



Community Justice Coalition (CJC) Report

on the

Prison Design and Technology Conference

International Corrections & Prisons Association (ICPA)

21 – 24 April 2026, Rabat, Morocco



The Conference

The ICPA is the world leading prison organisation to exchange ideas for meaningful improvement. Advances in technology is one focus.

About 250 people from 50 countries were present. The conference had support from the Moroccan government as well as strong representation from African countries.

The two days following the opening had five plenaries and then three parallel workshops running at a time. The African engagement was substantial in all the plenaries.

Access to technology was embraced by all, for administration as well as for prisoners. There were discussions about the use of technology in the prisons notwithstanding poverty in the community.

CJC's participation

CJC has long been interested in harnessing digital technology in the hands of prisoners to bring about better outcomes for them and for the community. The CJC has now attended four of these technology conferences - Istanbul, Adelaide, Bangkok and Rabat, to ensure it is aware of developments and that the prisoner voice is heard. We distributed a flyer to the key people to make sure they understood the CJC's particular interests. It is at the bottom of this Report.

Prison visits

On the last day of the conference an official visit to the model prison Tamesna had been arranged. We thought that a visit to Morocco's biggest prison, Oukacha in Casablanca, would be useful as well. We paid a visit informally on the day before the conference opened. It was tense and the guards were very unfriendly.

Oukacha holds 10,000 prisoners. Morocco's imprisonment rate is 270/100,000, 25% higher than Australia's.

Proceedings of the Conference

Tuesday 21st April

The opening was in the evening around the pool at the Royal Nautical Club of Salé beside the Bouregreg River. It featured an energetic performance by bands beating Moroccan drums and pipes, and a red carpet leading to a feast of Moroccan food, no alcohol.

Wednesday 22nd April (first day of conference)

At the first day's plenary, the ICPA CEO Natalie Boal opened. She is from South Australia, and came into the CEO position with Peter Severin, the ICPA President who died in 2025 and had been NSW Corrective Services Commissioner for nine years.

Overcrowding was the major issue she emphasised. She said there had been a 25% increase in world imprisonment over five years, and that this increase offered a significant challenge. Prison authorities, industry corporations, and policy strategists were strongly represented in the audience.

Kim Ekhaugen, Vice President of the ICPA, from Norway, talked about the purpose of the conference to be challenged and inspired.

Moroccan prisons boss Mohamed Tamek also addressed the plenary. He spoke of getting support for change from the King of Morocco. He presented a video showing professionalism and modern standards in Morocco's prison system, promoting the view that prisoners were being given a fresh chance to gain skills and resettle. He was accompanied by 15 members of the top prison bureaucracy.

Launch of UN/Red Cross Handbook on Technology in Prisons

The opening plenary also included the launch of the [Handbook on the Use of Technology in Prison Settings](#), developed jointly by the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Four people discussed what it meant: Philipp Meissner from UNODC; Anne-Julie Deniel, the head of the detention unit at the ICRC; the Namibian Prisons Commissioner Raphael Hamunylea; and Steven Van De Steene, an ICPA board member from France.

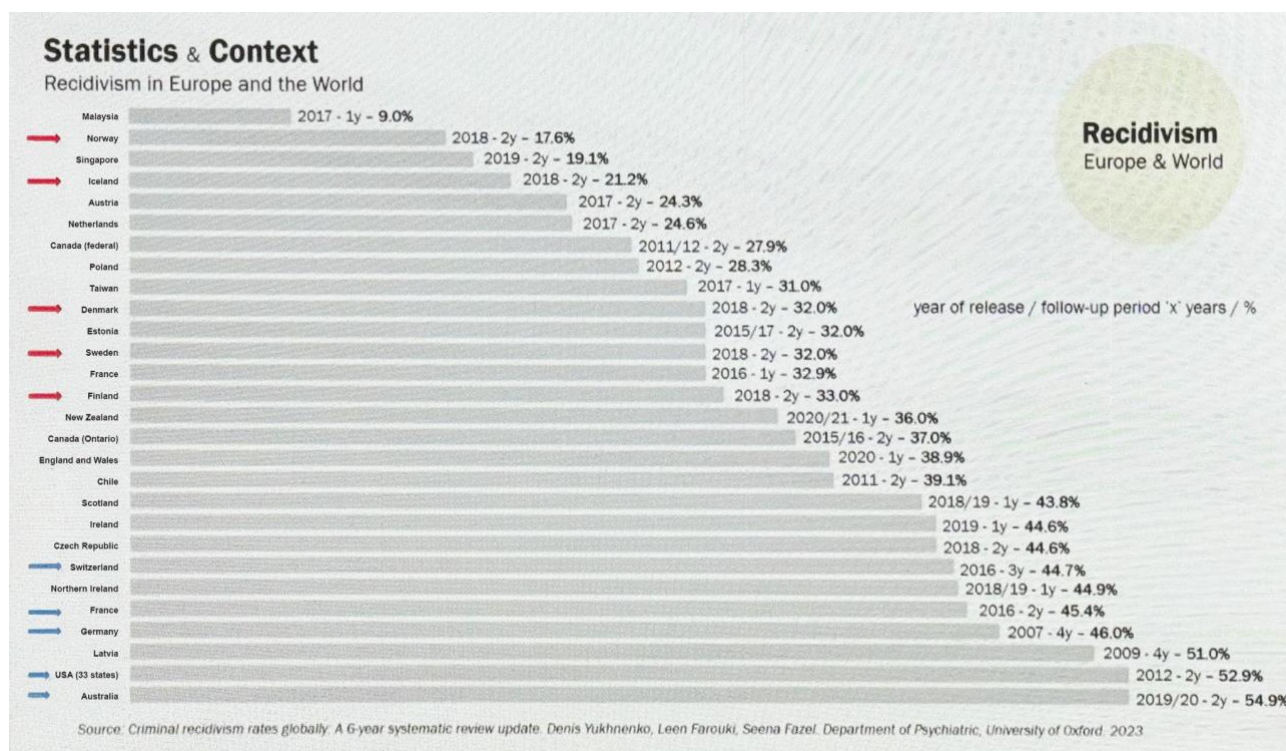
Terry Hackett, who chaired the launch, talked about overcrowding as the big problem, and also spoke of human-centred prison outcomes, safety, accountability, and opportunities for rehabilitation.

The Handbook has positive recommendations and features, but in our view, overall is defensive in tone, and in particular omits any reference to human rights entitlements or the [Nairobi Declaration for Detainee Telecommunication Rights](#).

Australia is referred to on p.90. We made a detailed [Review of the Handbook](#) which has now been published and distributed it to conference participants.

Australian's recidivism shame

Danish architect Sonia Bom, in her segment on design for rehabilitation, showed a recidivism rate graphic, ranking Australia as the worst in the world at 54.9 with Malaysia the best. Her sources are sound.



EuroPris Guide to ICT Installation in Prisons

EuroPris, the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services co-funded by the Council of Europe, presented a plenary around [their document](#), which is a guide to installation of ICT in prisons. The Expert Panel of Donna Creaven and Tony McDonnell were fully positive about its use. We have a draft review of the document.

The CJC representative asked the panel, given the installation of computers in cells in some Australian states, and the acceptance of access to outside services in countries like Finland and Norway, what assurance could they give to Australian prison authorities that the technology was safe and they had solved the problems? Did they give support to the Nairobi Declaration of Detainee Telecommunication Rights? They didn't answer the questions directly but received the CJC flyer.

Thursday 23rd April (second day of conference)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was presented as being important both for management and prisoners. It was seen as part of the digital divide, with every future employer expecting competence in it and a need for prisoners to have access to it. Mike Sparling from Canada presented the wider argument.

Viapath's Eric Gonzalez and Chris Ditto, who supply NSW prisons with the computer services, presented their research on generative AI. It was an amazing insight into the future, yet obvious. They had selected a prison in a Kentucky rural area, showed photos of participants and used an ex-prisoner to assist its direction. The tablets allowed prisoners to ask questions and get answers similar to ChatGPT, but with guardrails in place. It used text as well as oral questions. Viapath collated the 160,000 questions over some months with a report showing prisoner interests. Few were dangerous questions. They said it was easy to design, and with small changes in code could serve lots of different purposes such as for getting jobs, access to health and legal advice.

The CJC discussed the "import model" with key participants. Some said that progress required political support. That using legal challenges, or trying to force prison administrators rather than encourage them, made it hard to win as they would obstruct change. One said I agree with your four "E's" but he questioned who paid for the certification of external suppliers. Another said: "Don't you think that virtual counselling using AI is the import model?"

Closing Plenary

Terry Hackett from Canada chaired a discussion about "culture and technology" with Makgothi Thobakgale (South African Correctional Commissioner and Chair of the African Correctional Services Association), Raphael Hamunylea (Namibian Commissioner), Younes Jabrane (Moroccan Secretary General), Simon Bonk (ICPA Board and Telio) and Kavan Applegate (ICPA Program Committee from Australia).

At the end the **CJC representative stood up and said on behalf of prisoners** that he was excited for the future that had been laid out and thanked the ICPA, but wanted to point out some issues that needed to be addressed. He said that the import model for delivery of external services is essential and had not been openly acknowledged – a key example was the need for counselling without a conflict of interest with security. Also that the CJC's vision for the future was different from what had been offered as a response to overcrowding: that we believed the answer was in the potential for telecommunications to safely allow the engagement of prisoners in general discourse. This was not to normalise imprisonment but to break down the isolation and the stereotype of prisoners as “others”, and to allow reconciliation and restorative justice. This would show imprisonment to be unnecessary and counterproductive for creating safer communities.

Later the South African Commissioner Makgothi Thobakgale was friendly and said that he engaged ex-prisoners, included peer mentoring and serving prisoners in all his work.

Friday 24th April (Prison visit day)

The visit was to Morocco's most modern prison, Tamesna, built in 2023, an hour out of Rabat. It was built for 2500, a women's unit of 200 with nine babies in a special unit, and 120 juveniles. It had an inspiring mural with a bird on the front, outside, under the tower. Security was high tech, but all doors were manually opened including between the cell blocks. There were lots of guards who saluted when we passed. The cell doors had a grille and a steel plate door over it with a simple key lock. Fan ventilation was built into the blocks.

The warden took a group of 60 visitors through the place, seeing a remarkably relaxed prisoner population. A mothers and babies unit held nine young children. We met them. Smiles and thumbs-up were exchanged. The juveniles had workshops, education with computers and art, and a clinic was running with a doctor present. Phones on the wall were being used, the canteen was well stocked and prices were similar to outside costs.

The dormitory cells with eight juveniles' beds were very clean but didn't seem to be being used – there were no personal items in them. Sports were happening with exercise area and gym machines as well as games. We didn't see the adults' area but were assured it was the same. We didn't see any punishment/segregation units.

Conclusion

We made some useful contacts and gained insights into other countries' approaches. We saw some seeds of hope that prison administrators might come to embrace providing digital access to prisoners, but there is still much work to be done.



Flyer handed out to conference participants

STATEMENT ON DETAINEE TELECOMMUNICATION RIGHTS

PRISON DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Morocco April 21-24 2026

The CJC based in Australia has had a continuing engagement with the ICPA Technology in Corrections conferences. As a former penal colony, our convict past offers well-documented lessons on respect, tolerance and change. The prison in our national capital is named to honour such a lesson – [Alexander Maconchie](#).

We look for the promised leadership and honesty from the ICPA in support of the import model of detainee access to telecommunications.

At the Adelaide 2023 TIC conference, the participants on the [opening panel stated](#) that they agreed with the principles of the [Nairobi Declaration for Detainee Telecommunication Rights](#). The ICPA itself, and some delegates and sponsors, said they would consider formal endorsement.

At the Istanbul 2024 conference, the issue of detainee access to mainstream services was totally ignored [Our Report](#) was distributed to attendees defining the compelling arguments.

At the Bangkok 2025 conference, the import model was discussed and wasn't challenged. The industry clearly had accepted that it would be the future. [Our Report](#) was about the details.

However, in practice, detention authorities are locking out the services, although the devices are in place and services ready to be switched on.

Governments are left looking dishonest because of **prison authorities' intransigence**.

Typical is the scenario where the Minister for Youth Justice told our Parliament, under oath, that supplying online counselling in cells was too expensive – at the same time as charging \$1.17m a year per child. [Video here](#).

After a media buffeting, he insisted that his internal counselling, despite the conflict of interest with security, was better than external mainstream counselling. A consultation with national counselling organisations contemptuously dismissed that too. Recidivism is 85%. A Senate Inquiry into youth justice is currently under way.

The major themes of this year's conference – humane detention, future rethinking, technology, and rehabilitation – all require explicit attention to the digital divide for detainees. We are **disappointed that the challenge has not been accepted**.

The **UNODC & ICRC Handbook** does not refer to the Nairobi Declaration and no clauses have been proposed in the draft Abu Dhabi Declaration for the World Crime Congress 2026.

The richness of music, art, language, could all be switched on. Personal development and hope are waiting. Counselling, telehealth, and restorative justice – all resulting in a provably safer community – await access to telecommunications in the cells. Millions of prisoners have been left frustrated for years with education no longer on hard copy. Violence against guards could be reduced by 60%. The costs are miniscule and the benefits compelling.

In 2017, the CJC won the implementation of Computers in Cells in NSW, to reduce the recidivism rates of domestic violence perpetrators, behind research that it would spare 500 women and children from domestic violence, and save \$110 million annually. It cost \$42m to install the system. Prisoners now have devices in their cells with limited telecommunications access, but nowhere has external counselling been turned on, despite it being the stated reason for the investment.

The government has yet to justify why it is blocking prisoners from receiving counselling. **Security isn't lessened** as everything is recorded, and with visits, phones and letters movement accepted.

The Minister is left looking irrational by his Department. He is outnumbered in Parliament including from his own side. [Here is the latest](#). Domestic violence is a community concern. Its frequency has increased by 24% since 2023, and the problem is getting worse.

For further clarity, we have added links to the [8-page CJC letter to the Minister](#), [the Minister's response](#), and [transcript with commentary](#) from the [Budget Estimates 2025-26 transcript](#).

The import model is essential. It is:

- Effective in providing trusted external counselling without a conflict of interest with a security role
- Efficient, as they are often already paid for by governments
- Existing through the sentence and available after release
- Emotionally important, enabling detainees to feel connected to the outside community

We call on the ICPA and conference participants to give support for the import model and the Nairobi Declaration for Detainee Telecommunication Rights as the way forward to safer communities across the world.

Please send us an email and assist with the urgent essential work. Digital copies of this document with working links are downloadable from our website.

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