

Guidelines for Non-Custodial employees during a natural disaster or industrial dispute

Over the past few years, Correctional Officers have sometimes made the reluctant decision to take strike action. This has been done to bring about change on matters such as inadequate handling of inmate violence and the devastating impact Benchmarking has had on staffing levels and prison safety.

When this happens, inmates are locked down and supervised by a skeleton team of Commissioned Correctional Officers. It has previously been requested by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) management that some Non-Custodial staff attend work outside of their normal working hours or perform functions outside of their role description to assist Commissioned Correctional Officers by covering for those on strike.

New draft guidelines

CSNSW has recently approached the PSA to develop draft guidelines to clarify what the expectations of duties are during natural disasters or industrial action. CSNSW has proposed the development of umbrella guidelines to inform local agreements at each Correctional Centre.

There have been previous concerning reports of situations where Non-Custodial members have been involved in assisting escorting inmates, delivering meals to inmates (including opening cells), driving officers to or from the centre, and catering/preparing food. Undertaking these tasks is not their role and can put members and others at very serious risk.

The PSA has made very clear the union's position that it is completely inappropriate for Non-Custodial staff to be undertaking any duties of Custodial Officers – it is simply unsafe.

A meeting of all union sub-branches in CSNSW (NCD, CCDC, POVB, COVB, SEAG) took place in April to formulate agreed union positions on the CSNSW proposal. Whilst these guidelines are still in draft, the PSA has provided the following common positions as part of the consultation process:

Natural disaster guidelines

Non-custodial staff are not to perform any duties outside their role description.

They are not to access any areas they do not normally have access to, unless it is unsafe to be in their normal work area.

Non-custodial staff are not to have contact with inmates beyond their normal functions, assuming there are necessary security posts to perform functions as normal.

Unless a staff member is a substantive custodial officer on shift that day, they are not to be undertaking any custodial functions, regardless of training. This includes substantive custodial officers on secondment to non-custodial positions.



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Non-custodial staff need to be put up for accommodation if the natural disaster does not allow them to leave the Centre.

Industrial dispute guidelines

Non-custodial staff are not to perform any duties outside their role description.

They are not to access any areas they do not normally have access to.

Non-custodial staff are not to have any contact with inmates. If inmates are present, they are not to be in that area.

Unless a staff member is a substantive custodial officer on shift that day, they are not to be undertaking any custodial functions, regardless of training. This includes substantive custodial officers on secondment to non-custodial positions.

Frequently asked questions

Can I be disciplined, sacked or have my pay docked for refusing a direction to do a Correctional Officer's job?

No. It is not a reasonable direction to require you to do any of the work of a Correctional Officer unless you are currently employed as a Correctional Officer. Unless you are refusing to undertake your own role, your pay cannot be docked.

What happens if I refuse to do a Correctional Officer's job and I am bullied/harassed by Management or other staff?

There can be serious penalties for bullying and harassing staff with regards to industrial action. Members subject to this should contact the PSA immediately.

I used to work as a Correctional Officer but now I am employed in a Non-Custodial role. Am I obliged to undertake custodial duties during the strike?

No. Unless you are currently employed as a Correctional Officer, you should not be undertaking any of the duties of a Correctional Officer. You do not have up-to-date training and are not employed to perform the duties of a Correctional Officer.

Should I assist in some custodial duties to ensure other colleagues are not overworked?

No. It is inappropriate and completely unsafe for you to be undertaking custodial duties unless you are a Correctional Officer.



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What if there are not enough Correctional Officers to safely escort inmates to AVL suites for court matters?

This is not the responsibility of Non-Custodial members. If there are insufficient custodial staff to safely escort, the AVL booking should be vacated. It is completely unsafe for Non-Custodial members to assist in escorting inmates and your safety is more important than an AVL booking.

If you are ever in doubt about what is an acceptable request or direction from CSNSW Management, please immediately contact the PSA on 1300 772 679.

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