

Into the Future

The year 2000 marked the start of the new millennium, and another busy and eventful year for the Department.

The disturbances at the Hei Ling Chau Addiction Treatment Centre on 4 June 2000 have resulted in 54 inmates charged with a variety of offences ranging from rioting, arson to serious assaults and criminal damage. The majority are awaiting trial with a small number having pleaded guilty and sentenced. Recommendations by the Board of Enquiry are now being followed through and good progress has been made.

On offender rehabilitation, two important initiatives were completed. Firstly, we adopted a comprehensive recidivism rate to describe the rate of re-admission within three years after discharge of all local convicts released from our custody. It helps to facilitate studies on recidivism, provide timely feedback to the Department in programme monitoring and evaluation, and serves as a useful reference for resource planning and allocation.

Secondly, a survey - aimed to better understand the needs and problems faced by discharged offenders and to help us with community education and rallying public support - was also concluded. The findings of this survey, which are being examined, should give us all a better focus and a more solid platform to launch and embark upon concerted initiatives in helping discharged offenders to be more successfully re-integrated into society.

A greater synergy between the community at large and the Department is beginning to bear fruit. Our public education and publicity drive in the rehabilitation of offenders has continued through the year and the overall response has been most encouraging. There is now a much deeper general understanding of the issues involved and a much better preparedness on the part of the community to support and participate in our efforts.

The year 2000 also saw the first full-year operation of the Committee on Community Support for Rehabilitated Offenders. Apart from giving invaluable advice on our programmes and strategies for offenders' re-integration into society, the Committee was instrumental in the production of a well-received and award-winning TV docu-drama series to drive home the messages of caring for and rehabilitation of offenders. We will continue to work closely with community groups, families of inmates and other professionals to further enhance the range and diversity of our offender rehabilitation programmes and initiatives.

The occupancy rate of our penal institutions was 113 % at the end of 2000. The penal population is expected to grow and may reach 15 000 by 2024,

representing a 30% increase over 2000. In this connection, we are actively formulating a long-term development strategy on our future provisions. The concept of co-locating all penal facilities in one place was first mooted in public at the end of the year.

We envisage co-location will have benefits in terms of optimisation of manpower deployment, cost-effective operations, long-term saving in recurrent expenditure, greater efficiency in rehabilitation activities, greater operation leverage, alleviation of prison overcrowding and general improvement of the prison environment. Initial public reactions to the concept are mixed. We will ensure wide consultation and the full consideration of diverse views before a way forward is charted. In the meantime, we will push ahead with the wider use of information and other technologies to enhance our effectiveness and efficiency.

Following an earlier accreditation for our sign-making workshop, our Complaints Investigation Unit was also awarded an ISO 9002 certification in the year. The attainment of this certification by the Unit, which is committed to expeditiously, thoroughly and impartially investigate and process all complaints received by or referred to it, ensures complaints are handled properly and in accordance with internationally accepted standards.

Internally, we have continued with our culture change initiatives which are key to our comprehensive human resource management reforms. During the year, we also developed a new competency-based staff performance appraisal system, which strategically links up recruitment, performance management, promotion, training and career development to form an integrated human resource management system.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the diligent and outstanding performance of all members of the Department and the unfailing enthusiasm and commitment they displayed throughout the year. Our work agenda for the year ahead is a heavy but focussed one. Endeavouring to achieve our vision through effective discharge of our mission remains the central theme whilst at the same time we are reminding ourselves of the vital importance of living our values. I am confident that together we can face whatever challenges down the road ahead to ensure Hong Kong remains a safe city in the years to come.



NG Ching-kwok
Commissioner of Correctional Services