

“Flip the Switch”: Experts Demand Digital Access in Prison Cells as Strikes Highlight Safety Crisis

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International corrections and justice experts are calling on state governments to urgently introduce secure computer tablets in prison cells to tackle escalating violence, improve mental health, and reduce reoffending across Australia.

The call comes as the **Community Justice Coalition (CJC)** is launching its milestone consultation report, [Technology in Prison Settings](#), and amid ongoing crisis in Queensland, where youth detention workers held [statewide strikes](#) over unsafe working conditions and inmate assaults.

At the [NSW Budget Estimates hearing](#) on Monday, Minister for Corrections Anoulack Chanthivong and the Corrective Services NSW Commissioner acknowledged the report and the safety benefits of correctional technology (p. 5, 12).

The CJC report brings together **31 professional bodies and global experts**, including the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) Psychiatry Subcommittee.

The President of the CJC, the Hon. John Dowd AO KC, stated:

“The CJC has consulted with international and Australian experts on the use of technology in prison settings, and we have found a clear consensus: giving prisoners access, in their cells, to digital devices that have connection to the wider world improves prisoner behaviour and reduces reoffending.”

International corrections technology expert Steven Van De Steene stated:

“The evidence is clear and the tools are ready: secure digital inclusion in prisons works to build safer communities. The future of public safety depends on it.” (p 7)

While Queensland correctional facilities faced severe disruption due to worker strikes over violence, NSW leadership indicated an openness to further reform. During Monday’s hearing, Minister Chanthivong stated he was *“happy to take advice from the commissioner”* as the government is *“always looking for ways to improve the operations of Corrections.”* (p 13)

The CJC is urging governments nationwide to deploy secure in-cell digital infrastructure to stabilize facilities and protect staff, inmates, and the broader community. **Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans said further:**

“The New South Wales government has—to its credit—now provided devices to most adult prisoners, and we congratulate them for that. But they can, and must, do more. It is essential that prisoners have access to effective domestic violence counselling.

We are not asking the government to provide it, or pay for it. All we are asking is that they let it through.

Just flip the switch.”

- ENDS -

Media Contact:

Deputy President Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans

Community Justice Coalition

info@communityjusticecoalition.org

<http://www.communityjusticecoalition.org/>

P.O. Box 345, Broadway, NSW 2007 Australia