



**G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd**

A.B.N. 37 050 069 255

Port Phillip Prison

451 Dohertys Road

Truganina Vic 3029

PO Box 376

Laverton Vic 3028

Australia

Tel: 61 3 9217 7200

[www.au.g4s.com](http://www.au.g4s.com)

6 April 2021

Team 11  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
Level 12  
222 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Team 11,

**Inquest into the Death of Gary Heitanen**  
**Case Number: 2017 3888**

We refer to the findings of Coroner Bracken in relation to the death of Gary Heitanen at Port Phillip Prison (PPP).

G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd (G4S) is the operator of PPP.

Coroner Bracken made two recommendations arising from the circumstances of Mr Heitanen's death. To assist with understanding this response to the Coroner's recommendations G4S makes the following observations and comments:

1. PPP is a maximum security men's prison with a current capacity to accommodate 1087 prisoners.
2. Borrowdale Unit at PPP is an intermediate regime unit, where prisoners are under a restricted regime.
3. St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) provides health services at PPP and employs medical and nursing practitioners and allied health professionals, including pharmacy technicians.
4. G4S employs custodial and support staff at PPP.
5. G4S promotes a collaborative approach to managing prisoners safety and security risks at PPP.

## **The Coroner's Recommendations and G4S' response**

We respond to each of the Coroner's recommendations in turn.

### ***Recommendation 1***

*G4S commission independent research into the safest efficient way to dispense medication to prisoners in the Borrowdale Unit of Port Phillip Prison incorporating consideration of:*

- a) 'Trap-to-trap' dispensation and alternatives including but not limited opening cell doors to dispense medication,*
- b) Dispensing medication directly to prisoners from a central point in the Unit; and*
- c) Whether different dispensation methods ought to be used for different prisoners taking into account the nature of the medication being dispensed and each prisoner's history of medication and drug use and abuse.*

### **G4S response – Recommendation 1**

G4S has considered this recommendation and recognizes its intent. G4S has respectfully elected not to obtain an external review of the medication dispensation processes in Borrowdale Unit.

The Coroner is aware from the evidence at the Inquest that Borrowdale Unit has a high number of short-term management regime prisoners as well as intermediate regime prisoners. These prisoners are often more likely to present management problems, with an associated increased risk of violence toward staff than other members of the PPP population, including longer term management prisoners. Management regime prisoners generally require an escort when out of cell, sometimes whilst handcuffed.

With respect to the considerations identified by the Coroner, opening cell doors to dispense medication or moving them to a dispensing room within the Unit presents an increased risk to staff of G4S and SVHM staff who administer the medication.

Whilst G4S staff are aware of prisoners identified as drug users and the associated safety and security issues which relate to that status, G4S unit staff are not clinically trained with respect to medication and will not be privy to individual prisoners' medication regime. Identifying individual or specific cohorts of prisoners to have medication dispensed in different ways within a variable and potentially volatile population presents significant operational and other safety risks for prisoners and staff. A trial of an alternative process did not identify any improvement in relation to drug diversion related incidents while there was an increase in incidents of aggression directed toward staff.

G4S has improved the process around 'trap to trap' administration of medication in Borrowdale Unit, including having 2 staff observe the prisoner from different viewing points ingest the medication and conduct the relevant check to confirm ingestion. G4S conducts targeted searching and drug testing of prisoners and cells based on intelligence information and random

searches and drug testing of prisoners to further manage risks associated with medication and illicit substances within PPP.

G4S considers this change balances and addresses the various risks to prisoner and staff welfare and the security and management of Borrowdale Unit.

**Recommendation 2**

*G4S reiterate to staff undertaking the 'lock-down' of the Borrowdale Unit that verbal, spoken response must be obtained from each and every prisoner. If such a response is not forthcoming from an enquiry made through the 'trap', the cell door is to be opened and a verbal response then obtained from the prisoner.*

G4S response - Recommendation 2

The Coroner is aware that G4S did communicate with staff in Borrowdale Unit that a verbal response is required from each prisoner during the lock down count each evening. This has been reinforced since the Inquest hearing.

We trust this information is of assistance to the Court and responds to the recommendations of Coroner Bracken. G4S is happy to provide any further information to the Court, if necessary.

Yours faithfully



Mrs Trish Sellman  
General Manager,  
G4S, Port Phillip Prison

058.21