

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON MONDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2015**

**Report No. 95 – Work Camps in Western Australia**

The latest report from the Inspector of Custodial Services has found that, overall, prison work camps have delivered positive benefits to the state, local communities and prisoners. However, the Inspector, Neil Morgan, warns that the under-utilisation of the camps, especially Warburton and Wyndham, presents a threat to the previous 20 years' progress.

Work camps are small, low security facilities which accommodate only specially screened minimum security prisoners who are preparing for imminent release. Mr Morgan said the key objectives of the camps are reflected in a number of 'R words': reparation, rehabilitation, responsibility, reintegration and reducing recidivism:

'Work camps achieve reparation through prisoners undertaking work in the local community. They contribute to rehabilitation by enhancing prisoners' skills and self-esteem. They promote responsibility and discipline because prisoners must respond to the trust that has been placed in them and must live together collaboratively, with limited staff supervision. Reintegration is enhanced because work camps are, in effect, a half-way point to freedom. The intended outcome is to reduce the social and financial costs of recidivism.'

From the late 1990's to 2010, work camps operated from more than ten different locations. Some sites only operated a few months, others for over a decade. Most had been converted from unused public infrastructure, with basic, often rundown facilities. Mr Morgan said:

'Despite the poor physical state of the some of these camps, both our inspections and a 2008 evaluation by the Department of Corrective Services concluded that positive work and outcomes were being achieved, and that the camps had particular benefit to Aboriginal men in the regions.'

In 2008-2009, the Department decided to establish larger, purpose-built facilities instead of re-purposing old buildings. The current camps are:

- Walpole (current buildings added in 2010; capacity 12; host prison Pardelup);
- Wyndham (opened June 2011; capacity 40, host prison West Kimberley Prison in Derby);
- Warburton (opened August 2011; capacity 24 minimum security prisoners and six secure cells; host prison Eastern Goldfields);
- Dowerin (opened February 2012; capacity 20 prisoners; host prison Wooroloo); and
- Roebourne (opened June 2014; capacity 30 prisoners; host prison Roebourne).

The up-front construction costs of the camps were high, especially Warburton (\$13 million) and Wyndham (\$8 million). However, work camp occupancy rates in the state have declined, and the camps have generally only been operating at 50 to 70 per cent of capacity. Mr Morgan said:

'Valuable assets of this sort must be fully-utilised if the Department is to maximise its opportunities for reducing recidivism. Crowding pressures in the mainstream prisons add to the urgency of the Department fully using all its assets.'

The main reason given for the under-use of the camps is that there are too few suitably qualified prisoners. However, this begs a series of questions about the Department's planning and priorities. If there were not sufficient prisoners to access the camps, why were they ever built? If there were sufficient prisoners to justify building the camps in 2009, what had changed by 2011 when they opened? And why were work camps for male prisoners prioritised for funding over major pressure points such as women's imprisonment?

Unfortunately, there are only two possible explanations: either the Department's original planning was flawed, and its commitments undeliverable or it has failed to deliver on deliverables.

Despite the current difficulties, the Inspector noted that work camps have the potential to play a key role in the Department meeting the goals of its recently-released *Strategic Plan 2015-2018: Creating Value Through Performance*. In particular, there is scope for work camps to increase the amount of accredited job-training that occurs at the camps, and to link more prisoners directly to employment on release. Mr Morgan also argued for the concept of work camps to be expanded to new prisoner groups:

'There is a strong case for developing new work camp models to meet the needs of women and juveniles. To date, apart from two very short-lived experiments work camps have been limited to adult men. The models for women and juveniles will need to be different but the goals should be exactly the same: reparation, rehabilitation, responsibility, reintegration and reduced recidivism.'

Neil Morgan  
**Inspector**

9<sup>th</sup> April 2015

**For further Media Information:**

**Please see the Inspector's Overview to the Report and Key Findings (attached).**

**The Inspector, Professor Neil Morgan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and can be contacted on 6551 4201 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))**