



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON MONDAY 10 APRIL 2017**

**Report**

***Access to funerals and other compassionate leave for people in custody in Western Australia***

The Inspector of Custodial Services has found that fewer people in custody are accessing compassionate leave to attend funerals or visit dangerously ill relatives. Aboriginal people have been most affected by the decline.

The report released today, is a follow up from a review completed in October 2013. At that time the Inspector found significant deficiencies in Department of Corrective Services' policies and practices with respect to funeral attendance, as well as in financial accountability. Several recommendations were made about the need to improve access to compassionate leave, to improve communication around such leave, and to understand the associated costs.

Although the Department supported all the 2013 recommendations, the latest review showed that this had not led to any improvement.

Launching the report, Deputy Inspector Andrew Harvey said:

We found that the Department has actually further restricted access to compassionate leave despite the known disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people.

Importantly the Department is still not aware of how much it is spending. Four years ago, under former Commissioner Mr Ian Johnson, the Department said it had limited access to funerals to save money, but could not show how much was being saved, or how much funerals were costing. Three years on, there is still no clarity around cost.

The State faces severe budgetary problems, and, cost considerations must obviously be taken into account when approving attendance at a funeral. But the Department needs to be able to identify what those costs are, and to apply them in a manner which does not systemically discriminate against Aboriginal people. It is not doing this.

Access to leave to attend funerals and visit dangerously ill relatives is necessary for people in custody so they can maintain connections with their family and community. While this leave is important for any person in custody, it is especially important for Aboriginal people who have a lower life expectancy and significant cultural obligations to attend funerals. Failing to attend can damage a person's well-being.

Andrew Harvey  
Deputy Inspector

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

#### For Further Media Information

The Deputy Inspector, Mr Andrew Harvey, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Monday 10 April 2017 and can be contacted on 0477 307 559.

The full report will be available on the Inspector's website ([www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au)).