

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON ON MONDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017**

**Report No. 108 – Court Custody Centres**

The latest report from the Inspector of Custodial Services found that, despite not securing a renewal of its contract to supply court custody and security services to the State, outgoing provider Serco had been providing a high quality service.

Serco's contract to provide court security and custody services at 20 centres will end on 22 March 2017, along with secure services at Fiona Stanley Hospital and transport for persons in custody. It has been the contractor since 2011.

Inspector Neil Morgan said that Serco had overcome a number of difficulties and incidents and proven itself to be a responsive service provider that had risen to the challenges it encountered.

'After a number of escapes earlier in the contract, Serco implemented significant improvements, not just in the hard end of security, but importantly in relation to the duty of care to people in custody, staff professionalism and improved procedures,' Mr Morgan said.

'While escapes are not acceptable, they are not confined to the services provided by private contractors. The Department also had a number of incidents over the same period. And some of the Serco escapes could be attributed to system-wide weaknesses. The main point is that Serco reacted swiftly and proactively to the identified problems and is leaving the contract in excellent standing.'

Mr Morgan noted his disappointment that the decision to retender the contract did not include any attempt to address the obvious deficiencies in the level of services required by the contract. This is especially related to the inadequate allowance for hospital security sits and transport and security for prisoners to attend funerals.

'The new contract presented a chance for new opportunities, but unfortunately this option was not taken. Supply of services in some areas falls well short of need and I am concerned that the new contract will continue to fail in this way. Numerous hospital visits are cancelled each week under the restricted contract, and prisoners are denied the ability to grieve for loved ones,' Mr Morgan said.

The risk to prisoner health by cancelling hospital appointments and the cultural and emotional impact on prisoners, particularly Aboriginal prisoners, threatens the Department of Corrective Services meeting its duty of care to prisoners.

The report was also positive in its assessment of services provided at the District Court and Central Law Courts under a separate contract with Western Liberty Group. Mr Morgan said that the 25 year contract for services was performing to a high standard, both in terms of security and duty of care.

'The long term nature of the contract has given stability to the service and a commitment from the contractor to build and improve services,' Mr Morgan said.

Issues identified during the inspection that needed to be addressed by the Departments of Corrective Services and Attorney General included the continued underuse of the Northbridge Magistrates Court; the lack of cohesion and agreement between the two agencies on a number of responsibilities under the contract; and a need for improvement to monitoring and accountability.

'Monitoring services in particular are concerning, in that the team responsible has been more than halved since 2012-13 and at the same time their responsibilities and scope expanded. Even with improvements to processes this has increased risks to service provision, especially in regional areas,' Mr Morgan said.

The new CSCS contract will be providing essentially the same services (minus juvenile services) for much less money – around \$22 million in savings. We hope that this will not come at the cost of quality, decency and safety.

History has proved the contract to be high risk as well as high value. We will continue to monitor the contracts with a focus on ensuring duty of care to those in custody; safety, security and efficiency; that staffing needs are met; and that contract management and monitoring is strong and open.'

Neil Morgan  
**Inspector**

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

**For Further Media Information**

The Inspector, Mr Neil Morgan, will be available for comment from 12noon on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 and can be contacted on 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)).