

28 August 2017

Our ref: 339/68: BDS/CLC

The Hon Mark Ryan MP  
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services  
PO Box 15195  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

By email: [police@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:police@ministerial.qld.gov.au), [attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au),  
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Dear Minister

**Access to legal representation in Queensland correctional facilities and the availability of interview rooms at Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre**

We write to raise the issue of access to legal representation in Queensland correctional facilities.

A number of Queensland Law Society members have expressed concern about the availability of rooms for legal conferencing at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre.

There are not enough interview rooms for legal visits.

This means that our members are experiencing delays in being able to access their clients to give legal advice or obtain instructions. It also means that there has been an increase in wait times for our members once at the prison. For instance, one of our members has reported that, as of 25 August 2017, there is no availability to hold a conference at AGCC until 30 September 2017. Other members have recently reported delays of between three to five weeks before they can see their clients.

This level of delay is unprecedented and requires urgent attention.

The delays are especially problematic in cases where there is an urgent need for instructions or to give legal advice, or where there is an urgent court hearing. The issue is then compounded by the fact that our members do not have other means of urgent access to their clients, for instance, via facsimile to enable paperwork to be signed.

We note that the re-design of the visits centre at Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre occurred without consultation with the profession.

The issues we have raised have had a significant impact on the ability of our members to access their clients. Prisoners have a right to freely access legal advice and representation and a delay of this right is a serious access to justice issue.

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In addition, the difficulty in obtaining prisoner interviews adversely impacts our members' case preparation and will contribute to further delays in the whole process, and inevitable backlogs in court and the criminal justice system more generally. It increases the likelihood of miscarriages of justice.

Please urgently consider relaxing the restrictions on available visitation times to include visits between 11.00 am to 1.00 pm and allocating appropriate resources to facilitate legal visits.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and other relevant stakeholders to discuss these matters further.

If you require clarification of any of the issues raised in our letter, please contact our Acting Advocacy Manager, Ms Binari De Saram on (07) 3842 5895 or [b.desaram@qls.com.au](mailto:b.desaram@qls.com.au).

Yours faithfully

Christine Smyth

**President**



*Copy:*

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