

Snapshot series: People on remand

Background

Between July 2009 and July 2014 the prison population has risen by 17 per cent from 4,463 to 5,223. Approximately 60 per cent of this increase was attributable to a rise in the number of adults being held on remand; an increase from 678 to 1,151 people.

In October 2009 remandees represented 14.58% of the total daily prisoner population. This figure climbed to 22.04% in the five years to July 2014. Most of the increase has been absorbed by the two facilities which traditionally hold people on remand, Hakea Prison (an increase of 179 people) and Bandyup Women's Prison (up by 55 prisoners). Recently a large number of people on remand have also been held at Casuarina Prison (up by 144 people).

People on remand are legally innocent. They are sent to prison or detention centre either as a result of the court ordering the person to be held on remand in custody or as a result of the person not being able to meet the bail conditions set by the court. The legal status of people on remand entitles them to be treated differently to their sentenced counterparts. According to the *Prisons Regulations 1982* remand prisoners are eligible to receive daily visits from family and friends, they may wear their own clothing where it is appropriate, and as far as is practicable, they should be kept separate from other prisoners. Remand prisoners are not required to work although they are able to do so. However, in practice, the management of people on remand does not differ greatly to those people who are sentenced. This is despite over half the people held on remand in prison being released from their court appearance. These figures are starker for youths with almost 80 per cent of young people remanded between 2009 and 2014 being released from court.

Limitations:

This review will be the first in our snapshot series, designed to provide statistical information on trends in the custodial population. It is not intended to examine the management of people held on remand, or to provide an analysis of why trends have occurred.

Purpose of the review

The review will examine the current levels of Western Australia's remand population (both adult and youth), as well as the trends in this population for the period 2009 to 2014. Where possible the review will also seek to compare trends in WA to other publically available comparison populations.

Terms of Reference

1. What are the trends for the adult remand population for the period 2009 to 2014?
 - Raw numbers
 - Changes in characteristics
 - Length of time on remand

- Reason for their remand
 - Court flow through
2. Are there any cohorts of offenders who are more or less likely to be affected by the changes in trend?
 - Adults v young people
 - Males v females
 - Aboriginal v non-Aboriginal
 - Age groups
 3. Are similar trends for the remand population in Western Australia being observed in other Australian jurisdictions?

Methodology

- Data extraction and analysis of remand population from TOMS
- Analysis of other open source data including Department of the Attorney General (WA) Annual Reports and Australian Bureau of Statistics for cross jurisdictional comparison