

South Australia's Cottages: A New Institutional Design Concept

As part of South Australia's efforts to minimize the institutional character of its correctional facilities, a new accommodation design concept known as "the cottages" was developed. First constructed in 1984, the cottages form a section of the Northfield Prison Complex which also includes the Women's Rehabilitation Centre. The facility is composed of 10 cottages (living units), which can accommodate a maximum of 40 male, minimum-security offenders who are approaching sentence completion.

Each cottage is a self-contained residence with four individual bedrooms. Each pair of bedrooms is provided with a bathroom (toilet, sink and shower) to be shared by the offenders. The other areas of the cottage - kitchen, dining room and living room - are for the common use of all residents. The inmates are provided with the necessary food supplies and facilities for the preparation of their breakfast and dinner. (They have lunch at their workplace.) The residents are also responsible for cleaning up after meals and for laundering some of their clothes.

In a further effort to encourage inmates to become more responsible and better prepared for their reintegration into the community, Northfield provides easy access to particular leave programs and offers various activities such as education, family visits, films, television, sports, arts and crafts, chaplaincy and library services.

The successful operation of the cottages at Northfield has inspired South Australia's Correctional Services to build other facilities based on this concept. The first site chosen for new cottages is at Port Augusta Jail. The cottages will be built outside and nearby the high/medium-security institution. Cadell Training Centre, an unwallled institution for minimum-security offenders, will be the site of other new cottages. Redevelopment of the Cadell institution will create a series of sectors resembling a small town and creating a sense of community.