1. **Introduction**

These Procedures operationalise Policy Directive 26 – Searches in regards to the search of cells and environs, to ensure consistency and application of legislated requirements.

2. **Exemptions**

2.1 There are no exemptions to the application of these Procedures.

3. **Definitions and acronyms**

**Designated Superintendent**

The superintendent as defined in s 36 of the *Prisons Act 1981* and includes any reference to the position responsible for the management of a private prison under Part IIIA of the Act. Does not extend to the Officer in Charge of a prison.

**prison officer**

A person engaged or deemed to have been engaged to be a prison officer under s 13 of the *Prisons Act 1981* or deemed to have been appointed under s 6 to an office designated by Adult Custodial Rule 12 – Designation of Officers as Prison Officers and suitably trained to undertake searches in accordance with Policy Directive 26 – Searches.

**superintendent**

The Designated Superintendent or Officer in Charge (OIC) of a public prison, the Director or Officer in Charge of a private prison.

**TOMS (Total Offender Management Solution)**

An electronic database used by the Department of Corrective Services to record and manage comprehensive information relating to prisoners.
4. **Cell and common area searches and security**

4.1 Although search standards contained within each prison’s Search Strategy will depend on the security rating of the prison, the following minimum requirements shall apply:

- **Cell security**
  All cells are to be checked at a minimum of once per fortnight to ensure that all physical components of the cell are to design standards.
  
  Cell integrity shall be checked as a matter of routine during all cell inspections and routine and targeted searches.

- **Cell searches**
  A minimum of 15% of cells in each prison are to be searched once each week as a matter of routine. Cell searches are to be conducted by two officers in accordance with these Procedures.
  
  Cell searches are to include an inspection and interrogation of all fixtures, fittings and items within a cell. Every cell in a prison is to be searched at least once every three (3) months.
  
  Observation and management cells shall be searched prior to and upon termination of a prisoner being placed in the cell. Occupied Observation and management cells are also to be searched daily upon the prisoner vacating the cell for showering, visits or telephone calls.

- **Area searches**
  Conducted at a regular frequency as determined by the Designated Superintendent and detailed in the prison’s Searching Strategy, area searches are to be conducted on all areas of the prison including but not limited to dayrooms, ovals, workshops, recreation areas and any other area where a prisoner may be reasonably expected to have access to.

- **Perimeter searches**
  Searches of prison perimeters for contraband and unauthorised persons are to be conducted at a minimum of once daily (minimum security prisons) and twice daily (medium and maximum security prisons).
  
  During such searches, officers shall ensure that prison’s perimeter security systems are in working order and barriers are free from damage. Evidence of perimeter check completion is to be reported to Adult Custodial Operations on a weekly basis.

4.2 Random and targeted searching of common areas and cells shall be conducted when required in accordance with these Procedures.

5. **Cell searches – Procedures**

Searches of cells shall be conducted in accordance with [Policy Directive 26 – General search requirements](#) and the following:

5.1 A minimum of 2 prison officers are to conduct a cell search.
5.2 Searching officers are to print out the cell inventory report from TOMS in order to identify any items which are not lawfully issued to the prisoner(s) housed in the cell being searched.

5.3 If a prisoner(s) is located in a cell prior to the commencement of a cell search, the prisoner is to be instructed to vacate the cell and shall be subject to a rub-down search, as a minimum requirement.

5.4 The prisoner occupant(s) of a cell is to be present during the search of the cell. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not feasible for the prisoner to be present, details of the exceptional circumstances shall be provided in an Incident Report (if contraband is located, refer Section 9) or in ‘Outcome/Remarks’ if no contraband is found or no Incident Report is submitted.

5.5 The prisoner occupant(s) of the cell are to be asked if they have any unauthorised articles in their accommodation or on their person or authorised items they are not authorised to have in their possession, including weapons, syringes or items which may cause harm to the searching officers. Even if articles are handed over, the search is to be continued.

5.6 Using the door as a starting point, each officer is to systematically work his or her way around the cell (one to the left, one to the right) searching all of its contents systematically and thoroughly. All known voids, ventilators, ceilings, floors, walls, doors, windows (inside, and where possible, outside) grilles, pipes and fixed furniture and fittings are to be searched. Searching is to be conducted systematically from top to bottom.

5.7 If the searching officers find an unauthorised article during the search and the prisoner is likely to be charged in accordance with the Prisons Act 1981 or by the police, procedures for the continuity of evidence must be followed as stated in Policy Directive 26 – General Search Requirements, Policy for Gathering and Preservation of Evidence, Continuity of Exhibits and Procedures for the Preservation of Evidence, Continuity of Exhibits, Drug Movements and Inventory Control.

5.8 If contraband or unauthorised articles are found, the prisoner(s) are to be asked for an explanation of the presence of the items found. Formal questioning or taking of a statement is not to be undertaken.

5.9 Privileged mail located in a cell is not to be read, in accordance with Policy Directive 36 – Communications. Written material including papers and mail may be targeted for review if information or intelligence suggests that the papers contain information of interest, however staff should be mindful that incoming mail to a prisoner is read in accordance with Policy Directive 36 – Communications, and should not be read as a matter of routine during a cell search.

5.10 Prisoners are not to store chemicals in cells. As such, Prison Officers are to be diligent during cell searches and inspections as to the presence of chemicals in prisoners’ cells. As a matter of course, all containers are to be checked for the presence of contraband, including illicit or dangerous substances and chemicals.

5.11 On completion of the search staff must inform the prisoner(s) of any articles that have been removed, even if they are to be returned at a later date.

5.12 If any damage has been caused to the prisoner’s property, the searching officers are to declare such damage and submit a report on TOMS detailing the circumstances of the damage.
5.13 Searching officers are to leave the prisoner’s cell as tidy as possible, while ensuring a thorough search has been conducted.

5.14 Searching officers are to ensure that any equipment taken to the cell (refer Section 7 below) for the purposes of conducting the search is removed prior to vacating the cell.

5.15 Searching officers are to record the search on TOMS and ensure that, in the event that unauthorised articles are found, a report is submitted in accordance with Policy Directive 41 – Reporting of Incidents and Additional Notifications.

6. Common area searches – Procedures

Searches of common areas shall be conducted in accordance with Policy Directive 26 – General Search Requirements and the following:

6.1 A minimum of 2 prison officers are to conduct an area search. Additional officers should be considered for deployment depending on the size and complexity of the area to be searched.

6.2 Generally, prisoners shall be required to vacate common areas prior to a search commencing.

6.3 Prisoners removed from the common area prior to a search being conducted shall be subject to a rub-down search, as a minimum requirement.

6.4 Using the door (or similar entry point) as a starting point, each officer is to systematically work his or her way around the common area (one to the left, one to the right) searching all of its contents systematically and thoroughly. All known voids, ventilators, ceilings, floors, walls, doors, windows (inside, and where possible, outside) grilles, pipes and fixed furniture and fittings, are to be searched. Searching should be conducted systematically from top to bottom. If more than two officers are required to search the area, due to its size or complexity, the area is to be visually divided into smaller areas in order for a systematic search to be conducted.

6.5 If the searching officers find an unauthorised article during the search and the prisoner is likely to be charged in accordance with the Prisons Act 1981 or by the police, procedures for the continuity of evidence must be followed as stated in Policy Directive 26 – General Search Requirements, Policy for Gathering and Preservation of Evidence, Continuity of Exhibits and Procedures for the Preservation of Evidence, Continuity of Exhibits, Drug Movements and Inventory Control.

6.6 Searching officers are to ensure that any equipment taken to the common area (refer Section 7 below) for the purposes of conducting the search is removed prior to vacating the area.

6.7 Searching officers are to record the search on TOMS and ensure that, in the event that unauthorised articles are found, the processes detailed in Section 9 are followed.
7. Perimeter checks – Procedures

The officer conducting external perimeter checks shall proceed as follows:

- Start the check at the main gate, outside the prison.
- Proceed around the perimeter until you return to the main gate.
- Check the perimeter for any signs of damage, markings or other interference.
- Observe and, if necessary, test in accordance with local instructions, any technical security aids fitted to the perimeter.
- Ensure the area adjacent to the perimeter is free from obstruction or potential escape materials.
- Once the initial circuit is complete, the officer is to enter the sterile area (if applicable) and proceed around the perimeter of the prison again.
- Ensure that the area immediately inside the internal perimeter, within view, is free from contraband or other objects.
- If a security breach is discovered at any point during the check, remain with it and summon assistance without drawing prisoners’ attention to the breach.
- On completion of the check, complete the necessary records in respect to any minor defects for repair. Report any potential security breaches to the Security Manager immediately.

8. Equipment

8.1 The Designated Superintendent shall ensure that appropriate equipment is available to conduct searches of cells and environs and that the equipment is maintained and replaced as required.

8.2 Search kits shall be available for use in each living unit and contain, at a minimum, the following:

- 1 x flat screwdriver
- 1 x Phillips screwdriver
- 1 x 150mm Adjustable spanner
- 1 x Inspection mirror
- 1 x telescopic magnet
- 1 x 280mm long nosed pliers
- 1 x torch
- 1 x fibre optic adaptor.

8.3 Searching staff using the search kits as detailed in section 8.2 shall ensure that all items are accounted for prior to storage after use.

8.4 Specialist search equipment and tools may be made available as follows:

- Itemiser
- Alcoliser
• See snake camera
• Handheld metal detectors
• Ground Metal detector
• Probes.

8.5 Each prison’s Searching Strategy shall detail where the items listed in Section 8.4 above are located.

8.6 Drug detection dogs and drug detection devices may be used as determined by the Designated Superintendent to assist staff in the searching of prisoners’ cells and prison environs.

8.7 Staff shall be mindful of the use of drug detection dogs in areas of prisons which are used for the production or storage of foodstuffs.

9. **Contraband finds**

9.1 In all cases where contraband is found a report must be submitted on TOMS.

9.2 In all cases where contraband is found the incident must be reported in accordance with Policy Directive 41 – Reporting of Incidents and Additional Notifications.

9.3 The seizure, labelling, evidence continuity, storage and disposal of contraband shall be managed in accordance with Procedures for the Preservation of Evidence, Continuity of Exhibits, Drug Movements and Inventory Control.

10. **Approved**

Commissioner or delegated authority in accordance with PD 26:

Signature:  
Date: 8 December 2014

11. **Policy sponsor**

Assistant Commissioner Custodial Operations

12. **Contact person**

The following persons may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

Director Security and Response Services

Principal Operational Policy Officer
13. Amendment history

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