



Corrections Victoria Deputy Commissioner's Instruction

DCI 1.11A Protective quarantine of new reception prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Operating Principles Corrections Victoria has established protective quarantine units across five prisons as a preventive measure to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) coming into the prison system.

Given the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the community, prisoners newly received into prison bring that exposure risk with them into custody. In response, Corrections Victoria will manage receptions in a manner to reduce the risk of COVID-19 being spread across the Victorian prison system.

This DCI will be managed in accordance with DCI 1.11 – Reception, Care and Control of Prisoners.

Outcome

The quarantine process will:

- be managed with the view of minimal impact to prisoners' mental health and wellbeing
- reduce the risk of infection being brought into prisons.

Prisoners' human rights are limited only to the extent that it is reasonably and demonstrably justifiable. All staff must act compatibly with human rights and consider human rights when making decisions.

Procedures

1 General Conditions

From Saturday 28 March 2020 until further notice, all prisoners on entry to prison custody will be required to be quarantined for a 14-day period, after completion of the reception assessment process. This period of quarantine may be served across multiple locations (i.e. prisoners may be transferred from a protective quarantine unit in one prison to another).

Separation Orders are not required to be completed for prisoners placed in protective quarantine as part of a declaration of an emergency in Victoria's prisons to exempt regulation 32 of the Corrections Regulations 2019.

General Managers must ensure that dedicated units are provided for prisoners in protective quarantine, with 24-hour staffing and regular observation of the prisoners (e.g. to monitor if their health has deteriorated). There must be sufficient staffing to ensure adequate observation and verbal communication with prisoners.

Staff will provide prisoners on reception with relevant information to ensure that they are fully informed about their protective quarantine. This must be in a manner readily understood by each individual.

Prisoners must be provided with materials and equipment to ensure active engagement during their quarantine period

Given risk of COVID-19 transmission, prisoners time out of cell will be significantly limited. Prisoners will be permitted to leave their cells for emergency events (e.g. fire, flooding, or to be transferred to an observation cell), and court appearances.

Prisons will, unless it is not operationally possible, provide time out of cell for all prisoners on a protective quarantine regime, where:

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- DHHS guidelines on physical distancing can be maintained
 - Prisoners only mix with prisoners who are at the same stage of the 14 day quarantine period
 - As deemed necessary, based on clinical advice from health and mental health service providers to manage medical and psychiatric conditions or risk.

The Corrections Victoria Forensic Intervention Service will provide a distress tolerance service (at request) to prisoners in the protective quarantine units, particularly for vulnerable prisoners. This is focused on transition, managing distress and wellbeing, supportive counselling and behavioural concerns/issues. This service can be provided via in cell (videos) or via the traps in locations. Health service providers will continue to provide mental health oversight and care to prisoners with a mental illness.

Where a prisoner leaves their cell during the social protective quarantine period, staff are required to manage the prisoner as though they have a suspected case of COVID-19, as per the Justice Health COVID-19 Guidelines for Corrections Victoria staff.

Professional visits, including access to lawyers, will be facilitated through in-cell phone calls.

Prisoners in protective quarantine will have access to personal video visits in accordance with DCI 3.04A – Use of Personal Video Visits in Emergencies and access to phone calls in cell.

There will be no changes for prisoners' access to meals or medication. Each prisoner in the protection quarantine units is to receive an allocation of canteen items for the 14-day period.

General Managers must ensure processes are in place to record the number of days each prisoner has been in quarantine and manage their regime (refer to Schedule 1).

Prisoners in protective quarantine will be accommodated in single cells.

All staff in protective quarantine units must wear a mask and gloves when closely interacting with prisoners.

Staff working with a prisoner are required to manage the prisoner as though they have a suspected case of COVID-19, as per the Justice Health COVID-19 Guidelines for Corrections Victoria staff, in the following circumstances:

- a prisoner leaves their cell during the social quarantine period
- staff need to interact with a prisoner in a way that means they cannot stay 1.5 meters away from the prisoner
- staff are working in a quarantine unit, in which case they must follow the Guidelines in respect of regular handwashing and the cleaning of units, cells and touch surfaces.

Physical staff interactions with prisoners will be minimal and primarily through the trap or via the cell intercom. Provision of food, oral medication (inclusive of OST), and other items (for example, tablets for video visits) will be provided through the cell door trap.

Protective quarantine unit staff will ensure that a cell inspection and intercom check is conducted in each cell daily, along with welfare checks and regular management observations of each prisoner subject to protective quarantine.

Upon completion of the 14-day quarantine period, prisoners will undergo usual induction/orientation processes.

Where a prisoner becomes unwell or tests positive for COVID-19 during this time, the prisoner's health must be managed in accordance to the Justice Health COVID-19 Guidelines for Corrections Victoria staff.



Corrections Victoria recognises the impact that protective quarantine can have on a prisoner's health and wellbeing. All prisoners have the right to humane treatment when in protective quarantine.

Prisoners are encouraged to maintain contact with family and social supports who can support them, such as writing or calling their family and friends.

Prisoners will be afforded a range of materials and equipment to support their time, as well as access to medical staff if they have difficulty coping.

2 Prisoner's Identified with Mental Health or 'At Risk' Needs

Prisoners must still be managed in accordance with DCI 1.02 – At Risk Procedures.

Prisoners who are assessed as P1 and S1 will continue to access a range of mental health supports.

Where a prisoner is required to be transferred during the quarantine period due to presenting as 'at risk', staff are required to manage the prisoner as though they have a suspected case of COVID-19 and follow the Justice Health COVID-19 Guidelines for Corrections Victoria staff.

3 Special Needs Prisoners

Where a prisoner is identified with special needs during the reception process, this may impact the way they must be managed in social quarantine. These prisoners may include but are not limited to:

- health/medical issues
- age
- intellectual or psychiatric impairment
- hearing, sight, physical, or speech disabilities
- inability to comprehend English

Aboriginal prisoners will continue to have access to an Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer via in cell (videos) or via traps.

Melissa Westin
Acting Deputy Commissioner, Custodial Operations

Monitoring / Evaluation

- Prisoner complaints
- PIMS/E*JUSTICE Incident modules and Reception register
- Medical reports
- Information Material for prisoners

Variables

- Security level of prison
- Prisoner profile and classification
- Type of record system i.e. manual/computerised
- Outcome of 'At Risk' / self-harm assessment
- Ability for airings
- Availability of prisoner accommodation in the prison or in selected units

Other Relevant Instructions

- Deputy Commissioner's Instruction 1.11 – Reception, Care and Control of Prisoners
- Deputy Commissioner's Instruction 1.02 – At Risk Procedures
- Deputy Commissioner's Instruction 3.04 – Personal – Professional – Adult Parole Board
- Deputy Commissioner's Instruction 3.04A – Use of Personal Video Visits in Emergencies
- Commissioner's Requirement Management of At Risk Prisoners

Legislation and Policy Requirements

- Corrections Act 1986
 - Corrections Regulations 2019
 - Correctional Management Standards for Men's Prisoners in Victoria
 - Standards for the Management of Women Prisoners in Victoria
 - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
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