



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

MEDIA RELEASE

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***The digital divide: Access to digital technology for people in custody***

The latest review by the Inspector of Custodial Services, Neil Morgan, has found that Western Australia provides poor access to digital technology for people in custody. He outlined the importance of technology access, stating:

Smart use of technology can increase people's opportunities to stay in contact with family and friends while in custody, making reintegration less confronting. With the right technology, access to legal, health and government services can also be improved. And secure web-based systems and other technologies offer opportunities to increase program and education services in custody.

The Department of Justice (formerly the Department of Corrective Services) has embraced technologies such as electronic monitoring of offenders, surveillance and scanning equipment, and computerised case management and reporting. But this trend has not been extended to using technology to expand services and improve digital literacy of people in custody.

Mr Morgan observed:

There is no centralised coordination or strategy to develop digital technology for people in custody. As a result, progress has been ad hoc and opportunities have been missed. We have fallen behind other states and territories.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of poor access to technology on accessing legal information. These days, the majority of legal practice is electronic, not paper-based. People in custody have the right to view such material in order to prepare their case or discuss a plea. Lawyers told us that, in their view, Departmental policies were not only hindering their ability to share information with clients but were also inconsistently applied.

I am pleased to report that since receiving our draft report the Department has drafted a revised policy and has committed to ensuring consistency at all prisons. They have also committed to engage with the legal profession to determine how best to manage communication and risks.

Mr Morgan said he was optimistic that the new Department of Justice would lead to better coordination and policy development.

Neil Morgan  
Inspector

For more details, 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 12 noon on Tuesday 27 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)).