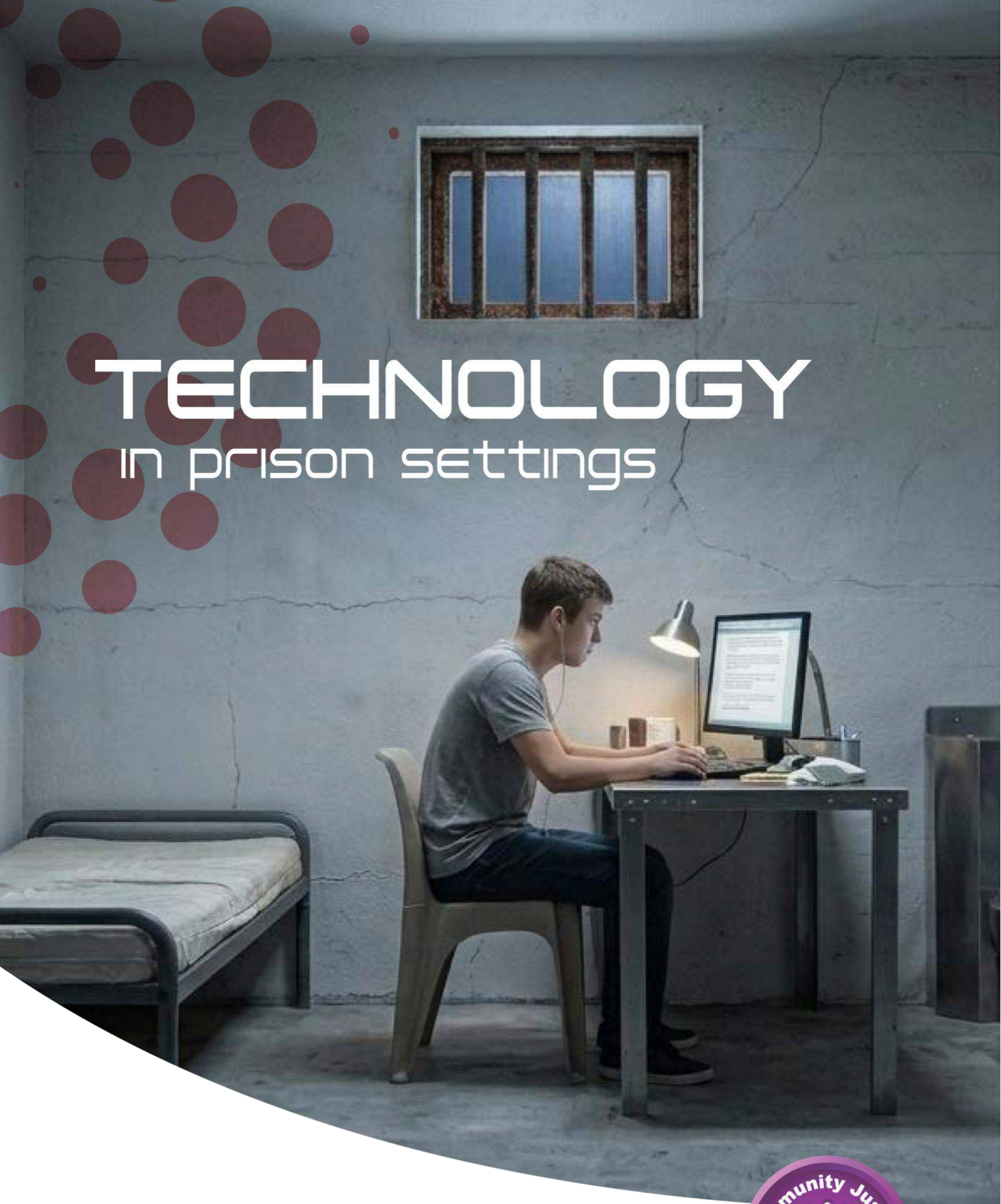




TECHNOLOGY

in prison settings

CONSULTATION REPORT



The Community Justice Coalition (CJC) has completed a consultation with world experts and technology providers examining the security, safety and benefits of computer devices in detention.

A separate consultation with Australia's leading counselling organisations examined the importance of counselling being provided by external services, independently of the detaining authorities.

These consultations focussed on statements made by Corrective Services NSW and Youth Justice NSW, as representative of similar responses by authorities in other jurisdictions.

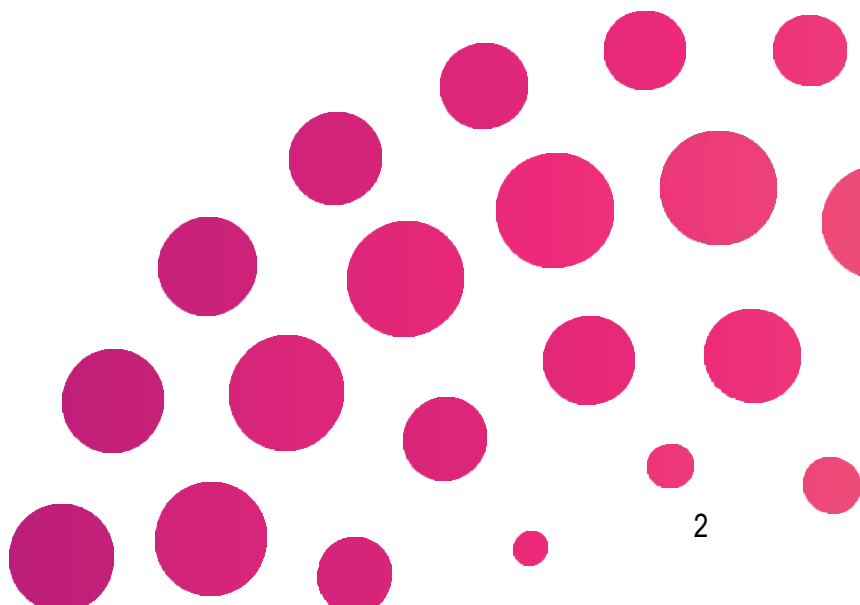
The responses confirm, with no dissent, that secure technology exists to allow prisoners to have digital connection in their cells.

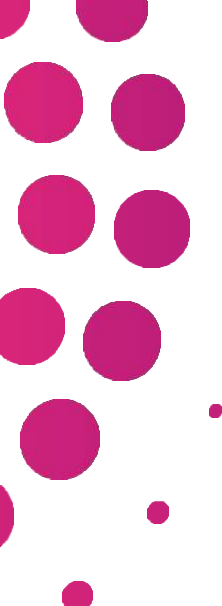
All responses on counselling said that external suppliers with independence from actual or perceived conflicts of interest is more effective.

Here is the Report.

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Background to consultations

The CJC has been negotiating with prisons administrators and their ministers for years, urging that prisoners have digitally-connected devices available to them in their cells. In this way they would have sustained connection with family; educational, medical, counselling, religious, and vocational services; legal information; and government services.

In particular, prisoners must be able to access counselling from mainstream providers whom they trust, and who are independent of the prison administration, and who can provide individual counselling fitted to the prisoner's own needs.

This will bring benefits not just to prisoners themselves, but also to prison administration and, most importantly, to the community as a whole. Those benefits will come in the form of better rehabilitation; safer communities; less destruction of families and other social units; reduced disruption in prisons; and prisoners and former prisoners able to function as contributing members of society.

We have received in-principle support from parliamentarians across the political spectrum, in and out of governments.

But we have had a lot of push back from prison administrators, usually on the basis that there are difficulties in implementing such changes which must first be resolved. Often they begin disputing the benefits, but retreat to (undetailed) claims of problems of implementation: that it can't be done technically, or it's too expensive, or it isn't secure, or it's not private enough.

These claimed difficulties are wrong. By blocking the opportunities brought by the digital revolution, administrators of places of detention - prisons, youth justice and locked hospitals - are badly failing our communities, their own staff and their reason for existence.

Consultations

PROCESS

We consulted on the technology widely with world experts in the field, and entities that provide communications systems and equipment. Representative statements are below.

We consulted on the need for counselling to be independent from the detaining authority, with 31 Australian professional bodies. Representative statements are below.

We sent them the documents linked below, as well as transcripts from NSW Parliamentary debates on the issues.

Mr Chanthivong, NSW Minister for Corrective Services [letter to CJC, 10/11/25](#),
CJC [reply to the Mr Chanthivong, 09/12/25](#).

Mr Dib, Minister for Youth Justice [letter to CJC, 18/05/26](#)

Responders

[Telio](#) is a leading European provider of secure inmate communication systems for correctional facilities. Founded in Hamburg in 1998, its solutions are in use in more than 20 countries across five continents, serving over 800 correctional facilities and more than 300,000 people in custody.

[Full statement is here.](#)

[Pia Puolakka](#), is one of Europe's leading figures in prison digitalisation and AI ethics in corrections. She led the development of Finland's first digital project "Smart Prison", as the team leader, and was the project manager for RISE AI, which is a key contributor to the Council of Europe's 2024 recommendation on ethical AI use in prisons and probation services. Pia is also one of the three writers of the [Handbook on Technology in Prison](#), developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). [Full statement is here.](#)

Steven Van De Steene was the IT Director for the Belgian Directorate General of Penitentiary Institutions (2015) to develop national IT solutions for prisoners. He was also one of three writers of the [Handbook on Technology in Prison](#), developed by [UNODC](#) and [ICRC](#). As an ICPA Board Member and Coordinator of the [Technology Solutions Network](#) for [International Corrections and Prisons Association](#), Steven advises correctional agencies worldwide on technology strategy, innovation, and digital governance. [Full statement is here.](#)

[PrisonPC](#) is an Australian-developed secure computing platform for high-security correctional environments, deployed in the ACT correctional system since March 2009. It enables secure, controlled delivery of digital services in custodial settings, including educational resources, communication tools, and other approved services, through a centrally managed infrastructure with tightly controlled user access. [Full statement is here.](#)

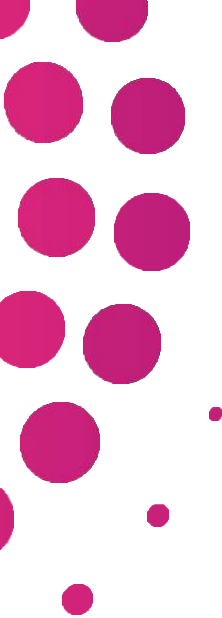
[RANZ College of Psychiatrists Forensic Subcommittee](#) The NSW Faculty of Forensic Psychiatry Subcommittee represents a body of experts and Fellows of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists who promote the highest standards in professional practice, training and research in the subspecialty of forensic psychiatry in NSW. [Full statement is here.](#)

Consensus

The responses confirm that there is no question that appropriately secure technology exists to allow prisoners to have digital connection in their cells.

As Telio says in its response:

Importantly, modern correctional technology platforms bear little resemblance to unrestricted consumer internet services. Secure prison communications systems can incorporate extensive safeguards including user authentication, role-based permissions, restricted service access, allow-listing of approved applications and websites, audit logging, monitoring, identity verification, session controls and administrative oversight.



These technologies are specifically engineered to operate within environments where security, accountability and compliance are paramount.

Our experience suggests that concerns regarding digital service delivery are rarely questions of technical capability alone. In most jurisdictions, successful implementation depends upon a combination of clear governance frameworks, defined operational procedures, staff training, risk management processes and stakeholder confidence. Where these elements are present, digital services can be delivered securely and effectively while maintaining appropriate levels of oversight and control. While Telio does not seek to comment on specific policy decisions that are appropriately matters for governments and correctional authorities, we support informed and evidence-based discussion regarding the responsible use of secure digital technologies within correctional settings.

With that all being said, we must be mindful if these services are not implemented correctly, significant issues can arise. Australian jurisdictions have also experienced incidents where deficiencies in operational controls, record keeping, oversight, or compliance processes have undermined the effectiveness of custodial systems and contributed to adverse outcomes. These experiences highlight that the key question is not whether technology exists, but whether it is implemented, governed, monitored, and audited appropriately throughout its operational life cycle. The lesson from such incidents is that technology must form part of a broader assurance framework incorporating policy, training, supervision, incident review, and independent oversight.

Not only does the technology exist; it is already used in the field. For example as PrisonPC says:

This isn't theoretical for us. At one of our sites, we're processing over a million emails a year, with 95% delivered without staff intervention. We have multiple successfully deployed sites of this kind (such as at the AMC in Canberra), with detainees completing tertiary qualifications through the platform.

We've published a Designing Secure Prisoner Computer Systems book (<https://prisonpc.com/design-book.pdf>) addressing security in detail, much of which is independently corroborated by Pia Puolakka's analysis.

More detailed consideration of technical feasibility is found in our letter to Mr Chanthivong and in PrisonPC's book referred to above.

Similarly, privacy issues are dealt with in some detail in our letter to Mr Chanthivong, and in Ms Puolakka's report.

So, as Pia Puolakka says:

From an international perspective, the question is therefore not whether secure prison technology exists — because it already does — but how correctional systems choose to govern, implement and integrate it responsibly into operational practice.

Counselling independently of detaining authorities was unanimously accepted as essential for trust. Highlighting this systematic issue, Dr. Trevor Ma of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Forensic Psychiatry Subcommittee noted:

The subcommittee acknowledges the fundamental value of trust, confidentiality and the therapeutic alliance in psychotherapy; and recognizes the unique challenges of providing effective psychological interventions to incarcerated individuals. The dual role of therapists in the custodial setting creates actual or perceived conflicts of interests, which either reduces confidence in treatment and consequently the efficacy of psychotherapy; or confidence in how clinical information will be shared and used by justice authorities.

Positioning psychology services external and independently to corrective services and within health services offers greater integration, efficiency and continuity of care for patients in both custodial settings and their transition into community.

Cultural change required

The treatment of prisoners should emphasize not their exclusion from the community but their continuing part in it.

That is a “Guiding principle” in the “Mandela Rules”, and a Guiding Principle for Corrections in Australia—to both of which we understand the Victorian government, and in particular its corrections administration, subscribes.

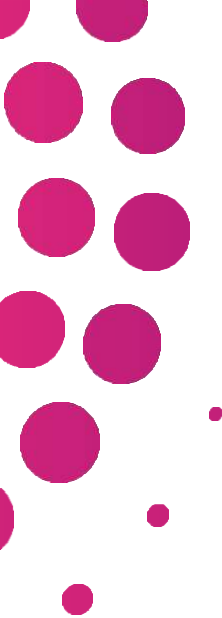
But how genuine is that subscription? How prison administration responds to the opportunities brought by digital communications will provide a good test.

That principle doesn’t only serve prisoners. Imprisonment comes at a massive cost, not just to the prisoner or to the public purse. Much of that cost flows from “their exclusion from the community”. Those coming into prison are not just offenders (or alleged offenders). Like anyone, they have multiple roles in the community, involving mutually beneficial relationships as parents, family members, employees, artists, breadwinners, carers, friends. Currently many, or most, of those relationships are necessarily destroyed by a person’s imprisonment, as they require a degree of connection that is simply impossible. The damage to, or destruction of, those relationships damages all parties to them, not just the prisoners, sometimes devastatingly.

The same Guiding Principle, emphasizing the prisoner’s “continuing part in the community”, self-evidently supports prisoners’ capacity, on release, to re-engage appropriately in the community. Where relationships can be maintained, prisoners can continue, genuinely and meaningfully, to have a “continuing part in the community”. They are not left to build relations from scratch.

Until recently, service provision in prisons required providers to be physically present. And of course the prison administration would have to manage their presence. That fed the model that prisoners could only get what the prison could, and would, provide. Culturally, that remains the norm, so that external providers are only grudgingly permitted. It has represented a severe limitation on the capacity of prisons to “emphasize not their exclusion from the community but their continuing part in it”.

The transformative power of digital connection can be even more dramatic in prisons. It makes it possible for prisoners to access services and information directly, rather than prison administrations having to provide it. It makes it possible for prisoners to maintain



their connections with family and friends; with other social and commercial networks; with religious services and connections of their choice; with educational institutions; with financial institutions—and all the rest. It is now technically possible, as never before, for prisoners genuinely to have a “continuing part in the community”.

Telio says: “We also recognise the growing importance of continuity of care within correctional systems. Secure digital access can assist in connecting individuals in custody with approved healthcare providers, counsellors, legal representatives, educators, family support services and community organisations. The ability to establish and maintain these connections during incarceration can support rehabilitation objectives and facilitate smoother transitions back into the community upon release. As correctional systems continue to face increasing demands on resources, workforce capacity and service delivery, technology has an important role to play in expanding access to approved services without compromising institutional security.”

“From an international perspective, the question is therefore not whether secure prison technology exists — because it already does — but how correctional systems choose to govern, implement and integrate it responsibly into operational practice,” said the **CEO and Founder of Mindtech Pia Puolakka**.

ICPA board member, Steven Van De Steene states that “Prisoners have a right to be digitally included: detaining someone should not make them anachronistically excluded from life’s normal routines. Access to e-services (education, job search, family contact, legal information, telemedicine, etc.) supports rehabilitation and re-entry and thus enhances public safety. Studies show that enabling incarcerated persons to maintain digital skills and contacts dramatically lowers reoffending. In short, the digital gap between prison and community can be closed without compromising security, if policymakers simply choose to do so.

“The evidence is clear and the tools are ready: secure digital inclusion in prisons works to build safer communities. What is lacking is political will and leadership. By committing real resources – funding infrastructure and training – corrections agencies can turn the digital prison from a hazard into a pathway. Bridging the digital divide in custody (with prudent safeguards) not only empowers rehabilitation, if done as part of a digital transformation programme, it can also reduce problems such as illegal contraband phones and channel inmate energy toward positive ends.

“I strongly believe we should commit more firmly to this vision: a modern prison system that respects human dignity, leverages technology, and returns citizens home ready to participate and contribute to this new digital society – rather than repeat mistakes. The future of public safety depends on it.”