sentence of three months) at least every six months. In brief, the intended role of the PRC is to review the prisoner's security rating; ensure the prisoner is given proper protection; review the prisoner's

programme; consider the prisoner for external leave programmes (long-term inmates); and ensure that the welfare needs of short-term prisoners and families are satisfied.

The purpose of this project is to examine how PRCs function in practice. As the Martin inquiry into prisoner security classification operated concurrently with this research, classification aspects of PRC operation took a secondary concern to the issue of prisoners' programmes.

In detail, the evaluation looked at six areas:

1. Need assessment and programme planning;
2. The operation of Programme Review Committee meetings;
3. Co-ordination between Programme Review Committee members;
4. Co-ordination with other related committees;
5. Members' understanding of the function of Programme Review Committees; and
6. Prisoners' understanding of the function of programmes and Programme Review Committees.

Recommendations for the improvement of the operation of Programme Review Committees must acknowledge the real constraints imposed by: the physical structure of prisons; the effect of court delays and the number of prisoners subject to further court action; the problems associated with moving people from place to place within the gaols; the variations in availability of employment and development activities; and resources at different prisons. Even given these constraints, we believe that existing resources can be used to achieve more for many prisoners than has been typical so far.

## **METHOD**

Research was conducted at 16 gaols throughout New South Wales. These prisons were selected to represent varying security ratings and geographical locations.

Methods used to gather information included: structured observations of Programme Review Committee meetings; standard interviews using largely open-ended questions; search of warrant files of prisoners who appeared before the PRC meetings in the sample to extract data required for standardised data record sheets; analysis of Classification Sub-Committee decisions using a set of standardised codes; and a check on the time between PRC reviews from a random sample of 212 prisoners' warrant files.

## Observations of Programme Review Committee meetings

A member of the research team attended PRC meetings in 14 gaols (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The number of PRC meetings observed and PRC member and prisoner interviews by gaol, security rating and gaol location

Gaol	Security rating	Location	No. of observations	Member inter-views	Prisoner inter-views
Bathurst (main gaol)	medium	country	8	6	8
Berrima	minimum	country	5	1	5
Central Industrial Prison	maximum	metro.	-	3	-
Cessnock	medium	country	7	6	7
Cooma	medium	country	8	5	8
Emu Plains Training Centre	minimum	metro.	6	6	6
Goulburn (main gaol)	maximum	country	8	5	8
Maitland	maximum	country	7	6	7
Malabar Training Centre	minimum	metro.	8	6	8
Metropolitan Reception Prison	maximum	metro.	8	4	8
Metropolitan Remand Centre	maximum	metro.	3	4	3
Mulawa	medium	metro.	3	4	3
Oberon Afforestation Camp	minimum	country	-	5	3
Parklea	maximum	metro.	6	5	6
Parramatta	maximum	metro.	11	5	11
Silverwater	minimum	metro.	13	4	13
<b>Total</b>			<b>101</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>104</b>

Neither Oberon Afforestation Camp nor the Central Industrial Prison were part of this sample. The ad hoc timetabling of PRC meetings in the CIP made it difficult to observe a meeting. Observations were made for 101 of the 104 prisoners who were interviewed.

The purpose of observations were five-fold: to see the circulation of documents prior to and during meetings; to note which subjects PRC members talk about; to observe whether members give information outside their area of accountability; to observe the decision-making process and member participation in the procedure; and to observe prisoner participation.

An observation sheet was designed to record the type of information discussed at PRC meetings and by whom as well as to document the prior circulation, presence, and discussion of PRC reports at the meeting. The observation sheet covered some general information on the prisoner's crime, sentence length, present gaol, present security rating, recommended gaol and recommended security rating.

Two tables were incorporated in the observation sheet. The first was to record the

circulation of PRC reports. There were nine rows, one for each of the six reports required for the meeting (Psychology, Welfare, Education, Probation and Parole, Work and Wing) plus one each for the previous PRC form, warrant file and description card. There were three columns, one each to record whether reports were circulated prior to the meeting, present at the meeting and discussed at the meeting.

The second table indicated which of eleven topics members of the PRC, the Administrative Assistant and the prisoner discussed at meetings. The topic selection was based on the Muir Report requirements and pilot observations of PRC meetings.

### Interviews

A total of 186 formal interviews were administered for the evaluation. (Pilot interviews had been conducted in April 1986.) The information for the main study was collected from May to September 1986.

Three groups were interviewed: PRC members, PRC Administrative Assistants and prisoners who had appeared before PRC meetings.

### (1) PRC members

Seventy-five (75) PRC members from the different professional areas were interviewed (Table 2).

Position	No.	%
Chairman	14	19
Industries Officer	11	15
Psychologist	12	16
Education Officer	13	17
Welfare Officer	13	17
Probation and Parole Officer	12	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

The member interview schedule incorporated: general information on members' qualifications and experience; questions on methods used to assess prisoners' needs and programme planning; and members' understanding of the function of the PRCs. In total, members were asked over 50 questions.

As Table 2 indicates, PRC member interviews were distributed fairly evenly between the 16 goals.

Interviews had an average duration of one hour.

### (2) PRC Administrative Assistants

Seven Administrative Assistants were interviewed. The interview schedule included questions concerning: information circulated prior to the meeting; administrative problems; the type of information Administrative Assistants put on warrant files; whether copies of PRC reports are kept; and perceptions of their role, how long prisoners should remain at each classification and ways the PRC could be improved.

### (3) Prisoners who appeared before PRC meetings

One hundred and four (104) prisoners were interviewed. With the exception of those from the Central Industrial Prison and Oberon Afforestation Camp, prisoners in the sample had been observed in PRC meetings (Table 1). These prisoners had varying classifications (Table 3).

**Table 3: Classification of prisoners interviewed**

Classification category*	At time of interview
A2	19%
B	28%
C1	24%
C2	19%
C3	10%

\* Security requirements for prisoners fall into six categories. A1 defines the prisoner who requires the highest available security, and is rarely used.

The prisoner interview schedule covered general demographic information, questions on PRCs and their administration, and the prisoner's awareness of services and programme planning.

### Search of warrant files

Two searches of warrant files were made. Firstly, the research team looked at the warrant files of 104 prisoners. These prisoners appeared before sample PRC meetings. Secondly, a random sample of 212 warrant files for prisoners not observed in PRC meetings was analysed. It was suggested that this random sample could include some inmates incarcerated more than six months who had never been seen by a Programme Review Committee.

The warrant file schedule consisted of a checklist indicating what information relevant to PRCs was contained in the warrant file. It also recorded, using the same categories as the PRC forms, the information from the initial classification form, the subsequent PRC form, and the most recent PRC form.

### Analysis of Classification Sub-Committee decisions

The final stage of data collection concerned an analysis of official records concerning the Sub-Committee's decision on the 101 prisoners observed. The schedule covered the PRC recommendations, the Sub-Committee's decisions, the Director's decision and any variations.

## RESULTS

### 1. Need Assessment and Programme Planning

The area of need assessment and programme planning was examined by obtaining information on:

- a) how prisoners are selected to receive a service;
  - b) what members consider to be a programme; and
  - c) how programmes are designed.
- a) **How prisoners are selected to receive a service**

#### *How contact is first initiated*

Non-custodial members of the PRCs were asked "How is contact first initiated between yourself and prisoners?" The question was designed to determine, in a general sense, whether the onus was on the inmate or the PRC member to initiate contact. It was also considered important to determine whether there existed any inter-divisional referral networks for initiating contacts, and whether it was possible for inmates requiring assistance to be "missed" by the system.

Table 4 shows that contact between non-custodial PRC members and inmates is generally initiated by inmates referring themselves (mentioned by all 12 Psychologists, 12 of 13 Education Officers, 12 of 13 Welfare Officers and 8 of 12 Probation and Parole Officers interviewed). It is also evident that the majority of Psychologists report that they use referrals from other non-custodial staff in order to initiate contact with inmates, but that this is not true of Education, Probation and Parole or Welfare Officers. This suggests that there is a network for referrals, but that it generally consists of the various divisional representatives making referrals to the Psychologist. The Probation and Parole Service has its own system for allocating caseloads, and 10 of the 12 Probation and Parole Officers mentioned that contact was generally initiated through this method.

These results suggest that since the onus appears to be on the inmate to initiate contact with divisional representatives and since there exists no formalised, comprehensive inter-divisional referral network, that it is possible for some inmates who need special types of assistance to be missed by the representatives of the different divisional services at the respective institutions.

**Table 4:** Reported ways in which contact is initiated between non-custodial PRC members and inmates

	No. of Psychologists (n = 12)	No. of Education Officers (n = 13)	No. of Welfare Officers (n = 13)	No. of Probation & Parole Officers (n = 12)
Self referral	12	12	12	8
PRC member initiates contact	6	10	6	5
Referral by Psychologist	5	5	4	2
Referral by Education Officer	10	6	3	1
Referral by Probation and Parole Officer	9	4	3	3
Referral by Welfare Officer	10	5	2	2
Referral by Industries Officer	5	0	3	1
Referral by Custodial Officer	9	3	4	2
Referral by Drug and Alcohol Officer	1	1	1	0
Referral by Chaplain	2	0	0	0
Referral by relative or friend	3	2	4	1
Referral by another prisoner	5	7	3	2
Allocated by Probation and Parole service	0	0	0	10
Other	2	4	7	2

**Note:** The question asked was: "How is contact first initiated between yourself and prisoners?"

***How prisoners' needs to receive a service are assessed***

In order to determine how non-custodial PRC members assessed prisoners' needs, they were asked what information they used to decide whether prisoners needed their assistance. This question was asked in an attempt to discover whether there existed any standardised procedures for assessing need; whether PRC members appeared to share information regarding need assessment; and whether PRC members agreed on the location of responsibility for need assessment.

Table 5 shows that 46 of 50 non-custodial PRC members reported that they used information gathered from personal interviews with prisoners in order to assess the degree to which the prisoners were in need of their assistance. It also demonstrates the existence of at least some sharing of information relevant to need assessment between members. This is demonstrated by the fact that 31 out of 50 non-custodial members said they used information from within their professional group to assess need, while 24 out of 50 reported that they used information from other professional groups.

The Muir Report has stated that the role of the Initial Classification Committee is "to begin preparing each prisoner for his earliest proper release by outlining and implementing an initial programme, with social/educational/psychological/industrial components as necessary" (1984:5). It could be assumed then, that much of the responsibility for assessing prisoners' needs is officially located with the Initial Classification Committee. However, only 9 out of 50 non-custodial PRC members reported that they used information provided by the Initial Classification Committee when deciding whether the prisoners needed their assistance (Table 5).

Several explanations could be suggested for these results:

1. Most PRC members do not use (and may not have access to) the information provided by Initial Classification;
2. Information about needs obtained at initial classification (if any) is not conveyed from Initial Classification Committees to PRC members;
3. PRC members are unclear on whether the Initial Classification Committee or the PRCs are responsible for assessing prisoners' needs; or

**Table 5:** The number of non-custodial PRC members who mentioned a specific source of information to determine whether prisoners need their assistance

Source of information	Psychologists (n = 12)	Education Officers (n = 13)	Welfare Officers (n = 13)	Probation and Parole Officers (n = 12)	Across all Professionals (n = 50)
Interview with prisoner	12	11	13	10	46
Within own discipline	8	9	6	8	31
Warrant file	6	6	6	7	25
Other discipline	8	6	8	2	24
Prison Officer	7	5	7	1	20
Psychological test	8	3	3	2	16
Initial classification	1	5	1	2	9
Other	6	5	5	5	21

**Note:** The question asked was: "What information is used to decide whether the prisoners need your assistance?"

4. Prisoners are expected to approach staff for help on the advice of the Initial Classification Committee.

Data presented below indicate that information contained on initial classification forms was minimal. The most frequent comment concerning work on initial classification forms was "as required", for example. Additionally, Table 6 indicates that PRC members are not entirely clear on whose responsibility it is to set up overall programmes for prisoners.

#### **b) What members consider to be a programme**

It is important for different PRC members to have a similar perception of what is meant by the term "a prisoner's programme". Without this members will be working toward different objectives. Moreover, where members on the one committee have different ideas about what constitutes "a prisoner's programme", it might prove difficult to redesign and/or monitor programme as a team.

As has been indicated, the Muir Report (1984) described a prisoner's programme as a plan with social, educational, psychological and industrial components as necessary. It is evident from Table 6, however, that when asked, "What is your understanding of the term 'a prisoner's programme'?", PRC members understood the phrase in a variety of ways. While it is true that the majority did describe it in terms of an "overall programme of development" including some combination of factors like psychological counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, work and security ratings (66%), five members explicitly stated that a prisoner's overall programme should be set up at initial classification. This suggests that PRC members are not entirely clear on whose responsibility it is to set up this "overall" programme.

Eleven per cent of PRC members understood "a prisoner's programme" only in terms of a prisoner's progression through the security ratings. It is clear that, according to the Muir Report (1984), a prisoner's programme is intended to encompass much more than this. There is a danger here that viewing prisoners' programmes only in terms of security ratings could reduce PRCs to little more than Classification Review Committees, a situation that would be clearly unacceptable given their original purpose, and the need to take account of development needs when deciding on security classification and placement.

Twenty-three per cent of PRC members reported that the phrase "a prisoner's

programme" referred to any activity which facilitated the return and reintegration of the prisoner back into the community. In other words, a prisoner's programme was regarded by 23% of PRC members as that which prepared "each prisoner for his/her earliest proper release", which is consistent with Muir's description (1984:4).

#### **c) How programmes are designed**

In light of the fact that PRC members appeared to have different impressions of what constituted "a prisoner's programme", it is not surprising that members reported various methods for designing programmes.

Seventy-two per cent of the 61 PRC members who were asked, "Do you design a programme for prisoners?" (chairmen were not asked) reported they did. However, there seemed to be little evidence of this in some gaols as indicated by PRC forms and prisoner interviews. For example, some sections of PRC forms are often left blank and comments such as "as required" appear regularly. Also, 42 of 104 prisoners interviewed said they had made some plans about what they were going to do throughout the course of their sentence, but that they would have liked more help in making these plans. These results suggest that programmes are not designed and implemented as regularly or effectively as some PRC members imply.

Table 7 shows the different approaches that PRC members reported they used to design programmes. The results suggest that there is a distinction between those who design programmes within their own specialist area (36%) and those who attempt to design programmes which include educational, psychological, social and work components (30%). This latter figure is comprised of those who reported that they attempt to do this individually (25%) and those who reported that they assess prisoners as a member of a team (5%).

It is also apparent from Table 7 that while most PRC members view programme design essentially in terms of need assessment, 25% reported that they contribute to the design of programmes in a purely advisory capacity (that is, based on what the prisoner wants). This figure is comprised of those who reported that they advise prisoners in relation to what the prisoners want to work toward (20%) and those who reported that they generally advise prisoners on how to work through the system (5%).

**Table 6:** PRC members' understanding of the phrase "a prisoner's programme"

Description	Percentage of PRC members (n = 75)
Overall programme of development including education, psychological counselling, D&A counselling, work and security ratings	66
Action to facilitate return and reintegration into the community	23
Path or progression through gaol security ratings	11
Negative responses (e.g., "What programmes?")	7
Education programme only	4
Other	1

**Note** 1: Total adds to more than 100% because some members mentioned more than one description.  
2: The question asked was: "What is your understanding of the term 'a prisoner's programme'?"

If PRC members have different perceptions of what constitutes "a prisoner's programme", and if they go about designing programmes in different ways, then it follows that the appropriateness and level of detail contained in programmes will vary greatly throughout the system. It is possible that this variation could result in some prisoners having very detailed programmes with specified education, psychological, social work, security and future placement components, while others may effectively have no programme at all.

***Designing programmes for Aboriginal, ethnic and female prisoners***

The evaluation attempted to determine whether there were any particular problems associated with designing programmes for Aboriginal, ethnic or female prisoners. Members were asked, "Do you have any difficulty in making programmes for 1. prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds; 2. women; 3. Aborigines?" and, "If yes, what difficulties exist?"

The majority of those PRC members who planned programmes reported that they found it difficult to design programmes for Aboriginal prisoners. The problem mentioned in the greatest number of cases was that the Aboriginal prisoners lacked interest or motivation. Other problems mentioned by some members were that Aborigines did not mix well with other prisoners, and that there were few facilities designed specifically for Aboriginal programmes.

The vast majority of these PRC members also reported difficulty in designing programmes for prisoners from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The major difficulty was one of communication with prisoners for whom English was a second language. Some members mentioned other problems, such as the lack of facilities for ethnic prisoners, and the difficulties associated with understanding other cultures.

About one-quarter of PRC members reported difficulty in designing programmes for women.

**Table 7:** How PRC members report they design programmes

Method	Percentage of PRC members (n = 44)
Assess prisoner's need for respondent's service in gaol	36
Assess prisoner's need for all services offered in gaol	25
Advise prisoner in relation to what he/she wants to work toward	20
Advise prisoner on how to work through prison system	5
Assess prisoner's need for all services offered in gaol as a member of a team	5
Look at recommendations from Classification Committee	2
Other	18

**Note** 1: Total adds up to more than 100% because some members mentioned more than one method.  
2: The question asked was: "How do you design a programme?"



## 2. The Operation of Programme Review Committee Meetings

The operation of PRC meetings was reviewed. Issues examined included:

- a) model standards for PRC meetings;
- b) the administration of PRC meetings; and
- c) general problems and implications.

### a) Model standards for PRC meetings

Ideally PRC meetings are the focal point of the review process. They offer a forum in which members of all disciplines can balance recommendations about prisoner security rating, placement and personal development with departmental, prisoner and community interests. They offer the prisoner an opportunity to present individual plans and views. They present a formal mechanism by which a prisoner's programme and progress can be discussed and monitored.

It is therefore important that PRC meetings operate effectively. The Muir Report's recommendations include a model for the efficient operation of meetings. This model was used to provide a comparison for subsequent observations of how a sample of PRC meetings actually were administered. (See Appendices for these recommendations.)

### b) The administration of PRC meetings

PRC meetings were examined in three ways:

- (1) An observation sheet was designed based on recommendations from the Muir Report and previous observation of PRC meetings.
- (2) Interviews were conducted with 75 PRC members and seven PRC Administrative Assistants.
- (3) A random survey was made of 212 warrant files.

Several broad issues were examined: the time between PRC reviews; the availability, distribution and discussion of information prior to meetings; interviewing prisoners before the meeting; the submission and discussion of reports during meetings; the focus of discussion and frequency of topics considered during meetings; and general problems and implications.

#### *Time between PRC reviews*

Two methods were used to assess the time between PRC reviews. It had been suggested

that some prisoners incarcerated more than six months may not have been seen by a Programme Review Committee and may have "slipped through the system".

One hundred and four (104) prisoners who had attended PRC meetings were interviewed. When asked, "How often do you see a PRC?", 92% said they had seen a PRC at least every six months.

A random sample of 212 warrant files for prisoners not observed in PRC meetings was analysed. Data indicated that all of these prisoners had been seen by a PRC at some time during the previous six months. This suggests that the 8% of the interviewed prisoners who said they had not been seen may have simply not recalled a review or have been referring to a period before PRC Administrative Assistants were appointed.

#### *The availability, distribution and discussion of information prior to meetings*

Observations about PRC meetings attended in 14 gaols included examination of the distribution of reports in preparation for meetings. At the Long Bay Complex Administrative Assistants distributed photocopies of the previous PRC form, the front cover of the warrant file and the Description Card with details of the current conviction.

Interviews with seven Administrative Assistants suggested variation in information provided by them to PRC members before the meeting. While all PRC members received agendas, the Administrative Assistants provided the previous PRC report and a photocopy of the warrant card at some institutions but not others. Other information provided by the Administrative Assistants at some institutions included the Probation and Parole report, a photocopy of the warrant file cover, the current PRC sheet and the Initial Classification Form.

These interviews and observations indicated that very little information is uniformly distributed prior to meetings. The agenda is the only piece of information circulated to all members of all PRCs beforehand.

Interviews with PRC members indicated that agendas are being set and distributed efficiently. Eighty per cent (80%) of PRC members received their agendas at least one week prior to the meeting (Table 8).

**Table 8:** Amount of time prior to meetings that agendas are received by PRC members and amount of notice received by inmates

	Percentage of PRC members	Percentage of inmates
More than a week	37	28
A week	43	25
Less than a week	20	32
No notice	not asked	15

*Note: PRC members were asked: "How long before the meeting do you receive your agenda?" Prisoners were asked: "How much notice do you get about a PRC meeting?"*

More than half of prisoners (53%) stated they received at least one week's notice about meetings (Table 8).

Interviews with PRC members further indicated the limitations and considerable variation of information available prior to meeting (Table 9). Fifteen per cent (15%) stated they had the pre-sentence report prior to the warrant file. However, it should be noted that in spite of the apparent widespread availability of warrant files, the type of information kept on these files varies. Information is filed roughly in date order as opposed to subject order making it time consuming to find information relevant to different aspects of a prisoner's programme.

Table 9 shows that there are certain types of information that PRC members do not have prior

to the PRC meeting which they consider useful. Two-thirds (67%) of members who stated they did not have a prisoner's pre-release report or a past PRC form (65%) prior to the meeting stated it would have been useful information to have had.

Several points are important. First, it appears that PRC members do not have access to certain information which they consider would be useful because there is no mechanism for making it available. For example, pre-sentence reports are not routinely available; and interviews with Administrative Assistants indicated PRC members do not have easy access to past PRC reports. In general, reports from non-custodial members were forwarded to the Classification Sub-Committee without being copied to avoid the possibility of a breach of confidentiality. There are objections to these reports being placed on warrant files.

Second, even though PRC forms are filed on the warrant file, PRC members do not regard them as easily accessible. This is probably because the warrant files are so unwieldy and organised by date order so that finding specific information is often quite difficult.

Three of seven Administrative Assistants made specific suggestions for the possible improvement of information available. Two persons mentioned that the PRC form could be redesigned to allow more space for setting out programmes in detail. Another suggested there should be a PRC or gaol classification file which moves in accordance with prisoner movements.

In brief, consideration must be given to providing PRC members with easy access to the

**Table 9:** Types of information PRC members stated they have prior to a meeting and information they said would be useful

Type of information	The percentage of members who stated that information was available	The percentage of members who did not have the information who stated that it would have been useful
Information from warrant file	71	56
Past P.R.C. form	39	65
Work report	29	53
Wing report	23	55
Psychology report	23	49
Probation and Parole report	19	49
Welfare report	17	48
Education report	17	52
Pre-sentence report	15	67

*Note: The questions asked were: "What information do you have about the prisoner before the PRC meeting?" and "Would any of the following information be useful to have before the PRC meeting as opposed to at the meeting?"*

information they regard as important to monitor a prisoner's programme.

**Table 10:** The number of PRC members who are able to "always", "often", "sometimes" or "never" interview prisoners before the meeting by position on committee

POSITION	FREQUENCY OF INTERVIEWING			
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Chairman	3	1	2	8
Industries Officer	4	0	3	4
Psychologist	2	4	3	3
Education Officer	3	3	5	2
Welfare Officer	4	7	2	0
Probation & Parole Officer	5	4	1	2
TOTAL	21	19	16	19
Percentage	28	25	21	25

**Note:** The question asked was: "Are you able to interview all prisoners before the PRC meeting?"

***Interviewing prisoners before the meeting***

Three-quarters of PRC members stated they were either "always", "often" or "sometimes" able to interview prisoners prior to the PRC meeting (Table 10).

Table 10 indicates that 54 PRC members (72%) were not always able to interview all prisoners before meetings. Twenty-eight (52%) offered reasons: it was unnecessary (12); insufficient time (10); already seeing prisoners (3); and other (3) (Table 11).

**Table 11:** Reasons offered by 28 PRC members as to why they were unable to interview all prisoners before the PRC meeting by position on committee

POSITION	REASONS			
	No time	Not necessary	Already seeing prisoner	Other
Chairman	0	6	0	3
Industries Officer	1	3	3	0
Psychologist	5	0	0	0
Education Officer	2	2	0	0
Welfare Officer	1	1	0	0
Probation & Parole Officer	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	12	3	3

**Note:** The question asked of PRC members who stated they were not able to interview all prisoners before the PRC was: "If not, why not?"

Nine of 12 persons who stated it was unnecessary to interview prisoners before the meeting were custodial officers (either Chairmen or Industries Officers). Further, only one of 10 custodial PRC members stated "no time" as the reason for not interviewing prisoners. A reasonable generalisation from data might be that custodial PRC members who do not always interview prisoners before the PRC meeting feel that it is unnecessary in view of their particular role in the gaols. Non-custodial members who do not always interview prisoners seem to be restricted largely by demands on their time.

Researchers attended PRC meetings in 14 gaols. Observations showed that prisoners had been interviewed by: Probation and Parole Officers (64% of cases); Psychologists (61% of cases); Welfare Officers (55%); Educational Officers (35%); and Industries Officers (10%).

Both observations and interviews indicate variation in interview procedures for prisoners. The development of a more standardised procedure for ensuring some pre-meeting contact between PRC members and prisoners would be advisable. As one-to-one interviewing is time consuming and ten PRC members who were questioned stated they did not interview prisoners due to lack of time, it might be appropriate to consider other more efficient methods for monitoring a prisoner's overall progress.

***The submission and discussion of reports during meetings***

The submission and discussion of members' reports during meetings was observed. Overall an average of 65% of the reports were submitted at meetings (Table 12). The Wing Officer's report was the most often available (for 84% of

the 104 prisoners reviewed), and the Education Officer's the least often available (51%).<sup>o</sup>

Late additions to the agenda, no prior contact with prisoners, members missing from the meeting and members who disagree with the need for written reports accounted for most absent reports.

The prisoner's warrant file and Description Card were always present at the PRC meetings observed. The form from the previous PRC was present at the majority (71%) of meetings.

Although information incorporated in the reports was available at the majority of meetings, it was rarely presented. Non-custodial PRC reports and previous PRC forms were discussed infrequently. In one-third of meetings observed, the wing report (32%), Description Card (31%), warrant file (30%) and work report (29%) were discussed.

***The focus of discussion and frequency of topics considered during meetings***

An observation sheet had been designed to record which of eleven topics members of the PRC, the Administrative Assistants and the prisoners discussed at meetings. The topic selection was based on the Muir Report requirements. Observational counts also were made about whether members give information outside their area of accountability, the level of member and prisoner participation and the decision-making process in general.

Data indicated that the Chairperson, Probation and Parole Officer and Psychologist have a wide information base and consequently these persons were more likely than other members to join in discussion on a regular and comprehensive basis. Other members

**Table 12:** Percentage of prisoners reviewed for whom different information was distributed prior to the meeting, was available at the meeting and was discussed at the meeting

	Circulated prior to the meeting	Available at the meeting	Discussed at the meeting
Psychologist's report	0	68	5
Welfare Officer's report	0	53	0
Education Officer's report	0	51	6
Probation & Parole Officer's report	0	55	6
Work report	0	79	29
Wing report	0	84	32
Average percentage for Member's reports	0	65	13
Previous PRC form	23	71	4
Warrant card	19	100	30
Average percentage for administrative information	20	90	22

(Welfare, Education and Industries) tended to restrict discussion to their own subject areas.

Observations revealed that the Chairperson was the most vocal member in PRC meetings (Table 13). Calculated as a percentage of total possible occasions to comment, the Chairperson's discussion involved: prisoner's length of sentence (67%), work programme (65%), behaviour in prison (63%), and prisoner's wishes (55%). Comments were made on other subject areas on an average of 29% of occasions. The only exception was the subject of local rules (defined as special rules relating to classification that are specific to a prison). Local rules were discussed infrequently by all PRC members (Table 14).

The main discussion contribution of the Assistant Superintendents- Industries concerned information on the prisoner's work programme (44%) and behaviour in prison (22%). Minimal comment was made concerning other subject areas.

Overall, psychologists' discussion input was 16% of total possible opportunities for comment. Discussion topics included: the prisoner's behaviour in prison (32%), special needs (21%), sentence length and release date (20%), educational programme (17%) and family and social background (17%).

The Welfare Officers observed generally restricted discussion to four areas: the prisoner's family and social background (31%), behaviour in prison (16%), prisoner's wishes (15%) and prisoner's work programme (14%).

The Educational Officers discussed the prisoner's educational programme (55%), behaviour in prison (17%), work programmes (14%) and special needs (12%).

As mentioned, Probation and Parole Officers' contributions reflected the broader knowledge of a prisoner necessary for their position. They talked about a prisoner's sentence length and release date (39%), behaviour in prison (38%), family and social background (33%), criminal history (29%), special needs (29%), and the prisoner's wishes (22%), work programme (20%) and educational programme (18%).

Administrative Assistants in attendance at PRC meetings were a source of information concerning: length of sentence (25%), regulations and criteria related to classification (23%), criminal history (21%) and time spent at the present classification (19%).

Observations indicated that prisoners were most likely to express interest in their future and how to occupy their time while incarcerated. Prisoners commented upon: their wishes (63%), educational programme (41%), work programme (41%) and their family and social

background circumstances (35%). Minimal discussion reflected administrative interests (classification regulations 7%, length of time served 10%).

**Table 13:** Members' discussion input as a percentage of total possible opportunities for comment on every topic for every prisoner

Position	Percentage
Chairperson	39
Probation and Parole Officer	23
Psychologist	16
Assistant Superintendent (Industries)	12
Education Officer	12
Welfare Officer	10

Table 14 indicates topics discussed in meetings. Most frequently considered issues were: the prisoner's behaviour in prison, work programme and length of sentence/release date.

**Table 14:** Topics discussed by PRC members as a percentage of possible opportunities for comment

Topic	Percentage
Behaviour in prison	31
Work programme	28
Sentence length and release date	25
Educational programme	24
Prisoner wishes	21
Family and social background	20
Special needs and drug or alcohol counselling	18
Criminal history	16
Regulations and criteria	12
Length at present classification	9
Local rules	2

In sum, observations of member discussion and frequency of topics considered suggest that lack of discussion about reports at meetings combined with the tendency for members to restrict participation to their own areas of expertise has reduced the effectiveness of information sharing at meetings.

### **c) General problems and implications**

Several general comments result from a random sample of prisoners' warrant files and observations and interviews concerning PRC meetings. Some issues have been considered elsewhere but are raised here to offer an overview.

1. Data from a random sample of warrant files and interviews with prisoners indicate that PRCs appear to review prisoners as frequently as planned. Data showed that the vast majority of inmates attended meetings at least every six months.
2. Both observation and interviews indicate variation in interview procedures for prisoners. Twenty-eight per cent (28%) of all PRC members said they interviewed all prisoners before meetings. Time constraints and an unwillingness on the part of inmates to see PRC members was said to restrict the individual interviewing of prisoners. Needless to say, the process of monitoring a prisoner's programme would benefit from members having maximum knowledge of inmates.
3. There is considerable variation in and limitations on information available to PRC members before the meeting. However, agendas are being set and distributed efficiently.
4. Observations indicated that an average of 65% of the reports were submitted at meetings.
5. Great variations exist in the level of information and detail contained in different reports. No clear guidelines have been set up on the type and level of information required. The lack of guidelines facilitates both irrelevant and narrowly technical information being incorporated in reports. The reports should be concise and relevant to the decision process.
6. The flow of information at a PRC meeting is inhibited by the lack of discussion of members' reports. The PRC meeting is the only formal mechanism for discussing a prisoner's programme and progress so it is vital that an effective information flow exists.
7. Members do not always participate in discussions even within their own area of expertise. The result is that not all members are fully involved in discussions or the decision making process for each prisoner at the PRC meeting. This reinforces the inadequate information flow and decision making process.

### **3. Co-ordination between PRC members**

Information was obtained on:

- a) the amount of consultation and co-ordination between PRC members; and
- b) problems and their implications.

#### **a) The amount of consultation and co-ordination between PRC members**

At present, the Programme Review Committee meeting is the only formal mechanism by which all PRC members can meet and discuss a prisoner's programme. Any consultation or co-ordination other than at the PRC meeting is at an informal level.

To analyse the degree of co-ordination and consultation between PRC members within the gaols the PRC member sample were asked: whether they had knowledge before the meeting of what other divisional representatives planned for prisoners; whether there was discussion with others prior to the meetings about decision-making; and whether these consultations were perceived to be beneficial.

Data analysis indicated:

1. The majority of respondents either "sometimes know" or "never know" what other PRC members have planned for the prisoner (Table 15).
2. A small percentage of PRC members had prior discussions with their PRC colleagues about what decisions should be made at the PRC meeting (see Table 16).
3. The majority of respondents (77%) consulted with representatives of other divisions when they were working out a prisoner's programme.
4. The frequency at which these consultations occurred mostly ranged from "always" (27%) or "usually" (16%) to "sometimes" (35%).
5. The consultation and co-ordination network appears to be more defined between non-custodial PRC members than between different custodial PRC members or between custodial and non-custodial PRC members (Table 17).
6. All PRC members generally considered these consultations were beneficial.
7. The main benefits in consulting were thought to be: sharing information (68%); sharing ideas and responsibilities (18%); co-ordinating progress (16%); verifying information from prisoners (12%); and influencing others' thinking (5%).
8. Data highlighted the irregular, informal and limited nature of consultation between PRC

members when designing and monitoring a prisoner's programme; and the co-ordination of services and resources necessary for the implementation and maintenance of a prisoner's programme.

**b) Problems and their Implications**

A number of problems exist in the process of co-ordination between PRC members:

1. Although PRC members do have an informal consultation network it is not comprehensive.
2. Prisoners at present can over-utilise resources by consulting with each PRC member separately about a particular problem.
3. The roles and responsibilities of some members overlap.
4. No formal mechanism exists to facilitate an efficient utilisation of resources; a well co-ordinated programme; the continual

monitoring of a prisoner's progress; or a network for information sharing between PRC members.

5. Without a formal mechanism for the continual monitoring of a prisoner's programme, changes in their needs, a lack of commitment on the prisoner's part or a crisis can remain unnoticed.

The preceding problems prevent efficient and effective co-ordination between members when working out and monitoring a prisoner's programme and progress through the gaol system. Instead of persevering with the present ad hoc method it might be more appropriate to introduce a systematic approach with members of different divisions co-ordinating their involvement with prisoners instead of sometimes dealing with them in isolation. Initiatives designed to achieve these objectives and address the preceding problems will be discussed in the recommendations.

**Table 15:** PRC members' knowledge of other members' plans

	Chairman's knowledge of:					Average %
	A/S Industries	Psychology	Education	Welfare	Probation & Parole	
Always			1 (7%)			1
Usually	1 (7%)		1 (7%)	1 (7%)		4
Sometimes	2 (14%)	3 (21%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)	3 (21%)	17
Never	8 (57%)	10 (71%)	9 (64%)	10 (71%)	10 (71%)	67

**Note:** The question asked was: "Do you know before the meeting what the other divisional representatives have planned for the prisoners?"

	Psychologist's knowledge of:					Average %
	Chairman	A/S Industries	Education	Welfare	Probation & Parole	
Always	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	8
Usually	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	15
Sometimes	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)	5 (42%)	35
Never	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	22

Welfare Officer's knowledge of:						
	Chairman	A/S Industries	Psychology	Education	Probation & Parole	Average %
Always						0
Usually			1 (8%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	5
Sometimes	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	30
Never	10 (77%)	8 (62%)	6 (46%)	6 (46%)	6 (46%)	55

Assistant Superintendents' (Industries) knowledge of:						
	Chairman	Psychology	Education	Welfare	Probation & Parole	Average %
Always						
Usually	1 (9%)				1 (9%)	4
Sometimes	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	14
Never	6 (55%)	6 (55%)	6 (55%)	7 (64%)	6 (55%)	57

Education Officer's knowledge of:						
	Chairman	A/S Industries	Psychology	Welfare	Probation & Parole	Average %
Always					1 (8%)	2
Usually	2 (15%)		3 (23%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	12
Sometimes	3 (23%)	5 (38%)	6 (46%)	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	41
Never	7 (54%)	7 (54%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)	37



Probation and Parole Officer's knowledge of:						
	Chairman	A/S Industries	Psychology	Education	Welfare	Average %
Always		1 (8%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	12
Usually	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	15
Sometimes	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	30
Never	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	22

**Table 16:** Indication of those PRC members who discussed their ideas with their PRC colleagues

	Discussed ideas with						% of possible discussion that did occur
	Chairman	Assistant Superin- tendent Industries	Psycho- logist	Education Officer	Welfare Officer	Probation & Parole Officer	
Chairman		1 (7%)					1
Assistant Superintendent Industries	3 (27%)		3 (27%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)	27
Psychologist	3 (25%)	2 (17%)		8 (67%)	8 (67%)	9 (75%)	50
Education Officer	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)		4 (31%)	5 (38%)	32
Welfare Officer	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	5 (38%)	5 (38%)		4 (31%)	27
Probation and Parole Officer	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)		32
% of possible discussions with the person mentioned	21	22	29	33	28	36	

**Note:** The question asked was: "Had you discussed your ideas about what decision should be made with anyone before the meeting?"

**Table 17:** Indication of which PRC colleagues PRC members consult

	Consult with						% of possible consultations that did occur
	Chairman	Assistant Superintendent Industries	Psychologist	Education Officer	Welfare Officer	Probation & Parole Officer	
Chairman		6 (43%)	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	49
Assistant Superintendent Industries	5 (45%)		6 (55%)	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	4 (36%)	47
Psychologist	5 (42%)	7 (58%)		11 (92%)	11 (92%)	11 (92%)	75
Education Officer	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	11 (85%)		8 (62%)	8 (62%)	56
Welfare Officer	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	11 (85%)	11 (85%)		9 (69%)	59
Probation and Parole Officer	3 (25%)	7 (58%)	8 (67%)	8 (67%)	6 (50%)		53
% of possible consultations with the person mentioned	33	46	68	70	60	62	

**Note:** The questions asked were: "Do you consult with other divisional representatives when you are working out a prisoner's programme?" and "If yes, which representatives do you consult with?"

#### 4. Co-ordination with other related Committees

Co-ordination between committees was examined by analysing three links:

- a) co-ordination between PRCs at different gaols;
- b) co-ordination between initial classification and individual PRCs; and
- c) co-ordination between PRCs and the Classification Sub-Committee that ratifies PRC decisions.

##### a) Co-ordination between PRCs at different gaols

The flow of information between PRCs at different gaols is essential if programmes are to be implemented effectively. Specifically, the level of information available on warrant files to the Reception Committee is important if prisoners' programmes are to be followed up when a prisoner arrives at a new gaol. This file is the only documentation available to all PRC

members which moves with prisoners from gaol to gaol.

Very little detailed information was available on the warrant files of prisoners in the sample (Table 18).

**Table 18:** The type of information contained on 104 prisoners' warrant files

Type of information	Percentage of warrant files containing information
Police Antecedent Reports	53
Probation and Parole Reports	31
Work Reports	24
Wing Reports	20

Information on initial classification forms and past PRC forms similarly contained little detail. In fact, 64% of PRC members stated that when prisoners were transferred from other gaols their previous programmes were rarely or never known.

**b) Co-ordination between Initial classification and Individual PRCs**

Information contained on initial classification forms and previous PRC forms was analysed by the categories listed on the forms: work, educational, psychological, social and welfare aspects, and recreation and other.

**Work**

The most frequent comment (42%) concerning work on initial classification forms was "as required" (Table 19). If this percentage is added to the percentage in which no information was given, a total of 51% of prisoners had no work programme specified at initial

**Table 19:** The type of comments regarding work programmes contained on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification (n=104)

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	9	13
As required	42	13
Maintenance	9	6
Prisoner's occupation before gaol	8	0
Sweeper	6	8
Cook	6	16
Full-time student	4	11
Other occupations/ comments	16	33

classification.

Although the first PRC forms after initial classification contained information on the type of job a prisoner had done or was doing in gaol, there was rarely any information on progress made or potential for development.

**Education**

There was little detail concerning education on either PRC or initial classification forms (Table 20). Although information was given on

the type of course a prisoner was doing, no detail was given on how well the prisoner was doing or whether the course was part of a vocational programme or a leisure activity.

**Table 20:** The type of comments regarding education contained on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification (n=104)

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	18	28
Basic education	14	7
Advised to see Education Officer	13	3
No interest	10	8
Motor maintenance	7	3
Business studies	5	5
Carpentry/building	4	5
Welding	4	3
Foreign languages	4	0
Typing	4	2
Arts/pottery	1	10
Other courses	26	33
No contact	0	5

**Note:** Percentages add up to more than 100 because some prisoners were doing more than one course.

If the categories "no information" and "advised to see Education Officer" are added, a total of 31% of prisoners had no specific educational programme recorded at initial classification. Similarly, 36% of prisoners had no specific educational programme recorded at their first PRC after initial classification.

**Psychological Aspects**

No programme was specified in 18% of cases at initial classification (Table 21). A total of 40% of prisoners had no psychological problem or service mentioned on their first PRC form.

**Social Aspects**

Forty-seven per cent (47%) of initial classification forms and 62% of first PRC forms contained no information on social aspects (Table 22).

**Table 21:** Comments regarding a prisoner's psychological programme (n=104)

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	18	32
Aware of service	27	17
Advised to see psychologist	23	3
Advised to see a drug & alcohol counsellor	14	2
History of drug and alcohol abuse	6	0
Psychiatric treatment recommended	5	0
Seeing psychologist	4	23
No interest	1	2
Report attached	0	10
No contact	0	8
Other	1	2

**Table 22:** The comments made regarding social aspects on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	47	62
Information on visits	53	36
Accommodation after release	0	2

#### Welfare

The majority of the forms contained no information on welfare aspects (Table 23).

**Table 23:** Comments regarding the welfare programme on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification (n=104)

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	70	55
Family situation	14	5
Aware of service	9	16
Information on visits	6	13
Advised to see Welfare Officer	1	2
No contact	0	4
Other	0	5

#### Recreation

No information was available about prisoners' recreation activities or interests on 88% of initial classification forms and on 96% of first PRC forms.

**Table 24:** The comments made on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification in the "other" section

Type of information or comment	Percentage of initial classification forms containing comment	Percentage of first PRC forms after initial classification containing comment
No information	21	15
Future gaol placement	30	40
On segregation/ protection	12	7
Criminal history	12	2
Judge's recommendation	4	2
Programme with educational, work and, psychological components	2	0
Other comments	20	34

#### Other

A variety of information was indicated in the "other" category (Table 24).

### **Overall comments**

Information on initial classification forms and the first PRC form after initial classification contained very little detail. There was wide variation in the type of information provided.

Several problems were highlighted:

1. The design of both initial classification and PRC forms prevents the inclusion of detailed information. There is minimal space to write comments. There is no category for a prisoner's employment history or for Probation and Parole information on the initial classification form. The information contained under the categories "social" and "welfare" overlaps. On PRC forms the categories are duplicated under the headings of a prisoner's current programme and a prisoner's recommended programme. Although logically distinct, usually only one part is used.
2. The problem of follow-up when a prisoner arrives at a new gaol was indicated. In principle the Muir Report (1984) states that every short-term prisoner with a minimum sentence of three months should appear before a PRC within two weeks of reception in their gaol of classification. In practice it can be up to six months before a prisoner is seen by a PRC at the gaol of classification. Although prisoners are seen by a Reception Committee, this committee cannot take the place of the PRC and follow-up a prisoner's programme.

### **c) Co-ordination between PRCs and the Classification Sub-Committee**

The PRCs forward their recommendations for a prisoner's classification to the Classification Sub-Committee. The two members of the Classification Sub-Committee consider and comment on the recommendations before forwarding them to the Director of Classification for ratification.

Aspects of the co-ordination between the two committees were examined:

1. Acceptance of PRC recommendations by the Classification Sub-Committee served to

gauge discrepancies in decision making by the two committees. A majority (78%) of PRC recommendations in the sample were accepted by the Classification Sub-Committee and the Director of Classification.

The major reasons given for refusal were: parole deferred; has served insufficient time at present classification; has breached parole before so parole date is unlikely; outside of the criteria of recommended institution; and remain on workhold.

One of the main reasons given for the refusal of recommendations was insufficient time spent at the present classification. However, when PRC members were asked whether a minimum time period existed on each security classification only half (51%) replied positively. A further question concerning minimum time periods was then asked of these members. There was no consensus. Responses varied from three months at a C1 or C2 classification to nine months to a year or "depends on sentence".

There are no official guidelines on the time to be spent on a certain classification, only informal guidelines. This inconsistency contributes to the maintenance of variations in the decisions made by the two committees.

2. PRC members were asked which factors they considered when they were lowering a prisoner's classification (Table 25).

The prisoner's behaviour and work patterns were mentioned by substantial majorities of the PRCs as being considered when lowering a prisoner's classification. However the factors reportedly considered are not consistent throughout the different PRCs. Other matters which might be considered depend on what is covered in the various reports.

These inconsistencies further exemplify the informality and vagueness of communication between the Classification Division and the PRCs. It is recommended that a manual be introduced to remedy these problems, and be supported by training and team development activities for all PRCs.

**Table 25:** Factors PRC members considered when lowering a prisoner's classification

Factor	Percentage (n=75)
Behaviour patterns	79
Work patterns	61
Psychologist's report	56
Offence type	52
Sentence length	49
Courses doing	49
Education Officer's report	49
Welfare Officer's report	49
Non-parole period	41
Date of release	41
Probation & Parole Officer's report	40
Family ties	39
Escapes	31
Length at present classification	25
Further charges	13
Type of institution	13
Pre-sentence report	13

**Note:** *The question asked was: "What information do you consider when changing the classification of a prisoner?"*

## 5. Members' Understanding of the Function of PRCs

This issue was examined by obtaining information on:

- the perceived role of the PRC;
- the perceived role of PRC members; and
- the training needs of PRC members.

### a) The perceived role of the PRC

It is apparent that the operation of any given PRC will be determined largely by how its members perceive its role. The research findings indicated that PRC members had varied and even contradictory ideas on the specific role of the PRCs. The major area of disagreement concerned the appropriate level of intervention required of PRC members into an inmate's programme. When asked, "What do you think the aims of the PRC are?", 37% of PRC members thought the PRC should be responsible for actively designing and implementing programmes, 28% thought it should be responsible only for monitoring programmes and 16% thought it should be

**Table 26:** How PRC members perceived the aims of the PRC

Aim	Percentage of interviewees who stated these as aims of PRCs (n=75)
Design and monitor a prisoner's overall programme of education, work, D & A counselling and security ratings	37
Monitor a prisoner's overall programme/progress	28
Review of prisoner's security rating and placement	21
Make suggestions/recommendations about what programmes are available	16
Negative responses (e.g. "who knows?", "what aims?")	7
Give inmate opportunity to express him/herself	4
Other	7

**Note:** 1. 13% of PRC members stated that the aim of the PRC was only to review a prisoner's security rating and placement, and mentioned no other aims.  
2. The question asked was: "What do you think the aims of the PRC are?"

simply responsible for providing suggestions or information about programmes (Table 26). Apart from these differences, 13% of PRC members saw the role of the PRC as concerned only with security classification and placement (Table 26).

When members were asked, "Have you any ideas how the PRCs could be improved?", 31% mentioned clearer guidelines from Head Office. This also suggests that members are not entirely clear about the specific role of the PRC. This might indicate why PRC operation varies so greatly. Consequently, in order to maximise the uniformity and effectiveness of PRCs it will be necessary to make explicit the specific responsibilities of the committees.

## **b) The perceived role of PRC members**

There was considerable variation among PRC members in how they perceived their roles and the roles of other members. Tables 27a to 27f summarise the relevant data. Each member was asked, "How would you describe the roles of the other members?" for each member by functional title. They were also asked, "How would you describe your role as a member of the PRC?" The replies were categorised by the functional title of the respondent and the functional title of the role described. Thus Table 27a shows the replies of 14 Chairmen and 61 members when asked to describe the role of the Chairman in the PRC.

Two of the thirteen Education Officers replied that their role on the PRC was only to provide information on educational courses available and to report on which courses the prisoner was doing. Seven other Education Officers mentioned that their responsibilities included some type of educational assessment and determining appropriate courses.

When other PRC members were asked to describe the role of the Education Officer, 32% replied that they were responsible only for providing information on available courses and reporting on which courses the prisoner was doing. Another 19% mentioned that they should be responsible for educational assessment and determining appropriate courses (Table 27d).

Other variations in the perception of PRC members' responsibilities were also evident from the results.

It seems that the Chairmen's views on their own responsibilities corresponded closely with how other PRC members viewed them (see Table 27a). This does not seem to be true of the Probation and Parole Officers. Only the Probation and Parole Officers themselves mentioned that their task involved acting as the "prisoner's advocate" and designing "suitable or appropriate programmes" (Table 27b). Also, while some of the non-custodial PRC members mentioned that acting as the "prisoner's advocate" was a part of their own respective roles, no one at all mentioned this task when describing the roles of any **other** members.

Another finding relevant to how members perceived each other's contributions was that for each group of PRC members (except the Chairmen), some of the other members made negative comments regarding their respective contributions, and in some cases queried why they were included on the committee.

These results have important implications for PRC operation, since it is clear that members' perception of their own roles and the roles of other members will determine the way in which members contribute to the committee and the way in which they interact with other members.

**Table 27:** How PRC members describe their own role and how their roles are described by other PRC members

27a) Chairman

Task	Task mentioned as part of Chairman's role by:			
	(a) Chairmen (n=14)		(b) Other PRC members (n=61)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Co-ordinate and act as spokesman for committee	13	93	38	62
Act as superintendent's representative (including provide security and classification information)	4	29	10	16
Provide information regarding inmate behaviour in gaol	3	21	6	10
Provide departmental and warrant information	2	14	10	16
Introduce prisoner	2	14	7	11
Communicate Classification Sub-Committee decision to inmate	0	0	3	5
Aid in decision making/break deadlocks	0	0	7	11
Other	1	7	8	13

*Note: The two questions asked were: "How would you describe your role as a member of the PRC?" and "How would you describe the roles of the other members?"*

27b) Probation and Parole Officer

Task	Task mentioned as part of Probation and Parole Officers' role by:			
	a) Probation and Parole Officers (n=12)		(b) Other PRC members (n=63)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Provide information relevant to non-parole period, past parole performances, parole chances, etc.	9	75	55	87
Act as prisoner's advocate	3	25	0	0
Design suitable or appropriate programmes	2	17	0	0
Provide information relevant to work release (i.e. sponsors etc.)	0	0	5	8
Negative responses	0	0	4	6
Provide long-term post-release care information	0	0	3	5
Other	0	0	3	19



## 27c) Psychologist

Task	Task mentioned as part of Psychologists' role by:			
	(a) Psychologists (n=12)		(b) Other PRC members (n=63)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Provide psychological information (i.e. current counselling, D & A problems, etc.)	9	75	53	84
Act as prisoner's advocate	9	75	0	0
Determine whether or not programmes are suitable for prisoners	6	50	6	10
Negative responses (e.g. "don't know why they are on PRC")	0	0	5	8
Other	0	0	5	8

## 27d) Education Officer

Task	Task mentioned as part of Education Officers' role by:			
	(a) Education Officers (n=13)		(b) Other PRC members (n=62)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Provide information on educational courses available and which courses prisoner is doing	7	54	39	63
Assess prisoner's capabilities and/or advise on appropriate courses	7	54	12	19
Monitor prisoner's educational progress	4	31	19	31
Act as prisoner's advocate	3	23	0	0
Negative responses (e.g., "wonder why they are there")	0	0	4	6
Other	2	15	5	8

Note: 1. 32% of PRC members described the role of the Education Officer only in terms of providing information on educational courses and which courses the prisoner was doing, without mentioning anything else.  
2. 15% (2) of the Education Officers described their own role only in terms of providing information on educational courses and which courses the prisoner was doing, without mentioning anything else.

27e) Welfare Officer				
Task mentioned as part of Welfare Officers' role by:				
Task	(a) Welfare Officers (n=13)		(b) Other PRC members (n=62)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Provide information and suggestions regarding family, social ties, visits, etc.	7	54	53	85
Act as prisoner's advocate	5	38	0	0
Negative responses (e.g., "don't know why he's there"; "minimal input")	0	0	6	10
Other	3	23	3	5

27f) Industries Officer				
Task mentioned as part of Industries Officers' role by:				
Task	(a) Industries Officers (n=11)		(b) Other PRC members (n=64)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Provide information on work and behaviour patterns	10	91	51	80
Provide information regarding work facilities at other gaols	0	0	3	5
Negative responses (e.g., "insignificant contribution")	0	0	3	5
Other	3	27	5	8

### c) The training needs of PRC members

When asked, "Would you like to have some training?" more than three-quarters (76%) of the PRC members interviewed stated that they would like some training connected with PRCs. It was thought that training would be useful if it addressed the following areas: standardised guidelines on how PRCs should operate (37%); the goals of PRCs (25%); facilities offered at other gaols (23%); roles of PRC members (21%); criteria used by Classification Sub-Committee for ratifying PRC recommendations (12%); how to conduct a meeting (11%); and the type of information that should be presented at PRCs; and report writing (11%) (Table 28). It is evident that most of these areas could be addressed by providing members

with the appropriate information, by way of a PRC manual or something similar. However, other areas would require some in-service training. For example, how to conduct an effective meeting is an area best addressed in this manner.

It is also worthy of note that 12% of interviewees mentioned problems with the Chairman (for example, "Chairman should be amenable to discussion", "we need a suitable Chairman") when asked what problems there were with the present PRC system. This might suggest that training for PRC Chairmen (with a focus on how to ensure all members participate and how to conduct a meeting so that a prisoner feels able to speak) is an area of particular need.

**Table 28:** Types of training considered to be useful by the 57 PRC members who stated that they would like to have some training

Type of training	Percentage of PRC members
Standardised guidelines	37
The goals of PRCs	25
Facilities and programmes offered at other gaols	23
Roles of Committee members	21
Criteria used by Classification Sub-Committee for ratifying PRC recommendations	2
How to conduct a meeting	11
Type of information that should be presented at PRCs and report writing	11
Other	11

*Note: Total adds up to more than 100% because some members mentioned more than one type of training.*

## 6. Prisoners' Understanding of the Function of Programmes and PRCs

Prisoners' understanding of the function of programmes and PRCs was examined by obtaining information on:

- a) prisoners' knowledge of services after initial classification;
- b) prisoners' plans at the time of initial classification and throughout the duration of their sentence;
- c) the type of help prisoners stated they need to make plans;
- d) prisoners' knowledge of classification criteria;
- e) prisoners' perceptions of the PRC system;
- f) prisoners' utilisation of services; and
- g) services that prisoners believe should be available.

### a) Prisoners' knowledge of services after initial classification

Table 29 shows the percentages of prisoners who reported that they were told about different services available in gaol when they were first classified. It is evident from the table that 45% of prisoners stated that they were not told about work opportunities in gaols. This is not surprising since "as required" was the most

frequent comment on initial classification forms under the work category. While the percentages of prisoners who claimed they were not told about the other services in gaol were smaller, the results still indicated that, according to the prisoners, the provision of information at initial classification was incomplete across a whole range of services. While this could in part be due to a lack of recall, prisoners did not receive the information in a retainable form.

### b) Prisoners' plans at the time of initial classification and throughout the duration of their sentence

Prisoners were asked whether, at the time of initial classification, they had planned what they were going to do during their sentence. This was asked firstly to determine the extent to which prisoners made plans, and secondly to determine the sorts of plans that prisoners made.

Of the 104 prisoners interviewed, 62% (64 persons) said they had a plan about what they were going to do during their sentence when they were first classified. Table 30 shows the percentage of prisoners who made different types of plans as a percentage of prisoners who made any plans. The types of plans most frequently concerned doing educational courses and trade training.

**Table 29:** Percentage of prisoners who reported that they were told about services in gaol at initial classification

Knowledge of gaol service	Told by gaol staff	Told by prisoners	Told by staff and prisoners	Not told	Cannot remember	Already knew about service
Educational courses	45	20	7	24	2	2
Work opportunities	39	16	7	45	-	2
Psychological counselling	53	17	-	23	1	6
Welfare services	47	23	4	19	1	6
Drug and alcohol counselling	35	18	4	36	2	6
Probation and parole	35	16	5	38	1	6
Recreation and sport	23	34	2	36	-	6

*Note: The question asked was: "Thinking back to when you were first classified for this sentence, were you told about: educational courses?; work opportunities?; psychological counselling?; welfare services?; drug and alcohol counselling?; Probation and Parole?; recreation and sport?"*

**Table 30:** Types of plans made by prisoners at time of initial classification as percentages of prisoners who actually made plans

Type of plan	Percentage of prisoners who made plans (n=64)
Do educational courses or further knowledge	39
Do trade training	16
Get to particular gaol	14
Work	11
Stay fit and healthy	11
Get out as soon as possible	11
Get drug and alcohol counselling	8
"Do my time"	6
Progress through the gaol system	5
Get to Work Release	2
Other	22

*Note: The question asked was: "Again, thinking back to when you first went before the Classification Committee, had you made any plans about what you were going to do in gaol during your sentence?"*

Table 31 shows the percentage of prisoners who made different or new plans throughout the duration of their sentence. Results show that many prisoners (45% of 40 persons) who had no plans at the time of initial classification

developed plans later in their sentence. Some prisoners (22% of 64 prisoners) who did have plans early in their sentence changed these plans at a later stage.

Changes in circumstances and interests have important implications for the way in which prisoners' programmes are designed, implemented and monitored. For example, it is clear that inflexible programme design at the time of initial classification is inappropriate, especially for those prisoners serving longer terms. PRCs need to be responsive to changes in a prisoner's circumstances and interests in order to be most effective.

**Table 31:** Percentage of prisoners who made different or new plans throughout the course of their sentence

	Those with plans at initial classification (n=64)	Those with no plans at initial classification (n=40)
Changed original plans	22	NA
Did not change original plans	78	NA
Made plans later	NA	45
Did not make plans later	NA	55

*Note:* The question asked was: "Since then, have you made any different plans?"

**c) The type of help prisoners stated they need to make plans**

Eighty-two of 104 prisoners interviewed had made plans either at the time of initial classification or later in their sentence. Only 29% of these 82 prisoners said that someone had helped them make plans. Almost half of the 82 (48%) reported that they would have liked additional assistance.

Of the 39 prisoners who wanted more help, almost one-third (31%) specifically wanted assistance in planning their release (Table 32). Approximately one-quarter (26%) stated they wanted advice concerning educational courses.

**d) Prisoners' knowledge of classification criteria**

Although a majority of prisoners stated that they had made plans at some stage during their sentence, they generally had no clear idea how to get a lower classification or progress through the gaol system. Twenty-eight per cent said they did not know what was required to obtain a lower classification (Table 33). Most others mentioned either "maintain a good attitude" or "work" as necessary to obtain a lower classification.

**Table 32:** Type of help that prisoners wanted

Type of help that prisoners wanted	Percentage of prisoners (n=39)
Help with planning release	31
Advice on educational courses	26
Information on facilities at other gaols	23
Easier access to and more time with non-custodial staff	21
Other	15

*Note:* The questions asked were: "Would you like more help in making plans on what you are going to do in gaol?" and "What sort of help would you like?"

The general nature of these responses seems to indicate that prisoners are either poorly informed on classification criteria or take little interest in decision-making regarding classification. If the former is the case, it would be beneficial to develop a system whereby prisoners are allowed ready access to information regarding classification (how decisions are made, what criteria are used and the like).

**Table 33:** Prisoners' idea of what is required to obtain a lower classification

Response	Percentage of prisoners who mentioned
Maintain a good attitude	55
Don't know	28
Work	26
Do time	18
Do educational courses	8
Depends on crime/sentence	5
Other	6

*Note:* The question asked was: "What do you have to do to get a lower classification?"

**e) Prisoners' perceptions of the PRC system**

When prisoners were asked "What do you think the PRC is for?", 10% of the sample replied that they did not know (Table 34). Almost half of the prisoner sample (45%) mentioned that the PRCs had the responsibility for reviewing a prisoners' general progress ("how you're going", "any problems" etc.). Twelve per cent

mentioned that the PRC was there to help the prisoner work through the system. Some prisoners had a very narrow view of the role of the PRC. This is shown by the 13% of prisoners who stated the role of the PRC was only to review a prisoner's classification, and the 3% of prisoners who said it was only responsible for monitoring the movements of prisoners between gaols. It is also evident from Table 34 that prisoners do not appear to see PRCs as a body which specifically reviews prisoners' programmes, but rather as something which is either concerned with the general review of prisoners' progress or related to prisoner classification.

Fifty-six of 104 prisoners interviewed (54%) stated there were problems with PRCs (Table 35). Twenty-eight per cent mentioned that the members on the committee did not know the inmates well enough to make appropriate decisions regarding the inmates' progress through the gaol system. Sixteen per cent mentioned that the committee did not treat inmates as individuals but simply applied standardised classification criteria in order to make decisions. Sixteen per cent mentioned that there was a lack of discussion between inmates and PRC members at the meetings so that it often appeared that inflexible decisions were made with minimum member-prisoner consultation.

**Table 34: Prisoners' perceptions of PRCs**

Role	Percentage of prisoners who mentioned
Review prisoners' general progress	45
Review prisoners' classification	26
Help prisoners work through the system	12
Monitor movement of prisoners between gaols	10
Make recommendations to Classification Division	8
Review prisoners for work release, day leave, weekend leave	6
Don't know/no idea	10
Other	11

**Notes:** 1. 13% said only "Review prisoners' classification" and nothing else.  
 2. 3% said only monitor movement of prisoners between gaols and nothing else.  
 3. The question asked was: "What do you think the PRC is for?"

A substantial percentage of prisoners (45%) stated they had problems interacting with PRC members at the meeting. Fifteen per cent commented they could not talk at all at meetings. Almost one-third (30%) said that they could not talk very much.

The prisoners who reported difficulty in participating in meetings perceived the main constraints to be: everything was decided beforehand (33%); the atmosphere inhibited their ability to talk (22%); the inmate was not allowed to speak or was not asked anything (20%); inmates felt that PRC members were not interested in them (16%); and the meeting was too rushed (9%).

**Table 35: Problems with PRCs reported by prisoners**

Problem	Percentage of inmates who made suggestion (n=56)
PRC members do not know inmates	28
PRCs lack authority and only make recommendations	27
PRCs do not see inmates as individuals	16
Decisions are made beforehand/lack of discussion	16
Problems with members of PRCs and their ability/attitudes	11
Follow-ups and explanation of sub-committee decisions	9
Bad judgements/"kneejerk" reactions	7
Sub-committee ratification takes too long	5
PRCs attempt to do too many inmates at once	4
Other	21

**Note:** The question asked was: "What problems do you think there are with PRCs?"

Observations in different prisons suggested that each gaol had a different atmosphere at their PRC meeting, with some being more encouraging for a prisoner to speak. Some meetings were very tense and inhibiting, reducing the information flow and interaction between all persons involved. Some prisoners may also have communication problems which reduce their ability to interact. The result is an

ineffective and unsatisfactory information sharing and interaction process.

When questioned about additional persons who inmates thought should be represented at meetings, only 38% of individuals surveyed offered suggestions for possible alternatives. The main point made by prisoners was that they would prefer someone who had spent more time with them and knew them better to attend the meeting.

These opinions were further emphasised when prisoners were asked whether they had any ideas on how PRCs might be improved. Table 36 shows that 29% of the 56 inmates who made suggestions mentioned that PRC members should try to better understand prisoners and treat them as individuals. Specifically 13% suggested that members of the PRC should talk to prisoners more during or prior to the meeting.

These responses indicate that a substantial number of inmates seem dissatisfied with the level of interaction that currently exists between PRC members and prisoners both during and prior to PRC meetings.

The results shown in Table 35 also suggest that some inmates are disillusioned with the current relationship existing between the PRCs and the Classification Sub-Committee, which either ratifies or rejects PRC recommendations. This is shown by the fact that 27% of the 56 prisoners who made suggestions regarding problems with PRCs mentioned that they lacked authority and could be (and often were) easily overruled. Further, 9% of those who made suggestions mentioned that there was insufficient follow-up or explanation of sub-committee decisions and 5% said that the Classification Sub-Committee takes too long to make a decision regarding a PRC recommendation.

Not surprisingly then, when prisoners were asked whether they had any ideas on how PRCs could be improved, some thought it would be helpful to increase the level of authority held by PRCs and also increase the feedback regarding Classification Sub-Committee decisions (Table 36).

It is apparent that a slow decision making process at the Classification Sub-Committee level and a high rate of "knockbacks" can only act to increase the level of frustration felt by prisoners awaiting decisions on PRC recommendations, and decrease the importance of PRCs to the inmates.

#### f) Prisoners' utilisation of services

The research team considered it important to determine: to what extent prisoners used

available services; whether anything prevented prisoners using certain services; and whether prisoners expressed a need for any services which were not available. These factors helped to define the actual relationship between prisoners and the programmes with which PRCs are concerned.

**Table 36:** Improvements to PRC suggested by prisoners

Suggested improvements	Percentage of those making suggestions (n=56)
PRCs should attempt to better understand prisoners and treat them as individuals	29
PRCs should have more authority	16
PRC members should talk to prisoners more during or prior to meetings	13
People more directly involved with inmate should have more say (e.g., Wing Officer)	11
Should be a better atmosphere during PRCs (e.g., smaller committee)	7
Should consider prisoners' point of view more	7
PRC should meet more frequently	5
Should be more feedback regarding sub-committee decisions	5
Other	32

*Note: The question asked was: "Do you have any ideas how Programme Review Committees could be improved?"*

#### Education

The current study sought information on prisoners' level of education, skills obtained since leaving school and courses completed in gaol. Information on prisoners' motivation for doing courses in gaol and whether or not they thought their course would be useful was also obtained.

Interviews revealed that 63% of prisoners had not gained any qualifications before leaving school. Forty-two per cent said they had not gained additional skills since leaving school.

Seventy-six per cent of the prisoner sample were doing or had done educational courses in gaol (Table 37). Eighty-four per cent of this group said they thought their course would help them when they were released. The reason

stated in the largest number of cases (40%) was that courses would improve employment opportunities.

When asked if they would like to do additional courses that were not available in their gaol, 35% were interested in trade courses (Table 37). Results suggest that courses which enhance employment prospects are perceived by prisoners as most useful. Thus, there is a particular demand for trade related courses.

**Table 37:** The type of courses done by prisoners in gaol

Type of course	Percentage of prisoners
Basic education	24
Motor related courses	23
Art and craft	16
Agriculture or horticulture	13
Computing	10
Typing	9
Sport and fitness	8
Carpentry	5
Cooking	5
Welding	5
Bricklaying	4
Accounting	4
Foreign languages	3
Other	28

*Note: The question asked was: "Are you doing or have you done any educational courses or trade training during this sentence?"*

**Table 38:** Courses that prisoners stated they would like to do that were not available in their gaol

Type of course	Percentage of prisoners (n=34)
Trade	35
Arts/craft/creative	24
Basic education	9
Social skills	6
Sport and fitness	6
Technical courses	6
Other	15

*Note: The question asked was: "Are there any other courses that you can think of that aren't available in the gaol that you think would be useful?"*

It is also worth noting that given the high proportion of prisoners who lacked any school based or post-school qualifications, the fact that one-quarter had completed or were doing a Basic Education course is encouraging. Since basic education is available in some form in all gaols, it is disturbing that 9% reported they wanted to do basic education but it was not available in their gaol.

**Table 39:** Reasons prisoners offered for not doing available courses, even though they reported they would like to do them

Reason	Percentage of those who mentioned reasons (n=34)
Serving too short a sentence	32
Courses not permitted at institution	26
Facilities not available at current gaol	15
Restricted by current classification	12
Qualifications not recognised	6
Other	21

*Note: The question asked was: "What stopped you from doing these courses?"*

Of the 104 prisoners interviewed, 33% stated that they were not taking available courses, even though they wanted to do them. Almost one-third of this group (32%) replied that their sentence was too short for them to get involved in the course (Table 39). This suggests that there is a need for some educational courses to be structured specifically for short-term prisoners, as has been done successfully for remand prisoners at Long Bay.

### Work

Prisoners were asked about the types of jobs they had in the gaols and whether they thought work experience in custody would benefit them upon release. Eighty-seven per cent of the prisoners interviewed reported that they either currently had a job in the gaol (84%) or had had one previously (3%). Table 40 outlines the range of work experience.



**Table 40:** The types of jobs prisoners held in gaol

Job	Percentage of prisoners sample who reported they had jobs (n=90)
Sweeper	21
Maintenance	20
Catering	13
Tailorshop	9
Machine/cabinet shop	7
Gardening	4
Laundry	4
Clerk	2
Boiler house	2
Stores	1
Other	16

*Note: The question asked was: "Have you got a job in the gaol?"*

Fifty-nine per cent of prisoners who had jobs in prison did not think that their work experience would help them to successfully find employment upon release. A number of reasons were mentioned (Table 41). Forty-five per cent said that jobs in custody were inappropriate to future plans. For example, some prisoners reported they had jobs as tradesmen or assistant managers waiting for them upon release, while they were employed as sweepers while incarcerated.

**Table 41:** Reasons why prisoners thought their work experience in gaol would not help them gain employment when released

Reason	Percentage of prisoners who said gaol work would not help them get a job (n=53)
Inappropriate to future plans	45
Unskilled work/no certificate	42
Already qualified	17
Other	4

*Note: The question asked was: "Why don't you think it will help you?"*

When prisoners were asked whether they could think of any useful work experience that was not available in gaol, 39% said they could. As Table 42 shows, the majority of these prisoners (61%) mentioned that trade-related work would be useful but was not available in their gaol.

Results regarding prisoners' perceptions of work facilities in gaol suggest that most prisoners believe that work experience in prison will not help them obtain employment upon release, and that prisoners want more trade-related work to be available.

**Table 42:** Types of work experience considered useful by prisoners but was not available

Type of work experience	Percentage of prisoners (n=41)
Trade related work	63
Arts/craft/creative (e.g., artists and musicians)	5
Social skills	5
Other	26

*Note: The question asked was: "Is there any other work experience or jobs not available in the gaol that you think would help you get a job when you are released?"*

### **Integrating Education and Work Facilities**

In planning a prisoner's overall programme in gaol it is clearly important to link non-recreational educational courses to practical work experience where relevant. To evaluate the extent to which this occurred, courses taken were compared to work performed (Table 43).

It is evident from Table 43 that within the prisoner sample, work experience and education courses were rarely related. While it is difficult without more information regarding types of jobs to estimate how closely education courses and jobs are related, it appeared that only thirteen prisoners were involved in jobs which could be regarded as providing practical experience connected with their educational courses.

Job allocation in most institutions is restricted by the availability of facilities. However, PRCs should still be concerned with the integration of work and educational aspects of a prisoner's programme. Since prisoners expressed a need for both trade related work and education, special consideration should be given to integrating facilities and the provision of services in this area.

### **Drug-related and alcohol-related offences and prisoner use of drug and alcohol counselling**

Fifty-five of 104 prisoners surveyed (53%) reported that they currently were serving sentences for drug and/or alcohol related offences (Table 44). Thirty-five per cent of

interviewees reported that their offence was drug-related; 21% that it was alcohol-related; and three persons stated it was both.

**Table 43:** The type of courses taken by prisoners in gaol by the job they had in gaol

Course	Job											Total
	Sweeper	Catering	Clerk	Laundry	Tailor Shop	Gardening	Maintenance	Machine/Cabinet	Boiler House	Stores	Other	
Basic education	3	1			1	1	1				6	13
Motor related courses	5		1	2	3	1	3	2				17
Art and craft	2	3		1	1		2				2	11
Agriculture and horticulture	3			1	1	1						6
Computing	1	1	1		1						2	6
Sport and fitness	2						3	1				6
Carpentry	1				1		2					4
Cooking	1	2		1								4
Bricklaying							3					3
Accounting							1	1		1		3
Welding	1						1					2
Foreign languages	1					1						2
Typing	3						2				1	6
Navigation	1					1						2
Other	6	4		1			5	2	2	2		22
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>107</b>

**Table 44:** The number of prisoners who reported that their offence was drug and/or alcohol-related

Offence	Number (n=104)	Percentage
Drug-related	33	32
Alcohol-related	19	18
Both drug-and alcohol-related	3	3
Neither drug-nor alcohol-related	49	47

*Note: The questions asked were: "Was your offence drug related?" and "Was your offence alcohol related?"*

Table 45 indicates the different types of help prisoners were receiving. It shows that firstly nine of 11 prisoners who reported they were

receiving help with their drug problem were involved in group drug therapy or were seeing a psychologist. Secondly, five of seven prisoners who reported they were receiving help with their alcohol problem were involved in Alcoholics Anonymous or were seeing the psychologist.

Thirty-eight of 55 persons admitting drug-related or alcohol-related offences were not receiving help in these areas. The majority of this group (51%) stated they were not interested in receiving help. Some prisoners (7%) reported facilities were not available or there was insufficient confidence in gaol staff to seek help (5%). It should be noted, however, that since these data were collected, considerable resources have been invested in drug and alcohol programmes using funds from the National Campaign against Drug Abuse.

While outside the realm of questions directly related to PRC evaluation, these data do raise an important problem: how committees can appropriately plan drug and alcohol programmes

**Table 45: Drug-related and alcohol-related offences by types of help received or by reasons why help was not received**

	Type of help received (n=17)				Reason why help not received (n=30)			
	Alcoholics Anonymous	Group therapy session	Psychol- ogist	Other	Would not like help	Facilities not available	No confidence in staff	Other
Offence Drug-related	-	7	2	1	15	3	3	2
Alcohol-related	3	-	1	2	11	1	-	1
Both	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Percentage	11	13	5	5	51	7	5	5

*Note: The questions asked were: "Are you getting help with your drug/alcohol problems?" and "What has stopped you from seeing someone?"*

for prisoners if the attitude of most inmates to receiving such help continues to be as negative as the attitudes in this sample.

#### **Psychological services**

Of the 104 prisoners surveyed, 27% reported they were seeing a psychologist regularly.

Seventy-three per cent of inmates (77 persons) were not receiving psychological services. The majority (74%) stated they were not interested in seeing a psychologist; 22% would have liked these services; and 4% were undecided.

The seventeen prisoners who reported that they were not seeing a psychologist, but would like to, were asked what had stopped them. In reply, thirteen said that they regarded the psychologist as inaccessible and four said that they did not have sufficient confidence in the psychologist to seek his or her help.

Prisoners were asked whether there were forms of counselling presently unavailable that would be desirable. Mentioned were: drug counselling (5 persons), pre-release counselling (4 persons) and counselling for inmate families to assist in coping with a relative's imprisonment (2 persons). Interviewees also suggested that some type of life skill/social skills training would be beneficial. The drug and alcohol programmes developed since the data were collected emphasise training in life skills and social skills, but deliberately avoid one-to-one counselling as it is thought to be ineffective.

In sum, results indicate the percentage of prisoners seeing a psychologist (27%) is well above the level found in the general community. Results also suggest perceived reasons why prisoners might be reluctant to become involved in psychological counselling when recommended by PRCs as well as inmate

perceptions of appropriate and useful forms of counselling.

#### **Welfare services**

Almost half of prisoners interviewed (46% of 104 inmates) reported they were seeing a Welfare Officer.

Eighty per cent of the remaining 56 prisoners not receiving welfare services were not interested in seeing a Welfare Officer. Only four persons commented that they wanted to use welfare services, but considered the Officer to be inaccessible.

#### **Probation and Parole services**

About two-thirds (63%) of 104 prisoners surveyed stated they were seeing a Probation and Parole Officer.

Thirty-eight prisoners were not receiving Probation and Parole services. The majority of this group (68%) were not interested in such services. Only six inmates stated they desired to use Probation and Parole services, but considered the relevant officer to be inaccessible.

#### **g) Services that prisoners believe should be available**

The concluding question in prisoner interviews was: "Is there any other help that is not available in gaol that you think would help you cope when you are released?" Sixty-two inmates replied positively to this question (Table 46). Suggestions included: assistance organising accommodation (48%); assistance with employment (35%); financial assistance at the time of release (19%); life/social skills counselling; and drug and alcohol counselling (11%).

In general these responses indicate that practical assistance with accommodation, employment and finances are areas of special demand. They are also important problems because they bear on other correctional issues such as the reintegration of prisoners into the community. Results suggest that an appropriate pre-release programme would be concerned with co-ordinating assistance in these areas, and that an effective PRC would begin to closely monitor a prisoner's situation with respect to accommodation, work and finance toward the end of his/her sentence.

**Table 46:** Services not available in gaol which prisoners suggest would be helpful upon release

Service	Percentage of those offering positive suggestions who mentioned service (n=62)
Assistance with accommodation	48
Assistance with employment	35
Financial assistance	19
Life/social skills counselling	19
Drug and alcohol counselling	11
Other	27

*Note: The question asked was: "Is there any other help that is not available in the gaol that you think would help you cope with life when you are released?"*

## THE MARTIN REPORT

During the course of this project, research staff were in contact with others professionally interested in Programme Review Committees. In particular, the many facets of PRC operation requiring improvement were discussed in meetings with Mr. T. J. Martin, Q.C., who was conducting an inquiry into the classification system. Whereas the Martin inquiry concentrated on classification, this study emphasised prisoner programme planning and management.

Consultation and general agreement concerning need for change has resulted in a similar direction of recommendations in both this report and Mr. Martin's (1987) report. Some differences in approach require comment.

All 58 recommendations in the Martin Report pertain to the classification system. As one of the functions of Programme Review Committees is to review prisoners' classification, many of the Martin Report's recommendations, if adopted, would influence some aspect of PRCs. Fourteen recommendations suggest specific changes to the administration of Programme Review Committees. Another five recommendations do not suggest substantive change to PRCs, but warrant comment and contrast to the recommendations made here.

Recommendations concerning PRCs in the Martin Report and this report are more alike than different. Both focus on the need for manuals. The Martin Report refers to a classification

manual whereas this project suggests a specific PRC manual which would cover matters other than classification. Both reports suggest files containing relevant paperwork to facilitate committee procedure and improve decision-making. The Martin Report further suggests that such a classification file follow the prisoner to each gaol to which he/she goes and be kept there in the custody of the PRCs' Administrative Assistants. This report recommends that a PRC file be the responsibility of the PRC Administrative Assistants or, at certain prisons, the senior clerk as there is no Administrative Assistant with responsibility for Grafton, Glen Innes or Broken Hill. Similarly, both reports stress the need for the Classification Sub-Committee to further explain rejected recommendations to PRCs in addition to the development of training programmes for PRC members.

Other important differences concern the degree of variation to be allowed between institutions for systems to assess, manage and review prisoners' programmes. For example, recommendation 32 of the Martin Report states, in part, that if practicable, PRC meetings should be preceded by a prisoner assessment conducted by a Case Management Review team on the Emu Plains or Malabar model. In contrast, our recommendations attempted to take into account local situations.

Project recommendations emphasise the local development of procedures to effectively manage a prisoner's progress and co-ordinate information. This approach is based on findings from a literature review on prisoner programme assessment which clearly demonstrates the advantages of decentralised programme planning in gaols. Some recommendations in this project allow for different approaches to be used by different institutions to handle the same problem.

There are two reasons for allowing greater variation in the methods adopted: conditions do vary considerably between different institutions; and local development of procedures results in greater commitment to implementation, while enforced adoption of procedures developed elsewhere often results in inadequate implementation. This is particularly relevant to two issues: the process by which PRC members obtain information about each prisoner; and the system through which a co-ordinated and appropriate programme for the prisoner is put into effect. No institution should be directed to adopt either the Emu Plains or Long Bay procedures, unless, after adequate opportunity, the institution has not devised and implemented an effective system of coordinated case management including assessment, programme planning, implementation and review processes.

### Recommendations related to Programme Review Committees from the (1987) Martin Report and brief comments

No. 6 That Regulation 11F should be amended so as to require Programme Review Committees to make a separate recommendation in appropriate cases.

Comment: none.

No. 8 That the Classification Manual be expanded to cover all aspects of Classification as far as is practicable, that provision be made for keeping it up to date, that it be made available to all persons in the Commission responsible for making classification recommendations, that it be placed in gaol libraries, offered to appropriate university, college and law libraries, made available to other libraries, members of the public, and prison authorities in other States.

Comment: A broader PRC manual dealing with procedures for programme planning, implementation and review beyond security classification issues, is needed.

No. 17 That it be the responsibility of the Parole

Officer who presents a pre-sentence report in every case where a prisoner is sent to gaol, to supply a copy to the Director of Classification. It should be placed on classification files of long-term prisoners dealt with at meetings away from Malabar. In the case of a short-term prisoner a copy should be made available for the Reception Committee dealing with his/her classification and a further copy for the appropriate file or files of the Programme Review Committee and/or Case Management Review Team handling any review of the prisoner. An appropriate solution should be found to any overlap with the work of the Malabar Parole Unit.

Comment: Supported, except that other case management systems might be acceptable.

No. 19 That all classification files be made in duplicate, that the duplicate follow the prisoner to each gaol to which he/she goes and be kept there in the custody of the administrative assistant of the Programme Review Committee. Any addition subsequently made to the classification files should be made in duplicate and the duplicate forwarded to the appropriate gaol.

Comment: There may be some papers on the Head Office file which should not, for security reasons, be on the institutional PRC file.

No. 20 That there should be an education file for each prisoner and that it should follow him/her to each gaol of placement and be kept up to date.

Comment: A briefer "progress summary" could be sufficient, but better flow of information is essential. Prisoners who do not study might not need a file.

No. 21 That the psychology file should follow each prisoner to each gaol in which he/she is housed.

Comment: Care is needed at institutions without a psychologist. Also, many prisoners do not see a psychologist and might not require a file.

No. 22 That the non-custodial officers at all gaols endeavour to interview each prisoner, whose classification is to be reviewed, preferably by a Case Management Review Team system, and make an appropriate report jointly or separately to the gaol's Programme Review Committee.

Comment: A more flexible approach with the same objective (co-ordinated assessment, programme planning, implementation and review) is preferred.

No. 23 That the Programme Review Committee should follow up the recommended developmental programme for each prisoner within 14 days of his/her reception at a gaol of placement, and Regulation 11F, Officer Instructions and the Manual should be amended accordingly. For the purpose of greater efficiency this should be

- preceded, if practicable, by a case management review by the non-custodial officers team on either the Emu Plains or Malabar model.
- Comment: The need for follow-up shortly after these transfers is agreed. More flexibility about the mechanism is desirable.
- No. 24 That prisoners transferred from one gaol to another should have their programmes considered and reviewed by the Programme Review Committee at their new gaol within 14 days of reception. Attention should be paid to the reasons for their transfer. Regulation 11F, instructions and the Manual should be amended accordingly.
- Comment: Agreed, except where transfers are brief for such things as medical or legal reasons, and the prisoner is to be or has returned quickly.
- No. 28 That administrative assistants prepare full copies of full criminal records of each prisoner for each member of Programme Review Committees. The Secretary of the Classification Committee should do the same for its members.
- Comment: Agreed, although these could be held (if obtainable) on Warrant Files.
- No. 29 That words and not code numbers be used to describe crimes in sheets for the information of committee members.
- Comment: Agreed, also needs to be checked back against Description Card.
- No. 32 That the Programme Review Committees should see every short term prisoner within two weeks of reception at his/her gaol of classification and make an assessment and devise a developmental programme for him/her. It should not be necessary for the Committees to formulate their decisions as recommendations to the Sub-Committee of the Classification Committee, unless the prisoner remains in the gaol for more than six months. If practicable, the meeting should be preceded by an assessment by a Case Management Review team on the Emu Plains or Malabar model, and this should be followed up from time to time by the team as appropriate having regard to the length of the prisoner's sentence. A Classification file to contain all necessary assessments and reports should be kept for each short term prisoner by the Administrative Assistant. It should follow the prisoner to any other gaol to which he/she goes. It should ultimately be kept by the Classification Division. Regulation 11F should be amended accordingly.
- Comment: More flexibility in the mechanism is required and it must also ensure implementation.
- No. 38 That a Probation and Parole Officer or some other non-custodial officer obtain from each prisoner before meetings of the Classification Committee or any Programme Review Committee his/her views as to classification matters for submission to the Committee and that he/she advise him/her that submissions in writing would be accepted by a committee; that where appropriate, committees bear in mind the possible need for a friend as advocate for a prisoner or for an interpreter, or for an Aboriginal welfare assistant, and that these matters be included in the Classification Manual.
- Comment: For some institutions and many prisoners a custodial officer could, and arguably should, perform this function.
- No. 39 That there be noted in the Classification Manual the various avenues for reconsideration of classification decisions open to a person dissatisfied with any such decision.
- Comment: Agreed.
- No. 40 That prisoners be notified on the standard form of recommendation by Programme Review Committees that if they are dissatisfied with the recommendation they may submit an argument in writing to the sub-committee of the Classification Committee.
- Comment: Agreed.
- No. 41 That Regulation 11F be amended so as to provide for Programme Review Committee recommendations to go to a sub-committee of the Classification Committee; that if the sub-committee proposes to reject a recommendation of a Programme Review Committee it notify it by a standard form with its reasons, giving the Programme Review Committee an opportunity to supply further reasons or arguments; that the Programme Review Committee discuss the matter with the prisoner; that the sub-committee notify Programme Review Committees in each case of rejection of recommendations of the reasons for it, giving them as fully as is practicable and necessary and relating them to the facts of the particular case; that the criteria used for judging and either accepting or rejecting recommendations for changes in security classification or placement be published in the Classification Manual.
- Comment: Agreed.
- No. 54 That so far as possible Superintendents appoint permanent Chairpersons for the Programme Review Committees and for Reception Committees; that if officers are new to the task, proper attempts should be made to train them for it; that if meetings are infrequent or it is otherwise not practicable to appoint a permanent Chairperson or one who has been trained, then Superintendents should carry out the duties in person.
- Comment: Agreed. Some training for all PRC members should be provided.

No. 56 That an officer should be appointed to the Classification Division, not necessarily female, to chair the various committees which make recommendations in respect of women's classification. This officer would chair the Classification Committee dealing with long term female prisoners, the Reception Committee dealing with short-term ones and the Programme Review Committee dealing with the review of prisoners.

Comment: We have no data relevant to this issue.

No. 57 That the case management review team system devised at Emu Plains Training Centre be instituted at Mulawa particularly for the benefit of giving some assistance to short term and remand prisoners. For long term prisoners the Malabar case management system of interviews by the non-custodial officers followed by consultation by them prior to Classification Committee meetings should be adopted.

Comment: A system to achieve the objectives be devised and implemented, but more flexibility is required for the mechanism.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of Programme Review Committees has examined how PRCs function in practice. Six issues have been analysed:

1. Need assessment and programme planning;
2. The operation of Programme Review Committee meetings;
3. Co-ordination between Programme Review Committee members;
4. Co-ordination with other related committees;
5. Members' understanding of the function of Programme Review Committees; and
6. Prisoners' understanding of the function of programmes and Programme Review Committees.

A summary of findings which outlines the results of this analysis has been included at the beginning of the report, preceding the main text.

Listed below are ten recommendations proposed to address specific aspects of PRC operations which this evaluation has determined are in need of attention.

- 1. Responsibility for initial prisoner assessment and programme design be assessed. Either the initial Classification Committee be given access to more detailed information on prisoners or responsibility for assessment and programme design be given to the staff at the first gaol of classification subsequent to initial reception.**

PRC members were unclear about the responsibility for initial assessment and programme design for prisoners. Responsibility must be determined.

Two options exist. Firstly, assessment and programme design could be done by the initial Classification Committee in which case it would be the role of the PRCs to monitor and update existing programmes.

If the Classification Committee were to be given such responsibility, additional information would need to be provided: social history information prepared by the Probation and Parole Service; a specific educational assessment which would include information such as literacy level, school history, areas of interest; and employment history including future employment potential.

This option has two major advantages.

- (1) A largely centralised assessment and programme design system would be more

likely to generate assessment procedures that were standardised for all inmates.

- (2) At initial classification a prisoner could be placed at the gaol that is most appropriate for his/her programme, obviating the need for transfer which could easily arise under the alternative proposal if the gaol of reception should prove inappropriate for the programme arrived at after initial placement.

Initial classification may be an inappropriate stage at which to design programmes for reasons listed below.

- (1) Prisoners are often still disoriented and probably have not adjusted to the institutional environment by this stage.
- (2) Prisoners are often more concerned with appeals and court matters than they are with making plans about how they are to spend their time in gaol.
- (3) It is possible to design programmes which address immediate problems such as adjustment to the prison environment or handling appeals and other court matters. However, planning of detailed long-term programmes for long-term prisoners in a state of flux is ill advised.
- (4) Decisions made about a prisoner's programme at one institution may not be implemented at an institution over which the initial committee has no administrative or financial controls. Plans made in a centralised unit can often be unrealistic and therefore not generate total commitment by those who have to implement them.

A second option could be that responsibility for prisoner assessment and programme design could be located with the staff at the first gaol of classification. In turn, the initial Classification Committee would be concerned primarily with security and placement.

As with the previous option, this approach has both advantages and disadvantages. Four general points stand in its favour:

- (1) The person responsible for need assessment would also become responsible for the subsequent intervention. This would be likely to increase the effectiveness with which programmes are implemented.
- (2) Delays at the Central Industrial Prison could be decreased.
- (3) Assessment workload would be redistributed among a greater number of staff.
- (4) It would allow a more practical assessment of prisoners' behaviour and attitudes,

enabling vocational courses and job opportunities to be allocated to those who would be most likely to benefit.

There are at least three disadvantages in the decentralised approach.

- (1) This method might require additional prisoner movement since the initial placement would not always be to the gaol which best suited the prisoner's programme requirements.
- (2) Decentralising assessment might lead to differential criteria being used in determining a prisoner's fitness for programmes.
- (3) Staff at the respective institutions could become effectively "full-time assessors", rather than being able to concentrate their energies on providing opportunities for care and development.

These options need to be considered by the relevant divisional heads. It must be kept in mind that, for prisoners expected to serve less than twelve months, the decentralised option already operates, although programme planning and management at the initial gaol of classification after first reception has to be improved at most institutions.

## **2. Within the constraints of available resources, Programme Review Committees ensure that opportunities for subsequent assessment, programme development and review are made available to all prisoners with a minimum sentence of three months.**

There are major constraints which inhibit giving effect to this recommendation. They include: the physical structure of prisons; the effect of court delays and the number of prisoners subject to further court action, associated with moving people from place to place within the gaols; and the variations in availability of employment and development activities and resources at different prisons.

Observation of PRCs in operation showed that most of the discussion centred around a prisoner's security classification and placement. In some institutions this simply may reflect the extremely limited facilities for implementing useful programmes. For example, at institutions like Cooma and Maitland, the only really productive work options are the tailor shops. Experience of this kind is unlikely to significantly increase inmates' chances of acquiring a job once they are released, and at best maintains work habits and earns some money to be used on release. Recommendations regarding the development of Departmental resources are outside the concern



of the present research project. However, the level of commitment to ensuring that opportunities for overall assessment, development and review are available to all prisoners is something that appears to vary greatly throughout the system.

This recommendation is in general accord with the Martin report.

**3. A PRC manual containing information concerning responsibilities of PRCs; the role of members; departmental policy on classification; and facilities available at various institutions be distributed to PRC members through the PRC Administrative Assistants.**

The manual could provide and maintain information for members and prisoners. It should include a definition of "a prisoner's programme" as well as the objectives of departmental policy on classification. The manual should be available to all PRC members and prisoners through the prisoner library at each gaol. It could include, but is more extensive than, a manual on classification procedures.

PRC members at each institution should be responsible to inform PRC Administrative Assistants of any changes concerning facilities and programmes. Individual Administrative Assistants should inform the Classification Division and be responsible for updating their PRC manuals. Departmental circulars regarding policy changes in classification criteria and eligibility for programmes should be incorporated into the PRC manual by the Administrative Assistants.

It would be convenient for the manual to be designed in "loose leaf" format to allow for easy updates.

**4. Training programmes be developed for PRC members which address issues such as how to effectively chair and conduct a meeting.**

It is recommended that the training needs of members which cannot be met by a manual should be addressed through training and education programmes.

Certain PRC training needs could best be met by in-house training. One area that requires attention, for example, is how a meeting could

be conducted that would encourage maximum member and prisoner participation.

**5. Reports to PRC members be completed in a standardised, structured format.**

The evaluation has shown how the PRC operation has been hampered by both the type and quality of information available to members prior to meetings as well as by the erratic standard of information contained in reports. PRC reports should contain specific categories for required information. For example, an education report should include information concerning courses attended by the prisoner, courses completed, progress or marks obtained and potential for development. Similarly, for those not involved in course work, the report would include information about reasons for not doing courses, circumstances which would favour course attendance and assessment as to whether the prisoner needs to do courses.

The introduction of clearly worded, sequenced headings on reports would indicate the type of information and detail desired, and encourage a more effective monitoring procedure of prisoner programmes. Appropriate model examples could be included in the PRC manual; completion of the form should be covered in the recommended training; and the quality of information should be monitored by the Classification Branch.

**6. The current PRC form be redesigned in order to eliminate existing duplications and to provide additional categories covering Probation and Parole and the Classification Sub-Committee Information.**

Several specific changes are recommended to improve the PRC form.

- (1) Eliminate duplication between the current prisoner programme and recommendation sections.
- (2) Eliminate the "social" section as it is redundant.
- (3) Include specific spaces and headings for Probation and Parole and the Classification Sub-Committee information.
- (4) Include a section for reasons why recommendations were rejected.

- 7. A PRC file be constructed. It should include the initial classification form, all previous PRC forms and reports and any other information relevant to the prisoner's programme. This file should be the responsibility of either the PRC Administrative Assistants or the Probation and Parole Service.**

The effective management of prisoner programmes relies on ready access to information. Information flow is impossible without the introduction of a file which would contain relevant papers necessary for effective decisionmaking.

As the computerised Offender Record System is developed, each prisoner's record could indicate the information available on paper files, but it will not be practical to store all relevant details on computer records in the foreseeable future.

- 8. The Classification Sub-Committee provide PRCs with detailed reasons for each case where a PRC recommendation is not ratified.**

To improve communication between PRC members and the Classification Division, it is recommended that the Sub-Committee offer detailed reasons for decisions, particularly those with negative outcomes. In particular, it should be stated explicitly what needs to be done to obtain future approval for a recommendation which has been rejected.

- 9. Staff at each gaol assess how in preparation for meetings communication and information flow between PRC members and inmates can be improved.**

At present any pre-meeting consultations between PRC members are informal. A few members jointly may work out proposals for a prisoner's programme in isolation from others. Or members may work on programmes independently which would not lead to an integrated, comprehensive programme.

For the implementation of a more effective procedure for managing a prisoner's progress, it would be necessary for Superintendents to develop a scheme appropriate to each specific gaol. Local development of procedures to effectively manage a prisoner's progress must be emphasised.

Several different approaches are possible. The Emu Plains Training Centre uses a case management team approach. The Malabar

Classification Committee staff have developed a different mechanism suited to that location. Another approach to achieve this objective is being developed at Mulawa for women prisoners. Similarly, communication is facilitated in some health centres by the use of an allocated case worker who is specifically responsible for a particular client. In turn, a team of professionals reviews progress and supports the case worker. It is the case worker who is responsible for overall co-ordination and implementation. If this type of approach were adopted in some gaols, the case worker could play an advocacy and co-ordinating role and would not need to be a PRC member. In many situations, a custodial officer (for example, a wing officer or industries officer) could be the case worker for a particular prisoner.

- 10. Co-ordination between different departmental divisions be improved through: effective, locally developed case management systems at each institution; effective overall programme management and co-ordination at each institution; and effective team development to improve programme management and co-ordination at Head Office.**

The Department should improve co-ordination between different divisions at three levels: case management (service delivery to individuals); institutional programme management (to provide programme activities); and central programme management (to resource and co-ordinate programmes at the state level).

Within each gaol the strategic plan needs to incorporate a method of co-ordinating knowledge about prisoners as well as the activities available and services delivered to each prisoner. Local development of procedures to co-ordinate such knowledge is essential.

Programmes and services available need to be co-ordinated. Problems, including conflicts of priorities, must be identified and resolved. Gaol management teams could take this responsibility at each institution.

The co-ordination between disciplines at Head Office should be improved to support the mechanisms set up in the gaols. This could be accomplished through team building activities, organised around co-ordination tasks involving heads or senior staff of each discipline (custodial, programmes, classification, industry, psychology, welfare and probation and parole).

## POSTSCRIPT - JUNE 1988

Since the initiation of this review and the completion of the Martin Report into Classification a number of issues which relate to the recommendations have been resolved.

A Classification Manual has been completed for the use of all P.R.C. members. Members now submit reports and there appears to be improved liaison and a better understanding of the function of P.R.C. members and their relationships with Head Office Classification Committee. Unfortunately constant and, sometimes, frequent changes of staff are problems which continue to affect the satisfactory operation of committees. The issue of specialised training for committee members as well as the composition of committees is under review.

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## APPENDIX

### The Muir Report's model for the efficient operation of PRC meetings

#### "Meeting

- (i) At the meeting the prison warrants and the review forms of each prisoner on the agenda are to be available;
- (ii) A report is to be given by each divisional representative and is then considered by the Committee.
- (iii) When the Committee has discussed the report, the prisoner is called in:
  - to review his/her programme;
  - to consider any request or application, e.g., day leave;
- (iv) Majority rule is to prevail when making recommendation. Minority views (including Superintendent) are to be recorded. Any dispute can be referred to the Director, Prisoner Classification, if it cannot be resolved in Committee" (Muir, 1983:13).

"The divisional representatives are accountable for the following:

#### (a) Superintendent or Nominee (Custodial)

- To chair meetings and to insure the proper procedures are carried out;
- To provide Wing Officer report;
- To give account of a prisoner's behaviour, in relation to the good order and discipline of the gaol;
- To follow-up proposed changes to programme and accordingly inform the prisoner.

#### (b) Principal Industries Officer

- To provide record of employment in institutions and prisoner's current employment position;
- To outline prisoner's performance and attitude to work;
- To give reasons for any job changes;
- To consider any requests of a prisoner for work or a change in work.

#### (c) Psychologist

- To review a psychologist assessment of social, emotional, intellectual and vocational needs;
- To act as an advocate for prisoner in identifying and designing a psychological programme that will be suited to a prisoner's needs;
- To raise any problems or risks of disturbance that may be exhibited by the prisoner, (within the constraints of confidentiality), e.g., coping with imprisonment, family problems, anxiety over transfer to another gaol;
- To give account of any medical/psychiatric attention (within the constraints of confidentiality).

#### (d) Education Officer

- To report on prisoner's educational/vocational programme and activities;
- To outline prisoner's progress in attempting to achieve educational/vocational goals;
- To report on any change of educational/vocational programme;

#### (e) Welfare Officer

- To report on prisoner's day-to-day problems, request and contact;
- To give account of any crisis in relation to welfare matters that may affect prisoner's placement and/or behaviour.

#### (f) Probation and Parole Officer

- To provide social background information (family, friends, circumstances of offence);
- To outline prisoner's release and post-release plans in order to monitor the effectiveness of prisoner's intramural programme and his/her release at the earliest proper time;
- To present a report on the suitability of an applicant for the Work Release Programme;
- To verify addresses of day leave sponsors when necessary" (Muir, 1983:12).