



Capricornia Correctional Centre
Workplace Culture Review
Executive Summary

Prepared by The Evexia Team



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DISCLAIMER

The *Workplace Culture Review Executive Summary Report* for the Capricornia Correctional Centre details a summary of qualitative data gathered through this process, and opinions and recommendations for future culture development and renewal within the Capricornia Correctional Centre.

The analysis undertaken here is based on perception data (staff opinion and the generation of themes) and has been considered within a work health and safety, psychosocial risk framework.

This is in contrast to a factual analysis undertaken during an investigation approach to determine on “balance of probabilities” whether particular events occurred as supported by collateral evidence.

It is not the intention of the report to express any opinion or to make or imply any finding against any individual, that they have engaged in illegal conduct, conduct that is contrary to any applicable employment code or is otherwise contrary to law.

Project Summary

Needs Analysis and Background:

1. Recent large-scale expansion in the built environment to accommodate an increase in prisoner numbers.
2. Significant recruitment drive, introducing new dynamics into the Centre.
3. Desire to understand any current concerns and opportunities for improvement along with an analysis of the alignment of the existing culture against the values and standards articulated by Queensland Corrective Services (QCS).
4. Requirement for recommendations, practical strategies, and insights to support the workforce to achieve objectives, create attitude and mindset shifts, adapt to change, improve overall workplace engagement, and address any shortfalls in communication and lines of authority.

Workplace Culture Review Method and Process:

The Workplace Culture Review process adopted a non-adversarial methodology based on a workplace, health and safety framework. The process benchmarks key factors in psychosocial risk and seeks to apply themes from perception data to generate recommendations for intervention. A three-part process was applied including:

1. Information sessions and frequent communiques to ensure informed consent and engagement in the process;
2. Individual interviews and small focus group sessions to understand the key risks, strengths and drivers of culture within the Centre; and
3. Engagement with leadership and work unit across the Centre to provide feedback, verification of findings and consolidate a local level action plan.

All current staff were offered the opportunity to attend a confidential one on one or small group interview, either within the Centre, at various off-site locations or via phone/video-conference. Each participant was provided with an information and consent form, which was discussed and signed at the outset of the interview. Participation in the process was voluntary and focused on understanding group-based themes, learnings, reflections, and ideas for the future.

The current report is a reflection of the key themes that arose during the interviews with 102 participants across October to December 2021, and risks / hazards have been examined based on the impact to psychological and psychosocial safety within the culture. The report includes a summary of key recommendations to act as a road map to mitigate risk and improve workplace psychosocial safety and engagement at the Centre, along with staff-based actions and ideas as captured during the feedback and action planning sessions undertaken across March 2022.

Executive Summary: Key Positive Themes

Positive Reflections:

Overall, the staff cohort interviewed as part of the workplace culture review came from a wide variety of backgrounds, bringing with them skills and strengths in a range of industries and vocations. Many reported that they found the work within a correctional centre provided an interesting opportunity to work with a diverse group of staff and prisoners.

A range of staff noted that the presence of the current General Manager, Chief Superintendent Mr. Butcher, had created a sense of hope for the future, with this leader described as being transparent in communication, open and focused on building trust, balanced and fair, approachable, and a positive role model of professionalism.

Many staff reflected that they enjoyed a range of aspects of their job, including the security of the job and the sense of peer support and camaraderie as well as the flexibility offered by shift and rostering opportunities. Additionally, for some staff there was a strong sense of pride and trust in the team to come together and work well in crisis.

Staff within the Low Custody work area report a more relaxed and enjoyable work environment and a dedication to supporting the transition and rehabilitation of low custody prisoners. It was also noted that a vast majority of Trades Instructors, while experiencing a range of challenges within their work team, expressed a passion for their roles in helping to educate and support prisoners with meaningful work. Common themes around support, wellbeing, education and rehabilitation of prisoners were also echoed by staff across departments within the Offender Development unit.

Executive Summary: Key Risks, Issues and Concerns

Historical Contributions to Culture and Psychosocial Safety:

Ongoing investigations

- A range of internal and external investigations were noted by staff as affecting morale and confidence in work roles.

Centre Expansion and New Staff Cohort

- The significant expansion of the Centre and subsequent introduction of many new staff impacted on the existing workforce, who act as mentors for new officers. Concerns were raised about inconsistencies in skill sets and onboarding experiences amongst the new officers. There was a perception that on-the-ground staff were not fully consulted in relation to the design and operational function of the centre redevelopment.

Change in Senior Leadership

- Changes in senior leadership within the Centre impacted staff sense of psychological safety and trust within the workplace. Differences in leadership styles led to inconsistent direction and reduced clarity for staff.

Current Issues and Concerns:

Overall Culture and Climate

- The culture within the Capricornia Correctional Centre appeared fatigued and disengaged. Concerns were raised about divisions between different sections of the workforce, leading to a lack of trust between different groups.

Role Clarity / Work Practices

- Inconsistency in work practices across the centre were identified as impacting on safety and trust, with the key risk highlighted being maintaining safety with prisoners.
- There was a reluctance to raise or question observed inconsistencies. A desire for greater understanding of scope of role and clarity of expectations was also expressed in many work areas.

Peer Support

- Peer support, while expressed by many as supportive and enjoyable, was also described in terms of 'in-group' and 'out-group', with reports of inappropriate behaviour between officer cohorts. This impacted on confidence to provide feedback or ideas that may have been contrary to the perceived norm.

- Various strengths and challenges regarding the current leadership team, capacity, and capabilities were reported. Some of the key challenges included a perceived lack of clarity on direction and strategy; a lack of support and a perceived disconnect with staff in frontline roles.

Workplace Behaviours

- Inappropriate and unhelpful behaviours, unprofessional conduct and an acceptance and tolerance of inappropriate comments were identified as a theme. These workplace behaviours were reported at various levels across the Centre.

Complaint and Issues Resolution

- Significant impacts on trust, morale and confidence were reported by staff in relation to long running investigations and concerns about the effective and appropriate management of complaint mechanisms.

Conflict Resolution

- The lack of centre-wide approach to the management of interpersonal conflict resolution between staff.

Work Health and Safety

- A lack of appropriate focus on workplace health and safety processes and procedures, including transparency and effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies and decision making was identified by some staff.

Performance Development/Performance Management

- Insufficient or inappropriate performance management and feedback was identified as affecting officer motivation and confidence.

Recruitment, Promotion and Recognition

- A number of concerns were raised by staff such as lack of transparency and clear guidelines relating to recruitment, promotion and developmental opportunities. Induction and mentoring of staff were reported as inconsistent. Feedback on performance, including recognition, reward or acknowledgment of hard work was considered uncommon.

Executive Summary: Opinion and Recommendations

Strategies to mitigate risk and improve psychological safety

In order to engage staff in the cultural rebuilding process, and provide transparency in the process, a series of feedback and action planning sessions were undertaken with management and staff work groups across March 2022. Participants in the session were stepped through a summary of the key themes and recommendations and their opinions sought on tangible actions relevant to their work area and the Centre overall. Engagement in these sessions was positive, with staff verifying the findings and contributing actively to practical suggestions for improvement.

Given the predominate reflection on culture at the Capricornia Correctional Centre is that psychological safety and trust are low, the foundations of culture improvement need to be grounded in rebuilding this safety. The following summary outlines the key recommendations:

Key Recommendations:

1. *Establish Psychological Safety through staff led action planning:*

- a.** Ensure that the action plan and related activities remain a priority for all work areas, with reporting and oversight by both senior leadership and a staff representative group, and the impact of the actions are evaluated for effectiveness.

2. *Review Work Practices:*

A critical action identified by many staff is the need for clarification of work practices, policies, and procedures. A range of ideas have been presented by staff as to how to go about the review process and include the following:

- a.** Establish representative working parties and ensure that these groups represent new and long-standing staff and staff at different levels. These working parties focus would be to determine the correct way to carry out the tasks and duties within the structured day in accordance with the COPDs and policies, as well as consistent approaches to dealing with codes, escalations and risks.
 - i.** This process may require input from expert parties and senior leadership to ensure a safe and productive discussion and openness in sharing confusion around practices that may have been creating safety risks and require correction.

- ii.** Taking a human factors, rootcause analysis approach to addressing areas of confusion in practice will create a safe and structured process and encourage continuous improvement. Adopting a learning culture through mechanisms such as the Use of Force reviews and other debriefing avenues will also reinforce safety in continuous improvement of work practices.
- b.** Work practices to be documented in language and formats that can be easily accessed and understood (could include screen shots of reporting systems or photographs/video examples of procedures where appropriate) and share these with all team members systematically to ensure each staff member has a clear understanding of how to carry out their roles. Staff suggested that messaging at morning briefings across each fortnight would ensure all staff on roster are across any changes or clarifications of practice.
- c.** Empower Supervisors to undertake mentoring roles through observation and debriefing of specific work practices. Ensure Supervisors have a structured process for debriefing and giving feedback that will further encourage safe, learning-focused discussions around challenges during their day to day shift.
- d.** Encourage positive feedback from peers and leaders, and celebrations of success when policies and work practices are consistently followed. This will encourage confidence in undertaking the day to day tasks and reinforce motivation to continue with consistent practice.
- e.** Throughout the process of reviewing work practices, key training opportunities may be identified. These should be noted and feedback provided to the Centre to incorporate into staff training schedules.

3. Communication

- a.** Each work area, with input from staff, Supervisors and Managers, to review the structure, purpose, frequency and impact of meetings across work units with the view to creating a cascade of meetings that encourage information sharing and input both up and down, and across work areas.
- b.** Encourage cross team/cross function forums to focus on whole-of-centre problem solving and thinking in line with critical improvement areas for the prison. This could be topics such as movement of prisoners, safety in the centre, culture and peer support between staff. Activate the Employee Engagement Group (or similar) as a staff reference group and starting point for cross-function problem solving.
- c.** Continue recording Full Staff Briefings and GM broadcasts as single point of truth and a Q&A forum for staff.

4. Leadership

- a.** Staff expressed a desire to understand and be involved in the strategic direction and vision for the Centre. It is recommended that the management team focus on communicating and engaging staff in this vision and supporting supervisors to work positively towards this direction. The leadership team could work closely with the Employee Engagement Group (or similar) to operationalise and share the vision with staff on the ground.
- b.** Overall, greater confidence in the management team is needed to assist in progressing workplace culture. Additionally, increased accessibility and visibility of the leadership team was desired by many staff. This included spending time within work areas listening to and solving issues and giving feedback on ideas and suggestions. It is recommended that the management team regularly “walk the floor” within their own work areas and other work areas to gain perspective on staff challenges, give positive and developmental feedback in situ, support supervisors with their development, assist in debunking misinformation, and close the loop on outstanding issues or concerns for staff.
- c.** It is likely coaching support, strategy development and targeted leadership skills training would further assist the Management cohort to encourage culture change and build psychological safety within the Centre.
- d.** Given the significant task of building a safe and engaged culture across all areas of the Centre, it is recommended that the management team create opportunities for increased peer support and cross-discipline peer support amongst each other. It would be important for this group to ensure that resolutions to issues in one work area do not create further challenges for another. This increased peer problem solving may be via the formal management team meeting or through alternate, smaller peer group problem solving sessions
- e.** Supervisors would likely benefit from the provision of tailored skills training in feedback, conflict resolution, performance development and problem solving. A peer-based supervisors’ network to share experiences and seek support may assist this group to build capability and confidence, with consideration of including guest speakers, training toolboxes or other such supports into these forums.

5. Workplace Behaviours

- a.** In line with QCS values and expectations, it is recommended that a reset occur on appropriate, helpful and positive workplace behaviours. While education and literacy on what is acceptable and unacceptable would be a positive step, staff will require regular and consistent feedback on positive workplace behaviours, as well as feedback and calling out of unhelpful, uncivil and bullying type behaviours. This feedback is best when immediate, issue specific and highlights how the behaviour is either contributing to psychological safety or detracting from psychological safety.

- b.** Creating multiple safe opportunities to give and receive feedback on conduct and workplace behaviours may help to normalise and create comfort in being called out for unhelpful comments and behaviours. Such opportunities would be in one-on-one interactions, and during small team meetings. Keeping helpful team behaviours on each team meeting agenda may also serve to encourage focus on providing positive, supportive feedback to each other and highlighting when inappropriate behaviours have occurred.
- c.** Staff at all levels are likely to require specific skills development in giving and receiving feedback related to conduct and workplace behaviours. It is recommended that training for identifying and calling out inappropriate workplace behaviour will assist staff at all levels to build skills and capability in this area and create expected norms against which to hold staff and leaders accountable. It may also be helpful for supervisors and managers to consider demonstrating and training their staff in processes such as curious questioning. This type of training can be undertaken within team meetings and does not require exhaustive resources.
- d.** Further work with the Employee Engagement Group (or similar) on addressing issues such as racism, sexism and intolerance to diversity may be a helpful strategy to creating buy-in for staff. State-wide Diversity and Inclusion strategies may also be a helpful reference to tackling this challenge.

6. Conflict and Issue Resolution

- a.** In line with a focus on workplace behaviours, it is recommended that a centre-wide strategy for conflict resolution be developed and shared with staff. This strategy may include escalation pathways that encourage peer-to-peer feedback and mentoring through peer support officers; skills development for supervisors on conflict resolution and mediation; mediation processes facilitated by HR or other skilled professionals; team development and team building processes; and management advisory and support where conflict is occurring between staff and leadership.
- b.** In general, greater support is required for supervisors and leaders who are currently attempting to resolve conflict or manage challenging behaviours. While the Centre's Human Resources work area may be an option to provide this support, assistance centrally to identify alternate mechanisms and resources to assist in this support may be helpful to the centre.
- c.** It is recommended that a program of education and information be provided to staff by Professional Standards on how decisions are made, including thresholds for suspension, the standard process for investigations and expectations for communication. This information may need to be reiterated to staff each time a complaint is lodged to clarify expectations and reduce misinformation within the Centre.

7. Work Health and Safety

- a.** As highlighted above, greater transparency and staff involvement in work health and safety risk management and planning would assist in developing increased trust and psychological safety across the Centre. Working parties or reference groups to contribute to risk mitigation and issue resolution would further create opportunities for engagement and recognition of staff capability and experience.
- b.** Critical to building trust is providing feedback and rationales for decision making and outcomes of safety issues, both verbally (to create opportunity to answer questions) and in writing to confirm the outcome.
- c.** A review of work health and safety issues, along with activities to resolve or mitigate these risks could form a standing agenda item in weekly or monthly team meetings, as well as encouragement of safety shares or toolbox talks on safety.

8. Recruitment and Selection

- a.** Staff suggested a greater focus on psychometric testing and fitness for duties assessments for new recruits to assist in ensuring longer term suitability and sustainability in Custodial roles. It was also highlighted that a focus on feedback on performance within the probation period would assist in clarifying areas for development and fitness/ suitability for the role. This was particularly relevant yet challenging within custodial areas due to rostering and shift work. Greater check in support on wellbeing of new recruits, along with personalised mentoring and tailored training were also suggestions that staff believed would assist in retention and development of new recruits.
- b.** Transparency through re-education for staff on the approved recruitment and selection process is also likely required to address misinformation and assumptions.

9. Performance and Development

- a.** It is recommended that an agreed structure for performance conversations be implemented and one-on-one conversations cascade through the centre while a formal framework is under development. Feedback from these conversations should, in the first instance, remain focused on strengths and areas for development, particularly while work practices are being reviewed and confirmed. The importance of undertaking one-on-one conversations would be to assist in developing a standard of expectation, both around conduct and performance, but also to establish individual staff needs, concerns and career aspirations.

Recommendations Road Map

Work Areas in Focus

In order to provide greater specificity for other areas within the Centre, a range of Work Area specific recommendations is highlighted below.

1. Secure and Residential Work Areas:

A particular focus on the review and clarification of work processes and procedures is critical to creating consistency and discipline across units and staff. Furthermore, multiple staff within these work areas noted that mentoring and buddy/shadowing systems provide opportunities to better upskill new staff and embed consistency in routine practices. Staff noted that greater planning and consideration of rostering would better foster opportunities to develop informal peer development and mentoring.

2. Industries Work Area:

The following specific recommendations have been made relating to this work area:

- a.** Mediation and conflict resolution is likely required to address individual concerns. While investigations may have been closed, relationships remain fractured and require sustained efforts to rebuild trust and safety.
- b.** A focus is needed to establish a whole of team development plan including; improving communication processes (such as meeting structures, processes for email updates and handovers, etc); agreed team strategies for issue resolution; exercises to build empathy and respect; clarification of processes and procedures across the Industries work area; and planning to manage work flows across the team. A collective team approach, including leadership of industries with input from the DGM, to focus on these areas will assist in increasing the transparency within the team, clarify the forward strategy and improve trust.
- c.** It is recommended that greater transparency and oversight by the DGM regarding the progress and resolution of issues being raised, along with greater consultation with staff on the strategies being enacted and team-based discussion on the evaluation of the impacts occur. The Toolbox talk meeting may provide a practical avenue for team-based problem solving and discussions of risk perceptions and mitigation strategies.

3. Business Services and Bulk Stores Work Area:

Business Services:

The key recommendations for this work area include:

- a.** Establish regular team meetings which are prioritised, with a standing agenda that covers staff movements, forward planning, communication relating to changes to process and opportunities for administration staff to contribute ideas and suggestions for problem solving (such as managing work demands) with their work areas.
- b.** Consider more regular and structured one-on-one meetings with administration staff, with a particular focus on wellbeing, development opportunities and performance feedback.
- c.** An additional consideration for staff in administration related to a desire for greater collaboration with the CCO cohort so as to improve respect and understanding of all roles within the centre. It would be prudent to include administration representation within the Employee Engagement Group (or similar) and any other cross-function/cross-discipline working group to encourage greater understanding of roles and contributions to the Centre.

Bulk Stores:

It is recommended the work area:

- a.** Re-establish regular team meetings to discuss workload, follow up on safety issues, provide peer mentoring and support, and disseminate information. Ensure action minutes are taken during the weekly meeting and consider facilitation by either the manager or supervisor to ensure they progress, even in the absence of one of these leaders.

4. Low Custody / Farm Work Area:

For the most part, staff working in Low Custody spoke positively of their experiences within this work area, including a lower stress work environment, open and honest engagement and communication with each other and prisoners, a trusting and supportive team environment and high levels of peer support and camaraderie. Staff described a range of team rapport strategies including local level problem and issue resolution, collaborative problem solving and sharing of overtime between peers. Staff within this work area also expressed a sense of common purpose working with Low Custody prisoners to assist in their transition and re-engagement into society.

Specific recommendations for this work area include:

- a.** Clarity of the strategic focus and aims of Low Custody within the Capricornia Correctional Centre into the future. This may assist the team members within the work area to better understand decision making and prioritisation and clarify perceptions of inequities.
- b.** Maintain an issues register or action plan that is visible to all staff and regularly updated by supervisors and managers as issues are raised and addressed with the Main Centre.
- c.** Enable staff representatives to attend whole-of-centre meetings or working party meetings within the main centre to foster cross work area communication, whole-of-centre connection and increased common understanding.

5. Offender Development Work Area:

A wide range of positive strengths were highlighted in relation to the Offender Development work area including: a multi-skilled and multidisciplinary team; high levels of commitment to prisoner wellbeing and rehabilitation; a strong enjoyment of the job; and fresh perspectives with new staff.

Specific recommendations for the Offender Development work area include:

- a.** Undertake a process of clarifying the scope of work for each unit within Offender Development and the requirement and tasks from each role to achieve that scope of works. Consideration within this process, of the skills matrix of individuals working in each unit, and how to capitalise on the strengths of each team member to achieve the purpose of Offender Development. This clarification exercise would also need to be undertaken with the strategic direction and future vision of the Centre in mind.
- b.** Some staff highlighted a desire for a broadening of their experience and understanding of how roles are undertaken within other prisons. Where possible and viable, it would be worthwhile considering options for peer support or peer supervision networks across Queensland Centres and empower staff to learn from each other and share experiences. This may also provide opportunities and structure for greater support and debriefing for individuals within this cohort who may be exposed to objectional content.

Next Steps

The feedback and action planning sessions that occurred with management and staff across March were an invaluable step forward in creating open discussion and focus on building psychological safety within the Centre. Participation in this process was positive and demonstrated a keenness for staff to be both informed and active participants in the way forward.

The feedback sessions also revealed staff perceptions that a positive shift in culture had started to occur within the Centre since the initial interviews. This was described by some participants as improved morale and team cohesion within work units, greater presence and engagement by leaders (including walking the floor, involving staff in decision making and examples of collaborative problem solving) and the commencement of addressing a range of work practice inconsistencies and process improvement, and the exploration of work health and safety issues.

In order to maintain forward momentum with cultural renewal, it is recommended that the Employee Engagement Group or similar cross-discipline representative group of staff be tasked with overseeing progress against action plans and accountability to agreed recommendations. Regular communication to staff around successes and achievements in relation to progressing the workplace culture action plans should then be shared with the whole of Centre to encourage ongoing focus and action.

An evaluation of the impact of the workplace culture review and subsequent action planning and execution is recommended at 6 and 12 months, post feedback. The annual *Working for Queensland* survey would also act as a gauge for workplace culture sentiment and perceptions.

It has been a pleasure working closely with staff and leaders of the Capricornia Correctional Centre and we are grateful for the engagement and feedback of so many individuals in shaping the themes and recommendations highlighted here.

Report Authors:

Jo Karabitsios
Director & Workplace Psychologist
BPsy Sc(Hons) MOrg Psych MAPS GAICD

David Whittingham
Director & Forensic Psychologist
B Psych, MPsych, FCFP, MAPS, MAPATAP

Carly Garner
Provisional Psychologist
BPsychSc, BSc(Hons)(Psychology), BCCJ, AMAPS

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