



Sniffing out drugs in prisons

More than half of the men and women in prison are there as a result of drug-related crimes, and consequently, there is a high demand for illegal drugs within the state's correctional facilities.

Drugs introduced into prisons effectively undermine efforts to rehabilitate prisoners.

The Corrective Services Investigation Unit (CSIU) investigates all criminal offences and major incidents occurring within correctional centres operated by or on behalf of Queensland Corrective Services (QCS).

These investigations include escapes, absconders, deaths in custody and misconduct investigations relating to staff. One of the Unit's main priorities is however, to reduce the availability of drugs in prisons.

Ongoing intelligence indicates the supply of drugs to prisoners by visitors on contact visits poses a significant problem.

In Queensland approximately 10 percent of visitors test positive to illicit drugs when passing through ionscan devices. These devices are used to detect traces of drugs on people and surfaces.

Intelligence suggests illicit drugs are overwhelmingly introduced by women who may have a relationship with a prisoner, whether it be mothers, girlfriends, wives or some other relative.

Recent seizures show that the most common drugs being introduced are prescription drugs used to treat opiate dependence.

As a proactive strategy the CSIU randomly conducts car park operations where visitors are intercepted prior to entering the correctional centre. One unrelated consequence has been the compliance with traffic matters and 'wanted person' checks.

The Roadside Drug Testing Unit was recently added to the measures used to deter the supply of drugs into prisons.

As measures are strengthened to keep drugs out of prisons those who attempt to introduce them are constantly exploring new methods of introducing drugs without detection.

Anyone caught taking illegal drugs into a correctional facility in Queensland faces a maximum penalty of 25 years imprisonment.

By Detective Senior Constable Neil Hansen, Corrective Services Investigation Unit.