



Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by MR Andrew Braddock MLA on 01 November 2022: Commissioner Johnson took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 01 November 2022 [PAGE 42]

In relation to:

MR BRADDOCK: Has there been any progress on detainee access to computer and internet for the purposes of external study?

Mr Johnson: I might have to take that on notice, it is certainly something we are conscious of and I know some detainees do not think we are making much progress on that front and the team were going away to consider that, you know, a lot of work was being done with the universities to try and come up with another way to provide the services because they are inevitably is some challenges with the secure facility and our prison PC, the system, whilst it was cutting edge some years ago, is now obviously there is more—there is newer technology and so, we are trying to look at how we can implement that.

The challenge though is always still with, you know, external access to the internet is tricky and difficult and I know the person responsible for this work has been working really hard with the universities and others, technology and so forth, to work out what we can put on a government computer that will allow that to happen, do I say I have fixed it? No, I cannot say to that.

I would love to be able to say to you, maybe estimates, the next ones around, that we have got a solution to that. I think the challenge with technology is they have got a longer way to run but it is an opportunity, there is really opportunities in using technology better in the centre and we are trying to use iPads, for example, to improve our ability to—for people in the cell to consult with—the clinicians, for example.

So it is supervised to a degree and it was not issued to everyone but it is the first step into a world where it may be able to do some more handheld computing. So again, it is a bit of a journey.

MR BRADDOCK: Yes. Can you please take it on notice just if there is anything else that you might not have mentioned just now in terms of progress in that space? I would be interested.

Mick Gentleman MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) have undertaken considerable work to improve the availability of internet websites for detainees engaged in distance education. This includes collaboration with universities to identify methods to provide detainees access to their websites and required software in line with ACTCS and ACT Government IT security and compatibility requirements.

Currently, detainees can access the Curtin University portal from the PrisonPC computers, and there is ongoing work to expand this to other universities. There are also processes underway to try to secure required software for various course units. Detainees are further provided with supervised access to the Internet, including their university portals, once a week. This is facilitated by the Senior Education Officer who supports distance education detainees by ensuring they have access to their required learning and course materials. Materials can also be printed by the library which is accessible to all detainees and stocked with educational and legal resources.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date: 17/11/2022

By the Minister for Corrections, Mick Gentleman MLA