

PART B

**CORRECTIVE SERVICES IN
QUEENSLAND**

2. CORRECTIVE SERVICES IN QUEENSLAND

2.1 Introduction

This section of the Report sets out an outline of the system as it exists in 1988. It is a snapshot of the organisation. This section does not particularly seek to draw attention to any findings or deficiencies nor to make recommendations for change. Rather, it provides a basic framework for understanding how the system is organised, how it operates, how big it is, what it does, where it is located, what the prisons are like and whom it employs.

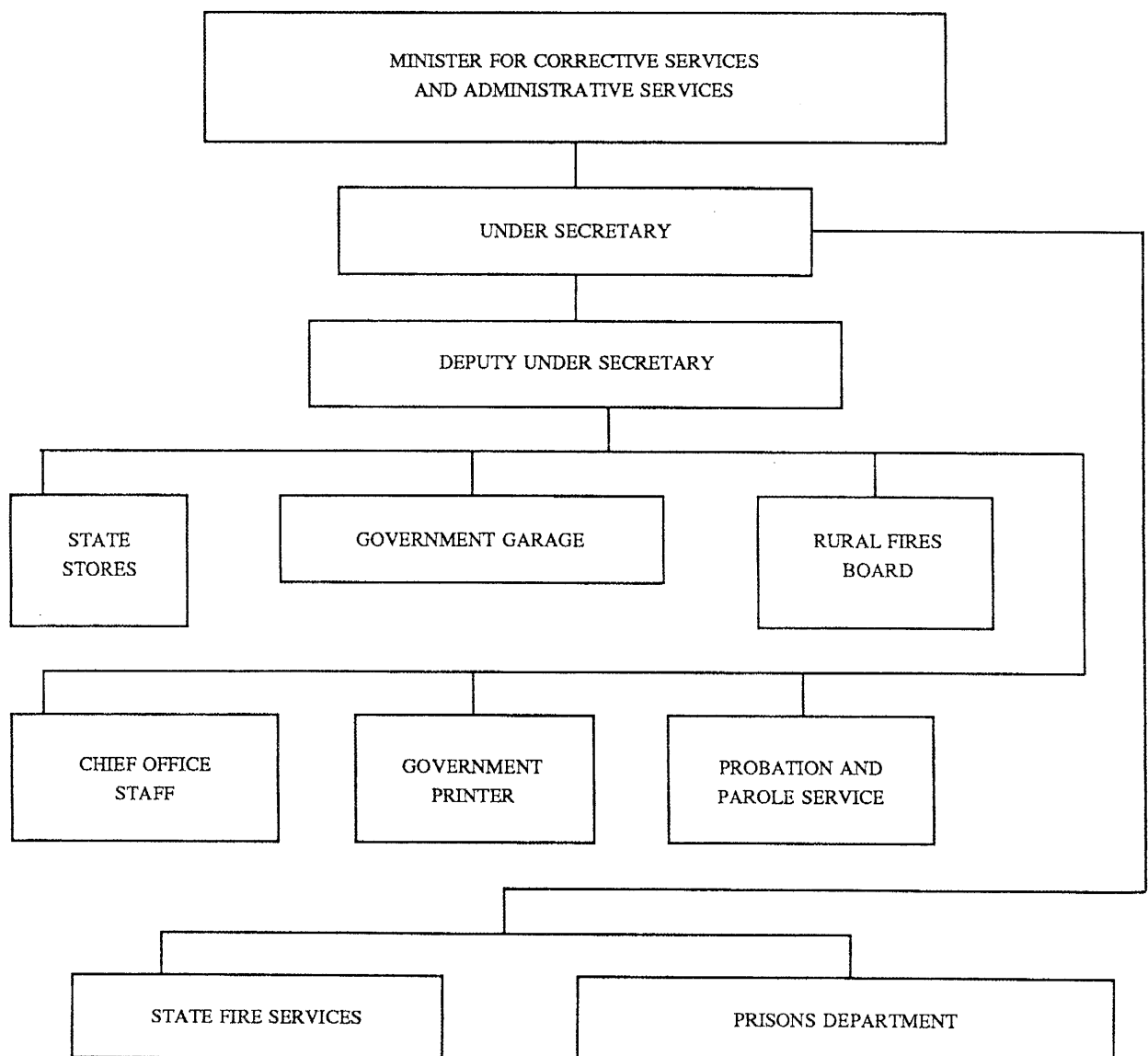
It is not easy to put together an accurate picture of the situation. In a field so affecting the lives of people and which is such a substantial user of taxpayers' money it is amazing that I have found it difficult to obtain accurate data about what the system actually does and whether society is getting value for its money.

Nevertheless, this attempt has been made using the Australian Institute of Criminology census of prisons, Departmental statistics and consultants to the Commission of Review to provide an overview of the system.

2.2 The Organisation of Corrective Services in Queensland

Corrective services in this State are administered by an "umbrella department", the Department of Corrective Services and Administrative Services. Figure 1 sets out the organisational structure for the Department and shows the relationship between the major administrative units.

Figure 1: Organisational Structure for Corrective Services in Queensland



There is no reason why a great many disparate functions cannot be grouped under a single Minister and a chief office structure. The concerns expressed in the Interim Report related to the fragmentation of the two arms of corrective services, problems being experienced in the Prison Service itself, and more particularly the need to revitalise the organisation of corrections.

In summary corrective services are presently organised into two quite separate services. These are:

- the Queensland Probation and Parole Service; and
- the Queensland Prison Service.

They are and have been kept so separate that this Report must describe them under quite separate headings.

The next sections provide a summary of the operations of the two arms of corrective services, and are intended to assist readers of this Report to place the comments, findings and recommendations into a clearer perspective of what the services do at the work face.

2.3 The Queensland Probation and Parole Service

2.3.1 *Background*

Queensland has had a parole system since 1937, and probation was first available for certain offenders in 1945. Until 1959 there was one probation officer for the whole of Queensland who was attached to the then Court of Petty Sessions in Brisbane. An integrated community corrections system was then established.

Many of the needs which led to the creation of community corrections programmes in 1959 remain unchanged today. An alternative to prison was needed to:

- respond to prison crowding;
- reduce costs of corrections;
- enable the Government to keep pace with corrections reform in other States;
- respond to pressure from professional groups and associations for more community supervision of offenders;
- respond to pressure from sections of the judiciary for a wider range of sentencing options;
- reduce the negative impact of sentences on the families of offenders; and
- reduce the incidence of crime.

The service has grown gradually and now has offices in most major towns and centres.

2.3.2 *Role of Probation and Parole Service*

The Probation and Parole Service exists to supervise offenders in the community granted orders by the courts, or who have been released from prison on parole by the Parole Board. This form of supervision is now generally termed "community corrections".

Community corrections is an attempt to provide interaction between the community and the offender. Through supervision under strict conditions and provision of specialist programs to offenders, the aim is to help offenders live as law-abiding members of the community.

The desired outcomes of community-based programs include lower recidivism rates, removal of less serious offenders from prison and a prison population that is lower than it might otherwise be. Community corrections are usually much cheaper than prisons and the risks to the community from not having these offenders in prison is not high. Community correction workers argue that community supervision and the professional nature of that supervision can have substantial positive benefits on the individual and to the community when compared to the impact of imprisonment.

Probation and Parole Officers compile pre-parole reports at the request of the Parole Board. These reports contain recommendations as to the appropriateness of parole release and often address specific areas of concern to the Board. In the process of compiling such reports Parole Officers interview the offender, consider his past offending behaviour, the risk he represents to the community, his parole plan, the family situation and any other relevant factors, in arriving at a recommendation.

Officers of the Service are available to advise Courts on the suitability of offenders for community supervision before a decision is made on a sentence. The use of this advisory service varies from area to area depending on the wishes of Magistrates and Judges to use it and the capacity of some staff to advise effectively.

Community supervision carried out by the Queensland Probation and Parole Service can take the following forms:

ORDERS MADE BY COURTS:

Probation. Except for certain prescribed purposes, a Probation Order is a conviction. It can be made for periods of not less than six months, and not more than three years. A person on probation will be required to visit the local Probation and Parole Office regularly and may also be visited at home by a Probation Officer.

Prison/Probation. Under these orders, imprisonment cannot exceed six months, and the probation period which follows cannot be less than nine months, or more than three years.

Probation orders contain a number of statutory conditions, but may also contain special conditions such as a requirement to attend a treatment facility for a substance abuse problem. The intensity of supervision, and involvement in programs, such as developing inter-personal skills, is determined by the Probation Officer who takes into account the risk the offender presents to the community and his particular problems.

Conviction for an offence while on probation may have serious consequences. It can result in the imposition of a fine or an order to make compensation, an extension of the existing order, the making of a fresh Probation Order or dealing with the person for the original offence, which may lead to imprisonment. Similarly, failure to report or comply with the probation conditions may result in a breach of probation with similar consequences.

Community Service Orders. Under these orders offenders can be required to perform work in the community on projects approved by the Corrective Services Minister. The hours performed in aggregate, cannot be less than 40, or more than 240.

The person on a Community Service Order is supervised by a part-time supervisor employed by the Probation and Parole Service, or by a person representing the organisation for whom the work is being performed. The type of work that these people do varies from such things as repairing and painting a scout hall, to lawn mowing for aged incapacitated people.

Fine Option Orders. If an offender can satisfy a court that he is unable to pay a fine, it may make an order requiring him to perform up to 240 hours of community service work, as described above.

Under these orders, there is provision to:

- credit any hours worked against the fine; and
- credit part payment of the fine against the number of hours required to be worked.

PAROLE ORDERS:

Prisoners serving sentences in excess of six months, with some prescribed exceptions, such as those serving life sentences, are eligible to apply for parole at the expiration of half their sentence. There is provision for courts to make a recommendation as to when a prisoner should be considered for parole.

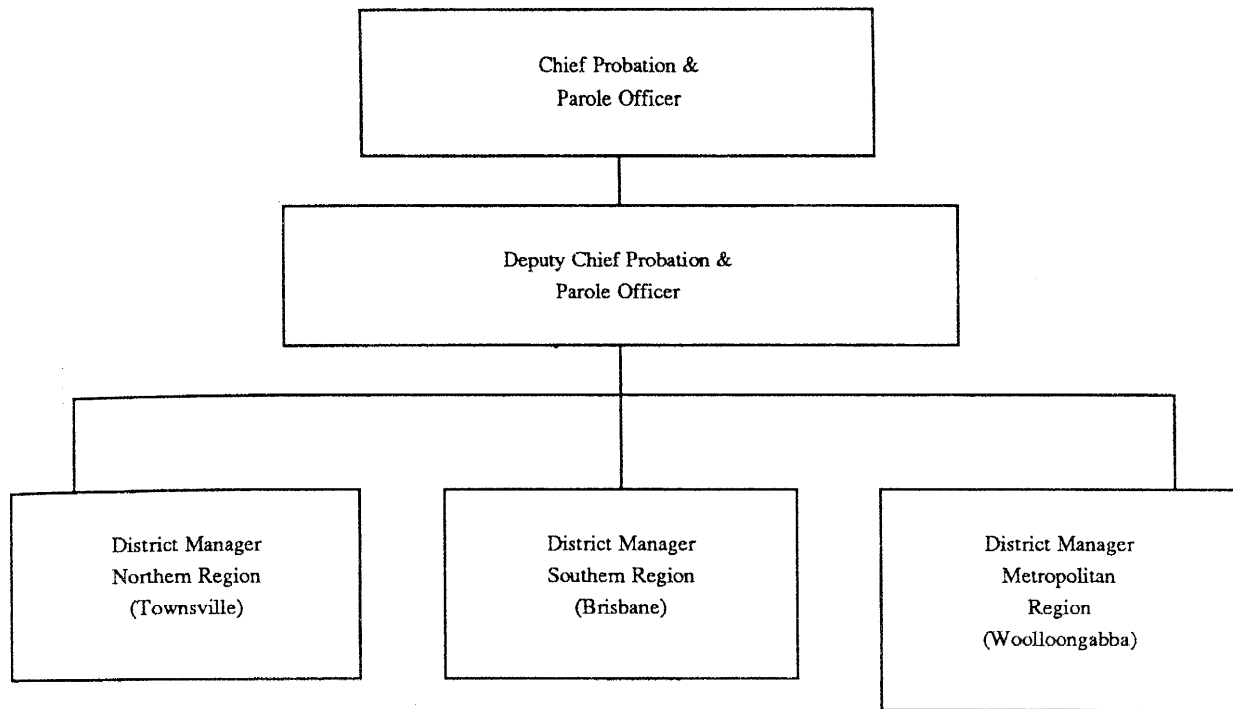
Parole supervision is subject to certain statutory conditions, and special conditions can be added. The supervision arrangements are the same as described for probation but even more stringent.

Release on parole of prisoners sentenced to life is determined by Governor in Council upon a recommendation from the Parole Board.

2.3.3 Organisation of the Probation and Parole Service

The Probation and Parole Service consists of a head office, and twenty-six area offices grouped into three districts. An organisational chart is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Organisational Structure for Probation and Parole Service



Each District Manager is responsible for a number of Area Offices, each in the charge of an Area Supervisor. For instance, the District Manager (Northern Region) is responsible for the following Area Supervisors:

- Townsville
- Mt Isa
- Mareeba
- Rockhampton
- Cairns
- Mackay
- Gladstone

The Chief Probation and Parole Officer is on the same public service classification as the Deputy Comptroller-General of Prisons. District Managers are on about the same salary as a Superintendent of a prison.

A typical Area Office, say Townsville, is staffed by four Probation and Parole Officers who supervise about 250 offenders. These staff usually have degrees in a behavioural science. In addition, community service co-ordinators and part-time paid community service and fine option supervisors are employed to co-ordinate and supervise work performed by offenders under these schemes.

2.4 The Parole Board

The Queensland Parole Board was established in 1959 under the Offenders Probation and Parole Act. It is chaired by a Supreme Court Judge and the other members are the Under Secretary, Department of Corrective Services and Administrative Services, the Under Secretary of the Department of Justice, the Comptroller-General of Prisons and three other members, one of whom must be a "medical practitioner or psychologist, and at least one of whom shall be a woman".

The Parole Board usually sits at three weekly intervals to consider applications from prisoners to be released on parole.

2.5 The Queensland Prison Service

2.5.1 Responsibilities

The Prison Service is the State Government body responsible for operating and maintaining Queensland's prisons. The Service is part of the portfolio of the Minister for Corrective Services and Administrative Services.

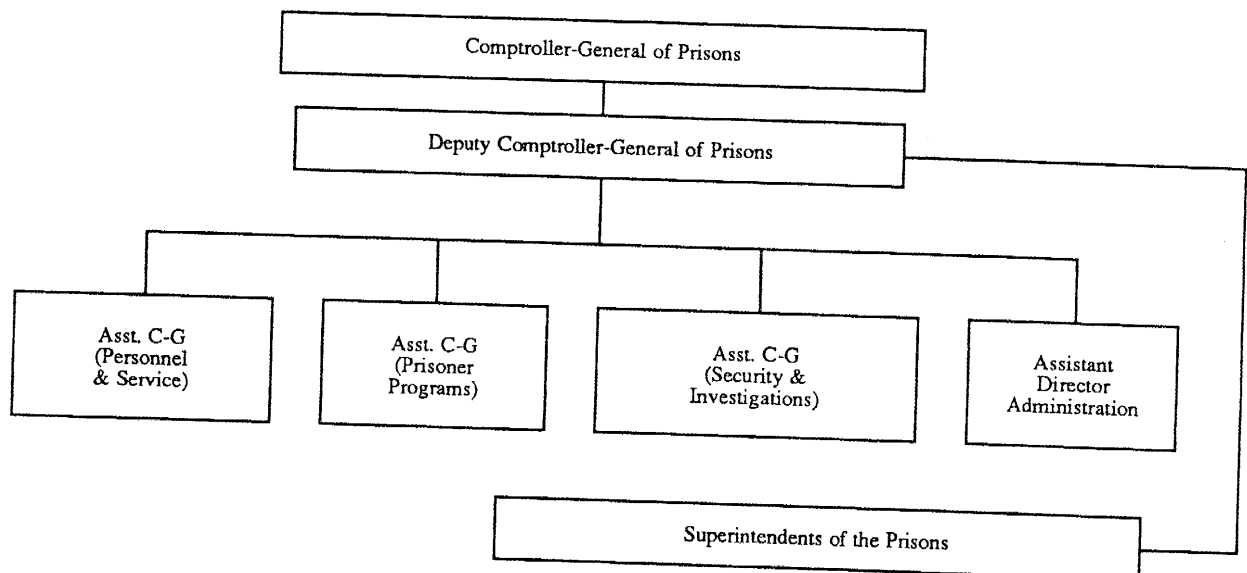
The Prison Service is responsible in full or in part for the following Acts administered by the Minister for Corrective Services and Administrative Services:

- *Prisons Act 1958-1974;*
- *Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982-1987;*
- *Weekend Detention Act 1970-1984;*
- *Offenders Probation and Parole Act 1980-1983; and*
- *Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1984.*

2.5.2 The Office of the Comptroller-General

The chief executive of the Prison Service is the Comptroller-General of Prisons. The Comptroller-General is responsible at law for the care, direction, control and management of all prisons in Queensland. An organisation structure for the Prison Service is shown as Figure 3.

Figure 3: Organisational Structure of the Prisons Department



Head office comprises four major divisions:

- Security and Investigations,
- Personnel and Service Development,
- Prisoner Programs, and
- Administration.

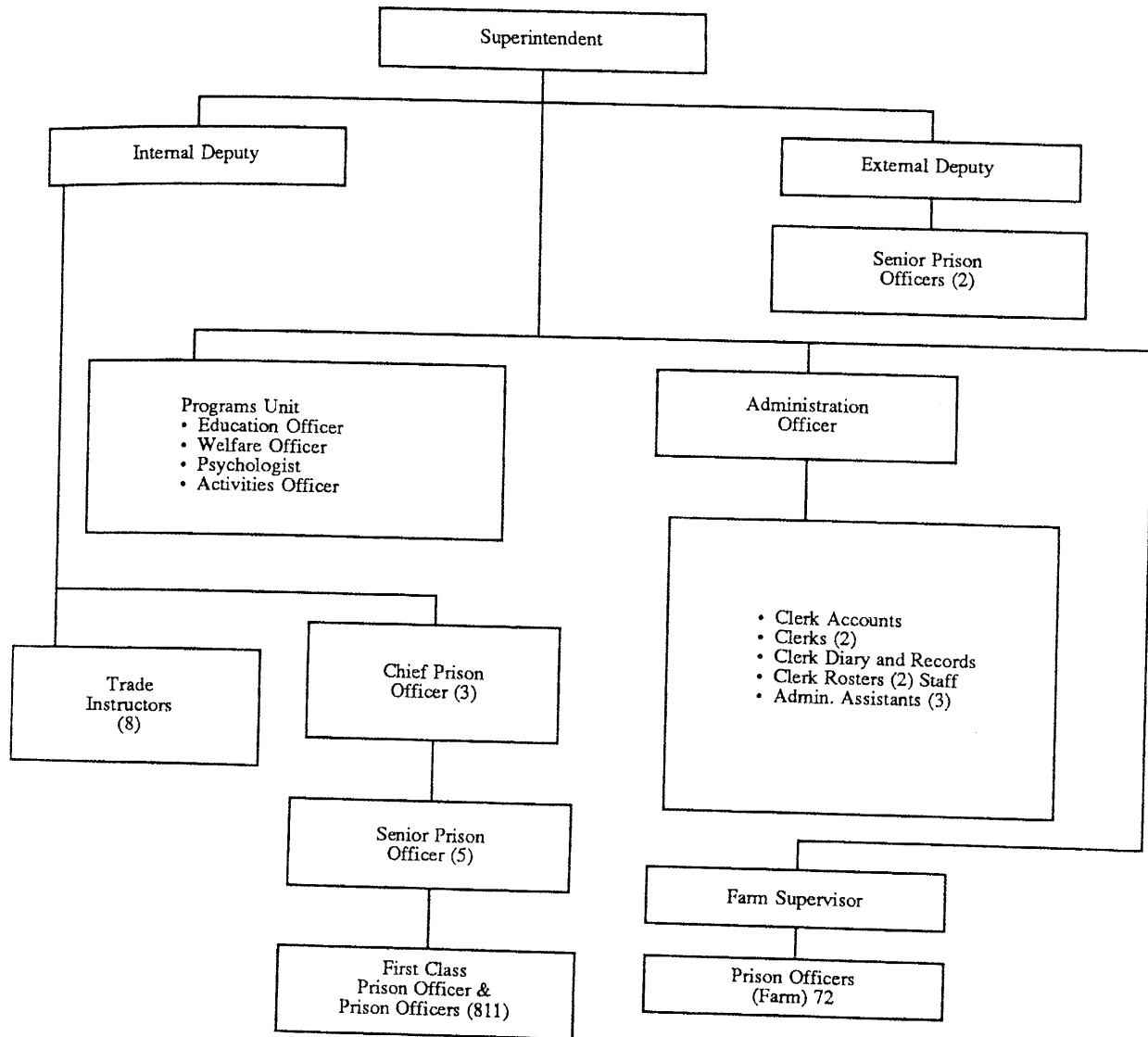
Each division is managed by an Assistant Comptroller-General or Assistant Director, who coordinates all activities within that division throughout the State.

2.5.3 The Prisons

Each prison is managed by a Superintendent who is responsible for the institution, its staff and inmates. The Superintendent is supported by Deputy Superintendents, Chief and Senior Prison Officers, Prison Officers, Specialist Staff (e.g. Trade Instructors and Farm Supervisors), Programs Staff and Administration Staff.

A typical organisational structure for a prison appears as Figure 4. Many of the other prisons are larger than Rockhampton and include additional senior staff to supervise particular functions. Townsville Prison has a Women's Prison for instance. Brisbane Prison is operated as a number of partly separate complexes but is under the overall control of a Chief Superintendent.

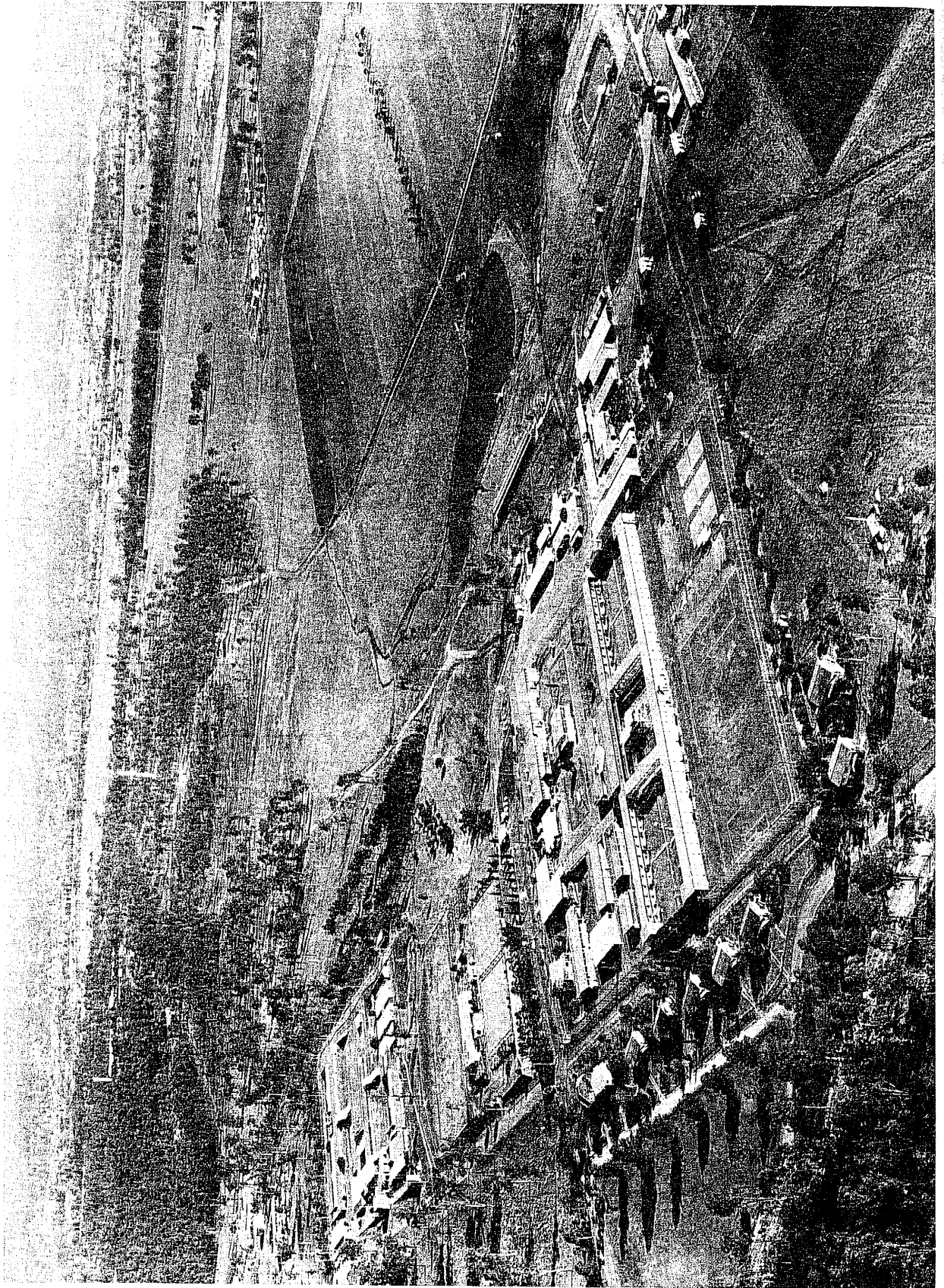
Figure 4: Organisational Structure Rockhampton Prison



An aerial photograph of Wacol Prison appears as Figure 5. This will give some indication of the style of a reasonably modern facility near Brisbane. This report makes no attempt to try and describe life or conditions in prison. The Interim Report said enough on the subject. If further reading is required "*Doing Time—The Prison Experience*"¹ is not too far off the mark. Tony Vinson's book "*Willful Obstruction*"² gives some indication of the problems confronting those who have tried to change prisons, although as indicated in the Interim Report there were particular reasons why his task was "doomed to failure" (p. 18). The *Nagle Report* is a particularly well known review of the New South Wales system but it is now dated.

¹ "*Doing Time—The Prison Experience*" by Barry Elen, Published by Fontana Books, Sydney 1984.
² "*Willful Obstruction*" by Tony Vinson, Published by Methuen, Australia, 1982.

Figure 5: Wacol Prison Near Brisbane



2.5.4 *Release to Work and Home Detention Schemes*

The Prison Service operates two community-based schemes. These are:

- The Home Detention Program, and
- The Release to Work Hostel.

Under the Home Detention Scheme, people convicted of offences such as drink driving, fine default and property offences can be approved to serve the last part of their sentence at home. People convicted of serious violent and serious sexual offences are supposed to be excluded from these programs.

The Release to Work Hostel in Brisbane provides 20 places for prisoners to work in the community for up to 6 months prior to release.

2.6 **The Location of Corrective Services in Queensland**

Figure 6 shows the distribution of corrective services in Queensland. Most major towns have Probation and Parole Offices. The Prison Service administers five prisons and two State prison farms. These are located in:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • Townsville | • Rockhampton |
| • Woodford | • Wacol |
| • Brisbane | • Numinbah |
| • Palen Creek | |

New prisons are currently being constructed at Borallon and Wacol in the south eastern corner of the State and at Chewko near Mareeba in Far North Queensland.

Figure 6: The Location of Corrective Services in Queensland

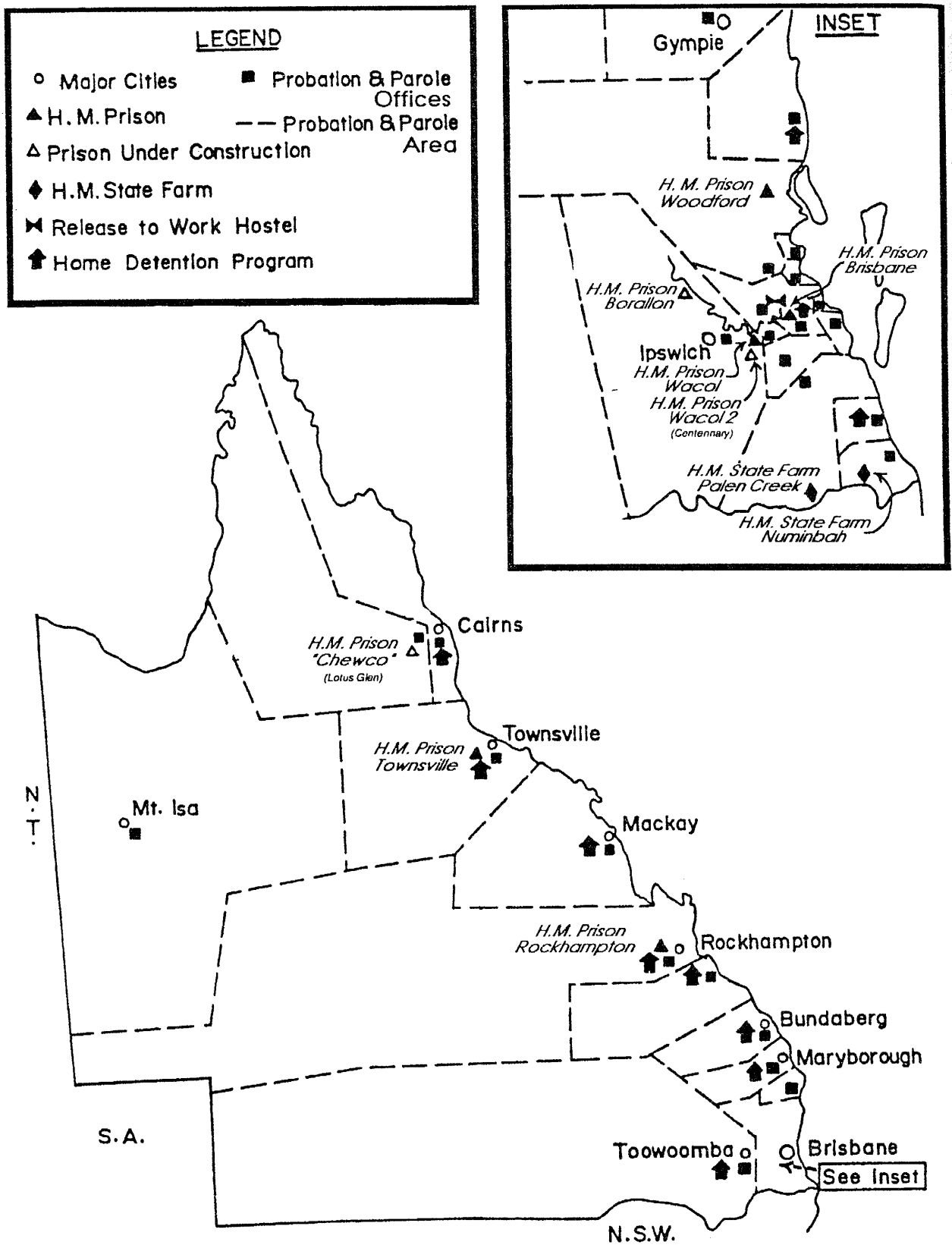


Table 1 sets out details regarding the age, prison population and staff numbers of each prison.

Table 1: Queensland Prisons			
Prison	Prison Age	Inmate Population	Staff Numbers
Townsville (M)	1890-1987	487	209
Townsville (F)	1987	13	11
Rockhampton	1967	233	127
Woodford	1973	261	160
Brisbane Male	1883-1979	570	378
Brisbane Female	1982	83	54
Wacol	1958	353	177
Numinbah	1940	81	11
Palen Creek	1934	71	11

(Source: Prisons Department)

Some indication of the size of the Probation and Parole Service can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Queensland Probation and Parole Service		
Office	Staff Numbers	Case Numbers
Beenleigh	2	195
Brisbane North	15	896
Brisbane South		
(Woolloongabba)	13	730
Bundaberg	2 1/3 (part time)	137
Burleigh Heads	4	291
Cairns	8	459
Cleveland	3	131
Gladstone	1	74
Gympie	1 1/3 (part time)	147
Inala	4	190
Ipswich	6	446
Mackay	4	241
Mareeba	1	190
Maroochydore	4	261
Maryborough	2 1/3 (part time)	135
Mount Isa	3	163
Pine Rivers	5	270
Redcliffe	4	277
Rockhampton	4	252
Sandgate	3	160
Southport	9	594
Toowoomba	8	483
Townsville	9	530
Woodridge	8	605
Total	123	

(Source: Qld Probation and Parole Service as at 1.4.88)

Corrective Services is equivalent in personnel to a medium sized company. The details are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Corrective Services—The Organisation			
Prisons Service	Head Office	Prisons	Total
Administration	38	79	117
Professional	8	48	56
Management	13	31	44
Custodial	2	1 069	1 071
Total	61	1 227	1 288
Probation and Parole ..	Head Office	Area Offices	Total
Management	4	5	9
Administration	7	30	37
Supervisory		99	99
Total	11	134	145

(Source: Department of Corrective Services and Administrative Services)

2.7 Allocation of Financial Resources

In the Interim Report and in later sections of this Report it is argued that the indicative evidence suggests corrective services in Queensland have been starved of funds for years. It is also argued some of the funds allocated could be used to better effect. The Report showed the effect of the low level of expenditure on service delivery. It said that any attempt to provide real "corrective services" was only token.

With the resources available to the Review Secretariat it was not possible to carry out a detailed economic analysis. Such questions as how much are the people of Queensland paying and what do they get in return are very difficult to answer. In this section is set out some details that we managed to put together about the resources used by the corrective services system.

Table 4 sets out the available information on budget allocations to corrective services in Queensland in recent years. It indicates the level of recurrent expenditure as a percentage of the Queensland budget, in constant price terms per head of population. It is not possible to provide details regarding capital and maintenance expenditure over time. Also expenditure on some services such as health care are not included. The accounts for this are scattered in the budgets of other departments. Inter-state comparisons are very difficult and the Secretariat lacked the resources to attempt this task. The Grants Commission has done some work on inter-state comparisons. This was obtained and is discussed later in this report.

Table 4: The Costs of Corrective Services

	Financial Year (\$000s)				
	83/84	84/85	85/86	86/87	87/88
PRISONS					
No. Prisoners	1 781	1 940	2 066	2 247	2 308
Current Prices					
• Total Costs	33,931	36,706	40,738	45,919	48,829
Constant 87/88 prices					
• Total Costs	43,858	44,946	46,744	48,973	48,829
• Cost per prisoner	24.6	23.2	22.6	21.8	21.2
COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS					
• No. of Offenders	5 177	7 639	7 633	8 658	9 214
Current Prices					
• Total Costs	2,819	3,536	3,958	4,537	4,839
Constant 87/88 prices					
• Total Costs	3,644	4,330	4,542	4,839	4,839
• Cost per case supervised	.70	.57	.60	.56	.53
TOTAL CORRECTIONS					
Constant 87/88 prices					
• Total Costs	47,502	49,276	51,286	53,812	53,668
• Cost per head					
Qld population (x 1 000)	19.1	19.5	19.9	20.5	20.0
% Qld budget	.87	.86	.86	.89	.89

(Source: A.B.S. and Department of Corrective Services and Administrative Services)

The expenditure per head of population in Queensland has remained fairly constant in real terms. Also the portion of the State budget allocated to corrective services has remained relatively constant in recent years, but, the very high growth rates in numbers of offenders both in community corrections and prisons has resulted in a substantial erosion of the real expenditure per offender. Without doubt the expenditure per prisoner has been falling steadily for some years in real terms. It is now some 13% to 14% lower than some four years ago. As shown later in this report, the level of expenditure started from a very low base compared with what is reasonable and compared with other states.

2.8 The Prisoners

There is a great deal of descriptive statistical material about the characteristics of prisoners. A useful source of raw data is the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra which provided data to the Commission of Review. The Institute carries out a national prison census each year.

More sophisticated analysis of the data appears in the Institute's publications as well as various journals. The Commission of Review has deliberately avoided becoming overly involved in academic debate. This section, therefore provides no more than a thumbnail sketch of details which will be very familiar to those involved with corrections.

2.8.1 Offences for Which Prisoners are in Gaol

It is worth seeing the crimes for which prisoners are sent to gaol. First, it needs to be said that a significant portion are not yet convicted. They are held on remand. Table 5 shows the most recent details.

Table 5: Legal Status of Queensland Prisoners

Status of Prisoners	No.	%
Under Sentence	1 902	87.0
Waiting Appeal	44	2.0
Unfit to Plead	16	.7
Unconvicted	179	8.2
Awaiting Sentence	2	.1
Awaiting Deportation	2	.1
Unknown	41	1.8
TOTAL	2 186	100.0

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology—National Prison Census 30/6/1986)

Of the convicted prisoners in prison at any one time, about 11% are imprisoned for homicide. About another 30% are in for other crime, generally violent, against the person with another 30% in for property crimes such as break and enter. About 10% are in for drug offences. The detailed break-down is shown below in Table 6.

Table 6: Number of Queensland Prisoners by Most Serious Offence

	No.	%
Offences Against the Person		
Homicide	239	10.9
Assault	124	5.7
Sex Offences	292	13.4
Other Against the Person	13	.6
Robbery and Extortion	207	9.4
Offences Against Property		
Break and Enter	289	13.2
Fraud and Misappropriation	141	6.5
Receiving	28	1.3
Other Theft	193	8.8
Property Damage	40	1.8
Offences Against Good Order		
Justice Procedure	41	1.9
Offensive Behaviour	3	.1
Unlawful Possession of a Weapon	8	.4
Other	6	.3
Drug Offences		
Possession and use	105	4.8
Trafficking	89	4.1
Manufacture	31	1.4
Traffic Offences	265	12.1
Other	72	3.3
Total	2 186	100.0

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology—National Prison Census 30/6/1986)

Less violent and less major crime attracts shorter sentences. Hence, in a given year the number of people sent to prison for less serious crime is considerably higher than shown in the above table.

2.8.2 The Threat to Security

The vast majority of prisoners are regarded as a low threat to security. Well over 75% are medium or lower classification security. Table 7 below.

Table 7: Percentage of Queensland Prisoners by Institution, Security and Classification

	Max.	Med.	Min.	Other/ Unclass.
H.M. Prison				
Brisbane	36.6	33.0	15.7	14.7
Townsville	6.3	85.2	3.8	4.7
Wacol	4.7	52.4	42.6	.3
Woodford	5.4	65.5	29.1	..
Rockhampton	5.7	47.6	20.5	6.2
Palen Creek .....	..	..	100.0	..
Numinbah .....	..	..	100.0	..
Total (Males)	17.2	49.4	25.5	7.1
Total (Females) .....	..	1.3	1.3	97.4

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census, 1986)

The Commission has been advised not to place too much reliance on these earlier census figures. The Director of Induction and Classification in the Prisons Department says that until last year, classification to a lower level often depended on the availability of accommodation in a lower classification prison rather than any objective assessment of the real risks posed by each prisoner. The Review is advised that the percentage regarded as maximum security is likely to be substantially lower when the next prison census data is released. The Prisons Department figures are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Percentage of Queensland Prisoners by Institution, Security and Classification

H.M. Prison	Maximum A	Medium		Minimum C	Unclassified U/C
		B1	B2		
Brisbane—					
—Males	18.06	36.62	9.53	7.86	21.93
—Females	1.14	35.23	45.45	12.50	5.68
Townsville	10.66	20.68	50.96	12.58	5.12
Wacol	2.82	13.84	35.31	46.89	1.13
Woodford	2.27	46.97	37.12	13.64	—
Rockhampton	5.76	8.23	26.75	37.45	21.81
Palen Creek	—	—	—	100.00	—
Numinbah	—	—	—	100.00	—
TOTAL	8.10	23.16	27.53	30.36	10.85

(Source: Prisons Department 26/6/88)

2.8.3 The Age of Prisoners

Table 9 sets out details of the ages of prisoners in Queensland and Australia. This shows that prisoners are predominately young and this is the pattern in all jurisdictions.

Close to 50% of the Queensland prison population is aged between 20 and 30. About 220 inmates in Queensland prisons are aged under 20. There was even one person under 16 at the time of the last census. The Commission received many submissions directing attention to the problem of this group in the prisons. These young males, termed "boys" in the system, often become victims of the social systems that operate inside prisons.

Table 9: Age Distribution of Prisoners

	Qld.		Aust.	
	No.	%	No.	%
Under 16	1	0	4	.0
16 .....	..	..	19	.2
17	29	1.3	89	.8
18	90	4.1	353	3.1
19	106	4.8	539	4.7
20-24	581	26.63	150	27.4
25-29	442	20.22	700	23.5
30-34	325	14.91	857	16.2
35-39	228	10.41	205	10.5
40-44	171	7.8	709	6.2
45-49	96	4.4	415	3.6
50-54	51	2.3	222	1.9
55-59	33	1.5	124	1.1
60-64	23	1.1	71	.6
+ 65	10	.5	34	.3
TOTAL	2 186		11 491	

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census, 1986)

It should also be noted that the Queensland prison system faces a more acute problem in dealing with young prisoners than prison systems in Australia as a whole. Queensland appears to imprison people more frequently than most Australian jurisdictions. There were 132 prisoners per hundred thousand population in Queensland at the census. The figure for Australia was 110. But Queensland also has very high imprisonment rates for young offenders. In Queensland 67 people per hundred thousand aged 17 or under are in prison. The figure for Australia is 37 per hundred thousand. For people aged 17 to 18 the imprisonment rate for Queensland is 216 per hundred thousand. For Australia as a whole it is only 138 per hundred thousand. Put simply, Queensland imprisons people more frequently than most Australian jurisdictions and of those imprisoned a far higher percentage are under 18 than would occur in other jurisdictions. Table 10 contains the data on which this conclusion is based.

Table 10: Age Specific Imprisonment Rate Per 100,000 Population

Age	Qld.	Aust.
17	67.7	36.8
18	215.5	137.9
19	258.6	211.6
20-24	268.1	233.2
25-29	210.0	205.9
30-34	162.1	147.0
35-39	117.0	98.7
40-44	109.6	72.9
45-49	75.8	51.2
50-54	45.1	30.2
55-59	28.9	16.7
60-64	21.1	10.2
+ 65	11.3	6.0
TOTAL	132.1	110.2

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census, 1986)

The Commission of Review has major concerns about the treatment or rather lack of special treatment the younger people in prison receive. A section later in this Report deals specifically with the problem.

2.8.4 Ethnicity of Prisoners

The Commission, particularly in its visits to prisons, received comments about the proclivity for crime and imprisonment amongst different ethnic groups. It seemed worthwhile to look at the available data. Table 11 sets out census data about the country of birth of the prison population.

The overwhelming impression received on visiting prisons is the very high levels of Aborigines in the prison system. Surprisingly in Queensland data was not collected about the numbers of Aborigines in prisons until this year.

Table 11: Number of Prisoners in Queensland by Country of Birth

	No.	%
Australia	1 844	84.4
New Zealand	88	4.0
Papua New Guinea	12	.5
Other Oceania	2	.1
Indo China and Asia	16	.6
U.K.	115	5.3
Greece	6	.3
Italy	14	.6
Other Europe	39	1.8
U.S.A.	12	.5
Canada	8	.4
Other	30	1.4
	2 186	100

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census 1986)

2.8.5 How Long have They Served?

The data indicates that a few prisoners spend a very long time in prison. Many serve short sentences as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Aggregate Sentences of Prisoners in Queensland

	No.	%
Under 1 Month	11	.6
1-3 Months	111	5.7
3-6 Months	195	9.9
6-12 Months	299	15.2
1-2 Years	258	13.1
2-5 Years	443	22.6
5-10 Years	381	19.4
10 Years and Over	119	6.1
Life etc.	122	6.2
Unknown	23	1.2
TOTAL	1 962	100.0

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census, 1986)

Prisoners are just not "old crims". They are in the main young and they have not been in prison long. Over 30% of prisoners in prison, at the Australian Institute of Criminology census date, were on sentences less than 12 months. Over 60% of the prisoners had been in the prison less than twelve months on their current sentence. (Table 13).

Table 13: Time Spent in Queensland Prisons—Current Sentence

	No.	%
Under 1 Month	298	15.2
1-3 Months	428	21.8
3-6 Months	293	14.9
6-12 Months	339	17.3
1-2 Years	283	14.4
2-5 Years	211	10.8
5-10 Years	62	3.2
Over 10 Years	47	2.4
Unknown	1	.0
TOTAL	1 962	100.0

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census 1986)

2.8.6 The Problem of Recidivism

For many prisoners, prison is a way of life. The Commission was informed that recidivism (the return after release of prisoners to further offending and possibly ultimately back to prison) is high. Clearly, many people in prison have been there before. Table 14 demonstrates this.

Table 14: Number of Prisoners with Known Prior Adult Imprisonment Under Sentence (Queensland)

	No.	%
Prior Imprisonment —		
Yes	1 252	57.3
No	856	39.2
Unknown	78	3.5
TOTAL	2 186	100.0

(Source: Australian Institute of Criminology, National Prison Census, 1986)

However, in Queensland as elsewhere, research into recidivism is not good. It is not known, for instance, how many people only spend one term in prison, how many several terms. It is not known how long a person spends on release before returning to prison. Also, little is known about the impact of changes to prison management and conditions on recidivism.