

A/CONF.6/C.2/L.9

FIRST UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION
OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS
GENEVA 1955

OPEN INSTITUTIONS

OPEN INSTITUTIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES
(AUSTRALIA)

by L. C. J. Nott,
Comptroller-General of Prisons of the
State of New South Wales, Sydney



UNITED NATIONS

Statements of fact in this report are the responsibility of the author, and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of organs or Members of the United Nations.

In accordance with the tradition of past Congresses, it has been possible to secure the co-operation of certain national prison administrations for the printing of documentation for the First United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, which is from an historical point of view the Thirteenth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress. Thus the present report has been generously printed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons of the United States of America, in the prison printing plant at Leavenworth, Kansas.

A/CONF.6/C.2/L.9

8 December 1954

OPEN INSTITUTIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA)

by L. C. J. Nott,
Comptroller-General of Prisons of the
State of New South Wales, Sydney

Open institutions in New South Wales are an established part of an integrated penal system. They are not a system in themselves and any attempt to regard them as such loses sight of the fact that their purpose is only valid when it is integrated with the whole of the penal system.

The first open institution was established in New South Wales in 1914 and since that time there have always been such establishments functioning in the State. At the present time, they are four in number:

(1) Emu Plains Training Centre

This open institution is situated some 35 miles from the capital, Sydney, and accommodates 100 prisoners, all under the age of 25 years, in single rooms with communal dining, recreational, educational and ablution blocks. The work at which they are placed embraces a full range of agricultural activities.

(2) Brookfield Afforestation Camp, Mannus

This camp houses 70 mature prisoners who have no previous criminal record, or who have been convicted of minor offences. The conditions of their detention are similar to those at Emu Plains Training Centre. The work is two-fold, agricultural activities being co-ordinated with re-afforestation.

(3) Glen Innes Afforestation Camp

This camp is similar to that at Mannus with accommodation for 62 adult male offenders. Living accommodation resembles that of other establishments and the work consists primarily

of re-afforestation with some agricultural work. The offenders who are sent to the Glen Innes Afforestation Camp are people with a lengthy record who are generally of a lower standard of intellect; there are no educational facilities available to them except such as can be obtained by correspondence.

(4) Oberon Afforestation Camp

This Camp provides accommodation for 60 prisoners who may be regarded as the less unhelpful of the recidivist class. Here, too, the conditions of detention are almost identical with those of the Glen Innes Afforestation Camp.

Complete records have been maintained over the years of the results achieved at the Camps. In all, about 17,000 prisoners have had the benefit of treatment at one or the other of these establishments and two-thirds of them have not returned to prison. In the same period, the number of escapes has been less than 70.

The transfer of prisoners to open institutions is not automatic but is based on selection. The following points are taken into consideration:

- (a) The prospects of the prisoner's adaptation to the less strictly supervised discipline at the open institution.
- (b) His physical condition, both his ability to perform work at the Camp and the need for medical attention as three of the Camps are located at considerable distances from medical attention.
- (c) The probability of his refraining from future criminal activity.
- (d) The length of his sentence (efforts are always made to place a prisoner in an open institution for the last year or so of any sentence).

The general conditions of detention at the Camps are rather similar to those of any other group of men engaged in rural work; their living quarters, their food and their recreational activities are at least as good and their educational opportunities are very considerably better.

The prisoners rise in time to leave their rooms at 7 a.m. when they are free for a short period necessary for ablution. They then breakfast in a well equipped and pleasant dining

room and after breakfast they commence work. Apart from a break of 15 minutes in mid-morning, they work through until mid-day when after cleaning up they dine together. After completing their meal, they have free activity within the Camp precincts until work recommences at 1 o'clock. It continues until 5 o'clock with a mid-afternoon break of 15 minutes. After the evening meal, the prisoners are free to follow their own bent, provided it is in accordance with any programme of training laid down for them. It may be directly educational, it may be reading in the library or participation in games with their fellows. They retire to their rooms at 8:45 p.m. and lights are extinguished at 9. The rooms are locked but this is for the purpose of ensuring that they do not leave their rooms during the night for "skylarking" as there is no officer on duty after lights out.

At Emu Plains Training Centre, since it is an institution to which young prisoners are sent, activities during the non-working hours have a measure of compulsion which is not present at the other establishments. Here, after the evening meal, prisoners must participate in educational activities, hobbies and handicrafts, or light reading on four nights of each week. A roster has been prepared which indicates that in general each prisoner spends two nights at educational classes and two nights in either the hobbies or reading room.

Each of the establishments is fitted with radio receiving equipment and has a 16 mm. projector.

The prisoners earn money credits for their work ranging from 3/- to 6/- weekly. They are allowed to spend a portion of these earnings on the purchase of additional dietary delicacies; they must, however, choose their purchase from the approved list of articles. They are all issued tobacco.

Visits from their relatives are permitted weekly at Emu Plains; at the other establishments which are at a great distance both from the metropolitan area and the rail head, visits are less frequent but are arranged as required. Prisoners may write a letter a week and may receive all letters which are sent to the institution for them.

The effects of hard though congenial work in the open air under conditions of comparative freedom, not only set up

the prisoners' physique but improve their outlook on life and prepare them for return to the community.

The open institutions are an integral part of the penal system of New South Wales, serving the dual purpose of avoiding the necessity to keep first offenders within a maximum security prison when the sentence does not exceed for instance three years and of preparing both physically and socially those men who have served really long sentences for their ultimate rehabilitation in the community.

It is upon the inmates of these establishments that the Department concentrates much of the activity of the after-care organisation. Results, both in the reformation of prisoners and in the improvement of the officer/prisoner relationship are so good that the correctional system would be gravely weakened were it not for the existence of the open institutions.

Résumé

Les établissements ouverts de la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud forment une partie intégrante du système pénitentiaire de cet Etat. Ils sont au nombre de quatre :

1. *Emu Plains Training Centre*. Cet établissement reçoit 100 détenus, tous au-dessous de 25 ans, qui sont affectés aux travaux agricoles.
2. *Brookfield Afforestation Camp, Mannus*. Ce camp est réservé aux détenus adultes qui n'ont pas de casier judiciaire ou qui ont été condamnés pour des infractions d'importance mineure. Ils sont affectés à des travaux agricoles et au reboisement.
3. *Glen Innes Afforestation Camp*. Ce camp reçoit 62 hommes adultes. Ce sont des délinquants d'un niveau mental assez bas dont le passé est très chargé. Ils se livrent à des travaux agricoles et de reboisement.
4. *Oberon Afforestation Camp*. Ce camp est destiné à 60 détenus choisis parmi les récidivistes dont le cas laisse quelque espoir.

Les détenus sont transférés à ces établissements ouverts sur la base d'une sélection qui prend en considération leur capacité de s'adapter à une discipline moins sévère, leur condition physique, la probabilité de récidive, ainsi que la longueur de la peine.

Dans ces établissements, les détenus travaillent toute la journée, mais ont la possibilité de suivre des cours ou de participer à des programmes récréatifs le soir. A *Emu Plains Training Centre* pour jeunes adultes, la discipline est plus stricte, et certains cours sont obligatoires pour les détenus. Le travail des détenus est rémunéré. Dans le cadre du système pénitentiaire de la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud, ces établissements ouverts ont le double but de recevoir certains délinquants primaires afin d'éviter leur contact avec un établissement à sécurité maximum, et de préparer au retour à la vie normale les détenus qui ont subi la plus grande partie d'une longue peine dans un tel établissement.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at CJSmithphd@comcast.net or Emil Wandzilak at emil.wandzilak@unodc.org.