

# The Inspector's Overview

## TOWARDS A NEW FUTURE FOR YOUTH CUSTODIAL SERVICES

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The third announced inspection of Rangeview Remand Centre ('Rangeview' or 'the Centre'), carried out between 28 May and 4 June 2010, is likely to be the last because planned structural changes to the youth custodial estate will see the Centre remodelled into a privately operated facility for 18 to 24 year old young men.

In the previous inspection report on Rangeview in April 2008, the then Inspector of Custodial Services had referred to an 'incipient crisis in the juvenile estate'<sup>i</sup> as a result of increasing numbers of young people entering detention, especially on remand. This inspection similarly began in the shadow of overcrowding immediately after Rangeview had reached an all-time population peak of 96 detainees on 20 May 2010. And notwithstanding a significant fall in the number of detainees during the inspection period, down to 66 by 31 May 2010, there continue to be unacceptably high numbers of young people remanded in custody.

The Department of Corrective Services ('the Department'), after investigating possible changes in patterns of policing and Courts' dispositions in relation to juvenile offenders, is 'unable to offer a reason for the consistently high numbers of remanded young persons'.<sup>ii</sup> Whilst the causal factors driving this increase are likely to be highly complex, this Office urges continued efforts to analyse and better understand this phenomenon as a necessary precursor to the development of interventions to reduce the number of young people in custody.

The tragedy of the over-representation of young Aboriginal people within these numbers also continues. At the time of the inspection 73 per cent of the detainees at Rangeview were Aboriginal. Given this stark fact, it is surprising that the Centre is not more adequately addressing the needs of the Aboriginal detainees. There is no dedicated program of events or activities for the Aboriginal detainees, little by way of Aboriginal artwork or other symbols of Aboriginal culture, and no program of visiting elders or other evidence of effective engagement with Aboriginal community organisations and service providers. Rangeview can and must improve service delivery to Aboriginal detainees, and Recommendation 12 in this Report specifically goes to this issue.

One of the key strategies aimed at reducing the number of young people remanded in custody is increased access to bail. Too many young people find themselves in custody for want of a bail option. The Department has an active supervised bail program that has had some success in increasing the numbers of young people placed on supervised bail. This Office is very supportive of the supervised bail program and would like to see it extended. Recommendation 2 in this Report calls for the establishment of a 24-hour bail service to support police and other bail decision-makers in relation to newly arrested young people.

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i See Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS), *Report of an Announced Inspection of Rangeview Juvenile Remand Centre*, Report No. 50 (April 2008).

ii Department of Corrective Services (DCS), Rangeview Remand Centre, Pre-Inspection Submission (16 April 2010).

There have been significant developments in the youth custodial system in Western Australia since the last inspection of Rangeview. In 2008 at the urging of the President of the Children's Court, His Honour Denis Reynolds, the Pilot Youth Justice Initiative was established. This initiative created an interagency approach to working with a number of juveniles within the justice system whose circumstances warranted intensive case-management. The success of this initiative has engendered a more co-operative and integrated approach between the relevant agencies, which can only benefit young people in contact with the justice system.

Also in 2008, the Regional Youth Justice Strategy initiatives in Geraldton and Kalgoorlie led to the establishment of youth justice centres that offer a broad range of services including arranging bail, an extended-hours family support service and emergency short-stay accommodation. Since the commencement of these strategies in both locations there has been a sharp drop in the number of young people sent to be detained in Rangeview.<sup>iii</sup> The success of the Regional Youth Justice Strategies was recognised in the 2010-11 State Budget by the allocation of a further \$43.9 million over the next four years to establish similar Youth Justice Service initiatives in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions.<sup>iv</sup> This is a very positive development for youth justice services.

As part of its 2008 electoral commitment, the Liberal Party undertook to spend \$40 million to build an 80-person Young Offender Prison in the first term of government.<sup>v</sup> This commitment led to the plan to transform Rangeview into a privately operated prison for minimum security 18 to 24 year old male offenders.<sup>vi</sup> The corollary of that decision is the plan to expand the Banksia Hill facility to accommodate all arrested, remanded and sentenced young people from November 2011. The remodelling has significant implications for Rangeview in that all the current services functions and resources will move over to Banksia Hill in the next 18 months, and Banksia Hill will become a multi-purpose facility housing all detainees, male and female, remand and sentenced.

Whilst this Office has expressed support for the proposal we have significant concerns about the immediate future of Rangeview in relation to the move, and the philosophy and service profile that will emerge at Banksia Hill for the Rangeview population.

The inspection surfaced several areas for improvement at Rangeview and it is imperative that the recommendations of this Report are acted on expeditiously. Although the Department is generally change managing its custodial workforce in the transition to Banksia Hill well, there are indications of an emerging view within some areas that positive change at Rangeview is unrealistic because of the impending move. This Office will be watchful for any tendency for the Department to 'sit on its hands' at Rangeview pending the move to Banksia Hill. The Department and Rangeview must continue to develop and improve services for young people on remand in the interim period.

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iii Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia, *Youth Justice*, Issues Paper 4 (April 2010).

iv Hon C Porter MLA, Attorney General and Minister for Corrective Services, *State Budget 2010-11: \$43.9 million to expand regional youth justice services: Media Statement* (20 May 2010).

v Western Australian Liberal Party, 2008 Election Commitments, *Prisons Policy*.

vi Hon C Porter MLA, Attorney General and Minister for Corrective Services, *Public Private Partnership for Prisons: Media Statement* (20 January 2010).

We have called in this Report for the development of a coherent throughcare model at Rangeview. Given that almost 80 per cent of young people are at Rangeview for two weeks or less, and a determination of their likely length of stay comes some time after admission, the need to quickly assess their needs and identify opportunities for early intervention is paramount. To this end a comprehensive, integrated throughcare model is essential; one which wraps health, mental health, education and program needs in a holistic case management approach. Further, the model must be culturally appropriate and family-centred, and link young people into relevant community-based services and programs. A successful transition back into the community is perhaps the most difficult component of a throughcare model to deliver, and the role of the family and community-based services and programs in this respect are paramount.

Rangeview has some way to go in establishing such an approach, and importantly cannot deliver it on its own. The Centre needs to work with the Department, other government agencies, and relevant community groups and providers to promote the development of comprehensive throughcare. The challenge for the immediate future is for the Department and Rangeview to work assiduously, pending the transition to Banksia Hill, to develop a coordinated throughcare model of managing remanded young people; and then to successfully transfer this paradigm to the remodelled facility.

This inspection of Rangeview was carried out against a backdrop of increased funding and service development, and significant reform and structural change within juvenile justice - all of which augers well for the future. In this context, the recommendations in this Report represent an opportunity for the Department of Corrective Services to improve the delivery of services to young people on remand in the justice system leading into and post the transition to the remodelled Banksia Hill facility.

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