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NSW adult prison population continues to increase

Full report - NSW Custody Statistics: Quarterly update Sept 2016 (pdf 1.3mb)

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Adults

The NSW adult prison population grew by 4.6 per cent between October 2015 and September 2016, reaching another new record high of 12,641 in September this year. This brings the total increase in the NSW adult prison population over the last two years to 21 per cent.

The increase is attributable to a growth in prisoners on remand (i.e. unconvicted prisoners awaiting trial or sentence). Between October 2015 and September 2016 the number of adult prisoners on remand grew by 11.4 per cent (from 3,751 to 4,177). Over the same period, the number of sentenced prisoners rose by 1.6 per cent (from 8,330 to 8,464).

The growth in the remand population over the last 12 months is due to an increase in remand receptions and the length of time being spent on remand. Over the last 12 months, the number of remand prisoners received into custody grew by 7.6 per cent. The average length of stay by prisoners leaving remand also increased from 52.6 days to 56.1 days in the last quarter.

Juveniles

In contrast to the adult prisoner population, over the last 12 months the number of juveniles in custody fell by 12 per cent. As at September 2016, there were 256 juveniles in custody; well down from the peak of 405 juveniles in custody back in June 2011.

The reduction in juveniles in detention over the last 12 months is due to a decrease in both the number of juveniles on remand and sentenced prisoners. Between October 2015 and September 2016 the number of juveniles prisoners on remand fell by 13.2 per cent (from 151 to 131). Over the same period, the number of sentenced juvenile prisoners fell by 11.3 per cent (from 142 to 126).

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) said that "recent research has shown that juvenile involvement in crime is falling; it is therefore not unexpected that we are seeing reductions in the juvenile imprisonment rate".

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