

Department of Corrections accepts obligation to consider inmates' circumstances when deciding work and educational paroles

Legislation	Ombudsmen Act 1975
Ombudsman	Sir Brian Elwood
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Refusal of work and educational paroles before inmate appeared before National Parole Board—inflexible policy inconsistent with concept of individual case management—review resulted in detailed case management plan for inmate

An inmate serving a life sentence complained about being unreasonably refused work and educational paroles which had been sought in preparation for ultimate release. The inmate had had an exemplary record in prison over nine years and sought the opportunity to pursue training for a career on release.

The Department's response was that to support the application to the Minister for approval would be to usurp the role of the National Parole Board which would see the inmate for the first time just over a year later. The Department's policy was to decline all such applications.

This policy appeared to be inconsistent with other functions and responsibilities of the Department, one of which is to take '*a comprehensive approach to dealing with the offender - one that will consider and respond to the individual needs and circumstances of each offender*'. After reviewing its position, the Department accepted that it was under an obligation to take a more proactive approach to an individual inmate's case management and to assist an inmate to achieve the earliest possible release consistent with statutory requirements and the perceived integrity of the sentence.

A detailed case management plan, including provision for appropriate paroles (subject to Ministerial approval), was therefore prepared for the inmate. This enabled the inmate to present to the Parole Board a detailed proposal for release and reintegration, many of the

details of which had already been worked through and, in some instances, tentatively put in place.

This represented a satisfactory resolution of the complaint and also a significant step forward in the development of the concept of 'case management' in the administration of inmates' sentences by the public prisons service.

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