



Research Publication

Unit Prisoner Accommodation - The Bathurst Gaol Experience, 1983-1987.

Angela Gorta
Senior Research Officer

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Angela Gorta

Senior Research Officer

Research and Statistics Division

Department of
Corrective Services

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This report is the result of a team effort. Research officers worked inside Bathurst Gaol evaluating the effects of the New Bathurst Gaol Management Plan for much of the first four and a half years of the operation of the reopened gaol. Four research officers (Diana Simmons, Kathy McLennan, Manuela Crouch and Kerry Mahony) worked for extended periods inside the gaol. I provided continuing supervision of the work with some assistance from Don Porritt.

Having research officers based inside a gaol for such lengthy periods was a new experience in New South Wales. The project could not have been such a success without the whole-hearted acceptance of the research team which was given by both officers and inmates at Bathurst Gaol during these years.

I would like to offer thanks to all those involved.

Angela Gorta
Senior Research Officer
March, 1988.

INTRODUCTION

Bathurst Gaol re-opened in September 1982 following the rebuilding of the gaol destroyed by riots in 1974. The New Bathurst Gaol Management Plan was intended to be a major innovation in the management of prisons in NSW. The Management Plan was to pioneer an approach to better management of prisons that might prevent the processes which led to the burning down of the old Bathurst Gaol.

"The philosophy of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan is based the Justice Model of imprisonment. In this model the primary aim of imprisonment is not rehabilitation of the offender. The purpose of imprisonment in terms of this model is the enforcement of a loss of liberty by ensuring custody of prisoners is maintained without placing further unnecessary restrictions upon them. This philosophy also involves a conception of the nature of prisoners that recognizes that prisoners are no different from other people in the community....

Based on this model, the philosophical principles of Bathurst are:-

- (a) recognition of prisoners as self responsible and self determining individuals who have rights, needs and can be held responsible for their actions.
- (b) recognition that prisoners have the right to be treated in accordance with their dignity, and needs as human beings and with principles of justice.
- (c) maximisation of the extent to which prisoners and officers have opportunities to exercise rational decision making potential within the constraints of security requirements.

- (d) establishment of a humane environment for prisoners and staff." (H.M. Gaol Bathurst: Management Plan 1985/86, pp. 1-2).

Hence the rationale behind the Management Plan was to make the atmosphere in the gaol as normal as possible, while still maintaining security. One aspect of the Management Plan was unit management.

Unit accommodation for prisoners was established at Bathurst Gaol in early 1983. At that stage it was unique in the NSW prison system. By 1st July, 1987, there were one hundred and twenty-nine prisoners housed in the eight units at Bathurst Gaol compared to eighty-nine in the traditional wing accommodation.

Research officers worked inside Bathurst Gaol evaluating the effects of the New Bathurst Gaol Management Plan for much of the first 4 1/2 years of the operation of the reopened gaol. Research officers worked at Bathurst Gaol from February 1983 to June 1984 and from October 1984 to April 1987. During this time these research officers produced a number of detailed reports, some of which are listed in the References. The purpose of the current report is to bring together the major findings from these reports pertaining to unit accommodation.

The material in this report is based on both formal and informal observations made by the research officers during this period; the results of two surveys of inmates' and prison officers' opinions on living and working in the units in comparison to a traditional wing; an intergaol comparison study of the attitudes of prison officers to their work at Bathurst Gaol, Cessnock Corrective Centre and Parklea Prison; and various revisions of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan.

HOW UNITS AT BATHURST DIFFER FROM THE MORE TRADITIONAL WINGS

As outlined in the Draft Management Strategy for the New Bathurst Gaol, unit management was described as follows:

"A system of management through interpersonal relational skills will focus on the relationship between officer/prisoner, and prisoner/prisoner, particularly officer/prisoner. Traditionally relationships have been tenuous to say the least. It is hoped to be able to change that relationship to some degree through a change in management approach which will require different behaviours on the part of prison officers, which will in turn influence prisoner's behaviour" (p.6).

Unit management is a system of management which subdivides large numbers of prisoners into smaller, more manageable groups. Units are physically smaller than wings, have fewer prisoners and contain amenities areas not commonly found in wings. The unit style of prisoner accommodation is different from the traditional wing accommodation in terms of both physical structure and management practices. For a summary of the differences see Table 1.

Physical structure of the units

The old Bathurst Gaol contained four wings: A, B, C and D. During the remodelling two of these wings (B and C) were each subdivided into four units. (See Figure 1.) Hence the eight units are referred to as B1, B2, B3, B4, C1, C2, C3 and C4.

"Each unit runs through three floors of the wing and is separated from adjacent units by a steel barricade that does not allow sight or communication between units. Each unit houses approximately sixteen prisoners, one to a cell. The ground floor is entirely made up of communal living space, a store room, and officers' administration area. The communal living area contains a lounge area, a kitchen, dining area, shower room/laundry. The upper floors provide cell accommodation and one room is reserved for hobby work. Each cell has a wash basin and toilet, bed, and chair. A console on the wall has a call button, which registers in the gatehouse should a prisoner require an officer during the night, a T.V. aerial,

light switch, power points. Prisoners will be encouraged to decorate their cells and express some of their individuality in their living area." (Bathurst Gaol Implementation Committee, 1981, p.6).

Management practices

i) Rostering and training:

Permanent unit officers were allocated to specific units and were rostered as often as possible to that unit. These officers attended a two day Unit Orientation Course in which the basic objectives of unit management were outlined. Unit officers were then asked as a group to define the aims for their unit, in keeping with the broad aims of unit management. In contrast, wing officers in other medium security accommodation are given an outline of administrative duties rather than participation in decision making for their specific area.

ii) Interaction between officers and inmates:

Both structured and unstructured interactions were to occur between officers and inmates.

"Structured interaction (was to) involve unit meetings to solve local unit problems, unit membership, to elect a unit representative, to deal with interpersonal conflict etc."

"Unstructured interactions (were to) develop and become more significant as some degree of trust evolved between prisoners and officers. This interaction required officers who were prepared to communicate with prisoners in a person to person relationship as the situation demands, who have some skill in dealing with people who are in some form of emotional crisis and who are generally good at relating to people on a sociable level." (Bathurst Gaol Implementation Committee, 1981, p.7).

iii) Decision making:

"In keeping with a principle of responsibility, prisoners would be encouraged to make decisions about management of their unit in so far as that management fitted in with management of the gaol. Total institutions deprive people of their individuality and the possibility of decision making. The term

'institutionalised' is one we all recognise as describing a person who has lost his ability to be autonomous and becomes dependent on others to decide for him. Bathurst Gaol would seek to positively avoid that situation and promote the opposite atmosphere where individuality could be expressed as far as possible, hence encouragement for the decoration of cells." (Bathurst Gaol Implementation Committee, 1981, p.7).

iv) Female officers in units:

"Women in the gaol force are seen as playing their most important role in the unit setting. Women are employed in a number of institutions and Norval Morris in 'The Future of Imprisonment' speaks of the advantages of women officers. The Superintendent of Pentridge Victoria, as recently as three weeks ago, October, 1981 stated that women officers, who work in all divisions in Pentridge have had a positive influence on prisoners' behaviour e.g., prisoners shower more often and watch their language and the Divisions are quieter. No incidents at all have been caused by officers being female as such.

It is the Committee's view and that of the Superintendent that women will have a positive effect in Bathurst Gaol in line with the positive effect evidenced in the Special Care Unit and Pentridge. The Committee recommends that the Commission

positively endorses the employment of women officers at Bathurst Gaol and sets a minimum target of 25 percent as the female staff requirement for Bathurst Gaol." (Bathurst Gaol Implementation Committee, 1981, pp. 6-8).

v) Restrictions:

Inmates other than unit members are not allowed upstairs to cell accommodation in the unit. This rule aims to allow greater privacy for unit members and easier management for unit officers. There are also restrictions to the number of inmates allowed to visit the unit at any one time. These restrictions are not a component of wing accommodation practice at Bathurst.

Unit accommodation was to be restricted to those who were employed in full-time work within the gaol.

Prisoners would be free to return to their units after 3.30 p.m. in the afternoon.

Hence the general objectives for the units written in the "Draft Outline of the Management Strategy" (prepared by the Implementation Committee and Mr G Hay, November, 1981) were:

1. Focus on the relationship between officer/inmate, inmate/inmate and officer/officer with the aim of greater positive interaction between all members of the unit community and hence a reduction of tension within a medium security environment.
2. Enable all members of the unit community particularly inmates, to be involved in decisions about the management of their

Table 1 - Summary of differences between Bathurst units and traditional wings

Units	Wings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units are physically smaller • Units house fewer prisoners (e.g. 16-18) • Units have amenities areas • Consistent rostering • Officers participate in decision making • Meetings for unit officers • Unit community meetings (officers and inmates) to discuss issues affecting unit • Unit inmates cook all meals in unit kitchen • Unit musters as frequent as wing musters, but less formal • Unit inmates locked in cells later (9.30 pm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wings are physically larger • Wings house more prisoners (e.g., 43-150) • Amenities areas uncommon in wings • Officers given outline of duties • Food for wing inmates prepared in gaol kitchen • Wing inmates line up outside wing for musters • Wing inmates locked in cells earlier (8.00 pm)

unit in so far as that management fitted in with the management of the gaol.

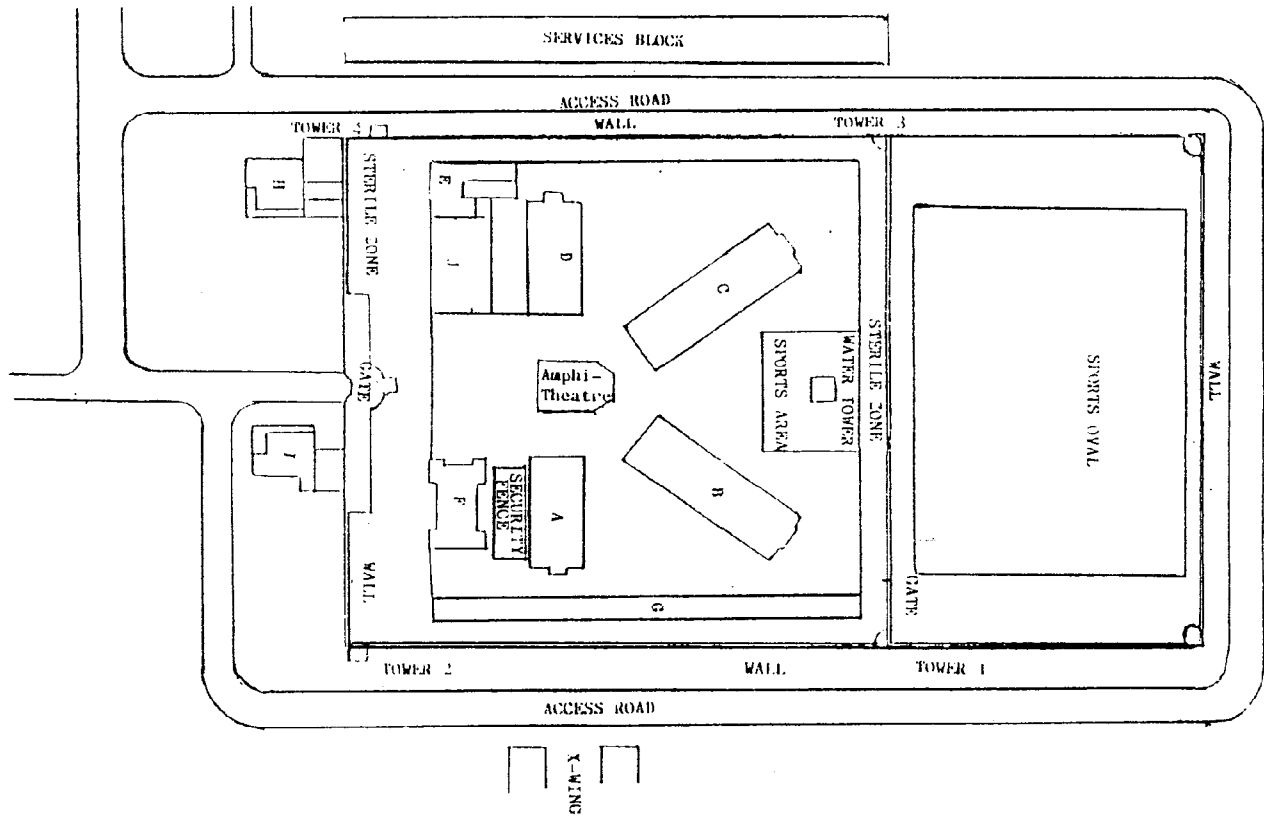
3. Allow those involved in the unit to be recognised as an individual within that environment (as opposed to the more impersonal environment of a wing). Such recognition and involvement would enable unit officers and inmates to develop a sense of unit identity." (Crouch and Mahony, September 1983, p. 6).

Figure 1: Plan of Bathurst Gaol

The eight units at Bathurst Gaol opened in stages during 1983 (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Dates Bathurst units opened

Unit	Date unit opened
C4	18th February, 1983
C3	16th March, 1983
C2	11th May, 1983
C1	4th June, 1983
B4	6th September, 1983
B3	10th November, 1983
B2	6th November, 1983
B1	5th November, 1983



- A & D - Accommodation
- B & C - Unit Accommodation
- E - Offices (Psych, P & P etc)
- F - Gym, Library, Canteen, Concert Hall.
- G - Industry/club room
- H - Visiting
- I - Administration
- J - Reception/Hospital/Chapel.

HOW PRACTICE DIFFERED FROM THE PROPOSAL

The establishment of the Industries' workshops and Trade Training courses took longer than expected. Consequently, for about eighteen months, there was a severe shortage of meaningful work for inmates at Bathurst Gaol. Trade Training and other meaningful work began in July 1984. This meant that criteria for living in units needed to be relaxed, and to date these have not returned to the rigidity originally intended.

In order to have one female custodial officer per shift per unit the Draft Management Strategy recommended attainment of a 25 per cent level of female custodial staff. This level has not been achieved. The highest level of female custodial staff at the gaol during the monitoring period was 6.4%. This also includes female officers at X Wing, being used as a women's minimum security institution since it re-opened in December, 1984. Hence it has not been possible to consistently staff units with female officers.

Shortages in custodial staff have continued to adversely affect the unit management system, along with the rest of the gaol. Originally, there were two officers rostered in each unit on a permanent basis. Later, due to staff cuts, this was reduced to three officers over two units, and then to one officer per unit. This decreased an officer's mobility from the office area and reduced the officer's involvement in unit activities. Also, permanent staffing for units was no longer maintained overall, although some units do have permanent officers. Briefly, the consequences for the units have been: an inability to retain permanent officers in each unit; no increase in the one officer per unit ratio or in the number of female officers working in the units; and very little staff development input to reinforce unit philosophy and objectives, due to problems maintaining a full-time Staff Development Officer.

ROLE OF UNIT OFFICERS

The role of the prison officer in the unit management system at Bathurst Gaol was envisaged to significantly differ from the traditional role of the wing officer. A wing officer spends a great deal of his/her time in administrative work (e.g., processing applications, monitoring and arranging telephone calls, letters, visits, etc.) for as many as 50-60 inmates. With only 16-18 inmates in a unit, the unit officer has far less administrative work and is able to extend and redefine his/her role to incorporate involvement in activities with unit

inmates. There is time for greater interaction and communication.

One of the aims implicit in the draft New Bathurst Gaol Management Proposal was to diminish the traditional gap between officers and prisoners: the "them and us" alliance, where the solidarity of each group was maintained by collective animosity directed towards members of the other group. To bridge this gap officers were to interact in, and, as part of, the unit community.

Both the draft New Bathurst Gaol Management Proposal and the advertisement for unit officers stressed the need for unit officers to "work closely with each inmate in the unit" and be prepared "to communicate with prisoners in a person to person relationship as the situation demands". Involvement (by unit officers) in the recreational, hobby and sporting activities of inmates was also outlined as a duty of unit officers. These duties specifically emphasised a level of interaction between inmates and officers in the unit that radically alters the traditionally antagonistic "us" and "them" relationship.

A game of cards, carpet bowls or scrabble allows officers to get to know prisoners personally and to be supportive if necessary. It must be realised that prisoners and officers interacting on a personal level is a radical change in relations for some. The unit orientation course enabled some discussion among unit officers on the redefinition of their role as a prison officer in a unit.

Initial selection of unit officers

In keeping with the management strategy, female as well as male officers were rostered to work in the units on a semi-permanent basis. The same six officers were rostered to a unit; two of the six relieving on days off etc. Officers could change to a different work location in time (if they wanted to gain varied experience) but it was intended that as far as was practicable the senior staff would continue to work in their selected areas and teams. Junior positions were initially filled by those officers who had completed an orientation course, who had demonstrated some leaning towards the aims of the new programme and had shown some aptitude for interacting closely with prisoners. Subsequently this was modified to include all 3rd class officers. To avoid professional jealousy, a policy was established that a pool of 3rd class officers be trained for the units and individuals be rotated into the units every three months. This was to not only give them this experience but also to diminish some of the mystique and elitism that had surrounded the units.

From the officer interviews as well as comments heard around the gaol and at the

orientation course there appeared to be a subculture of officers who did not want to associate or interact with prisoners on anything but an administrative level.

Some C4 officers had trouble adjusting to their new role in the units. Initial observations indicated that four of the six officers were interacting often and relating personally with residents whilst the other two were experiencing difficulties in feeling comfortable in this new role. The officers expressed their feelings very openly. One officer expressed how he felt guilty if an officer from another part of the gaol came in and saw him playing cards. The standard joke was, "do you call that working?" Another officer described how when everything was running smoothly and administrative tasks were out of the way and the residents happily engaged that he often had trouble filling in his time or feeling that he was doing his job. The Assistant Superintendents of Staff Development and Accommodation were supportive in that they reassured and confirmed to the officers that they were going in the right direction. The meeting concluded with officers feeling more confident about their style of work. (It must be noted, however, that about one month later one officer who could not feel comfortable in this new role did leave unit work.)

When this first unit opened there was a degree of professional jealousy directed towards the unit officers: they were referred to as "super screws". This peer group pressure no doubt also hindered adaptation to the units for some. To overcome this aura of elitism that surrounded the units, union representatives proposed that a pool of 3rd class officers be trained for the units and that they rotate in the units every three months. This was recommended at a Gaol Management Team (G.M.T.) meeting and became policy.

A misjudged tutoring tactic caused the officers in C3 to adopt methods, and therefore a role, that was not quite in line with the management strategy. At the C3 orientation, officers were asked to define aims for their unit and then to work out how they were going to meet them. They defined aims which centred around helping and rehabilitating the residents. Those running the orientation course once again explained that the programme is based on the Justice Model, where prisoners only join the available rehabilitation programmes if they choose. The officers were then very annoyed; they felt that they had been set up to be wrong; they had been led to believe that they could make their own decisions in keeping with the ideals of participatory management. They had come fired with

enthusiasm to help their residents and they felt "shot down". They did, as a group, continue in their own direction and planned individual progress reports on each resident. They set goals, values and behaviours which may well be valuable in themselves however in so doing they were limiting prisoner autonomy by setting these standards for them.

From interviews with a random sample of Bathurst officers in April, 1983, it was discerned that some role anxiety was generated by officers expecting too much of themselves. There was a constant bias to view the units as treatment oriented. Not having sufficient training to be therapists, officers consequently lacked confidence about working in the units. One comment was: "I'm trained in security, I'm not a counsellor"; and yet the officer concerned had been observed as being good with people. Some of the officers had previously worked in the Special Care Unit (S.C.U.) (which is a therapeutic centre). They were experienced and qualified enough to find their own role within the broader role defined by the management programme. It is understandable that other officers felt anxious when they attempted to meet S.C.U. role expectations without having had equivalent training and experience.

From comments and interactions with inmates in C3 in April, 1983, it was noted that not only were the officers expecting too much from themselves but the prisoners also were expecting too much from the officers. Comments such as: "they are here to serve us" and "they are supposed to help us" illustrated the need for a better understanding of the programme aims, especially where they related to accountability and responsibility.

Following feedback of these views, so as not to encourage this bias towards therapy, the psychologist changed the title of his segment of the orientation course from "Basic counselling" to "Communication" and the Assistant Superintendent (Staff Development) was sensitive to this bias and emphasised good management rather than treatment at the orientation course.

Both C2 and C1 opened with six permanent unit officers allocated to work in the unit. Unlike C3 and C4, no female officers were chosen as permanent unit officers. While it had been intended that one female officer would be on duty in each unit in the afternoon, the limited numbers of female officers working at Bathurst Gaol hampered full implementation of this objective.

INITIAL SELECTION OF UNIT INMATES

Unit C4, the first to be opened, began with four residents. Four new residents were introduced each week until there was a full complement of 18. The initial four residents were selected because it was felt that they were fairly stable for this new learning experience for all. The unit officers then took over the selection procedure, holding interviews for those who had applied to live in the units. It was decided that only those inmates who had at least six months to serve should apply. The applications were first culled by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation), who checked for length of sentence as well as any serious complicating extenuating circumstances (e.g., checked that that applicant was not a co-offender of somebody already in the unit who had "put him in" to the police or someone who had committed a crime against a member of the family of a unit resident). At a meeting of the unit staff, interviews were held with each applicant and selection was made in terms of compatibility. They selected prisoners of about the same age and having similar interests. They respected the prisoners' wishes to be housed in units with their friends.

Unit C3 was the second to be opened. Resident intake and selection were on the same criteria as for C4 although it must be noted that C3 residents were a different group in that they were not considered quite as stable or mature as those selected for C4. This is because the most socially adept were the first to be selected on application to C4 to ensure that C4 could cope with the unforeseen teething problems that they were likely to face.

Initially six inmates were selected by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) for C2. Any further applicants were to be selected by unit officers. Unit inmates were given the chance to express their views on the selection of new inmates. One inmate accepted in the initial intake was perceived by the officers to be a difficult person who may disrupt the others. This was discussed at the orientation course. Some officers acknowledged that, in keeping with the

Management Strategy, the unit environment could have a positive effect on his behaviour.

Unlike the initial procedure for C3 and C4, which was a gradual process of accepting four new inmates each week, C2's intake was rapid. An initial intake of six inmates was accepted on the 11/5/83, two inmates on the 13/5/83 and eight inmates on 14/5/83. Within four days the unit's intake was completed. This may be related to the fact that at this time, Bathurst Gaol had just gained a large group of prisoners transferred from Parramatta Gaol. While the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) expressed dissatisfaction with the rapid intake of inmates in C2, he felt there was no alternative, given the recent intake from Parramatta.

As in units C3 and C4, unit officers interviewed applicants for the unit. They explained the aim of the unit and asked applicants what they felt they could gain from being in the unit. They also respected inmates' preferences to be housed in units with their friends. It was noted that one applicant accepted into the unit, had previously been placed on protection in another gaol. Initially other unit inmates were suspicious about this applicant and why he had been placed on protection. However, once officers explained the reason for his protection status to the other unit inmates and they understood he was not an informer or someone charged with molesting a child, they agreed to accept him into the unit.

Unit C1 opened on the 4th June, 1983 with an initial intake of four inmates, selected by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation). Other applicants to the unit were chosen by unit officers. As in units C2, C3 and C4 inmates were be given an opportunity to voice any specific objections about particular applicants. Within eleven days, nine inmates were accommodated in the unit. No inmates in this unit had any previous protection status, so unlike other units, the issue of accepting ex-protection prisoners did not arise. The number of inmates in C1, unlike C2, increased slowly. No identifiable factions developed in the unit and all unit members were soon involved in contributing to and organising the decoration of the downstairs communal area.

TEETHING PROBLEMS

It is worth noting the teething problems faced by these units for the benefit of other new units which might face the same problems. The development of the first four units to open was closely monitored. Problems encountered during the initial implementation of unit management included: the selection of prisoners for the unit which involved the problem of the integration of ex-protection prisoners; the administration of difficult prisoners; the realistic attainment of participatory decision making for inmates; the rate of intake; and clarification of desirable objectives for officer/inmate relations.

Problem 1: Selection of prisoners for unit

The first major problem to develop stemmed from giving inmates some choice concerning with whom they were going to live. Such choice, while taken for granted in the community, is not generally available in the prison system.

It was initially planned that prisoners be selected to live in the units on compatibility and that they be given some degree of choice about fellow inmates. This caused an unprecedented problem in that prisoners who saw other prisoners as "protection prisoners" (although none of these prisoners was on official protection), "dogs" (informers or friends of informers - not to be associated with), or "rock spiders" (child molesters) did not want to associate with or be seen to be associating with these people. Apparently these prisoners are tolerated in the wings because other inmates have no choice about living in the same wing with them. One prisoner representative explained that he could not take the risk involved in associating with a "dog" or "rock spider" because the word would spread and he himself would be "put on the dog" and if transferred to another gaol he risked being found "stuffed under a bed" (murdered).

Of the first five inmates chosen to go into unit C3 three refused to live with the other two. All five were rejected and another five chosen. Once they were established three more applicants were put forward to the residents to check if they had any strong personal objections. The residents initially tried to have two of the three excluded. This problem also occurred in unit C4 where they all threatened to leave over one potential resident.

The prisoner code is such that in some cases a prisoner is totally rejected and ostracized solely because of the crime he committed. The prisoner's personality or personal attributes are not taken into account. In fact the residents in one

unit were, unknowingly, living compatibly with a person who had committed a crime against a child.

For C3 the issue of "rock spiders" and "dogs" living in the unit became prominent when one inmate who was known as a "rock spider" became a unit member. It was only after he moved in that inmates discussed the issue openly. There were threats that inmates would leave the unit or that the "rock spider" would be given a hard time and he would have to leave. A meeting was called over the issue one night where discussion became heated. The next day the issue was discussed at the community meeting and the inmates selected a spokesperson to give their views. The spokesman said that it had been decided that the unit members were going to make an effort to get on with the "rock spider" although they recognised at times it would be difficult for the unit inmates and for the "rock spider". They requested that in the future they not be asked their opinions as a group of who was an acceptable unit applicant; rather if anyone had any personal objection to any applicant they should go to the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) or the Assistant Superintendent (Staff Development). The unit members saw this as a solution to the problem of other inmates in the gaol seeing them as having the power to decide who should come into the unit, which had caused some antagonism between unit inmates and wing inmates.

In C4 the resolution on the issue of "dogs and rock spiders" was quite different. The issue was raised when an applicant to the unit was named a "dog". Discussion about the issue came up at one community meeting where it was stated by one particular prisoner that he would not want to be seen to associate with a "dog" so if the applicant did come in he would leave. Also he made the point as in C3 that it didn't seem right that prisoners were making decisions on who does or doesn't come into the unit. The discussion ended with a suggestion made by a unit officer that the decision be left with the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation). The outcome was that the applicant decided the next day he didn't want to come into the unit. This resolution can perhaps be seen as inadequate in terms of setting a precedent. Neither officers nor prisoners were involved in the final decision, only the individual applicant made the decision to withdraw his application. It may reasonably be assumed that the applicant would have had feedback on the general attitude of unit members to his label of "dog".

Problem 2: Problems in compatibility in unit living

Apart from having problems integrating so-called "dogs" and "rock spiders" there were also problems integrating prisoners who were very immature and/or generally aggravating to the remainder of the community.

It was an ongoing process in that there was a partial acceptance followed by a flare-up in times of stress followed by another settlement, although the periods of tolerance and acceptance tended to become longer. The officers in C4 felt that the individuals concerned were making progress which was having a beneficial effect on the unit community. The psychologist, unit officers and probation and parole officer engaged in considerable individual counselling with the people concerned. They managed to gain the trust and confidence of these prisoners, which led to greater openness and better self understanding. Also a special community meeting was called after one flare up in which the aggravation reached such a level that the other unit members threatened to leave. The meeting was very honest and a greater understanding of the people concerned eventuated. Also a commitment to responsible behaviour was sought from the people seen to be causing the problem. The unit members were willing to be tolerant and supportive (if rather paternalistic for a while) of these people.

One issue that became problematic for officers in C3 was the different attitudes among officers regarding what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of inmates. This issue was discussed at length at two meetings. Specifically the concern was with the behaviour of one particular prisoner who was considered to have acted violently on a number of occasions. His behaviour sparked discussion in these meetings about a number of incidents which some officers felt should not be overlooked. Other officers felt that they were not serious enough incidents to warrant conflict in the unit. As one officer stated conflict does not help harmonious living in the unit. One suggestion made by a unit officer was that the unit needed sanctions. Another officer disagreed. He stated that "we (the unit) don't need more rules". The Assistant Superintendent (Staff Development) suggested that in the unit it is a matter of the officers' accepting each others' different attitudes and that if such behaviour continued it should be brought to the notice of everyone in a community meeting. It was noted however that discussions still continued after the meeting and the attitude among some officers remained in favour of more sanctions and rules in the unit, as they saw this

to be the only way of deterring unit inmates from continuing what they viewed to be unacceptable behaviour.

Problem 3: Speed with which the unit was filled

Both units C1 and C2 developed quite differently from units C3 and C4. The initial problems that arose were quite different. For C2 the problem related to the speed with which the unit was filled. From frequent informal observations and discussions with inmates and officers over the first few weeks, it became obvious that two distinct groups had developed among the inmates in C2. Only inmates from one group seemed to be using the downstairs communal living area. Some of these inmates were labelled "Parramatta Gaol 'heavies'" and it was stated by a number of the unit officers that the other inmates would not come downstairs because they were fearful of the more dominant group. The two distinct sub-groups of inmates were obviously not communicating or interacting as a whole community. Such a distinct division between inmates was not in keeping with the unit aims of "good communication" and a "stable and harmonious environment". Both executive staff in accommodation and C2 unit officers felt that such a division was related to the speed with which the unit was filled and the notoriety of some inmates who had been transferred from Parramatta Gaol. In this case, it was the inmates who expressed negative reactions to the new Bathurst Gaol and the idea of interacting with prison officers. Executive staff acknowledged that succeeding units must not be allowed to initially accommodate inmates with such rapidity. Such an intake procedure did not enable prison officers to develop an initial rapport with individual inmates. This appeared to have prevented the integration of officers into the unit.

A change in the group of inmates who used the downstairs communal area and decoration of the unit both occurred around the middle of July, 1983. Some officers and inmates stated that this change occurred largely because one particular ex-Parramatta prisoner had been transferred to Long Bay. Two other ex-Parramatta inmates, who had contracted hepatitis, were also transferred. All had been associated with the more dominant group in the unit.

Problem 4: Reluctance to hold community meetings

It is also worth noting that during these first few weeks, inmates in C2 seemed reluctant to agree to hold community meetings. It seemed that most inmates the research officer talked to were

reluctant because they had preconceived ideas that community meetings were therapeutically directed rather than a participatory decision making process related to the day-to-day running of the unit. Unit officers felt this might change as the inmates grew more accustomed to the idea of community meetings.

Problem 5: Development interrupted by prison officer strike

For C1 the involvement of officers in the initial development of the unit was hampered by a prison officer strike. C1 inmates were reluctant to have much to do with unit officers (or the research officer). Inmates continued to feel that some C1 unit officers were particularly control-oriented. Unit officers felt that some inmates would always regard officers with a certain amount of suspicion and distrust. However, both officers and inmates were jointly involved in organising the purchase of a unit fish tank and initiation of cooking for the unit. Overall there did not appear to be any significant unit issues or initial teething problems that arose during this period of C1's development.

The issue of accepting prisoners labelled as 'dogs' or 'rock spiders' which had arisen in C3 and C4 did not become a significant problem in C1 or C2. The issue of an ex-protection prisoner placed into unit C2 was resolved.

These teething problems pointed to the need for ongoing professional support for both the unit inmates and officers. Officers required ongoing support and guidance in:

- i) revision and reinforcement of their role as defined by the management strategy;
- ii) positive support in that the officers needed to realise that the problems that they were experiencing were to be expected in any new programme;
- iii) revision and reinforcement of participatory management strategies both among themselves and in giving residents appropriate autonomy;
- iv) further ongoing training in interpersonal skills and stress management.

Inmates on the other hand, required ongoing support and guidance in:

- i) explanation of participatory decision making and meeting procedures;
- ii) more information about the aims and objectives of the management strategy so that all the community could work in the same direction i.e., that the residents are aware of the role of the prison officers and know what they could reasonably expect

from officers as well as knowing what is expected of themselves.

In the Bathurst case this support was provided by the Assistant Superintendents of Accommodation and Staff Development, the prison psychologist and the programme co-ordinator.

Possible influences on unit development

What influences might have contributed to a higher level of interaction between officers and prisoners developing in units C3 and C4 than in units C1 and C2?

It is difficult to compare different groups of inmates and officers. However, three possible influences have been identified from many informal discussions with inmates and officers in all four units. All three may have contributed to a difference between units in willingness to be fully involved in a radical programme and specifically in a change in the traditional relationship between officers and inmates.

Firstly, both C3 and C4, particularly C4, were the first units to be opened. Inmates and officers chosen for these units exhibited a willingness and enthusiasm to be the first involved in the new programme. Thus both groups were willing to involve themselves in a different type of interaction between officers and inmates and in doing so had to deal, as a group, with the negative and, at times, antagonistic reactions of some officers and inmates in the rest of the gaol. In dealing with this antagonism, they united in their defence of the unit system and their position in it.

Secondly, inmates in C2 and C1 were on the whole less willing to be involved in interaction with officers. Some had withdrawn their applications to enter units C3 and C4 because they regarded the intake of ex-protection prisoners into C3 and C4 with suspicion. Some had heard via the gaol grapevine that units were full of "dogs" and "rock spiders" and they did not want to be labelled as such. The label of "dog" was being directed at inmates who were seen to be spending time talking to officers or be involved in activities with officers. However these inmates still viewed unit accommodation favourably because they saw the units to be generally more comfortable, more private and to have the added advantage of a later lock up than the wings.

Thirdly, the development of units C1 and C2 was interrupted by the strike period and hampered during this period by a low morale among staff and inmates. During significant periods before and after the strike, key staff were away. This left the organisation and operation of units to senior and executive staff who had less

experience and knowledge of the participatory decision making process and the overall unit management system.

It has also been suggested that the main cause of the difference may have been that more C1 and C2 inmates had had negative experiences with officers in previous gaols. This seems unlikely to be a major factor. Some inmates in C3 and C4 have also had previous experience in maximum security gaols and have related some negative experiences with officers in these gaols to the research officer. However, this does not seem to have hindered their willingness to be involved in activities with officers in their units.

INTERACTION BETWEEN OFFICERS AND INMATES

In 1983, structured interaction (i.e. formal unit meetings) occurred regularly in two of the eight units with more informal discussion regarding unit issues occurring in some units. From interviews conducted in four of the units it was apparent that the majority of the unit members (both inmates and officers) viewed meetings as potentially useful. However, criticism regarding lack of clear guidelines on areas of decision making for officers and inmates, and delayed action on decisions, were noted. Once a unit was established and its local rules agreed, there was often little for such meetings to do, unless a specific problem arose.

Results of a structured observation study conducted in July - September 1983 indicated that although differing levels of interaction between inmates and officers existed in the units, there was a higher level of officer-inmate interaction, and especially of social interaction, in the units than in the wing. Administrative tasks were less often the focus of interaction in the units than in the wing and a greater proportion of all interactions in the units involved both officer and inmates. The implementers acknowledged that differing levels of interaction in different units were acceptable as long as there was "peaceful co-existence".

PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING IN THE UNIT COMMUNITY

The New Bathurst Gaol Management Proposal placed great importance on participatory management, where all who are involved with the management of prisoners take part in the decision making process through team meetings.

The concept of participatory management has received considerable attention with "advocates of participative techniques far outweighing those who might question such approaches" (Scanlon, 1976, p.15). However, while advantages such as increased employee motivation, acceptance and commitment have been cited by Scanlon, he also adds that participatory decision making "takes time", and "members of the group must perceive that higher level management is really interested and committed to fostering a team climate based on open communication and trust" (Scanlon, 1976, p.17).

Participatory decision making is not only relevant to the officers in the units but also to the residents. It is central to "responsibility" and "accountability": two of the basic principles of the Bathurst Management Strategy programmed to counteract the possible effects of long incarceration in an institution. The principle of responsibility is not a new concept in prison reform. As Berliner has noted: "Current treatment approaches, regardless of theoretical divergences, stress mobilizing and strengthening ego functions and developing individual autonomy and responsibility". This, however, is the "paradox of treatment within prison, as the prison environment tends to stress control from without with consequent loss of individual autonomy and responsibility" (Berliner, 1980, p.82).

Participatory decision making in the unit community is a multi-faceted process. Many issues can be and are discussed and decisions made informally among inmates and officers in the units. Structured community meetings, unit officer meetings and activities organised by and for the unit community are also aspects of the participatory decision making process. It is these three structured aspects that are the foci for this discussion on the participatory decision making process, simply because while a more informal process of participatory decision making may be equally useful, it is not as easily identifiable or assessed by an outsider to the community.

To reach a decision or to solve a problem, the Bathurst Programme aims at instigating group dynamics that are able to evolve to a stage where decisions are made by consensus. It is recognised (Schein, 1969) that the consensus type of decision making takes time to implement and to evolve to such a point where all group members can leave the meeting feeling that even if they don't fully agree with the decision made they can work or live with it. The following are possible levels of decision making:

1. Decision made by default, e.g., nobody spoke up or relevant people were not present when the decision was made;

2. An autocratic decision was made;
3. Minority rule;
4. Majority rule with little information or debate;
5. Majority rule with much information and debate;
6. Group consensus;
7. Unanimity

Any discussion on participatory decision making in the unit is based on observations of structured interactions, that is, observation of meetings within the unit where decisions are made about the unit and when all unit members and at least two unit officers are present.

Unit community meetings

Community meetings are for all unit members: inmates attend and officers for that particular shift also attend.

Unit C4

When C4 first opened all residents as well as officers attended the meetings which were held twice weekly. There was a gradual dropping off in numbers as other activities and classes vied for attendance. It was subsequently decided to hold meetings weekly and in May, 1983 a decision was made to hold meetings fortnightly. The major reason for this decision was that both inmates and unit officers felt that once the unit had settled down to a routine that was acceptable to all, not as many issues needed to be discussed. It was recognized that meetings were still needed to discuss: issues related to the unit e.g., the general cleaning of the unit; activities organised for the unit; and decisions by the Department, the Gaol Management Team (G.M.T.) and the Accommodation Team that affected inmates.

A different chairman was nominated every two weeks. The chairman tended to be the most articulate, and as some residents were unsure of meeting procedures or were reluctant to speak up publicly the chairman tended to dominate by default.

Overall community meetings in C4, attended by a research officer, were well organised by inmates who had generally had little or no previous experience in meeting procedures. Internal household issues were openly discussed allowing inmates to express their ideas and feelings. However, meeting effectiveness was hindered by a lack of communication from decision making bodies such as the G.M.T. and executives in the Accommodation Team.

Decisions or requests made by the unit community were not effectively communicated to succeeding meetings nor was information on G.M.T. decisions regularly communicated to C4 inmates.

It is interesting to note that even though meetings were organised and run by inmates, with officers attending and contributing, during the prison officer strike meetings did not occur. Inmates seemed to feel that because officers were not there, there was no need for meetings. In part, this is obviously a valid comment because unit officers and seniors did contribute information and ideas on issues. However, their presence would not be essential to the discussion of issues related to cleaning and organising the unit.

During the May-mid-August, 1983 period there was a distinct change in the enthusiasm and involvement of both officers and inmates of C4. The prison officer strike period created a void in the development and progress of all units. Also immediately prior to and following the strike, C4 officers and inmates expressed a certain dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the new programme and their expectations of how the unit should be running.

An item on the agenda for the community meeting on the 6th July, 1983 indicated that inmates were concerned about the amount of time that there were no permanent unit officers rostered in the unit. Inmates felt that other officers did not understand the routine in C4 and some created a general uneasiness in the unit as a whole. The raising of this problem indicated a genuine concern by inmates regarding the stability of their unit.

A total of fifteen issues were tallied as problems or issues on which a decision had to be made or a resolution reached in meetings held during May-August, 1983. Each officer and inmate had one vote on these issues. Of the fifteen issues, thirteen were domestic unit issues and two were gaol-related issues. A resolution was reached on four of these issues by taking a vote at the meetings. Eight issues were resolved by way of discussion, where a general agreement was reached among unit inmates. Three issues were referred to the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) for a decision. Thus the majority of issues needing a resolution were dealt with in a community meeting by way of discussion. Although not everybody present gave their opinion on every issue, there was no obvious conflict between unit members at the meeting. Many of these issues related to maintaining and cleaning the unit. These were generally resolved by bringing unit members' attention to the issues and noting that greater

effort was needed by all to maintain the unit. Many of these issues continued to be raised by inmates and officers when they felt the unit cleanliness has declined.

Unit C3

As at April 1983, all members of the unit had attended meetings unless they had to work or attend education classes at the time. The process of decision making was noted for the four meetings that were observed. The chairman was the same for all four meetings. During the first two meetings the chairman introduced each issue for discussion and gave his opinion on the issue. He then recognised a few other unit members who wanted to contribute, usually because they raised their hands waiting to be acknowledged. However, inmates also spoke over others or before others to give information on their opinion about the issue. The chairperson became the decision making figure on the majority of issues by ending discussion and giving his opinion on how the issue was to be resolved. Only a minority of others contributed to the discussion. Unit officers on the whole contributed minimally to the discussion as they felt that the meeting should be left to the inmates to organise, discuss and resolve issues.

Overall this period may be viewed as one where a change in awareness of unit meetings occurred among unit inmates, many of whom had had little or no prior experience of meetings and meeting procedures.

During May-August 1983, unit meetings continued on a weekly basis, the meeting then being held at night. During this period, meetings in C3 were streamlined from two hours duration, to between 45 minutes and one hour. They were well organised and mostly orderly with an itemised agenda. Inmates became more aware of when issues needed to be voted on and when a general discussion was more appropriate. Only two chairpersons had been elected to run unit meetings during the May-July 1983 period.

The level of inmate enthusiasm and involvement, unlike that for C4, did not distinctly change. The majority of unit inmates continued to attend meetings to discuss household issues and unit activities. Issues that affected inmates on a wider goal level were discussed less often than in C4.

A particularly contentious issue discussed during this period was visiting hours in the unit. A number of meetings concentrated discussion solely on this issue. The issue was initially raised by the Assistant Superintendent (Staff Development) after feedback from unit officers that some unit inmates were reluctant to come

downstairs during visiting hours because the downstairs communal area was dominated by inmates from outside the unit. A general discussion of the issue ended with a motion being carried that unit visiting hours, 7 hours per day, be maintained. The Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) accepted their views and agreed to allow the visiting hours to continue as normal. A week later further discussion at a community meeting clarified acceptance by inmates and officers of visiting hours. However, some three weeks later, some inmates in the unit criticised the length of visiting hours. A motion was then carried that visiting hours be restricted to 1 1/2 hours in the morning and 1 1/2 hours in the afternoon. This issue was particularly contentious. Its resolution, a restriction of hours, could have simply been imposed by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation). However, in keeping with the concept of participatory decision making, both unit officers and the Assistant Superintendent allowed the issue to be resolved by inmates, a process that eventually enabled inmates who were dissatisfied, to voice their opinion. Restrictions were agreed to rather than imposed on unit inmates.

Eight C3 community meetings were observed by a research officer during the May-August 1983 period. A total of sixteen issues were tallied as problems or issues on which a decision had to be made or a resolution reached. As in Unit C4, each officer and inmate had one vote on these issues. All sixteen issues raised were domestic unit issues. A resolution was reached on five of these issues by taking a vote at the meeting. Four issues were resolved by way of discussion where some general agreement was reached. While not every unit member expressed their opinion at the meeting about these issues, there was no obvious conflict about the agreement that was reached. Three of the sixteen issues were referred to the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) for a decision and one was deferred for more information. Three of the issues were neither resolved, deferred or referred. Rather they were lost in discussion of other issues and not formally minuted at these meetings.

Over the months, meetings in C3 became better organised along more effective lines. Inmates expressed less dissatisfaction with the duration of meetings and the extent to which extraneous matters were included for discussion. Inmates did, however, express some dissatisfaction with the frequency of meetings. Some felt fortnightly meetings would be more appropriate given the unit's development. Many comments from the inmates in C3 indicated they were dissatisfied with the lack of information

channelled through community meetings relating to policy decisions that affect inmates.

Unit C2

Unit meetings became the focus of many informal conversations among both inmates and officers in C2. Inmates were sceptical and unsure about the concept of unit meetings. Some inmates felt that meetings in other units were therapeutically oriented and officers were trying to "get inside inmates' heads". They also felt that comments made in unit meetings were misinterpreted, thus creating bad feelings between unit inmates and other inmates in the gaol. This was specifically related to an incident in C3 when one inmate was said to have criticised some inmates in the wings for adhering to the traditional prisoner code of not speaking to officers for fear of being called a "screw lover". Such scepticism hindered any initiation of unit meetings from the inmate population. Unit officers felt that to impose unit meetings would not be useful as it would create bad feelings between officers and inmates. Officers also strongly advocated that, in keeping with the philosophy of inmate responsibility, inmates must be the ones who initiate and organise meetings for the unit.

As at August, 1983 only three structured community meetings had occurred in C2. A number of informal meetings at night had occurred when most inmates were present in the downstairs communal area. A research officer was not present at these informal meetings, however, both officers and inmates stated that these meetings occurred only when an issue such as cleaning the unit needed to be briefly discussed. No agenda or minutes were kept for these meetings.

The three structured meetings that were held were all organised by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) and the unit officers. The first was a meeting to introduce staff and present a brief outline of the aims of the unit and the concept of participatory management. Inmates were told at this meeting that unit officers and accommodation executives expected all units to run differently. The common aim of all was to maintain a stable environment. Two other meetings were organised with the specific intention of discussing existing problems of visits to the unit. As in unit C3, problems related to an uneasiness among some unit inmates about using the communal living area. Other problems related to gambling, petty theft and inadequate signing of the visitors' book. The Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) outlined these problems to unit inmates and, as in C3, agreed to a week's trial basis of the existing visiting hours.

Clearly, while consensus on this issue was not achieved, consultation with and involvement of inmates was sufficient to ensure their co-operation, if not perhaps whole-hearted acceptance of the resolution.

Overall while C2 was not operating within the planned formalised structure of participatory decision making, the method of dealing with the particularly contentious issue, unit visits, indicated that some form of discussion and agreement was achieved among unit officers and inmates. Thus a significant change to the traditional method of regulating containment and control in a maximum security gaol was achieved in relation to this issue.

Unit C1

Inmates in C1 remained particularly sceptical about community meetings. The reasons given for not wanting community meetings were meeting ineffectiveness, the perceived therapeutic nature of meetings, and misreporting and consequent repercussions from inmates in wings. Officers were, as in C2, reluctant to impose meetings.

No structured or unstructured meetings occurred during the early months when this was being monitored except for one meeting organised by the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) to introduce staff and outline the aims of unit management. Even at this stage, inmates were questioning whose right it was to decide to have community meetings, officers' or inmates'. The Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) stated that while it was up to inmates how often they conducted meetings they could not disband community meetings altogether. The discussion raised a critical point for all involved in the new programme. To what extent can inmates exercise autonomy in participatory decision making? In particular, can they decide to reject an aspect of unit management such as structured meetings?

Unit officer meetings

The major objective of unit officer meetings was to allow unit officers as a group to discuss particular issues, incidents or the behaviour of particular inmates that had created problems or were specifically significant to that particular unit. Examples of these were: visiting hours in the units; the role of unit officers; programme reports on inmates; incidents that caused disruption to the unit such as gambling; or individual inmates 'acting out' in the unit.

During the May - mid-August 1983 period, unit officer meetings continued. Meetings for C3, C2 and C1 officers were held on a weekly basis

while C4 meetings were streamlined and were held on a fortnightly basis. Both the period of the strike and the absence of the Assistant Superintendent (Accommodation) hampered the regularity with which all unit officer meetings were held.

The meetings were usually 40-60 minutes in duration. They were effectively chaired allowing all officers to contribute ideas and opinions on issues. In allowing this discussion, consensus decision making was achieved on some issues which warranted further action or feedback to the unit community. However, the overall function of these meetings was to allow unit officers to express their ideas and feelings and to provide ongoing support from executive staff.

These meetings were met with mixed reactions from officers. As noted previously some officers felt that meetings were ineffective and did not provide solutions to problems. Others felt meetings were worthwhile as they allowed all officers an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to executive staff and other unit officers. They felt such an opportunity had not been provided in their previous work experience in other gaols.

Unit officers' meetings were particularly useful in the initial opening of the unit, when unit officers were unsure of their role in the unit. Clarification, discussion and encouragement from executive officers in these meetings provided constructive support for unit officers during this period. However the long period during which no meetings were held hampered the maintenance of such support. Problems in rostering unit officers to particular units and the absence of officers on leave or attending modular courses also hampered continuity of weekly discussion. While recognising the difficulty associated with maintaining a shift rotation that enables permanent unit officers to be rostered to their unit as often as possible, it is a vital aspect of the unit management system.

During this period the first full Accommodation Team Meeting was held with unit and wing officers. A number of issues that had continued to be discussed at unit officer meetings were again discussed at this team meeting with particular styles of resolution suggested by unit and wing officers and executives.

Unit activities

Unit activities are another aspect of the participatory decision making process operating in unit management at Bathurst Gaol. A brief outline of activities is included to illustrate the diversity among units in the types of community activities organised and the development of separate community identities within the larger institution.

Examples of unit activities which have been organised include: fortnightly "Toastmaster International" meetings useful for developing confidence and skills useful in public speaking (unit C4); macrame (C4); cooking (C4, C3, C2, and C1); decoration of the unit (C3); donations for the support of a child in a third world country (C3); sporting activities such as chess, darts and carpet bowls (C3); visits of groups from a local high school (C3); and building of unit furniture (C2).

Finally, the success of the Unit C3 cooking project should be mentioned as an indicator of inmate responsibility. Ingredients for cooking are supplied from the main kitchen. In the beginning all C3 inmates shared the cooking and cleaning on a roster basis. As more work became available, fewer inmates could take time out for cooking, so positions were created for two inmate cooks. Following the success of C3's project, members of the Inmate Liaison Group requested that all units do their own cooking. This was introduced in December 1985.

ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE OF ACCOMMODATION UNITS

Two surveys including both inmates living in units and officers working in the Bathurst units were conducted. Structured personal interviews were administered on both occasions. The first of these studies, conducted in September 1983 when only four units were operating, involved interviewing fifty per cent of the inmates living in units at that time (29 inmates) and sixteen unit officers. At the time the second study was conducted in April-May 1986 all eight units were well-established. Once again a fifty per cent sample of unit inmates (this time involving 59 inmates) were interviewed as well as all twenty-six permanent unit officers and all three permanent wing officers.

In both these surveys inmates and prison officers were asked their opinions on living and working in the units in comparison to a tradition wing. The main areas covered in both sets of interviews were: the physical environment, the social atmosphere; participatory decision making; identification with the unit community and relations between officers and inmates.

In the period following the interviews of September, 1983, unit management suffered significant setbacks in its development. Two major factors were identified. One was the staffing reductions mentioned previously, which were compounded by shortages due to sick leave and resignations. The second factor was the strike by prison officers in February-March, 1984. Although no major incidents of violence or abuse occurred, the degree of enthusiasm among inmates and officers involved in unit management declined in the period immediately following the strike. The good rapport which had begun to develop between the officers and the inmates diminished. Inmates retreated from their unit officers in the belief that the striking officers had not cared if they had been left in their cells all day with no visits or telephone calls. In addition, the striking officers were less supportive of the plan because it had become identified with the executive staff, who were the object of much hostility during the strike.

Overview of findings:

In both the 1983 and 1986 studies a positive picture of the units emerged from both prisoners and officers. Units were described as having better relations across the community and providing a more relaxed environment to live and work in than wings. The problem mentioned in the 1983 study of inmates finding it hard to adjust to closer contact with other people, appears to have been solved. Both prisoners and officers

stated that they got on better with each other, and the recently introduced unit cooking was popular with the majority of those interviewed in 1986. These aspects of unit living were compared favourably to the wing environment.

However, in 1986 opinions on many aspects of unit living were more negative than they had been in 1983, especially the opinions of officers. More unit officers stated that they would prefer to work elsewhere, than they had in 1983, and felt a lot of things in the units could be improved, for example, musters, lock-ins and the procedure for bringing inmates into the units. It would appear that while officers still saw the advantages of the units, changes which occurred over the years have made their work role less meaningful. In 1986 they were no longer interacting with the inmates in the ways outlined in the Management Plan, so therefore their eight hour shift could become extremely boring. Also for this reason, some officers reverted to the traditional role of merely being there to 'lock people up' rather than supervising, and joining in with, activities for the unit inmates.

In 1986 the 'norm' appeared to be that inmates and officers did not interact to any great degree. Officers stated informally that they would feel uncomfortable about 'forcing' themselves to interact socially with inmates, some even felt that this was 'not their job'. Inmates also felt uneasy about being seen to spend too much time with officers.

One thing which almost all officers and inmates agreed on was the positive effect of informal musters. This reflected less regimentation and a way of incorporating a prison rule more naturally into everyday life. Also, informal musters were seen to reduce an area of potential conflict between officers and inmates.

Inmates also, although more positive about units than the officers, saw that the advantages of the units had decreased between 1983 and 1986. They saw the benefit of getting to know people better and having some input into their own lives, but they also felt disappointed about their lack of decision making powers within the unit. Inmates still saw that officers were different in the units and easier to get on with, but not to the same degree as they had three years earlier.

In the 1986 study it was intended to take particular note of responses given by the Aboriginal group in C4 to assess whether they valued being given a choice about residing with their own ethnic group. While C4 inmates showed that they felt a part of their unit and liked living in the unit, their responses did not differ greatly from those of other unit members. The majority of inmates interviewed felt some 'community spirit' within their unit.

This 'community spirit' did not, however, carry over to unit meetings. Meetings were rarely held in 1986, although both prisoners and officers felt they would be useful. While it would be wrong to force people to hold unnecessary meetings, unit meetings were seen as a vital communication tool by the original implementers of the Management Plan. The lack of this communication could, in part, explain the reduced involvement between officers and inmates. Since the 1986 study was initiated moves have been made to re-introduce unit meetings.

The introduction of unit cooking has proved successful. Inmates felt that they now had more responsibility over their own lives, as well as getting better food. Officers recognized that it was easier to manage well-fed inmates. Problems arose, however, with the lack of space and equipment available. The kitchen area was considered inadequate for the number of people for which it had to cater, and the equipment such as the stove, strained through over-use. Some units had to do without the most basic cooking equipment because of breakdowns. The kitchen in unit C3 was enlarged, with minimum capital outlay since labour was provided by the inmates themselves.

In summary, both officers and inmates were positive about the concept of the units, especially with regard to unit cooking and the chance to get to know people better. However, the units were seen to be not running the way they were originally intended to, in terms of participatory management, officer/inmate relations and inmate responsibility. This caused some dissatisfaction among officers and inmates.

A more detailed description of the assessment of the unit officers and inmates is provided in the following sections. Where opinions in the 1983 and 1986 studies were similar, the findings from the 1986 study are described in greater detail.

Unit officers

The officers were asked how they felt about working in a unit compared to working in a wing. Their opinions were fairly evenly divided between those officers favourably disposed towards unit work and those who were not. Most of the favourable comments concerned a unit allowing for more individual contact with inmates. Seven officers said the smaller number of inmates enabled officers to "get to know individual inmates better" and "have an idea of what problems may come up". Two of these officers also expressed reservations about inmates abusing the rapport, for example, through inmates taking unit privileges for granted or being

more demanding of officers. One officer put it as follows:

"I prefer units. They are not so cold; you get to know inmates better and build up a rapport with them. But it's got its good and bad points. It can be very demanding as the pressures build up more in a closed community".

The other six favourable comments concerned work satisfaction. Three of these officers said unreservedly that a unit was a good place to work: it offered variety and they approved of the unit management system. Another three officers agreed that the units were relaxing to work in, but they were also boring.

In the 'negative' category were seven officers who stated outright that they preferred working in a wing. They emphasized that the wing offered a more structured work environment, which was favoured by some. One officer said:

"I prefer wings. There's more activity; people making enquiries. By the time inmates get to units they know everything about the gaol - education, problems, etc. They don't come to you as much".

Of the other four criticisms of working in a unit, three concerned work structure and one was directed at the inmates. Unit work was described as 'boring', with 'too many grey areas', and 'restrictive', because there was no twenty minute break allowed on A Watch. The officer who commented on 'grey areas' said:

"In units too much grey area; things aren't black and white as they are in wings ... Wing officer only does set duties; can't get involved with every prisoner and can't get to know them so well. The executives don't back up the unit or wing prison officers. I've yet to see the Management Plan working."

As noted above, preferences for and against working in a unit were about even. Those officers who enjoyed unit work appeared to like the social interaction aspect. They felt it benefited officer/inmate rapport and knowledge of inmate behaviour. Those who preferred working in a wing felt there was more work to do there. Perhaps these officers preferred a more structured work environment which did not involve as much contact with inmates.

A comparison with 1983, results showed the favourable comments about unit work again focussed on officer/inmate relations. However, the proportion of unit officers who were positive about working in a unit had declined by thirty-one per cent since 1983 (50% in 1986 compared to

81% in 1983). None of the officers interviewed in 1983 was negative about working in a unit, whereas in 1986 just under half the officers (42%) said they preferred wing work or disliked unit work.

a) Smaller size:

Twenty-five officers (96%) felt there were advantages in having a smaller number of inmates housed in a unit. Facilitation of inmate management and control was the main advantage given. The smaller numbers also gave officers the opportunity to know inmates better and anticipate problems. The safety/security aspect of the unit environment was also highly rated in 1983 (89% of officers in 1983 compared to 69% of officers in 1986). Comments about inmate/officer and inmate/inmate rapport formed the second largest category of advantages. Seven officers felt that a unit allowed for greater interaction and involvement by officers with inmates' needs and problems. In addition, more time could be given to their needs. Benefits to the inmates from living in a harmonious group were also mentioned. Some of the opinions expressed were:

"... call inmates by first names; get more involved. If they like you they will wait until you are rostered there to bring up problems";

"From inmates' perspective 'yes'. If you get a smaller group who can live together they are a lot happier".

About a third of the officers (39%) said there were no disadvantages to a unit's size. This, along with the high proportion of officers who gave advantages (96%), was another indication that officers were generally positive about smaller inmate groups in a unit compared to a wing.

The disadvantages expressed by a minority of the officers were mainly concerned with over-familiarity between inmates and officers, and boredom experienced by officers working in a unit (reported by six and four officers respectively).

b) Design and layout:

Comparisons of the unit environment to the wing environment were also offered on the design and layout. Nineteen officers (73%) gave advantages and twenty officers (77%) gave disadvantages in the unit design without saying that the wing design/layout was any better. Most positive comments were in the category of "control and supervision of inmates" (nine officers), followed by "a unit allows inmates to live

in a 'homely' atmosphere" (eight officers). The remaining comments were that the units were clean work areas for officers and that the layout allowed for easy officer/inmate interaction (two officers).

The unit offices were more centrally located than in a wing and this facilitated supervision of the ground floor area from the unit office. One officer pointed out:

"The offices are more central; you can keep a better overall eye on things. In the wing the office is down one end and to the side".

Two officers saw difficulties with observation in a unit layout: one officer said you could not see upstairs from the office and another said that the supporting pillars obstructed vision in the ground floor area.

Twenty-two officers saw advantages with the unit facilities, most of which pertained to inmates. Thirteen officers made comments relating to inmate responsibility. The remaining comments concerned convenience and comfort for inmates ensuing from the facilities, in particular, unit cooking.

Having the use of the facilities and being able to exercise some discretion about their use, allowed inmates to be more independent and self-sufficient in a unit than in a wing. This was the opinion generally expressed by officers who were positive about the facilities.

In the 1983 study, the officers generally said that the design/layout of "the accommodation area was good". In 1986, the officers' positive comments were more specific in that they felt the design/layout assisted with supervision and created a more 'homely' atmosphere in a unit. In a negative sense, officers interviewed in 1983 were critical of the lack of privacy.

Commenting generally on the physical environment, the officers in 1983 emphasized their dissatisfaction with the office area. In 1986 the officers were much less inclined to criticize the office area. In 1983, eight out of nine officers expressed dissatisfaction with the size of the office, lack of privacy and difficulty in having two sets of staff share the same office. In 1986, two officers out of the twenty-six were critical of the cold temperatures and dim lighting in their offices.

c) Social atmosphere:

Officers did not see the units as having a particularly better social atmosphere than other accommodation areas, the average percentage in the "positive about a unit" and "no difference" categories were about the same (38% and 32% respectively). However, only a small average

percentage were positive about a wing compared to a unit (19%).

In 1986 the interview schedule asked about specific aspects of social atmosphere as well as general impressions, whereas in 1983 the question was limited to general impressions. Seventy-six per cent of officers in 1983 conveyed a positive view compared to sixty-six per cent in the 1986 general impression responses.

d) Safety:

Feeling threatened or personally unsafe in the work environment affects how a prison officer copes with work and gets on with inmates. The unit officers felt that Bathurst Gaol was a generally safe place to work. Over half the officers (58%) said there was "no difference" in a wing or a unit. Most emphasized that they generally felt secure at Bathurst Gaol. Only one of these officers said he did not feel secure anywhere.

Of the remaining officers, six (23%) indicated that they felt more secure in a unit, whereas five (19%) said they felt more secure in a wing.

e) Coping with work and getting on with inmates:

The opportunity to get to know inmates better was an important factor for the officers who preferred a unit in terms of coping with work, and in finding it easier to get on with inmates. These officers felt the unit assisted them in knowing inmate "behaviours" and in pinpointing problems. Mutual understanding, including inmate awareness of the officers' expectations, was another benefit perceived in these categories. Examples of opinions expressed were:

"You develop a better relationship with inmates. They know what you want and expect"; "... easier to establish rapport and it takes less time to break down the barriers".

f) Privacy:

The officers felt there was little difference in the amount of privacy they got in a unit or a wing. They also did not consider privacy in the workplace to be a critical issue for the officers.

g) Tension:

Eleven of the twenty-six officers who felt tension was reduced in a unit gave various reasons. These included: some choice about inmates coming into a unit, smaller numbers, a stable population, later lock-ins, and more privacy for the inmates.

Some officers made additional comments that tension levels could suddenly rise in units or

wings, depending on the officer in charge, individuals with short tempers, and particular incidents. They indicated that tension levels could be easily upset by the introduction of something that annoyed people. This can also be found in the general community.

Reduced tension across the gaol was also commented on. Four officers in the "no difference" between units and wings category stated there was less tension throughout Bathurst Gaol than at other gaols.

Overall, the majority of the officers felt that the unit environment had a positive effect on tension.

h) Identification with the unit community:

The majority of officers (73%) said they felt a part of their unit. Their main reasons were that they had spent a long time or they had achieved something in their unit. Three examples of comments include:

"... first unit I've worked in. The executive told me they thought I was too hard at first, suffering from the Long Bay syndrome; I've eased off a bit and now get on better";

"Been here for over a year. I get fairly involved with inmates - generate certain amount of trust and I feel more at ease there";

"... because I helped start it, but am now disillusioned. Inmates have used what they see as the officers' weakness to their advantage".

Of those who stated they did not feel a part of a unit (27%) two officers who were "floaters" said they were never in any one unit long enough to become part of it. Another "floater" said it was not his inclination to be part of a unit as he was "not a good mixer", although he said he gave inmates what they had a right to, according to unit rules. The remaining four officers commented that it was "just a job" in the sense of working eight hours and doing your best while you were there.

In the 1983 study, the majority of officers also felt they belonged to a unit. However, they emphasized other reasons for belonging. Length of service in a unit was a major reason given in 1986 study, whereas, a positive relationship between inmates and officers and a sense of working closely as a team with other officers, were the main aspects in 1983. In 1986, only two officers mentioned trust between officers and inmates. In addition, there was only one comment about officers working as a team. This officer said that officers had put a "team effort" into improving a particular unit. It is likely that the

officers were less aware of operating in an Accommodation Team in 1986. Alternatively, the units had been functioning for about three years by 1986, so familiarity over time may have become the overriding reason for feeling part of a unit.

i) Participatory decision making in the unit:

Of the twenty-six officers interviewed, eighteen (69%) answered "yes" or "sometimes" when asked if they were given an opportunity to be involved in decision making. In 1983, eighty-three per cent said they had recently been involved in a community decision.

The officers' comments centred on their being consulted and having a say about an inmate coming into a unit. Officers assigned to a particular unit generally said they had some input into this decision, although they were sometimes over-ruled by the executive officers. Community decision making was mentioned.

These results were consistent with 1983, although the proportion of officers who were positive was reduced by fourteen per cent. The 1986 responses indicated that the nature of topics discussed between the officers and inmates had changed since 1983. Topics cited then included meal times, overseeing of the milk ration, frequency of meetings, visiting hours and unit cooking projects. The 1986 responses emphasized officer involvement in decisions regarding incoming inmates, although other topics were discussed at formal meetings.

More than half the officers (54%) said there was less participatory decision making in a wing. Statements were made that there were few decisions to make in a wing or that it was unimportant owing to the high turnover of wing inmates. However, the six officers (23%) who indicated that there was less decision making power in a unit did so on the basis that wing officers got more say in decisions, and they also had the power to carry them out.

However, the overall results indicated that the officers felt the unit environment provided more opportunities for participatory decision making. This coincides with the 1983 findings.

j) Perceived usefulness of community meetings:

Overall, the results showed that unit meetings had been held infrequently in five out of the eight units. The majority of officers interviewed in 1986, and in 1983, considered formal meetings to be useful. The positive functions were to discuss problems with inmates and to reinforce the Unit Management Plan. There were

qualifications expressed that meetings should be run properly and only held when necessary. It appeared that further training in meeting procedures would be helpful to both officers and inmates to ease the awkwardness which some of the officers felt during meetings.

k) Opinions on management of units:

Officers generally felt the units were managed in a different way than wings. Seventeen officers (65%) thought units were better managed, particularly in the areas of inmate participation in decision making and officer/inmate communication.

l) Officer/prisoner relationship:

Twenty-one prison officers (81%) stated that prisoners were different to be with in the units compared to the wings. Only two of these officers felt that inmate behaviour was worse in the units. Four officers (15%) said there was no difference and one officer (4%) said it depended on which officer was on duty in a wing or a unit, as to how inmates reacted.

Overall, the officers perceived their relationship with the unit inmates favourably. Seventeen out of the twenty-six officers made positive comments about the way prisoners were different to be with in a unit; the majority of which were about inmate behaviour towards unit officers.

Seven officers said the inmates in the units were more interested, friendly and open with officers. They also accepted explanations more easily. For example:

"The majority (are different to be with) in the way they treat you. In a unit (you) can explain why you are refusing something and inmates will come back. In a wing if you refuse, you are a 'dog' straight off".

The comments on inmates' friendliness to staff included one qualification that this was evident in a one-to-one situation, not with a group. This officer said:

"One out they are. Lot more conversation and sense out of them in a unit - can keep them on the right path mostly."

Reduced peer pressure to be 'anti-officer' was one reason given for unit inmates having a more positive attitude towards the officers. One officer said:

"Yes, they aren't distracted as much by peer pressure - don't have to wear 'anti-officer' cloak in a unit - get away

from traditional ideas, don't have to put on a pretence all the time ..."

Three officers felt officer/inmate relationships were closer in a unit. For example, one officer said:

"Yes, look on me as a father figure rather than a boss figure. I'm the boss here too, but they have some say. I'm guiding here."

Six officers made comments which indicated there was less tension in a unit. Some of the comments made about inmates being relaxed in a unit were:

"Yes, its more relaxed. They feel more at home there - treat it as their 'home'";

"Inmates are calmer - not trying to prove how tough they are; they know if they stuff up here its back to the wing - it seems to make them mellower".

In summary, the majority of officers in this study felt inmates were different to be with in a unit in a positive way. Favourable comparisons to a wing included comments that inmates were more relaxed among themselves and more open towards the officers. A minority of the officers felt that inmates behaved in a demanding manner in a unit, and, conversely, were more respectful towards the officers in a wing.

These results were consistent with the 1983 study when most officers also said unit inmates were different in the sense of positive inmate/officer relationships.

m) Suggestions for change:

The officers interviewed gave a total of thirty-eight suggestions for changes to the units. The main suggestions for change concerned:

- i) better facilities needed (42%);
- ii) unit management should be improved (39%);
- iii) more consistent staffing policy (19%);
- iv) more sanctions for unit inmates (15%);
- v) better maintenance (15%);
- vi) improve cleanliness (12%); and
- vii) other suggestions (4%).

Unit inmates

In both studies the majority of inmates interviewed were positive about living in the units compared to a wing. The proportion of inmates who were positive about unit living increased

slightly between the 1983 and 1986 studies (83% in 1983 compared to 90% in 1986). This slight increase may reflect the fact that the units had become much more established. They were no longer an entirely new concept. In the 1983 study, some inmates appeared to feel uncomfortable with the 'closeness of unit living', however this was not mentioned as a particular problem in 1986.

The majority of positive comments related to getting on better with other inmates in the unit (35%), being able to cook better food (33%), and having more 'freedom' within the unit (31%). Other favourable comments concerned a more relaxed atmosphere (17%), more privacy (10%) and better living conditions (10%). Some typical comments were:

"easier to get on with only seventeen other blokes";

"I like having our own cooking facilities";

"the unit operates as a unit ... everyone eats together".

Those inmates who expressed reservations about the units, did so for a variety of reasons. The reservations related to living too closely with other people (4%), other inmates being lazy and selfish (2%), and the day being longer because of the extra hour-and-a-half out of cells at night (2%).

a) Smaller size:

When asked what advantages they could see in having a smaller number of inmates in each unit, the majority of inmates (60%) said it was easier to 'get to know people' and 'get on well with them'. This advantage was seen to have a variety of consequences. For example:

"easier to get to know people. People think of each other a bit more ...";

"you know everyone, know the way they think";

"strong communal sense".

Being able to get to know other unit members better was considered to be an advantage in both the 1983 and the 1986 study. The majority of inmates (83%) said that there were no disadvantages with the unit's size.

b) Design and layout:

Most inmates (85%) gave favourable comments about the design and layout of the units compared to a wing. Only seven inmates (15%) reported no advantages.

The communal area and furnishings downstairs were appreciated by the inmates. Over half the comments (58%) pertained to the living area. Three such comments were:

"No space at all in the wings to sit down and eat meals; wings are draughty and cold. I like the unit carpets - its also quieter to ring up";

"It's more like sitting in a room. We also have a TV which is an advantage for the blokes who don't have TV (in their cells). I think it takes the aggro out of you, being able to sit back and relax";

"Units give you more leisure area, posters and things brighten up the place".

The furnishings were also mentioned as better than that in the wing, including the carpet, T.V., dining tables, wall posters, refrigerators and microwave ovens (20% of comments). These results were similar to the 1983 study in that the living area and furnishings were the two largest categories of advantages.

It appeared that two-thirds of unit inmates were satisfied with the design and layout of the units. Only one inmate in three (38%) gave negative comments, compared to 62% of inmates who stated there were no disadvantages. Lack of space in the kitchen and overcrowding in the dining room at mealtimes were the two main disadvantages reported (8 out of 18 disadvantages).

Comments were fairly evenly spread over all units. One unit was seen as barely furnished in comparison with the one next door. For example, two inmates from that unit mentioned their area did not have a table tennis or pool table, which would give inmates "something to do downstairs".

Inmates, on the whole, appreciated the design and layout of the unit. They see it as more of a 'home' than they do wings. However, problems such as lack of space in the kitchen and lack of adequate equipment were mentioned.

c) Social atmosphere:

The majority of inmates interviewed (92%) stated that the units were better than the wings in terms of getting on with one another. For example:

"You can get along with people because you're with them for a long time. In the wing, you don't get to know them so you don't get on with them";

"Being in a unit doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get on with

people, but you've got more choice. In the wing, there's no choice".

Of the remaining four inmates, two said they could get on with people just as well in the wing as in the unit, and one stated that he got on better with people in the wings because there wasn't such 'close contact'. Another inmate did not compare wings and units.

In the 1983 study, just over half the inmates interviewed (55%) commented on the positive aspects of the way they related in a unit.

d) Safety:

In addition, getting on better with other inmates in the unit was one of the main reasons given by the twenty-nine inmates who said they felt safer in a unit than a wing. For example:

"In the unit, people stick up for you. You don't know anyone in the wing, here you've got your mates";

"Unit members try harder to keep conflicts down";

"You're in there with people you know, you don't have to worry about strangers".

While no-one stated that they felt safer in a wing than a unit, nineteen inmates gave answers which indicated they either did not care about being 'safe' or that they felt they were not safe anywhere. For example:

"No difference. I just mind my own business";

"In the wing its probably easier to attack you but the close atmosphere of the unit may contribute more to an attack".

The unit environment is made more comfortable by the fact that inmates live with other inmates they like and can get on well with. In the community, people choose with whom they live, so the units create a fairly normal atmosphere. The wings cater to a more transient population, who may not necessarily get on well together.

e) Relationship with officers:

Inmates in 1986 were evenly divided between those who said there was not much difference in the way they got on with unit and wing officers (42%) and those who commented favourably about unit officers (35%). One in five inmates (19%) indicated they would prefer not to associate with any officers, and two inmates (4%) said they had difficulty in getting on with officers in the units.

The unit officers were seen as having more contact with inmates; being more polite, friendly and giving more attention to inmates' problems.

f) Coping:

When asked if they thought the units made it easier for them to cope with gaol, forty-four inmates (92%) said yes. Reasons given for this included:

"Always find someone in the unit you can tell your problems to, you can cope better that way";

"Time's gone a lot quicker in here, time doesn't cross my mind as much as if I've got to have musters".

Three inmates said that it was the same whether they were in wings or units because it was 'still gaol'. One inmate said that the whole nature of Bathurst Gaol made it easier for him.

g) Privacy:

The majority of inmates (65%) felt the units afforded more privacy than the wings. One inmate summed it up as follows:

"The units are better. In the wings people are walking around the landings all the time, being noisy and disruptive. In units, you can go up to a cell and write a letter in peace".

In a system where lack of privacy is almost commonplace, it seems important to preserve what privacy inmates are allowed. The physical and social structure of the units means that inmates can maintain at least reasonable levels of personal privacy.

h) Tension:

The majority of inmates (67%) stated that there was less tension in the units than in the wings. Reasons given for this included:

"In the unit, everyone gets to know each other, in the wing you're always bumping into people you don't know";

"In the unit, you can talk about problems with your mates".

Seven inmates said they thought there was less tension in the wing than the unit. This was mainly attributed to the 'closeness' of the unit, and not being able to get away from other unit members. Five inmates said that the levels of tension were the same in the units and the wings, depending on the individual. Four inmates stated that they "didn't know" about tension.

i) Identification with the unit community:

When asked if they felt a part of the unit, forty-four inmates (92%) said yes, while four (8%) said no. Inmates in units B3, C1, C2, C3 and C4 were more likely to report identification with the unit community (100% said they 'belonged' to their unit) than the members of units B1, B2 or B4 (71%, 83% and 83% respectively said that they 'belonged'). Reasons given for feeling part of the unit included: because they have a say in its operation; because they have been in the unit so long that they felt important; and because their friends lived there and they knew everyone in the unit.

j) Participatory decision making in the unit:

Just over half the inmates (54%) felt that they were given an opportunity to be involved in decision making in the unit. Most inmates in this category emphasized that these opportunities were limited to informal consultations by other inmates and officers about who could come into the unit. The other areas of consultation mentioned were unit buy-ups, touch football, meal menus and choosing a sweeper. Units B3 and C1 had higher proportions of inmates who responded positively to the question.

Almost two in every ten inmates (19%) said there were no opportunities to be involved in decision making. It was interesting that six inmates, mostly from Unit B1, felt that decision making opportunities had declined. Typical comments in this category were:

"Just lately, no. They've been putting anybody in. When I first went into the unit, the prison officers asked us about people coming in";

"No, not anymore. We've lost that option".

It appeared that inmates did not feel as involved in community decision making as they did in 1983. When the proportions of 'yes' and 'sometimes' responses were combined, the total of sixty-four per cent was below 1983 results. Then, seventy-two per cent of inmates answered they had recently been involved in making community decisions.

The perception that inmates in the wing were not asked for their opinions persisted in 1986 (83% of inmates indicated there was 'no opportunity'). Inmates in the units generally believed that inmates in the wing were not asked for their opinions and that people were out for themselves. As three inmates commented:

"Everyone just does their own thing there - they have no choice about moving in there - just go to a vacant cell";

"You just don't make decisions over there; it's a totally different concept; majority of blokes in units are doing a lot of time and want to settle in - in wings, its mainly short-timers";

"Not at all. They get told over there".

k) Perceived usefulness of community meetings:

Of the thirty inmates who stated that their unit had unit meetings, only four stated the meetings were held regularly. The remaining twenty-six said that meetings were held rarely or only when needed. It is interesting to note that the four inmates who said that meetings were held regularly in their unit, were in units where other unit members stated that unit meetings were not held or that they were not held regularly.

Reasons given for having meetings included:

"Cleanliness" (12 comments);

"Filling vacancies in the unit" (8 comments);

"Cooking arrangements" (4 comments).

The majority of those who said meetings were held (67%), stated that both prisoners and prison officers attended the meetings. Most (81%) stated that they thought unit meetings were, or would be, useful for the unit. Some examples given were:

"Can resolve problems among inmates as a group rather than on a personal basis, can nip things in the bud";

"It's a chance to get people together, air differences and work something out";

"If you don't like someone, everyone gets a vote about moving them in or out".

Nine inmates stated that they thought meetings were pointless or a waste of time (6 comments), or that the officers had the last say anyway (3 comments).

On the whole, in 1986 unit members were still more positive about the usefulness of unit meetings than they had been in 1983. In 1983, 79% said that meetings were useful, of these just over half were unreservedly positive. Also, in 1983, the inmates were much more concerned about their lack of power, and whether meetings

were run so that everyone involved had equal decision making power.

l) Opinions on management of units:

Thirty-eight inmates felt that the units were managed in a different way to the wings. Differences included: inmates being treated better (38%); better organised/size makes it easier (19%) and units being "freer" (17%). It would appear that inmates' main concern regarding the management of the unit, especially in bringing other inmates in, was that they get an opportunity to give their opinion. However, even if this is a problem, the inmates recognize that they get a 'better deal' in the units than in the wings.

m) Officer/prisoner relationship:

Thirty-four inmates (71%) stated that officers were different to be with in the units than in the wings. The principal reasons given for this were: they (the officers) get to know inmates better (40%); they are more easy going (19%); they have a better attitude (8%); you see less of them (2%) and 'don't know, they are just different' (2%). In addition, three inmates (6%) stated that throughout Bathurst Gaol officers were better than at other gaols. Eight inmates (17%) said that officers were not different in wings and units, and three (6%) inmates said they did not know if officers were different.

This result differs slightly from the 1983 study in which 86% of inmates stated that officers were different to be with in the units. In 1983, inmates mainly emphasized a difference in relations and a difference in tension between officers and inmates. It would seem that these areas were not so pronounced in 1986.

n) Suggestions for change:

Suggestions given by inmates as to how the units could be made better were concerned with four main areas. These were:

- i) In relation to small items of equipment supplied (e.g. need more plates, need better linen, carpet in cells, proper maintenance, more sports equipment, better food rations) (40%);
- ii) In relation to inmates (e.g. more say in who comes into the unit, improve relations with officers, allow friends to go upstairs in unit) (35%);
- iii) In relation to facilities and large items of equipment offered (e.g. bigger kitchen, more ventilation, stove and fridge too small) (21%);

- iv) In relation to officers (e.g. pick ones who are interested, improve relations with inmates, regular officers) (13%).

Inmates were most concerned about the lack of equipment supplied in the unit and the lack of maintenance. For example:

"If we had proper maintenance, everything else would be good";

"If we had more cleaning material and cooking utensils, we could make the place better."

Bathurst Officers

In May 1985, a systematic random sample of all Bathurst prison officers was taken by tossing a coin to determine a random starting point and then selecting every second officer named on the

twenty-eight day roster. This study was conducted in order to examine officers' awareness of and attitudes towards the Bathurst Management Programme. Unlike the studies reported in the previous section, this study involved interviewing a cross-section of all prison officers at Bathurst Gaol, not just those working in the accommodation areas.

Six out of every ten (64.0%) of the officers interviewed had spent some time working in the units either as a unit officer or on an occasional shift.

The majority of officers (88.0%) agreed with the statement that "unit living allows prisoners to be more responsible for themselves"; however, only half agreed that "most prisoners at Bathurst could fit in with unit living" (for further details refer to McLennan and Simmons, 1985).

INTERGAOL COMPARISON

As part of the evaluation of the Bathurst Gaol Management Plan, research officers conducted an intergaol comparison of the attitudes of prison officers to their work at Bathurst Gaol, Cessnock Corrective Centre and Parklea Prison. Random samples of prison officers from each of these three institutions were interviewed during January - February 1987 about: aspects of their job which they felt assisted them or made their job more difficult; their work area and whether they felt they had a say in running that area; reactions to and relations with inmates; opinions on local gaol and Departmental policy; support from fellow officers and executive officers; and particular issues which they felt to be important in their job.

Parklea Prison and the Cessnock Corrective Centre were chosen as comparison gaols since they appeared to hold the closest similarities to Bathurst Gaol. Parklea, although it has a maximum security classification, is similar to Bathurst in its size (Parklea has capacity for 218 prisoners, Bathurst 209) and that it has unit living, which allows prisoners to live in small groups. Although Cessnock is a larger gaol (holding 400 prisoners) and has traditional wing accommodation for inmates, it is similar to Bathurst in that both gaols have a medium security classification. Cessnock also has a relatively large education component within the gaol, which is comparable to Bathurst.

It was anticipated that unit management at Bathurst would have affected the relationship between prison officers and inmates. The responses of the prison officers reported in this study indicated that Bathurst officers did clearly differ from officers at the other two institutions in the way they managed and related to prisoners. For example, Bathurst officers were more likely to agree that "officers explain the reasons behind their instructions to prisoners at their gaol more than at other gaols" and that "to manage

prisoners effectively, it is important to discuss their ideas and feelings with them" than were officers at Parklea or Cessnock. Bathurst officers were less likely to report having prisoners challenge their authority and less likely to agree that "prisoners must be kept under constant watch to prevent trouble" and that "prisoners should always do as they are told without asking questions". Bathurst officers were also more likely to report relating differently with inmates at their current gaol than were officers from Cessnock or Parklea. When describing the difference in the way they related, officers described Bathurst as being more relaxed and having more openness and communication. Bathurst officers were more likely to address inmates by their first name and to be addressed by inmates by their first name.

While the unit accommodation at Parklea did not appear to produce similar affects on the relationship between officers and prisoners, officers at both Bathurst and Parklea stated that interaction with inmates made their jobs worthwhile. Boredom with unit work was not as pronounced in this study as in the earlier (1986) study of unit management at Bathurst Gaol. Unit officers from both Bathurst and Parklea appeared to express a high degree of job satisfaction compared to Cessnock wing officers. Bathurst officers tended to experience more consistent rostering than officers at the other two gaols. Perhaps it is this more consistent rostering which also contributes to the different way of relating to and managing prisoners.

Officers from all three gaols appeared to be in favour of unit accommodation with the majority of officers agreeing that "unit living allows prisoners to be more responsible for themselves". (For further details of this study please refer to McLennan, Gorta and Simmons, 1987.)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE BATHURST GAOL EXPERIENCE OF UNIT ACCOMMODATION

1. Unit accommodation is seen to have clear advantages over wing accommodation by both prison officers and prisoners.
2. Every unit will develop in quite distinct ways and steps to foster desired development must take this uniqueness into account.
3. Simply opening a unit does not guarantee either the development of closer interaction between officers and inmates, or formation of formal procedures for participation in decision making.
4. Inmate/officer relations were noted to be developing positively, although degrees of involvement between the two groups varied from unit to unit. There was considerable uncertainty among key staff about how much interaction between unit staff and inmates was sufficient to meet the aims of the plan.
5. Units do not develop in isolation. The prison bureaucracy influences the experiences of inmates and officers moving into a new system of management. The effective prison grapevine played a major role in influencing the understanding inmates and officers in Bathurst and other gaols have of the unit system. Consequently misinterpretations or misunderstandings of the operation of the units strongly influence and reinforce the scepticism and suspicion among inmates about the units, particularly in relation to the redefinition of the relationship between officers and inmates.

Difficulties encountered:

1. Delineating the levels at which different types of issues about unit operations can be decided. Participatory decision making is a time consuming process which aims to promote discussion as opposed to autocratic decision making. The process can be seen to be promoting only token discussion if positive and constructive contributions from all unit members are not acknowledged and acted upon.
2. Difficulties in maintaining continuity of permanent unit officers, senior and executive accommodation staff. Shift work, shift swapping, annual leave, sick leave and in-service training create many difficulties. The absence of key staff at all levels is particularly significant during an implementation period when their replacements are unsure and inexperienced in the new methods of participatory management.
3. Difficulties faced in redefining the "traditionally tenuous relationships" between officers and inmates. Such difficulties are not easily overcome in an institution where the inmate population is continually absorbing inmates from other gaols where the dichotomy between staff and inmates predominates.
4. Difficulties faced in maintaining morale, ongoing development of the units, and staff training during a long period of industrial dispute.

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