

September 2015

REVIEWING THE SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF LIFERS

The Inspector of Custodial Services today released a report into the security classification of 'lifera' – inmates who have been sentenced to life imprisonment.

The report examines a recent decision by Corrective Services NSW to revoke the classifications of 12 lifera from maximum security to medium and minimum following a public backlash from media and the community.

The report finds the decision to regress these inmates back to maximum security was not made in accordance with the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014*.

The Inspector said the correctional classification system is complex and is set to be reviewed by CSNSW shortly.

"This review, in seeking to strike a balance between political and professional, should not compromise the objectivity and integrity of classifications," he said

"I am particularly concerned there has been very little attention given to the long term effects this decision will have on the entire custodial system.

"Revoking classifications without complying with regulations can undermine the integrity of the system, impact behaviour management and, ultimately, make it difficult for staff to manage inmates."

The report also notes classification procedures can be undermined by prison overcrowding.

It suggests that in NSW, a larger number of inmates are housed in a higher and more expensive security classification than necessary.

"Inmates housed in accommodation rated higher than their security needs is a waste of public funds," the Inspector said.

The Inspector of Custodial Services was established in October 2013 to provide independent oversight of the state's correctional facilities, including Corrective Services NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW.

The report is available at <http://www.custodialinspector.justice.nsw.gov.au/>

MEDIA CONTACT: John Paget 0407 209 396