



Department of
Justice

Work Camps – Protocols

Prison work camps have been operating successfully in Western Australia since 1998. They offer an alternative to traditional imprisonment for eligible minimum-security prisoners.

The aim of work camps is to successfully reintegrate prisoners into the broader community through stable employment and a law-abiding lifestyle. This is achieved by ongoing collaboration with regional communities to engage prisoners in meaningful projects which enhance community life and maintain community assets and services.

Based in rural and remote communities, work camps are small facilities organisationally attached to a prison. Prisoners are supervised to undertake a range of valuable work projects in local communities. They work a structured day in a public setting, enabling them to develop employment and social skills which are key to successful reintegration into the community.

Over the past five years, work camps have made a positive difference in regional Western Australia through environmental, heritage, cultural, tourism and recreational projects, as well as disaster relief. They have contributed over 219,000 hours of work to local communities, with a total value of \$4 million. Most of this work would otherwise not have been completed.

Work camps operate under Section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981*, which stipulates that the Department may approve a program of activity for minimum-security prisoners outside the boundary of a prison. This may involve community work, charitable or voluntary work, work associated with the operation of the prison, sport, religious observance or other approved activities. All prisoners selected for a Section 95 program are carefully screened and assessed as posing minimal risk to the community.

The success of the Section 95 program is due, in part, to the support and generosity from sponsoring communities in assisting prisoners to learn new work skills and providing prisoners with the opportunity to interact, under supervision, with members of the community in a non-institutionalised environment.

Protocols for community sponsors

The right community

Work camps are about reparation to the community, the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration back into the community. Therefore, the focus of the work camps must be directed at achieving these three outcomes.

For a work camp to be successful, a strong partnership with the community is required. Work camps need to be established in communities where there is:

- Strong community support for the work camps concept and community acceptance of the prisoners as part of the community
- a good roll out of work projects that will return maximum benefit to the community
- a range of projects that will develop new skills and assist prisoners to find employment when they leave prison/work camp.

Work projects

The Department of Justice provides the community with the labour (generally unskilled and semi-skilled) and supervision of offenders required to undertake the projects. Communities are responsible for identifying suitable projects and providing all materials, specialised tools and equipment, and specialised supervision (for example where the expertise of a builder or tradesperson is required) to undertake the work.

Community groups are encouraged to actively apply for community grants or seek sponsorship from local businesses and service organisations if required to facilitate the commissioning of projects. This could be undertaken by the Community Liaison Committee.

Generally, projects fall into four main categories:

Environmental

Such as tree planting, salinity control, coastal regeneration, eradication of non-indigenous vegetation, elimination/control of fire risks.

Recreation/tourism

Maintenance and development of infrastructure in national parks, nature reserves, other tourist parks and rest areas. Suitable projects include trail construction, information shelters, BBQs, and picnic facilities.

Heritage

Maintenance and restoration of heritage sites and buildings of significant historical value, such as pioneer cemeteries and homesteads and other important buildings.

Smaller local community projects

Tidy Town/streets-scaping projects, upgrading of community facilities, erection of playground equipment, sporting facilities for young people and projects for small local clubs.

For detailed project guidelines, including suitable and unsuitable work, refer to the Terms of Reference on our website.

Protocols for Prisoner – Community Contact

Whilst the reintegration and socialisation of prisoners is considered an important outcome for the Department of Corrective Services, a prisoner who is outside the prison on an approved activity, such as a work camp, is still considered to be in lawful custody, even though they may not be directly supervised by a prison officer at all times.

Participating communities must, therefore, never lose sight of the fact that work camp prisoners are still in custody. This requires certain protocols to be observed by members of the community **at all times** in any dealings they have with prisoners.

- Prisoners must not be offered any drugs (lawful or otherwise) or alcohol.
- Members of the community must not offer to bring or remove any article for a prisoner (ie letters, parcels etc or pass items on to a third party).

The above acts are an offence under the *Prisons Act 1981* and may incur criminal charges.

- Members of the community must deal directly with the supervising prison officer of the work party in all matters relating to prisoners. Prisoners are aware that they are not allowed to make contact with people in the community without the permission of the officer in charge.
- In the event of any unauthorised absence from the work party, or if it becomes clear a prisoner is not abiding by the agreed rules, the prison or supervising prison officer must be notified immediately.
- Prisoners must not have access to the internet.
- Prisoners may not be paid money or receive any gifts for payment of work done.
- Prisoners are not to be invited on to licensed premises or gambling facilities such as the TAB.
- Members of the community must not lend a prisoner a mobile phone, make phone calls on behalf of prisoners, or allow prisoners to make phone calls without the permission of the supervising prison officer.
- Under no circumstances can prisoners be identified publicly by name or in photographs where their faces or other identifying features would make them recognisable. **This is a very important requirement in order to protect and respect the rights of victims and facilitate prisoners' privacy, safety and their rehabilitation on release from prison.**
- All media requests must be referred to the Public Affairs Manager at the Department of Justice. Under no circumstances will the Department allow the filming of prisoners for commercial purposes.

Note: it is important these simple protocols are followed at all times.

Clarification should be sought from the prison or officer in charge if a situation arises which may not be covered by the above protocols.

