



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

MEDIA RELEASE

Report Name: ***Recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff in the Department of Corrective Services***

A newly released report by the Inspector of Custodial Services has found that while the Department of Corrective Services can effectively attract and recruit Aboriginal people, there had been a recent decline in retention rates.

The report found that in 2014/2015 the representation of Aboriginal staff in the Department (7.9%) was almost three times higher than the Western Australian public sector agency average (2.8%). However, in the period between 2009 and 2015 the overall rate of separation for Aboriginal staff in the Department was 12.7 per cent, which was almost 60 per cent higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal staff (8.0%).

In releasing his report, Acting Inspector Eamon Ryan said:

“Over the years, our prison inspections have clearly demonstrated that Aboriginal prisoners will seek out Aboriginal staff for support and assistance. This has many benefits, including building communication, bridging the gap between staff and prisoners, reducing risks to both prisoners and staff, and improving the prospects of rehabilitation.

The overall rate of employment of Aboriginal staff was commendable, but of concern was the number of Aboriginal employees leaving the Department over recent years. There were a number of reasons for this, but our consultations during this review strongly highlighted the need for Aboriginal staff to feel more valued, and for their skills to be better used.”

The Department launched its Reconciliation Action Plan 2015-2018 (RAP) in December 2015, which may address many of the issues highlighted in the report. A key outcome set by the RAP is to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed by the Department across a range of positions and places. Mr Ryan said:

“The Department is to be commended for the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan. However, like any strategy, success is not dependant on the launching and publication of objectives but actual leadership commitment and implementation. The

Department's response to the report was encouraging and set out a comprehensive strategy with timed actions and targets to implement the RAP. Only time will tell whether the objectives and commitments set out in the RAP come to pass but the opportunity is there and the time is right for change. "

The report is available on the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services website at (<http://www.custodialinspector.wa.gov.au/go/reviews>).