Finally Fit for Purpose: The Evolution of Australian Prison Architecture

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Introduction

Prisons tend to reflect the society that oversees them (Johnston, 2000). The architecture and design of correctional facilities, as well as their regimes philosophies, priorities and problems, are intrinsically related to their location. At their most extreme, in a 'Supermax' (examples being the Florence Administrative Maximum Penitentiary in Colorado, USA, or the High Risk Management Unit at Goulburn Correctional Centre in New South Wales, Australia), prisoners may be held in hermetically sealed environments which inflict, sometimes simultaneously, sensory deprivation and sensory overload, resulting in psychic and physical pain on a par with techniques of torture. At the other end of the penal spectrum (for example, in prisons typically associated with Northern Europe and the countries of Scandinavia), prisons seek to 'normalize' the prison environment with open-plan interiors, an absence of hard fixtures and furnishings, maximum exploitation of natural light and access to outside space. But what happens when one penal jurisdiction imitates the structural designs of another with little regard for their political, social and cultural differences and with no attempt to embrace the broader institutional philosophy or staff training needs that underpin particular forms of penal design? This article traces the parallel histories of the penal estates[1] of the USA and Australia and illustrates that, from their earliest days, the structure and internal layout of prisons became harmonized with the enforcement of particular regimes, but that penal philosophies do not necessarily travel *with* the architecture and design of prisons when transposed from one context to another.

A brief history of prisons in the US and Australia

In their early incarnations, prisons in the US and Australia were similarly shaped by the emergence of 'Enlightenment thinking' in Europe and by the views of prominent prison reformers, including John Howard (1726-1790). Both countries 'mined a

British tradition…for using the Gothic for prison structures' (Johnston, 2000: 85); a 'castellated mode' that became established as '*the* style for prisons' (ibid: 65-66). They also followed the UK's example of classifying inmates, holding them in separate cells, subjecting them to discipline, hard labour and religious servitude and routinizing their time; all of which were benignly viewed as the most effective means of reforming criminals.

During the 1820s and 1830s the two contrasting methods of faith-based reformatory prison regime that emerged in the United States and the UK, the 'separate' (or 'Pennsylvania') system and 'silent' system, sought to diminish the need for physical punishment, as good behaviour was maintained 'with the passive instrument of the building itself' (Nihill cited in Evans, 1982: 323). As a result, prison accommodation became increasingly enclosed and cellularized and where previously the architecture of incarceration had been based on Howard's recommendations to maximize ventilation and circulate air in the belief that these prevented *physical* contagion, the architecture of the separate and silent systems was constructed around the prevention of *moral* contagion – i.e. that prisoners risked becoming 'worse' if allowed contact with other offenders.

Like their Anglo-American predecessors, the major, urban prisons built in Australia[2] in the 19th and early 20th centuries were dark, forbidding structures surrounded by high, solid walls, which communicated a clear message about the perils of crime, even to a population for whom the Gothic was hardly indigenous (Johnston, 2000). Internally, radial and cruciform designs were favoured, although there were slight jurisdictional variations. For example, New South Wales prisons were configured with detached wings radiating from a central chapel while in Queensland wings were grouped around an open space. One or two major prisons were idiosyncratic and did not employ typical architectural solutions. Often the architectural designs constituted strange conglomerations or misinterpretations of various concepts. For example, B Division at Pentridge Prison followed the Pentonville doctrine for the design of the cell-block while the radial exercise yards

followed Philadelphia's panoptic principles (Kerr, 1988). Fannie Bay Gaol in Darwin, built in 1882, consisted of a cell-block and other more substantial buildings surrounded by a series of galvanized iron structures. This was felt a suitable design solution for the large number of Aboriginal prisoners held there, their perceived security requirements, the location of the prison and the tropical climate.

In the 20th century rehabilitative thinking underpinned penal policy throughout much of the English-speaking world, reaching a zenith in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when the welfarist model resulted in judicial proceedings being influenced by a new raft of professional 'experts', including social workers, psychologists, health professionals and academics. In the US, states including California, Minnesota and Wisconsin rivalled countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden for introducing rehabilitative programmes (Rothman 1980) although the rhetoric was aspirational rather than grounded in reality and, as Haney (2008) notes, even in their heyday, few prisons in the United States ever really functioned as fully-fledged treatment or program-oriented facilities. The rehabilitation experiment was also short-lived; by the mid-1970s 'treatment' was coming to be seen as further expression of the state's repressive disciplinary tendencies not least in relation to the use of indeterminate sentencing whereby prisoners would be treated for as long as it took to make them 'better'. The now infamous 'nothing works' (Martinson, 1974) paradigm that followed was intended by its liberal initiator to support a reduction in the use of imprisonment. However, its appropriation by conservatives, who used Martinson's findings to support their calls for longer sentences, more brutal regimes and capital punishment resulted in many prisons in the US and Australia being starved of funds for educational and other rehabilitative initiatives.

There essentially followed a long period when prisons became little more than warehouses; a problem exacerbated by the dramatic rises in prison populations that occurred from the mid-20th century (Mauer, 2001). President Nixon was elected on a 'war on crime' platform and initiatives such as the 'Safe Streets Program' (which legislated preventative detention as a means to combat rising crime rates), the

establishment of agencies including the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency and the National Institute of Corrections, and the deinstitutionalisation of the mental health system were among the many factors that led to an increase and partial radicalization of the prison population (ibid). As numbers grew it became dramatically clear that the penal estate was not fit for purpose and the Bureau of Justice set about a definitive program of change including, in 1971, the establishment of a multidisciplinary research team composed of correctional administrators, architects, psychologists and social scientists. The group visited over 100 correctional institutions across the United States to observe and evaluate facilities and record the effects of the physical environment on staff and prisoners (Johnston, 2000). Following their recommendation that reintegration and rehabilitation should be the prime objective of corrections (Nagel, 1973), the ideology of humane treatment was embraced by many US correctional agencies and a program developing and applying evidence-based research was formulated to move from punitive to rehabilitative models. Among the new developments proposed was the introduction of unit management.

The mid to late-20th century was similarly characterized by rising prison populations across Australia and the extension of human rights into prisons – or at least the rhetoric of human rights, as some commentators have noted that in practice little changed (Rynne, 2002). The pressures of post-war migration, population increases and numerous government inquiries and Royal Commissions into issues including poor conditions, assaults, brutality and discrimination against Aboriginal prisoners, resulted in a sense of hopelessness at stemming the tide of problems and there followed a prolonged period of neglect. The pressing need to update the Australian penal estate was largely ignored and conditions deteriorated over several decades. Many prisons lacked internal plumbing and prisoners used buckets for sanitation; a number of facilities had no glass in windows resulting in prisoners bearing the brunt of the (often extreme) weather (ibid). Even when new facilities were built, the architects and planners got it badly wrong. For example, Risdon Prison in Tasmania was commissioned in 1960 and designed by the Professor of Architecture at

the University of Melbourne, Brian B. Lewis. Curiously modelled on a Californian prison, Risdon's design was 'totally inappropriate for the rigours of the Tasmanian winter', making it a particularly brutal and unpleasant prison for its occupants (Ombudsman Tasmania, 2001).

As a result of such appalling conditions prisoner unrest was rife and the 1970s witnessed a series of prisoner hunger strikes, roof-top protests and riots over poor conditions and treatment. Brisbane's Boggo Road Gaol, Western Australia's Fremantle Prison and South Australia's Yatala Labour Prison all experienced significant structural damage to the prison buildings as increasing numbers of prisoners and bouts of prisoner disorder placed pressure on ageing infrastructures. An urgent response was clearly required to address the appalling conditions and out-dated operational policies and procedures and the New South Wales Nagle Royal Commission constituted a watershed in Australian penal history, heralding a period of significant, if brief, reform. The Commission's final report, published in 1978, revealed cultures of institutionalized violence against prisoners and recommended over 250 changes to the penal system including the upgrade and replacement of prisons and prisoner amenities. In turn, many Australian prison systems became the subject of official inquiries regarding allegations of systemic abuse of prisoners and/or conditions of confinement. The Governments of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory all embarked on comprehensive building programs to replace the older prisons and began to implement 'modern' methods of prison management.

The decade that followed Nagle is commonly referred to as the 'Golden Era' of Australian Corrections because, after decades of neglect, attention was finally given to rebuilding the dilapidated, Dickensian prison estate according to new architectural concepts and developments emerging in the United States. Following America's lead, the Australian authorities enthusiastically embraced unit management, secure perimeter barriers, campus planning, podular design, 'new generation' or 'third generation' design, public private partnerships and the supermax,

but with mixed results. In the section that follows we will discuss each of these architectural innovations and consider some of the difficulties in putting their accompanying philosophies into practice in an Australian context

The Introduction of Unit Management

Unit management was first conceived in the US in the 1960s as a program delivery system rather than architectural innovation. The first full prison implementation was at Lewiston Penitentiary in Pennsylvania where ongoing violence had been a source of concern and an inquiry suggested a trial of unit management (Ingram, 1978). Under the trial, prisoners were divided into groups of approximately 100 individuals who were housed around common living areas. Attached to each group was a unit manager, a psychologist, one or two case managers, two or three correctional counsellors and custodial officers. It was quickly identified that close contact between staff and prisoners led to better delivery of programs, speedier problem identification and the personalisation of services. The climate of the prison changed from one of tension and violence to relative harmony and safety. Such was the commitment to unit management that, by 1976, 21 of 31 institutions under the jurisdiction of the US Bureau of Prisons were utilising the system in varying formats.

The unit management model quickly evolved and synthesized its program delivery aims with the design of the environment. Underpinned by social psychological theories of human relations and the symbiotic relationship between buildings and behaviour, Robert Sommer's theories of environmental psychology were used to design prisons to complement and enhance the model. For example, evidence-based research on privacy, territoriality, the behavioural impacts of noise and visual connection with the outside world were applied to the design of unit management settings in an attempt to 'normalize' the custodial environment and address issues of human dignity and self-gratification (Sommer, 1974). Organization and management perspectives were also applied to prison settings for the first time, including emerging theories which argued that employees are capable of self-direction

and that managers can assist employees and prisoners to reach their potential, rather than commanding and controlling them as subordinates. It was also suggested that prison officers were likely to achieve greater work satisfaction through engaging with prisoners than being deployed on activities such as manning towers and that prisoners with access to meaningful lifestyle and personal development programs were less likely to re-offend on release.

Other salient architectural and operational innovations to accompany unit management included dispersing the dining and recreation activities to the living units so that prisoners could, for example, make their own breakfast. Outdoor recreational areas and libraries were included in designs. To lessen the prisoner violence associated with shared amenities, cells were fitted with toilets, hand basins and in some cases, showers. Cells began to be designed so as to afford an external view and value was placed on providing natural light and ventilation to each cell. Each prison was generally single-security category and prisoners were supervised by program staff whose roles had replaced that of the guard or 'turn-key'.

Some Australian jurisdictions viewed the developments in the United States with considerable interest. Nagle's (1973) recommendations that all New South Wales prisons adopt unit management provided a powerful impetus for reform and in time prisons across Australia were converted. Unfortunately, however, despite a broad commitment to unit management's organizational principles, its underpinning philosophies were often ignored or misunderstood. The early conversions focused on the classification of inmates and the need to accommodate prisoner sub-groups into different units. The tiers of older prisons were filled in and areas sub-divided, creating what is termed 'second generation' design in the US. In the sub-divided corridors of cells, prisoners were supervised by 'intermittent surveillance' due to the facilities' physical layout and the difficulties in the implementation of full supervision (unit management being reliant on continuous observation which is not possible in a linear setting). Nonetheless, across Australia, the gradual conversion of prisons to unit management produced several benefits including immediately decreasing

disturbances, assaults and other problems relating to congregate activities. The decreasing incidence of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults was anecdotally correlated to retro-fitting of toilets into cells and the decommissioning of communal bathrooms.

There were, however, losses to prisoner amenities. Communal dining areas were also often de-commissioned with prisoners left eating in cells or in the corridors reassigned as 'unit' communal space. Recreational activities (such as concerts and film nights) were no longer scheduled and in-cell television (when and if it became available) grew to be the principle leisure activity for prisoners, leading to passivity, lack of stimulation and erosion of social skills among many inmates (Jewkes, 2002). In the Australian context, loss of communal eating and television viewing were particular problems for Aboriginal prisoners who comprise 26% of the Australian prison population (ABS, 2011) and make concerted efforts to control their social groups and be imprisoned in the same correctional facilities in order to be close to family and kin. The loss of prison association areas had a significant impact on these groups who had previously used opportunities for communal activity as a source of camaraderie and mutual support and to catch up on news of family and events, providing respite from the 'pains of imprisonment' (Grant and Jewkes, 2013).

The Introduction of Podular Design and 'New' or 'Third' Generation Philosophies

In the early 1970s, the US Federal Bureau of Prisons held a competition for the design of inner city remand centres in four cities to house remand prisoners. Architects, Harry Weese and Associates won the competition for the Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Center with a design that aimed to provide humane living conditions in urban environments where land was at a premium (Ichinowatari, 1979). Commissioned in 1971, the 88 metre high triangular tower broke new ground in the development of podular units and resolved issues arising from housing prisoners on an inner city site by using a high rise model. Accommodation was designed within right-angled triangular living units, with cells located around a communal space. The

triangular form decreased the internal distances to windows allowing all prisoners an external view and reduced corridor lengths, minimising the distance to be patrolled.

In the decades that followed, a complex assemblage of factors resulting from the introduction of a neo-populist political agenda (which included a 'war on drugs', an unwillingness to afford prisoners any rights and the mass imprisonment of young, black men from poor urban areas) resulted in continued unrest in many American prisons. Research indicated possible reductions in prison violence through the overlaying of podular design with unit management principles. Behaviour-based evaluations were used for the assessment of design prototypes with US researchers seeking to improve the fit between the physical setting and the organisational and behavioural needs of user groups. By this time, mid-20th century discourses of therapy and rehabilitation had given way to new ideas concerned with helping prisoners to change and improve as a result of their own efforts, backed up by systems of privileges or penalties to be administered for good or bad behaviour (Jewkes, 2002). Spatial organisation was instrumental in this respect, and the 'new generation' of prison architecture incorporated features of situational crime prevention into design; for example, discrete housing units staffed by officers who operated informally and interacted with inmates in living areas while having a clear sight of all cell entrances.

This model of direct, informal supervision by officers – sometimes referred to as dynamic security (Dunbar, 1985) – is aimed, not simply at aiding surveillance and control, but also at facilitating communication between staff and inmates, so that the role of officers is no longer to watch and respond to problems, but to predict and prevent them. It was found that direct supervision by carefully selected and trained staff was a crucial tool in reducing violence in prison settings and that linear design should be avoided because it replicated 'the streets', where groups of prisoners congregate to replicate some of the activities they might engage in on the outside. Favoured design prototypes included personal podular spaces for prisoners positioned around a shared interactive space; a concept that became known as 'new' or 'third'

generation and quickly became the basis of contemporary penal design in the US (Johnston, 2000).

The triangular podular design pioneered in Chicago and in the less architecturally striking Metropolitan Correctional Centers in San Diego and New York heavily influenced Australian prison design. The Government of South Australia employed many of the concepts first seen in the Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Center for the design of the Adelaide Remand Centre, commissioned in 1986, in the belief that the specialist small units were a prime tool in managing the complex and changing needs of sub-groups within the prison population. The Adelaide Remand Centre incorporated an existing heritage-listed building for administration and entrance functions, with a seven-storey addition at the rear containing eight living units, indoor sports and recreation facilities (including a swimming pool), kitchen, medical facilities and operational control facilities. A series of triangular forms reflect the layout of the living units and overlook the exercise yards and inner city areas. Communal bathrooms were relegated to history with the inclusion of in-cell sanitation. The Adelaide Remand Centre stands as one of only two multi-storey remand centres built within the central business district of an Australian capital city. The other, Melbourne Metropolitan Remand Centre (later renamed the Melbourne Assessment Prison when it became the reception prison for all male prisoners in Victoria), was completed in 1989. Constructed of brick rather than concrete, the design incorporated bands of cream on a red brick base to 'heighten the humane vision for the facility' (Jackson Architecture u.d.). Both centres also followed the American practice of locating remand centres in or near cities to allow detainees greater access to family and legal services, minimize transport costs between courts and reduce population pressure in prisons.

Following experiments with triangular shaped units, the blueprint was later developed into a butterfly design of one or two storeys situated onto a central officers' station. Nonetheless, some prisons constructed in the 1980s and 1990s retained a model of uninspired linear living units with cells opening onto a central corridor,

reminiscent of the linear prison designs of the 19th century. In addition, although many Australian correctional agencies aspired to direct supervision and case management, there was considerable resistance by prison officers and their unions. Indirect supervision (where officers monitor prisoners from enclosed posts) was favoured over direct supervision or dynamic security due to perceived safety concerns. In essence, Australia only adopted the physical model and not the program focus, the staff profiles, the staff training models or the philosophies. It was not until the 1990s that Western Australia introduced case management and prisoners received a sentence plan (APP, 2012). Finally, at this stage jurisdictions began to formulate guidelines on unit management specific to their circumstances.

The Introduction of Campus Planning

In the 1970s and 1980s in locations where space was not an issue, campus style prisons were introduced which imitated architectural principles being applied in the planning and construction of education and medical facilities. An early campus style prison in the US was the Federal Butner Complex in North Carolina, commissioned in 1961 but not opened until 1976. Employing the campus principles of separated, informally grouped buildings placed around communal external spaces, designers sought to allow residents a sense of community and maximum freedom and space inside the precinct. The emphasis was on holding residents responsible for making constructive changes through voluntary program participation, minimizing tensions between staff and prisoners and flexible decision-making. By the end of the 1970s, other new facilities opened using the therapeutic principles of the campus model (but not the clinical behavioural modification programs for which Butner became infamous), incorporating open, campus planning and 'third generation' operational, architectural and management approaches. Initial plans were predominately for low security environments (e.g. Federal Correctional Institution Pleasanton, California, commissioned in 1974) but, later, campus style planning was extended to the design of medium and high security facilities. Following the US's lead, campus style prisons

began to appear at the beginning of the 1980s in other countries, including Canada, the UK and Germany (Fairweather, 1994).

Australia's first campus style facility, Mobilong Prison, was commissioned in 1987. The prison is located on 50 hectares of land near Murray Bridge in South Australia with an external perimeter fence enclosing approximately 15 hectares and 11,400 metre squares of building space. Mobilong was designed as an educational and vocational training prison and the original workshops provided training in a variety of skills and trades. It includes four 'L'-shaped living units (albeit with cells laid out with linear design adjoined to a communal space), separated by 'village space' from operational support buildings. Since the commissioning of Mobilong, campus principles have become integral to the planning of most Australian prison projects. Post-occupancy evaluation has indicated particular design elements are imperative for their success. These include zoning of areas, the separation of vehicular and pedestrian routes and the provision of separate housing units, each with direct access from cell to living areas (Home Office, 1985). To allow residents maximum space and freedom of movement, security is ideally placed on the exterior of the site and the location of the prison should be central on a large land holding creating a buffer zone, where a perimeter fence is placed around the facilities (ibid). The land holding size required for campus planning approaches is significant, and new prisons in Australia are located greater distances from urban and regional centres than has been the practice in the past, presenting obvious problems for prisoners to receive visits from family and legal representatives.

The Development of Secure Perimeters

Returning to the United States, by 1990 the US Federal Bureau of Prisons was facing a dramatic growth in prisoner populations and the increasing use of Life Without Parole (LWOP), effectively creating a permanent prison population with nothing to lose. A new discourse of 'dangerousness' and 'risk' had entered the carceral lexicon and the American penal system, which had previously adopted a policy of

indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole release 'as a matter of absolute routine and good correctional practice' (Petersilia, 2003: 62) had by now ceased even to gesture in the direction of rehabilitation and reintegration and instead had explicitly embraced a strategy of permanent exclusion (Dolovich, 2011). The convergence of penal and medical discourses to assess the risk that any individual might pose and the concomitant security measures required to predict and prevent any future harms they might perpetrate had permeated down through the system so that it was no longer only those offenders who presented a 'vivid danger' who were subjected to preventative detention on grounds of prediction (Bottoms and Brownsword, 1982). Prison managers even at the medium and low security end of the penal spectrum were confronted with competing needs: the requirement to maintain security and control; the desire to fully introduce prisoner unit management models of operation; and the constraint of having to do both at a time when government policy did not allow increases in staff numbers.

The solution to these problems appeared in the form of new technologies. A perimeter security model was implemented based on the maxim 'deter, detect, delay, detain' and enabled by new electronic systems and security technology adapted from the military arena, including CCTV cameras. For example, each staffed guard post on the 'wall' required four to five full-time armed staff if it was to be operational for 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year, whereas electronic surveillance with a roving guard on the exterior only required two full-time posts; one at the cameras and the other on patrol (Krasnow, 1998). Another key feature of the new perimeters was the construction of transparent, perforated fences which allowed roving staff to see through them when called to a location where a prisoner might be contemplating or attempting an escape. The perimeter was usually made up of a first fence with detection equipment on the vertical plane, an inner 'no-go zone' with more detection equipment and CCTV cameras, an outer fence, and then a patrol road, all illuminated at night to an intensity to allow colour CCTV coverage. This system could consume some 30 or more metres of perimeter width, a factor that required a large amount of

extra land, particularly when the authorities also wanted some distance from the patrol road to the site boundary. A contentious aspect of the perimeters was that the tops of the fences and, in high security centres, the inner area between fences, were installed with rolls of razor wire. An argument for this extreme measure was that, with its higher standard of containment, there could be a less restricted internal site, a factor that supported the campus layout principles and operations.

Once again, Australia enthusiastically embraced these innovations and new prison developments adopting the principles were built in remote rural areas. From the mid 1980s, guard towers were consigned to history and the use of razor wire in prison projects commenced (Knell, 2002), often in addition to a solid wall on the outer layer of the perimeter. Unfortunately, in most Australian adaptations of the model, it was determined that each zone required consideration to the type of monitoring and controls and effectively prisons began to be conceived as a number of entities within a perimeter or 'prisons within a prison', thus destroying features of the campus model and returning the interior to something more akin to prisons in the UK. This appears to have occurred in facilities where the operational pattern has returned to the control model; where staff were not adequately experienced in people management; where the prison is multi-security rated; and later, with the introduction of public private partnerships, where the PPP model's performance penalty system has created a culture of risk avoidance rather than risk management.

As the sophistication of sensor and surveillance technology grew, Australian prison authorities started to believe they could produce an escape-proof perimeter that would allow them to do away with some of the original features, including the 24-hour roving response team, replacing them with an on-demand model. Consequently, detection equipment has functioned largely only as a means of alerting officers to an incident already in progress. Staff are able to watch an escape unfold but can do little about it. In addition, after a number of serious injuries and some fatalities, there is a pressing requirement to construct a perimeter that is not physically harmful to

prisoners; again staff can do little but observe on a monitor when a serious injury or fatality occurs due to an attempted abscondment.[3]

Arguably, then, the potentially humanitarian and rehabilitative elements of unit management behind a secure perimeter have fallen dismally short in the Australian context. Surveillance technologies have increased operational effectiveness but at the expense of direct supervision and dynamic security. In what many would come to see as a backward step, security and control became impersonal, rather than interpersonal. At HM Barwon Prison, one factor in the choice of a solid perimeter was bushfire risk but other arguably negative factors were instrumental, including sequestering prisons from public gaze. More recent projects constructed in Victoria include Port Philip Prison, the Metropolitan Remand Centre and the Hopkins Correctional Centre (formerly Ararat prison) where expansion has been accompanied by the construction of solid perimeters, which may have been chosen to allow their security rating to be upgraded at a later date.

Penal Controversies: Public Private Partnerships and the 'Supermax'

Before moving on to discuss Australia's success in forging its own identity in progressive penal design and construction, there are two particularly controversial penal developments found in both the US and Australia that are worth brief discussion. The first is privatization, which has become a cornerstone of corrections in both countries and across the western world. The second is an architectural, political and ideological statement which saw a reverse direction of influence as Australia imported to the US what many prison scholars and penal reform groups consider to be its cruellest and most unusual form of imprisonment – the Supermax.

The involvement of the private sector in the operation of prisons first emerged in the 1970s, but really took off under the market-driven, New Right administration of President Reagan in the 1980s. By 1990, two per cent of the US prison population were housed in private prisons (Harding, 1992) and, since then, private prisons have become a ubiquitous, if controversial, part of the American penal estate. According to

a report by the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), while the number of people held in all prisons in the US has increased by 49.6 per cent over the past 15 years, private prison populations have increased by 353.7 per cent (JPI, 2011). JPI's allegation that private prison companies have not only benefitted from this increased incarceration, but have helped fuel it, may be strengthened by their finding that in 2010 alone, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group, the two largest private prison companies in the States, had combined revenues of $2.9 billion.

Australia was the second country after the US to initiate Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). The first private Australian prison was commissioned in 1988 when the Queensland Government awarded the contract for a new prison at Borallon (Brown, 1992). Since then, PPP contracts have been awarded in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and there are currently eight private prisons holding 19.2% of the total Australian prison population (Australian Productivity Commission 2012). The introduction of PPPs has had a profound effect on procurement, design, construction and operational practices for prisons and indeed the whole correctional landscape in Australia. While there are varying preferences for procurement models around Australia, the level and complexity of knowledge necessary to participate in the PPP process has resulted in a number of architectural firms specialising almost exclusively in the design of custodial environments. However, it has also led to some interesting and, in some instances, compromised designs. For example, Deer Park Metropolitan Women's Correctional Centre (later renamed the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre) in Victoria has faced criticism regarding the design and build quality, while Port Phillip Prison (also in Victoria) experienced a number of deaths in custody, due in part to design issues, which ultimately led to a review of the safety of cell environments across that State (Coroner of Victoria 1999). It has been suggested that PPP projects by their nature (they are subject to a fiscal penalty regime for performance failures) stifle innovation and diminish the role of the architect, resulting in prescriptive design and operational briefs (Consoli, 2004). While a number of commentators argue that PPPs have

improved Australian corrections in areas such as diversity in the prison estate, service delivery and cost effectiveness (Harding, 1992), actual debate on the impact of PPPs on prison design has been minimal. Unlike the US[4], Australia does not have an active movement among the design profession to boycott prison projects on the grounds that involvement of the private sector leads to economically-driven rather than design-driven projects. It would appear, then, that although PPPs were heralded as potential vehicles for innovation, in Australia they have increasingly generated conservative and limiting prison design.

Few architectural plans can be as conservative and limiting as the highest security institutions, however. Australia's vast expanses of uninhabited land and its enthusiastic adoption of key architectural and technological features such as zoning and electronically monitored perimeter walls may help to explain the Australian super-maximum security prison; a concept that has not been embraced anywhere in Europe. Although the supermax has its origins in the harsh conditions of solitary confinement found in the 'separate systems' of mid-19th century prisons, its philosophies were honed in the post-war era of behavioural psychology and 'treatment' when various forms of sensory deprivation and social isolation were introduced in order to make prisoners susceptible to 'remoulding' through therapy and medication. In more recent times, a punitive publicly-endorsed (or at least tolerated) desire to make imprisonment rigorous and unpleasant may have accompanied a sustained period of impatience with the criminal justice process which is frequently characterized by media as 'soft on crime' (Johnston, 2000; Jewkes, 2011). New prisons are being built with 'a level of security above "high security"' and internal routines not seen for 140 years (Johnston, 2000: 4). Moreover, the ratcheting up of security within penal systems in the US, Australia and many other western, industrial nations, has run parallel to it escalation in a post 9/11, risk-attuned and retributive society, rising to a level of prominence that eclipses every other consideration, including what it means to be human (Drake, 2012). While this is true even of many medium security prisons, it is particularly apt in relation to facilities such as the

Florence Administrative Maximum Penitentiary (ADX or Ad-Max) in Colorado, or the High Risk Management Unit at Goulburn Correctional Centre in New South Wales.

The first supermax is the subject of contention. Ward and Breed (1986) assert that Alcatraz was the original supermax, while King suggests that this dubious honour goes to the US Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois in the lockdown period following the killing of two prison officers in October 1983. However, as Carlton (2009) has observed, Katingal Special Security Unit in New South Wales, Australia, was a supermax experiment that can be dated as far back as the 1970s. At Katingal every aspect of a prisoner's life was subject to staff control:

> All doors were electronically operated by prison officers from behind bars that separated them from prisoner areas. Prison officers also controlled the air-conditioning and water temperatures, prisoner lights and power from remote console panels. An air-conditioning system catered for the fact that there were no windows in the tiny cells and the limited space in the exercise yards was covered by steel mesh. The cells were so identical, so uniform the Department found it necessary to paint the control panel in each gallery a different colour so the officer in charge would not be disoriented (Carlton, 2007: 6).

While Katingal lasted barely two years before it was closed down because the conditions of sensory deprivation for its inmates were considered an abuse of human rights, Australia has retained the supermax security principles more commonly associated with the United States. Political agendas in the 1990s were 'quite literally to intensify the punitive force of the experience of imprisonment' (Brown and Wilkie, 2002), leading to a proliferation of supermax prisons, built to house the most dangerous prisoners and those charged with terrorist offences. Goulburn, together with several other New South Wales prisons, have been criticized over the lack of natural light and airflow, isolation, deprivation of association, harsh environments and regimes (NSW Ombudsman, 2008).

Australian Approaches to Prison Design in the Twenty-first Century

As the fallacy of uncritically following the United States' example in penal design became apparent, several national bodies were established in Australia, such as the Corrective Services Ministers' Council and the National Correctional Administrators' Council, to discuss and exchange ideas. National standards and guidelines[5] were finally initiated and, although drawing heavily on the US experiences in the first instance, they were later tailored to local circumstances. Involvement in building programs to upgrade the prison estate and other custodial facilities resulted in a growth of expertise in prison construction within the Australian design professions and correctional agencies and less reliance on overseas expertise.

The landscape of Australian corrections has now changed to the extent that there are specific Australian approaches to contemporary prison design. Vernacular forms and solutions have emerged to meet local imperatives such as prisoner needs, budgets and political agendas. Every Australian jurisdiction has developed facilities to accommodate minimum, medium and maximum security prisoners although, it must be said, with mixed success. A positive example has been set by the State of Victoria, which has developed several assessment and distribution prisons along the lines of podular design and unit management as well as a number of prisons specifically built to provide therapeutic, drug-free and treatment environments for particular groups of prisoners (such as HIV positive and intellectually disabled prisoners, those with substance misuse issues, women, sex offenders etc). New South Wales' preoccupation with control and security has in recent times changed to a focus on developing prison environments to meet the needs of separate prisoner groups in a similar fashion to Victoria. In Western Australia the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the prison system has led to an emphasis on the development of specific facilities for Aboriginal prisoners and attempts to house people near their families (Grant, 2009). One notable success in this respect is the willingness of the Department of Corrective Service, Western Australia, to embrace a regional approach with normalized living conditions for Aboriginal prisoners. The recently opened West Kimberley Prison

accommodates 120 male and 30 female prisoners of varying security classifications, in separate areas for men and women. Accommodation is provided in self-care housing units, arranged so that prisoners can be housed according to family ties or language, and security ratings. The units are located around an AFL football oval, the sport being an important aspect of contemporary Aboriginal cultural identity. The Northern Territory also grapples with accommodating high numbers of Aboriginal people and is attempting to develop appropriate facilities for different groups of offenders. Less imaginatively, Queensland has adopted a 'one size fits all' approach with podular designs and sparse fittings to keep within set budgets and reflect relatively punitive political agendas. Tasmania has been faced with the complexities of accommodating differing groups requiring separate management styles within a small system. In response, a single multi-purpose prison has been constructed to accommodate the majority of prisoners. With stark finishes such as unpainted concrete and harsh lines, it is reminiscent of Queensland's approach to prison design.

As well as developing diverse approaches to address specific needs, Australia has become an international leader in key areas of prison design, such as safe cell technology. The 'safe cell' projects occurred after a coronial inquiry (1999) was held into a series of deaths at Port Phillip Prison in Victoria. Design guidelines were developed incorporating numerous prisoner safety components from evacuation in the event of fire to the removal of obvious hanging points in mainstream cells (Department of Justice, 2003). Correctional agencies in other states came under pressure to examine the incidence of suicide and to employ similar standards and ultimately Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory developed their own design guidelines to reduce ligature points. Australia is also progressive in the design of women's facilities, borrowing some elements of the Canadian experience and applying them within a local context. The predominant trend is a move away from traditional cellular design, towards communities of cottage style accommodation units overlaid onto campus plans. Dillwynia Correctional Centre in New South Wales (commissioned in 2004) was the first to be designed with a campus

planning approach and domestic-style living units for prisoners, and was followed by the Jacaranda Pre-release Units at Emu Plains, NSW. Other jurisdictions have followed this lead and 'women specific' facilities with domestic style architecture have been opened at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre, the Mary Hutchison Women's Prison (Tasmania), Tarrengower (Victoria), and the AMC (Australian Capital Territory). In 2009, the Bandyup Women's Prison (Western Australia) was also upgraded, having been designed and built to provide facilities and routines that replicate (as near as possible) family and community responsibilities. The most commonly cited example of 'best practice' design for female prisoners in Australia is the Boronia Pre-Release Centre in Western Australia where architects were asked (in 2004) to design a prison that respected the unique characteristics of women. The centre includes twelve houses for 70 residents and incorporates two mother and child units, immediate care units, visits areas, children's play areas, health centre, administration areas, a spiritual area, medical centre and vocational training area; all located within a landscaped environment.

Conclusion

As Johnston notes in the Introduction to his classic work *Forms of Constraint: A History of Prison Architecture*, most histories of punishment barely mention the buildings where confinement takes place, resulting in a 'dismal' and 'disappointing' understanding of their importance (Johnston, 2000: 1). He further observes that the history of prison design and construction has not been linear, but has 'cycles, bursts of creativity and innovation as well as periods of stagnation and the continuation of traditional planning' (ibid: 2). As we hope to have shown in this article, Australia has in recent years been enjoying a period of creativity following decades of conservative traditionalism interspersed with eras of neglect and stagnation. There are still challenges for Australian prison design, however. The innovative evidence-based research into prison architecture and programs conducted in the US dramatically changed prisons in Australia but demonstrate the importance of ongoing evaluation and analysis of the local context. Many of the principles imported from the US were

only partially embraced and some of their potential benefits have been lost; for example, when attention was not paid to the normalization of the environment or where there have been increases in prisoner numbers without appropriate staff-prisoner ratios being maintained.

The introduction of unit management and 'third generation' principles came at a critical reform period in Australian corrections and framed the future direction of Australian prison design, but the inspiration drawn from the US during the reform period remained largely uncritical emulation. Australian jurisdictions could not readily distinguish between the keenly promoted models coming out of the States, tending to borrow parts but rarely implementing a holistic package of architecture, management philosophy and staff training programs. This led to curious amalgamations of mismatched design and policy, resulting in unmanageable prisons, diminishing staff morale and aggrieved prisoners who frequently either fatalistically resigned themselves to the psychological harms that poorly designed environments elicit, or resorted to violence and disorder to vent their frustrations.

Nonetheless, Australian state penal systems have, in very recent years, made significant advances both in applying US principles appropriately within a different cultural context and, arguably more importantly, in finding their own identity and accommodating prisoner populations in culturally sensitive and program-oriented institutions. After more than a century of looking to the US and slavishly following American design types, then, Australia is finally constructing a prison estate that is fit for purpose.

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[1] We use the term 'penal estate(s)' throughout the article. Although possibly less familiar to a US readership than to readers in the UK, Australia and elsewhere, it most satisfactorily encapsulates the physical, structural dimensions and interior, environmental features of both individual facilities and the system as a whole.

[2] Broadly speaking, Australian prisons have fallen into two categories; major prisons – typically large and imposing, emulating the English archetypes of the mid-nineteenth century – situated on the fringes of densely populated urban locations (e.g. capital cities) and holding serious offenders; and local prisons, equivalent to US jails, which are typically low-rise, sprawling constructions situated in rural environments, and holding prisoners serving shorter sentences for minor offences.

[3] A notable exception has been the design of juvenile and mental health facilities. Some jurisdictions will not allow the use of any materials that could cause physical harm to anyone attempting to escape.

[4] In the US Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) has called for a boycott of all prison design and construction on the grounds that the prison system is 'a devastating moral blight' which 'has no place in a society that aspires to liberty, justice, and equality for all (http://www.adpsr.org/home)

[5] The Standard Guidelines for Prison Facilities in Australia and New Zealand (1990) is a set of design guidelines for the construction of new prisons, while the Australasian Correctional Planning Framework (2000) expands on the requirement of the Building Code of Australia. The Revised Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2004) is a set of minimum standards for prisoner treatment and conditions. These are not enshrined in legislation.