

MEDIA RELEASE- EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 2015

THE NEW WEST KIMBERLEY PRISON IN DERBY IS PERFORMING VERY WELL, BUT POOR PLANNING FOR THE REGION LEAVES BROOME PRISON FLOUNDERING

Report No. 96- West Kimberley and Broome Regional Prisons

The Inspector of Custodial Services' 2014 inspections of the two prisons in Western Australia's Kimberley region found a stark contrast between the two. West Kimberley Regional Prison was operating an innovative focused philosophy and achieving positive results. However, Broome Regional Prison had been left in the dark about its future and was flat and directionless.

Inspector Neil Morgan said he was most impressed by his first inspection of West Kimberley Regional Prison (WKRP), which had been designed around a clear philosophy of managing and servicing its predominantly local, regional, and remote Aboriginal prisoner base.

Mr Morgan said in its first two years of operation WKRP had established the ground work for providing high quality services.

'WKRP has a philosophy that is relevant both to the region and to the Department of Corrective Services goals of security, safety, prisoner treatment and community safety. It enjoys good leadership and positive staff/prisoner relationships and respect. Prisoners are busy, engaging in skill-building activities and building self-confidence.

The high level of respect shown to Aboriginal culture, and the opportunity for the prisoners to remain 'in country' for their sentence, contributed significantly to these high levels of engagement and self-confidence.'

Mr Morgan praised the prison's staff as being proactive and highly engaged in their work, and supportive of the aims and goals of the prison. He found this was due in part to the Department's policy of local recruitment and training.

The prison itself was a testament to good design practices, Mr Morgan said:

'Too often the building of prison facilities has been reactive and the physical environment has been compromised by resource, time or footprint restraints, rather than matching the needs and purposes of the prison. WKRP is an excellent example of what can be achieved when planning and building are done well. The operating philosophy and expected outcomes were identified first, and the buildings were designed accordingly.'

Despite being managed by the same Superintendent, the Inspector found the situation at Broome Regional Prison in stark contrast to WKRP. Mr Morgan said that:

'Broome's future was uncertain as far back as 2007 when it was decided to site a new prison in Derby. This decision, allied to the fact that the main courts remained in Broome, called for advance planning and proactive engagement.

This did not happen and our 2012 inspection of Broome called for clarity as to its future. In response, the government announced that Broome would transition to closure at the end of 2015. The years of uncertainty have been bad for the prison, its

staff, and other justice services in the region. In mid-2014, the universal feedback from stakeholders was that the Department had still not engaged about future plans for the prison and how justice services would continue to be delivered to the courts, and others in Broome.'

The result of the decision to transition to closure was a severe downsizing in the prisoner population to mainly remand prisoners appearing in the Broome court and a small number of minimum-security prisoners who were required to keep the prison functioning. This resulted in a stripping back of services and supports to prisoners, in some areas to extremely concerning levels. Despite this, Broome is the most expensive prison per capita in the state.

Staff have been hard hit in trying to anticipate where their futures lie, with many having established their homes and families in Broome. They reported a total lack of communication from head office about their futures since the beginning of 2013, an intolerable situation.

Since the inspection the Department has been more proactively considering the future of Broome Prison and whether it could meet the custodial and justice needs of the region without its presence in the town. We believe that a decision is finally imminent, and recent media reports have suggested that Broome will now remain open beyond December 2015. Mr Morgan said:

'It makes sense for Broome to remain open but its decline over recent years has been depressing and damaging. If it is to remain open, the Department will need to invest in building a new culture, revitalising its management and staffing, expanding its services, and upgrading the infrastructure.

Decisions regarding Broome must also form part of a plan to meet the justice needs of the entire Kimberley region. In addition to maximising the use of all custodial facilities, including the underused Wyndham Work Camp, this plan will need to incorporate transport, courts and community corrections.'

Neil Morgan

Inspector

5 May 2015

For more detail, see the Inspector's Overview to the Report and Key Findings (copy attached)

For Further Media Information

The Inspector, Mr Neil Morgan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 5 May 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).

About West Kimberley Regional Prison

West Kimberley Regional Prison, opened on 1 November 2012, is located 2,240 kilometres from Perth and seven kilometres south of Derby. The prison was built to increase the number of prisoners from the Kimberley region who could be kept in their own country while in prison, and was designed to originally house 150 prisoners, consisting of 120 males and 30 female prisoners.

About Broome Regional Prison

Broome Regional Prison is located on the main street of Broome, 2,174 kilometres north of Perth, and is the oldest operating prison in Western Australia. Opened in 1945, in August 2012 it was announced that the prison would close in December 2015.

About the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office)

The role of the Office is to bring independent external scrutiny to the standards and operational practices relating to custodial services within Western Australia. The Office is required under its legislation to undertake an inspection of each prison every three years. The Office commenced operations in June 2000 and reports directly to Parliament.