

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Embargoed until 12 noon, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**REPORT OF AN ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF ROEBOURNE  
REGIONAL PRISON**

The latest report by the Inspector of Custodial Services finds that progress has been made in some key areas at Roebourne Regional Prison over the past three years. However, significant issues remain with respect to the ailing infrastructure, limited service provision for prisoners and the lack of longer term planning for the region.

Two areas have improved markedly. First, the prison now has sufficient locally based custodial staff so potentially risky fly-in fly-out system of staffing arrangements could be ended. Secondly, the prison has worked locally to secure excellent partnerships, notably with Rio Tinto, for the training of Aboriginal prisoners to secure work in the mining industry upon release.

'The Work Ready program operated through an external work station is a great example of an innovative and practical initiative. More partnerships such as these should be developed with willing corporate sponsors who understand and reflect current workforce demands. 'Real world' partnerships of this sort can significantly improve prisoners' prospects of success when they return to the community,' Inspector Neil Morgan said.

However, the age and condition of the prison present some real problems and risks to the prison and prisoners.

'The climate in Roebourne is harsh and conditions in the cramped and non-air-conditioned cells are both degrading and a risk to health. Better climate control is required and there are numerous other maintenance issues which also need to be addressed. These include the bunk beds. Few of the beds, if any, would pass any safety audit,' Mr Morgan said.

The report also found that investing in workshops and in a dedicated minimum security area outside the current fence would provide the prison with a feasible and cost-effective opportunity to expand opportunities for training and external employment.

Also of significant concern was the extended period of time that the prison had been without key support staff, especially a Women's Support Officer. The prison accommodates only a small number of women in a small internal compound. They are marginalised and lack equal access to services compared with their male counterparts and with female prisoners in the metropolitan area.

The Inspection also revealed a lack of clear planning for custodial services in the Pilbara region, where it was evident that supply and demand for prison beds are out of alignment.

'Around one-third of prisoners from the Pilbara are imprisoned out of country and the situation is likely to get worse as the regional population grows. A custodial plan for the region, with objectives, targets and timeframes is required.

Given that there are no plans for a new prison, it is critical for all the relevant parties – not only the Department of Corrective Services but also Treasury and government as a whole – to ensure that the prison is supported and resourced to take it through the next five to ten years.'

Neil Morgan

4 April 2011

Neil Morgan will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 5 April and can be contacted on **9212 6200** or **0427 426 471**.

The full Report will be available on the Inspector's website ([www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au))