

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2018**

**Report No. 114 – Bandyup Women’s Prison**

The latest inspection report on Bandyup Women’s Prison finds that a drop in prisoner numbers has led to improvements after years of crisis. This drop in numbers offers a unique chance to improve the conditions for women prisoners in WA, now and in the future.

At the time of the inspection in May 2017, Bandyup’s population was only 230 compared with 400 for much of 2016. The drop was due to the opening of a new women’s prison, Melaleuca, in late 2016.

In presenting his report Mr Morgan said:

‘Melaleuca had a difficult first year of operation. But it has provided a much-needed window of opportunity for the Department of Justice to address service shortfalls, infrastructure deficits, and human rights failings at Bandyup. Previous attempts to address Bandyup’s problems failed, but they were always going to fail when the prison was so grossly overcrowded and stressed.

The Department must take advantage of the respite provided by the new prison to do some planning for Bandyup and all other prisons that hold women. Despite their growing numbers in the system, women have been severely disadvantaged over the past decade. They need better female-specific infrastructure, services and programs.

The government’s decision to change Wandoo from a re-entry facility for young men to a women’s drug and alcohol rehab facility also presents opportunities for better planning and services for women.’

Most female remand prisoners are now held at Melaleuca. This resulted in a more settled and less volatile population at Bandyup. As a result, the prison was much calmer and less stressed. Staff morale and culture had also improved.

The inspection found that service delivery had improved in many areas for the women at Bandyup. But this was largely a reflection of the lower numbers and a changed profile. Even with the lower numbers, however, there were significant infrastructure deficits, and little evidence of longer term strategic planning.

Mr Morgan said:

‘Substantial changes at the prison have been relatively small. It seems to have been ‘business as usual’ rather than a time for planning and change.

In terms of the prison itself, I am concerned that the Superintendent who helped to drive improvements at Bandyup has moved to another prison, and some of the other experienced managers are undertaking other projects. Bandyup needs a strong, experienced, stable, and women-focused management team.

The advent of Melaleuca has already presented challenges with co-ordination between women's prisons. The pending transition of Wandoo to a women's rehab facility makes it even more urgent for the Department to have a sharper strategic focus on women. For too long, even as their numbers have grown at a faster rate than the men, they have suffered from indifference and structural inequality.

It is important, when the Department's restructure is finalised, that a Director of Women's Services, or equivalent position, is established.'

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 Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 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))