



Investigation focus: Investigation into health services provided to prisoners in a Queensland correctional centre

## Insights and learnings

The investigation highlighted the following broader insights and learnings:

### Leveraging technology for improved healthcare delivery

- The use of electronic medical records systems have significantly improved medication management and healthcare delivery. This highlights the value of leveraging technology to address systemic challenges.

### Balancing privacy and safety

- The investigation highlighted the challenges of maintaining patient confidentiality in a correctional environment, where safety and security considerations must also be managed. While no systemic breaches of privacy were identified, the investigation emphasised the importance of clear communication and adherence to privacy protocols.

### Continuous improvement

- The investigation highlighted the health service provider's proactive commitment to continuous improvement, demonstrated through effective monitoring and feedback mechanisms that address concerns and prevent systemic issues. This approach is essential for improving service delivery and maintaining public confidence in the healthcare system.

## Background

The Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) conducted a systemic investigation into the health services provided at a Queensland correctional centre by a health service provider. The investigation was initiated following a complaint that raised concerns about systemic issues in the delivery of healthcare services to prisoners.

The investigation aligns with the OHO's statutory functions under section 25 of the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*, which includes identifying and investigating systemic issues and ensuring compliance with relevant health service standards.

The purpose of the investigation was to investigate the provider's compliance with relevant health service standards and ensure the delivery of safe and quality healthcare.

## Issues investigated

The investigation focused on four key areas:

### Provision of ongoing medications

- Whether the health service provider ensured appropriate and timely access to prescribed medications for prisoners.

### Provision of 'as needed' medications

- Whether the administration of 'as needed' medications complied with relevant guidelines and procedures.

### Wound care and treatment

- Whether prisoners received adequate wound care and treatment in line with clinical standards.



## Management of patient information

- Whether the collection, use, and disclosure of patient information adhered to privacy laws, guidelines and regulations.

## Key findings

The health service provider demonstrated compliance with relevant legislation, policies, and procedures, as well as adherence to the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

Key findings included:

- **Medication management:**
  - The health service provider followed established protocols for the administration of ongoing and ‘as needed’ medications.
  - Nursing staff adhered to strict identification and documentation guidelines, and deviations were subject to incident reporting and review.
  - The use of electronic medical records systems has improved medication management, enhancing efficiency and accessibility.
- **Wound care and treatment:**
  - Wound care was provided in a timely and appropriate manner, with nursing staff addressing prisoners’ health needs effectively.
  - The investigation noted a structured approach to healthcare delivery, ensuring compliance with procedures.
- **Patient information management:**
  - Confidentiality measures were in place and aligned with legal and ethical standards.
  - While the prison environment posed unique challenges to maintaining complete privacy, no evidence of

systemic breaches of confidentiality were identified.

- **Systemic challenges:**

- The investigation acknowledged broader systemic challenges, including resource limitations which may impact healthcare delivery in correctional settings. However, these challenges did not indicate widespread non-compliance or inadequate care.

## Outcome

- The findings of this investigation confirm that the health service provider is delivering appropriate care and complying with relevant legislation, policies, and procedures. The findings also highlight the importance of ongoing efforts to address systemic challenges and improve healthcare delivery in complex environments such as correctional facilities.
- The findings also highlight proactive efforts to address systemic challenges, such as the use of electronic medical records systems to enhance medication management. These measures reflect the provider’s dedication to continuous improvement and ensuring the safety and quality of healthcare services for prisoners.
- By meeting compliance standards and addressing the unique challenges of correctional healthcare through innovation, the health service provider has set a positive example of effective healthcare delivery in Queensland correctional facilities.