



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

Contact with family and friends  
while in custody

November 2018

ISBN: 978-0-6483021-2-4

This report is available on the Office's website and will be made available, upon request, in alternative formats.

# Table of Contents

Inspector's overview .....	i
Executive Summary.....	iii
Conclusion.....	v
1 Telephone use is high but not everyone has equal access .....	1
1.1 Regional and maximum-security prisons provide less access to phones .....	1
1.2 Competition for phones creates prisoner conflict.....	2
1.3 Installing new land line phones is difficult and costly .....	4
1.4 Some prisoners can barely afford the cost of a call per day.....	5
1.5 Officer-initiated calls are a vital service showing responsive staff engagement .....	8
2 Prisoners get visits despite overcrowding and booking difficulties .....	9
2.1 Roebourne Regional Prison is not meeting the legislative requirements for people on remand .....	9
2.2 Population pressures make scheduling visits tight and complex .....	10
2.3 Family and social support influences placement decisions despite population pressures .....	11
2.4 The Department is mitigating the challenges faced by visitors but more can be done .....	14
2.5 Prisoners are not accessing their full visit entitlements.....	18
Appendix A Number of prisoners receiving the remote allowance (April 2018).....	21
Appendix B Proportion of available visiting hours used by prisoners .....	22
Appendix C Department of Justice response to recommendations .....	23
Appendix D Methodology .....	27
Appendix E Bibliography .....	28

## Inspector's overview

The Department of Justice has a responsibility to ensure family and broader relationships are maintained while people are in custody. These relationships are key to being able to successfully re-integrate at the end of a sentence. Once released, family and friends often provide a place to stay, financial support, and a way to reconnect with their community. These factors are essential in reducing reoffending.

In general, the Department is enabling prisoners to maintain these relationships but it is becoming increasingly difficult due to overcrowding in our prisons.

### Phones are used to maintain frequent contact

The easiest way for prisoners to maintain contact is by telephone. An estimated four million calls are made by people in custody across Western Australia each year.

Yet, access to phones is not equal. There are fewer phones in regional prisons, and less opportunity to access them. Similarly, there are less hours in the day when prisoners in maximum security facilities can access phones. Logically people with lower security ratings should have more privileges, but half the population being held in maximum-security facilities are rated medium or minimum. Access to phones for these people should not be less than if they were placed in a facility reflective of their rating.

Overcrowding in prisons is creating more competition for accessing phones. Prisoners have developed their own informal queuing systems to manage and police access. This is risky and prisoners have raised concerns with us about the rising tensions it is causing.

The Department has been relying on old technology to provide phone services to prisons. Adding new phones to existing facilities is expensive. The Department has been slow to adopt new technologies and needs to consider alternatives such as the use of mobile phones and tablets through wireless technology. In its response to this report the Department has stated it is exploring alternatives for prisoner phones, with a solution expected in the first quarter of 2019. We look forward to seeing the proposal and the subsequent implementation.

### Visits are being facilitated but the Department can improve

While phone contact is important, the benefits of having family and friends visit in person cannot be underestimated. People on remand are entitled to daily social visits, and those who are sentenced can have weekly visits. Except for Roebourne Regional Prison, the Department is meeting these requirements.

Roebourne does not provide daily visits meaning people on remand in Roebourne are unable to access their legal entitlements. This was raised in our 2016 inspection and again during this review. The Department has indicated this situation will be resolved by the end of the financial year.

Despite visits session being available daily, in practice:

- people on remand receive around three visits each month.
- sentenced prisoners receive around two visits per month

Access to visits is limited by individual circumstances such as location or distance from family, security rating, and the additional needs of prisoners such as those requiring protection. Although most prisoners are receiving visits, overcrowding and population pressures are placing a strain on the Department's ability to schedule and facilitate regular visits.

One of the major difficulties for visitors is booking a visit. Currently, manual bookings are taken at each facility over the phone by one or two staff members. People are often unable to get through during booking hours. Some visitors told us they had made more than 100 attempts to make a booking. Others reported having to spend days or weeks trying to get through. Anyone cancelling a booking has to go through the same difficult process of trying to call, therefore people rarely cancel when they can no longer attend. A 'no show' can be harmful for the prisoner and may prevent others from accessing a visit as they believe the session is full.

The Department is yet to adopt a modern approach, such as an online booking system, which will make it easier to make and manage bookings. It responded to our recommendation for an online system by stating it is "piloting interim solutions to address the volume of calls". This seems to be about managing the queues rather than making booking easier. Having alternatives to phone bookings and extending the hours in which to book is desperately needed.

On a positive note, we found the Department is treating visitors well and providing much needed family support services for visitors. This is a credit to all staff, and arguably the most important factor in whether a visitor chooses to return.

**Neil Morgan**

**22 November 2018**

# Executive Summary

## Background

The importance of maintaining contact with family for people in custody is recognised in international human rights instruments, legislation, and inspection standards. This recognition reflects the research which has consistently noted that family and social contact is an important protective factor for prisoners as it reduces their sense of isolation, enhances their mental health, and helps maintain their emotional wellbeing (NSW Inspector of Custodial Services, 2015).

Numerous research studies have also found that prisoners who maintain close links with their family and friends during imprisonment are more likely to successfully re-integrate into the community upon their release (Corrective Services NSW, 2012). When a person is released from custody, it is often family and friends who assist them with accommodation, employment, financial support, and re-establishing family ties and social networks (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2011). Therefore, the maintenance of family and social ties during incarceration is an important means of safeguarding the availability of support prior to release.

People in custody generally maintain contact with their family and friends through social visits, telephone, and mail communication. Contact with family and friends is strictly controlled by prison staff. Prisoners can only receive visits from people who have been added to their list of approved visitors. Similarly, all phone contacts must be approved. Phone calls and mail are subject to monitoring, including the recording of all social calls. Visits with family and friends are also monitored using physical and electronic visual surveillance.

The number and frequency of visits and phone calls is influenced by the individual circumstances of prisoners and their family and friends. However, access to visits and calls is also influenced by circumstances beyond a prisoner's control. Organisational factors such as phone operating times, visit session times, and prison policies and procedures also have a role to play in contact with families.

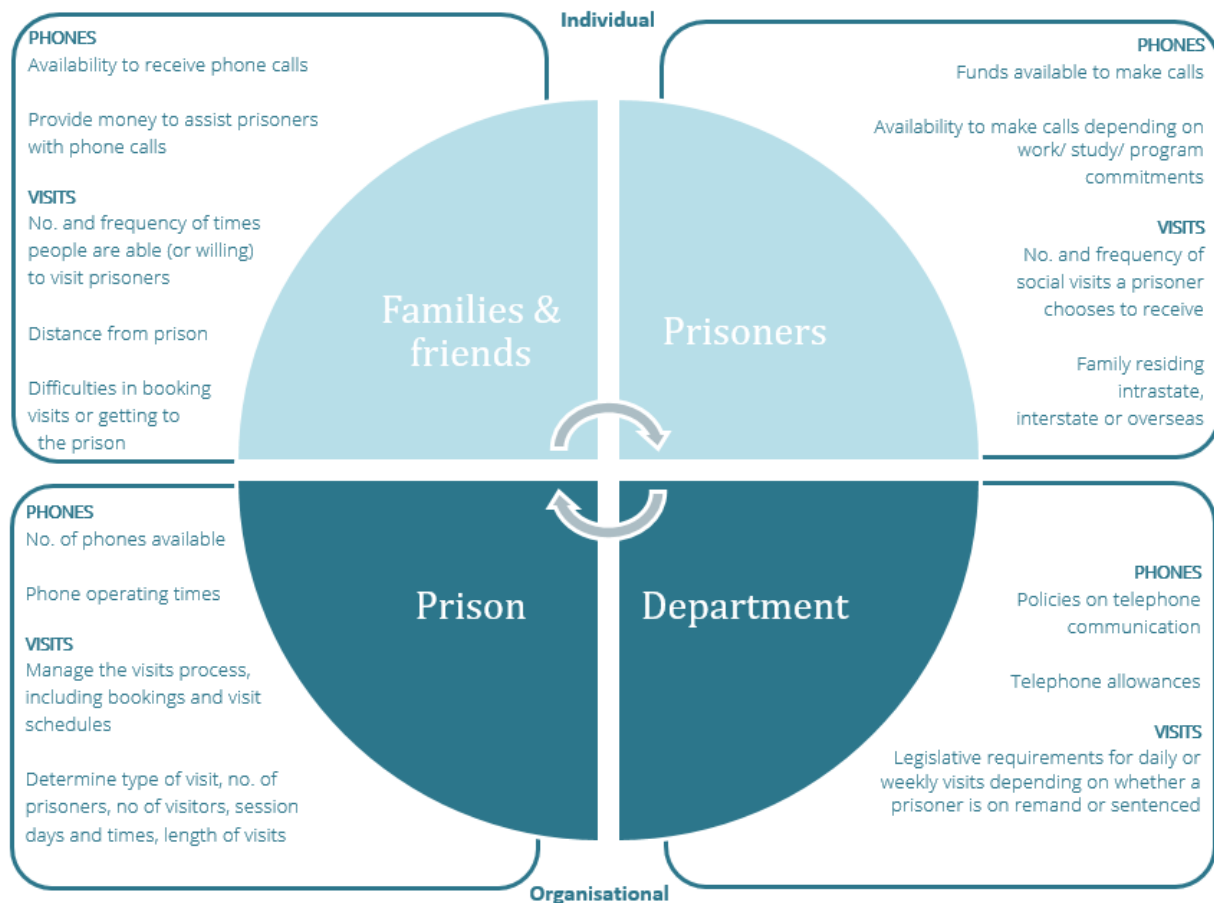


Figure 1 Individual and organisational factors influencing the number of phone calls and visits

In Western Australia, the Department of Justice ('the Department') has a responsibility to ensure family relationships are maintained through social visits, phone calls, and mail communication. It is also important that people in custody are placed in a prison as close as possible to their family, friends, and community so they can receive visits and maintain social ties.

### Key findings

#### Telephone use is high but access is not equal

An estimated four million phone calls are made by people in custody in Western Australia each year, with up to two-thirds of the prison population accessing the phones each day. Despite this, access to phones is not equal, and depends on a prisoner's location, security rating, and how much money they have.

#### Competition for phones increases risk

Overcrowding in some prisons means there is competition for a limited number of phones. This can cause tension among prisoners and potentially causes negative behaviour such as standovers and violence. Ageing infrastructure and other constraints make it difficult for the Department to install additional phones to keep up with demand.

## Overcrowding and inefficient processes are making it more difficult for prisoners to receive visits

The Department is finding it increasingly difficult to meet the legislative requirements for social visits due to overcrowding and inefficient processes, including an outdated visit booking system and complex visit schedules. Most prisons provide less visits than what they are potentially capable of offering, with the capacity of social visits across the estate estimated at about 56.7 per cent of full capacity.

## Population pressures are restricting placement options

Despite the Department's efforts to accommodate the individual placement needs of prisoners, population pressures mean that it is becoming increasingly difficult to place prisoners where they want to be. This means many prisoners cannot access social visits as they are placed away from their family, often during the remand period or even once sentenced.

## The Department is mitigating the barriers faced by visitors but more can be done

The Department has made positive efforts to address some of the barriers for family members visiting people in custody, including the provision of family support services for visitors, and offering special visits during times of need. Prison staff generally treat social visitors professionally and respectfully which makes the process more acceptable for visitors. However, the telephone-based visit booking system is inefficient and outdated, causing frustration for many social visitors trying to book visits.

## Conclusion

The Department is facilitating prisoners' contact with family and friends but population pressures and inefficient processes are making it increasingly difficult to meet legislative requirements.

Overcrowding at some prisons is affecting access to phones and the ability to provide visits for all prisoners. Competition for phones can result in tensions among prisoners, with the phones becoming a commodity as demand exceeds availability. Population growth and overcrowding also means that some prisons are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the visit entitlements for all prisoners. Reduced familial contact can affect the mental health and wellbeing of prisoners, as well as cause strain on family relationships.

The Department has some measures in place to mitigate the barriers associated with maintaining contact with family for people in custody, including considering prisoner's proximity to family when making placement decisions, establishing family support centres, and providing phone allowances. However, population pressures are restricting placement options, family centres are providing fewer services following a recent change in contract, and phone allowances are insufficient to adequately cover the average cost of calls for people in custody.



## Recommendations

Page

<b>Recommendation 1</b> – Consider the use of wireless technology where adding land lines is cost prohibitive	5
<b>Recommendation 2</b> – Increase the remand allowance to reflect the increased costs associated with calling mobile phones	7
<b>Recommendation 3</b> – Review and update the remote allowance to reflect actual STD and international call costs	7
<b>Recommendation 4</b> – Provide daily visits at Roebourne Regional Prison to meet legislative requirements for remand prisoners	10
<b>Recommendation 5</b> – Implement an online booking system for social visits in all prisons	16

# 1 Telephone use is high but not everyone has equal access

Phone contact is, by far, the main way people in custody maintain contact with their family and friends. An estimated four million phone calls are made by prisoners in Western Australia each year. On just one day (Friday 19 January 2018), about two-thirds (63.1%) of the prison population (4,254 prisoners) made 28,603 calls. We would expect these numbers to be even greater over weekends when prisoners and their social contacts are less engaged in activities such as work and education.

The prisoner telephone system is available seven days a week and people in custody find phone contact is the easiest way of maintaining family contact. Prisoner survey data suggests 86.4 per cent of prisoners found it easy to contact their family via the phone. This contrasts with mail communication (78.5%) and visits (67.6%) (OICS, 2018).

However, phone operating times can vary depending on the day of the week, the security rating of the prisoners, and the operational needs of the prison. This means that although people in custody have a minimum entitlement to at least one social call per day, access to phones is unequal. Access depends on a range of factors, some of which are outside the prisoner's control, including their placement and security rating. It can also depend on how much money they have and levels of demand from other prisoners wanting to access the phones.

## 1.1 Regional and maximum-security prisons provide less access to phones

Prisoners in Western Australia can access the phone system, on average, approximately 12 hours per day. However, maximum-security prisons have less access to phones compared to medium- and minimum-security prisons. Maximum-security prisons offer an average of 11 hours' phone access per day, while Acacia Prison (the only medium-security prison) provides access 12 hours per day. Minimum-security prisons provide more than 15 hours per day on average. While it is expected that those with lower security ratings would have more privileges, as at 29 June 2018, 44.8 per cent of the population being held in maximum-security facilities were rated medium or minimum. This meant that 1,352 prisoners were not receiving equal or proportionate access as their counterparts in medium- or minimum-security prisons.

### Limitations to phone access

Phone availability generally corresponds with the hours' prisoners are unlocked from their cells. Most maximum-security prisons lock prisoners in their cells between 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm and do not unlock them again until about 7:00 am. In contrast, minimum-security prisoners are normally locked in cell between 10:00 pm and 10:30 pm until about 6:00 am.

Phones in regional prisons were available for fewer hours compared to the operating times of phones in metropolitan prisons. Regional prisons offered, on average, just less than 12 hours per day, an hour less than the metropolitan average of 13 hours per day. They also had fewer phones with an average ratio of 18 prisoners per phone compared with about 15 prisoners for each phone in the metropolitan prisons.

Regional prisoners often find it difficult to receive visits due to the remoteness of their location and distance from major public transport hubs. Thus, they are heavily reliant on phone calls to maintain family contact. In 2017, an average of about 1,900 adults were placed in regional prisons across

Western Australia on any one day, representing over one-quarter of the total prison population (28.4%).

## 1.2 Competition for phones creates prisoner conflict

During weekdays, people in custody make most of their calls between 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm (57.5%), with the peak period of demand between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm (40% of all calls). The peak period reflects the prison's structured day with a small window to use the phones occurring between prisoners returning to their units after work, study, or other activities throughout the day, to being locked in their cells in the evening. The peak times may also be influenced by prisoners wanting to speak to their children or partners who may have been at school or work during the day.

The small window to make calls means prisoners compete for the phones at the same time. Our most recent inspection at Bunbury Regional Prison found there were long queues for the four phones in the Pre-Release Unit (PRU), which houses 144 prisoners (1 phone to 36 prisoners). All PRU prisoners finished work and returned to the unit at 3:00 pm each day (OICS, 2018).

Competition was also observed at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison. The phones at Eastern Goldfields use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology, using a broadband internet connection instead of analogue land lines. In Unit 3, there were three outdoor phones located close together but the middle phone was not in use. This was due to the volume of the handset, which meant prisoners could not hear conversations properly, particularly when bookended by calls on the other two phones. Therefore, prisoners compete for access to only two phones causing longer lines than if all three phones were operating as intended, and if the phone placement allowed for greater privacy. The women's unit had four phones. All were operating as intended but they were still placed very close to one another restricting privacy.



Figure 2 Phones in the women's unit at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

Between prisons, and even within prisons, the ratio of prisoners to phones differ, disadvantaging some prisoners access to phones. This is explained, in part, by population growth and overcrowding. The larger male maximum-security prisons have been especially impacted by population pressures and reduced phone access within some of the accommodation units. Departmental data indicates there is one phone per 17 prisoners at Casuarina. However, this is an average across the whole

prison and there is a great variance when examined at unit level. Some accommodation units have less access than others. Some accommodation units only have one phone for 32 prisoners.

When there are not enough phones to allow equal access among prisoners to make calls, the competition causes phones to become a commodity. Prisoners often develop their own informal queuing systems to manage and police access, including the order in which they will use the phone. This can be risky and potentially encourages negative behaviour, such as standovers and assaults (NSW Inspector of Custodial Services, 2015).

Between December 2017 and March 2018, we identified three incidents relating to tensions over phones. On two occasions, prisoners had damaged the telephone handsets, rendering the phones inoperable. One incident saw the prisoner threatened by others seeking retribution for breaking the phone. The second incident resulted in the prisoner being assaulted by another prisoner as he had damaged the phone. The third incident occurred as prisoners were queuing up to use the telephones, with a fight starting as a result of one prisoner allegedly 'pushing in'.

Prisoners at Hakea advised us they were concerned about escalating tensions as a direct result of difficulties in accessing phones in their unit. They felt that 24 prisoners to one phone was inadequate to meet everyone's needs, and that competing for a phone was a source of tension and arguments among prisoners.

#### Extract from a letter signed 'Unit 8 Hakea Prison'

*"...[the unit] was originally built and housed single cells. For some time, the unit has been converted into double outs. No further amenities have been added since the rise in the occupants. There is still only one phone on each wing. Each wing houses 24 men. There has been numerous issues regarding the phone usage. To be blunt, one phone is not enough for 24 men to share. We as a group have raised the issue with our unit staff, the Peer Support members, the prison councillors and the independent visitors. To date, we have not been given a solution. 95 per cent of the issues regarding phone usage occurs in the evening, after the 4 pm muster and the evening lockdown, when 24 men quabble (sic) and argue over the phone. Tensions have rose (sic) in the past, and as a side result of us working together and forfeiting of certain people from using the phone each night, have serious problems been avoided. All of this can be solved overnight with one extra phone being added to each wing at a minimum. We have been told by our officers that the phone system cannot accommodate another phone, but given the prison population rising and the issues no phone access creates we as a group feel we need to bring this urgent issue to your attention..."*

To reduce violence in prisons, the United Kingdom recently rolled out secure telephone handsets in cells in 20 prisons, and are in the process of extending this across the entire prison estate. In-cell phones are also seen as a means of reducing the demand for contraband mobile phones, as well as boosting rehabilitation by fostering increased family contact (BBC News, 2018). The use of in-cell telephones is limited to approved contacts and controlled and monitored by staff (National Audit Office, 2013).

Similarly, France recently opened the bidding process for a telecom provider to install landline telephones in 50,000 cells in 178 prisons. The program was launched after a successful trial at a facility in northeast France. The installation of in-cell phones was found to ease tensions inside the prison, as well as assist with the maintenance of family ties. Authorities also noted a 31 per cent drop in contraband mobile phone seizures (Prison Legal News, 2018).

### 1.3 Installing new land line phones is difficult and costly

The Department has progressively built up the number of phones in prisons over the last five years with the total number of phones increasing by 66 between December 2013 to December 2017. However, this figure includes handsets installed in newly-built units or prisons, including Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility, and Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison. Due to the population increase, while the number of phones has increased, the ratio of prisoners to phones has not (1:14 in 2013 compared to 1:16 in 2017).

Adding new phones to existing facilities is expensive. Except for Eastern Goldfields, prisoner phones currently run on an independent analogue network. Monitoring calls requires additional equipment. The installation of new phones at most prisons requires this equipment to be upgraded. It is also difficult to locate and replace copper wiring within the closed prison environment. The Department is required to pay substantial up-front costs for each new phone installed. For example, the cost of installing a new handset in the Management Unit at West Kimberley Regional Prison in 2016 was nearly \$8,500.

Capital equipment, maintenance, operating costs, and software security services for the phone system are amortised over time by the call costs incurred by prisoners. The costs associated with new handsets are also amortised over the life of the contract through the call costs. The phone system is supplied to the Department through a Common Use Agreement (CUA) contract arrangement with NEC which expires in February 2019.

We recognise that the Department currently faces limitations in installing phones in prisons due to costs, contract arrangements, existing infrastructure, and difficulties associated with installing handsets in closed environments. But there are other options. A report by Lord Farmer in the UK, released in August 2017, investigated ways to support prisoners to engage with their families in an effort to reduce reoffending (Farmer, 2017). Lord Farmer found a recurring theme in the UK about the high cost of phone calls in many prisons and suggested that better family contact could be achieved through better use of technology. He noted:

While phone calls are highly valued, people are not communicating in the same ways as they previously did and the prison services need to adapt.

Pima County in the United States experienced similar issues, and are trialling the use of tablets to maintain family contact. Using these tablets, people in custody are able to make phone calls from their cells during most hours of the day, as well as send and receive emails (Napier, 2017). There is no internet access and no social media available through the tablets. Emails cost about 25 cents to send and a call costs about 20 cents a minute. Calls and emails are monitored. Family members cannot directly call a prisoner, but they can contact the prison and ask an inmate to call them at a certain day and time (Coppola, 2017).

While there would be initial costs in establishing a wireless network, and obtaining suitable tablets, moving to wireless technology will avoid the costs associated with adding cabling into units.

**Recommendation 1** – Consider the use of wireless technology where adding land lines is cost prohibitive

#### 1.4 Some prisoners can barely afford the cost of a call per day

Prisoners are required to pay for their social phone calls. If they do not have sufficient funds in their account, they are unable to contact their family or friends. An analysis of all calls for one day showed the total amount spent by prisoners was \$16,151.78, equating to nearly \$6 million per year.

The cost of telephone calls is built into the phone software and is identical across all prison sites, whether private or publicly-operated. Call charges are designed to cover the operating costs including infrastructure, maintenance, and services. Phone call connection services and the cost of phone calls are governed through CUA contract arrangements with AAPT/TPG. The Department does not make a profit from prisoner telephone calls which are made on a cost recovery basis.

Call rates are \$0.29 for a local call, and \$0.29 per minute for national (STD) and mobile calls. GST costs are also applied once the call duration is known and a call connection fee is added for all mobile calls. International call rates are at cost and vary depending on the country called.

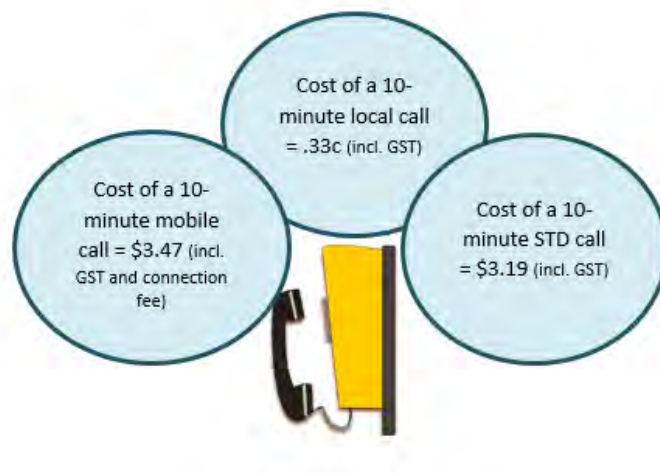


Figure 3 Call charges for prisoners

Nearly 70 per cent of all calls made by prisoners are made to mobile phones (68.9%). This reflects the shift in society towards mobile-phone-only use; whereby 36 per cent of people in Australia had no fixed-line phone in their home in 2016–2017. This has increased from 22 per cent in 2012–2013 (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2017). For many Australians, it has become more economical to use a mobile phone and a lot harder to justify the expense of keeping a landline because most mobile providers now offer unlimited calls and texts (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2017)

The ongoing shift to mobile-phone-only use impacts people in custody as many of their social contacts can only be contacted via mobile. While this might increase the likelihood of successful contact, the downside for calling a mobile is the increased cost incurred. As mobile calls cost more

than local landline calls, people in custody are now spending more money to keep in touch with family and friends. In our snapshot on 19 January 2018, prisoners spent \$13,817.72 on calls to mobile phones in the one day. This represented 85.5% of the total call charges for the day.

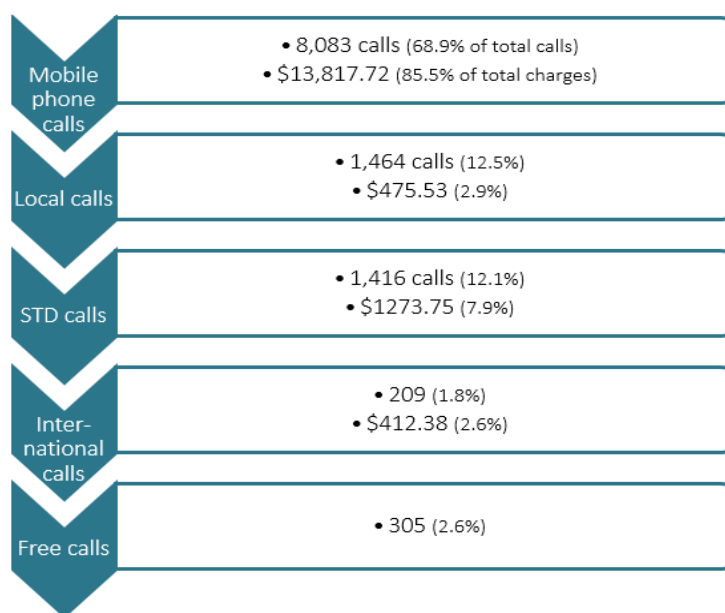


Figure 4 Call type and total expenditure for all calls made by prisoners on 19 January 2018

To pay for phone calls while in custody, people can earn gratuities by engaging in work, education, or vocational training. They can earn higher payments with more engagement. Prisoners who are unable, or unwilling, to work are paid the lowest level of gratuities, earning \$3.15 per day, or \$22.05 a week. As at 29 June 2018, nearly one-third of prisoners were on the lowest level of gratuities (28.8%).

Many prisoners on remand are not engaged in employment, whether through their own choice or difficulties in obtaining work. The *Prison Regulations 1982* (the Regulations) state that remand prisoners, who are presumed innocent and not yet convicted, are not required to work. The intent of the Regulations is that unconvicted prisoners should be able to prepare for their trial, meet any bail conditions that would enable their release, and maintain their community ties and external interests, based on the presumption of innocence (OICS, 2007).

There are also less employment opportunities for remand prisoners. If a remand prisoner wishes to work, the Regulations state that he or she must apply in writing to the superintendent. Our most recent inspection of Hakea Prison found that 91 per cent of prisoners not working were on remand. This was despite almost all having signed a document indicating availability to work (OICS, 2016 ).

The Department recognises the entitlement for remandees to maintain regular contact with family and friends by providing a weekly remand allowance of \$1.65. This equates to five local calls each week. Therefore, people on remand who are not working receive a total of \$3.39 per day. This amount does not cover the cost of a 10-minute mobile call per day (\$3.47). Given prisoners are also required to budget their spending on toiletries and other canteen items this puts unnecessary pressure on prisoners to maintain social contact (particularly if their family members are only contactable via mobile).

In many cases, the families and friends of people in custody provide additional funds to assist prisoners with meeting the costs of their calls and canteen spends. Literature suggests that many of these families are in lower socioeconomic groups and may find it difficult to afford to 'top up' a prisoner's phone or private cash account (Christian, Martinez, & Martinez, 2015). With the increased demand for mobile phone calls, and the associated increased expense, there is a real risk that families and friends may be pressured to provide additional funds to prisoners.

During this review, we found two examples of prisoners threatening family and friends, intimidating them into putting money into their private cash accounts. This is likely to represent the tip of the iceberg as much of this pressure is likely to be more subtle and therefore remain unrecorded.

**Recommendation 2 – Increase the remand allowance to reflect the increased costs associated with calling mobile phones**

### Remote allowances do not reflect policy

Prisoners who are placed in a prison far from their home have a heavy reliance on phone contact as they often find it difficult to receive social visits. They are also required to spend more money on phone calls compared to people who are placed locally due to the higher rates of STD or international calls. For example, on 19 January 2018, a 20-minute call from a prisoner at Acacia Prison to Port Hedland cost \$6.39. A nine-minute phone call from a prisoner at Casuarina Prison to Vietnam cost \$17.79.

Prisoners who are placed in a facility far from their home may be eligible to receive a remote allowance equal to the cost of two free 10-minute calls to family or friends per week. Calls may be intrastate, interstate, or international (Department of Justice, 2014). The distance a person can be from their home, before they are considered remote, varies from facility to facility. Even if the person is beyond this distance the allowance itself is subject to strict eligibility conditions. If the prisoner has sufficient funds to pay for calls themselves, or if they have had a video visit within the past week, they are not eligible to receive the allowance. Prison local orders specify that remote allowances must be applied for in writing before being approved by unit managers. If approved, the prisoners' eligibility for the allowance is monitored on an ongoing basis. They are unable to accumulate unused calls or credits unless in exceptional circumstances approved by the superintendent (Department of Justice, 2014).

Based on departmental policy, a prisoner (eligible for the allowance) making two 10-minute calls to Vietnam should be entitled to about \$36.00 per week (as the cost of a 10-minute call to Vietnam is about \$18.00). However, in practice, all prisoners eligible for the remote allowance receive a flat rate of just \$7.35 per week. The Department is breaching its own policy as eligible prisoners calling some overseas numbers are not receiving a sufficient allowance to cover the costs of two 10-minute calls per week. Conversely, the Department is overpaying some prisoners given the cost of two 10-minute STD calls is \$6.38.

At the time of our review, about 20 per cent of prisoners were receiving the remote allowance (see Appendix A).

**Recommendation 3 – Review and update the remote allowance to reflect actual STD and international call costs**



## 1.5 Officer-initiated calls are a vital service showing responsive staff engagement

Officer-initiated calls are initiated on behalf of prisoners by prison officers allowing staff to respond to an individual's needs as they arise. They also offer an opportunity for staff to build rapport and foster positive relationships with people in custody.

Officer-initiated calls must be approved and recorded, with calls logged through the prisoner telephone system. The calls can be at the expense of the prison or the prisoner depending on the circumstances. They are an important practice that can be approved for several reasons, including:

- compassionate grounds, such as a death or serious illness in the family
- a need to call the family as the prisoner is considered at-risk of self-harm
- upon transfer to a new prison, to inform a family member or friend of their new location
- interprison calls (Department of Justice, 2014).

On 19 January 2018, 305 free calls were made from (or on behalf of) 96 prisoners. About 15 per cent of these calls were to 1800- or 1300- common numbers like Legal Aid and the Aboriginal Legal Service (48 calls). The remaining 257 calls were made to 21 landline numbers and 236 mobile numbers, on behalf of 63 different prisoners. Phone registers kept in various prisons indicate many of these calls were likely to be officer-initiated welfare calls.

During the first few days of imprisonment, people are particularly vulnerable, anxious, and stressed, resulting in an increased risk of suicide or self-harm. Initial contact with their family is often via an officer-initiated call. These calls can provide:

- support and reassurance from the family direct to the prisoner during this critical time
- relief for any concerns the prisoner may hold for family
- the ability to resolve any immediate practical matters, including financial, child care, or housing arrangements.

For newly-received offenders these calls were usually made during the reception process. These calls are also made for prisoners transferring from one prison to another if there is a delay in setting up their phone account at the new prison.

## 2 Prisoners get visits despite overcrowding and booking difficulties

In 2017, the daily average prisoner population was approximately 6,800 people in custody. During this time, there were over 250,000 social visits booked in Western Australian prisons. This represents a significant number of prisoners, as well as their family members and friends interacting with the visits system.

Prison Regulations permit sentenced prisoners to have weekly visits (or about four visits per month) and remand prisoners are entitled to daily social visits (about 30 visits per month). In practice, sentenced prisoners receive approximately two visits per month, while people on remand average about three visits each month.

Access to visit entitlements is limited by individual circumstances such as location or distance from family, security rating, and the additional needs of prisoners such as those requiring protection. Although most prisoners are receiving visits, overcrowding and population pressures are placing a strain on the Department's ability to schedule and facilitate regular visits. It is also becoming more difficult for the Department to place prisoners in their preferred prison so they can access visits.

### 2.1 Roebourne Regional Prison is not meeting the legislative requirements for people on remand

With the exception of Roebourne Regional Prison the Department is meeting its legislative requirements to offer social visits for people in custody. All prisons holding people on remand, except Roebourne, offer daily visit sessions, and many offer multiple visit sessions per day.

Despite 40 per cent of its prisoner population being on remand (approximately 75 people) Roebourne only offers social visits four days per week. The prison's local order states that any additional visits are at the discretion of the superintendent. Nonetheless, this clearly breaches the legislative requirements set out in the Regulations.

Table 1 Visiting sessions for prisons holding remand prisoners

Facilities with remandees	Offer daily visit sessions	Average no. of visit sessions per visiting day
Albany Regional Prison	Yes	1
Bandyup Women's Prison	Yes	3
Broome Regional Prison	Yes	1
Bunbury Regional Prison	Yes	2
Casuarina Prison	Yes	5
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison	Yes	1
Greenough Regional Prison	Yes	2
Hakea Prison	Yes	4
Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility	Yes	2
Roebourne Regional Prison	No	1
West Kimberley Regional Prison	Yes	1

We commented on this as part of our most recent inspection of the prison in 2016, suggesting that the local order should be changed to reflect the legislation (OICS, 2016). It is not clear why Roebourne is not providing the legislative requirements as all other prisons are doing so. West

Kimberley Regional Prison offers daily visits and has a similar number (and proportion) of remand prisoners. Broome Regional Prison has a much smaller remand population than both West Kimberley and Roebourne (with a daily average of about 20 remand prisoners), yet daily visit sessions are provided.

**Recommendation 4** – Provide daily visits at Roebourne Regional Prison to meet legislative requirements for remand prisoners

## 2.2 Population pressures make scheduling visits tight and complex

Overcrowding means it has become more difficult to manage visits for different cohorts in some prisons. Over the last five years, the adult prison population in Western Australia has increased by about 26 per cent. The larger male maximum-security prisons, Casuarina and Hakea, have been particularly impacted, with the daily average population of Casuarina increasing by more than 50 per cent (52.9%) while Hakea's population has grown by 11 per cent.

Five years ago, Casuarina had a relatively small proportion of remand prisoners, totalling about 100 prisoners or about 17 per cent of its population. In 2018, the daily average population of remand prisoners had increased to nearly 450 prisoners (or 47.4% of its population).

To accommodate the increased number of visits required for their burgeoning remand population, Casuarina offers 32 visiting sessions per week, with a maximum capacity of 22 prisoners per session. The visits schedule has become difficult to manage because up to three one-hour visit sessions are offered each morning and afternoon, with only 15 minutes between each session. The tight schedule means that prisoners and visitors do not always receive the one-hour visit they are entitled to. This is due to the time taken to call the prisoner up for the visit, as well as delays in processing visitors in and out of the prison.

Hakea's remand population has increased by 35.4 per cent over the last five years. We would expect a corresponding increase in social visits. However, visits have decreased by 14.8 per cent with only a negligible increase (1.1%) in visits for remand prisoners.

The reduction in visits at Hakea may, in part, be explained by the complex visit schedule. Hakea provides 27 visit sessions per week, with a maximum capacity of 38 prisoners per session. There is an estimated capacity of 1,026 visiting hours per week. However, the visits schedule is complicated, with sessions scheduled and managed in accordance with colour-coded sessions for different prisoner groups. This allows separation of prisoners based on alerts, gang affiliations, restraining orders, and protection status.

Hakea provides four one-hour 'Protection Visit' sessions a week. This means that a remand prisoner on protection status at Hakea cannot access their daily visit entitlements. On 29 June 2018, there were 129 protection prisoners at Hakea, most of whom were on remand (69.8%). During the review period, protection prisoners accessed 913 social visits, with 792 visits by remandees (86.7%). On average, each protection prisoner on remand received approximately two social visits each month. This is less than the state average for remandees of approximately three social visits each month.

	8:30 am–9:30 am	10:00 am –11:00 am	1:00 pm–2:00 pm	2:30 pm–3:30 pm
Monday	Orange group	Green group	Green group	Purple group
Tuesday	Protection Visit	Purple group	Green group	Orange group
Wednesday	Late unlock (no visits)	Protection Visit	Orange group	Green group
Thursday	Protection Visit	Orange group	Purple group	Green group
Friday	Green group	Purple group	Green group	Orange group
Saturday	Purple group	Green group	Orange group	Green group
Sunday	Protection Visit	Orange group	Green group	Purple group

Figure 5 Complex Hakea Prison visiting schedule, March 2018

### 2.3 Family and social support influences placement decisions despite population pressures

People in custody are given an active role in deciding their prison placement and, where possible, the Department aims to place people at their preferred location. Other drivers such as the need to attend a program or security issues takes precedence over prisoner preference but where these factors are not present, the preference is facilitated. Many prisoners want to be located at the prison which is closest for their family and friends to travel so they can receive visits.

People are interviewed on initial entry into custody and at least on an annual basis once they have been sentenced. Staff use detailed checklists to capture relevant information about a prisoner’s family and social circumstances, including receiving, or the expectation of visits. During these interviews prisoners identify their preferred prison placement.

A case study analysis of 50 prisoners showed only three people were not placed in their preferred prison. Two of these prisoners were recently sentenced and their individual management plans, which identifies their placement preference, were outstanding. The remaining prisoner was unable to be placed in his preferred prison for security reasons (although he was still the same distance from his family).

Although there are less placement options available for remand prisoners, the Department also considers family support when determining their placement. For example, five remand prisoners were transferred between metropolitan and regional locations to facilitate visits. The remaining 11 remand prisoners were either released from custody or able to remain in the metropolitan area to access visits.

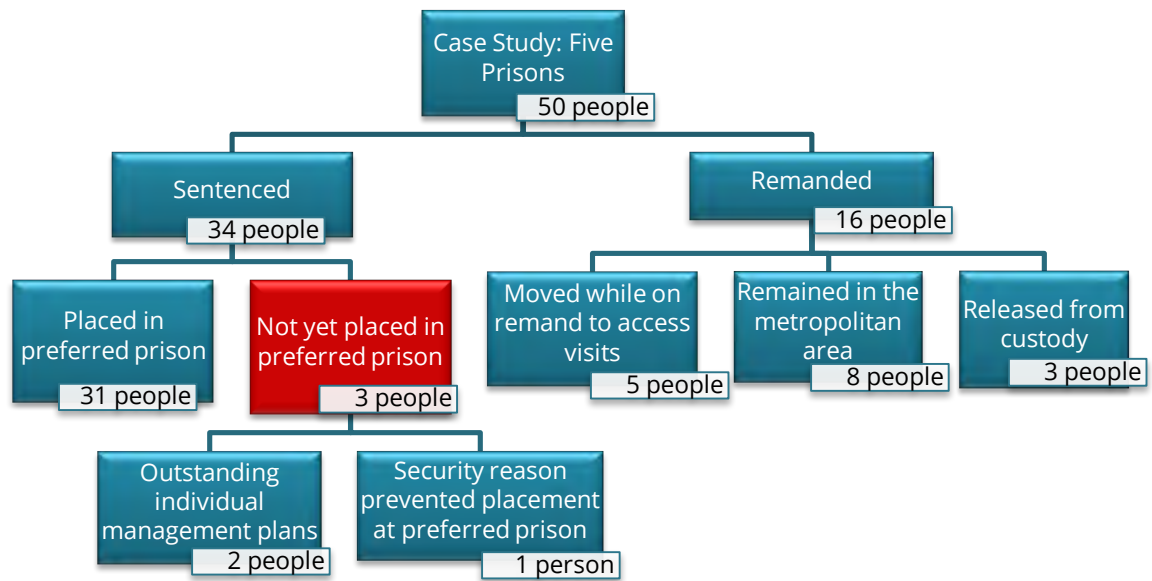


Figure 6 Case study analysis of 50 prisoners and their preferred placement

When a prisoner is not placed in their preferred prison, they can appeal the decision. Only a very small proportion of prisoners use the appeal process indicating the Department is meeting most prisoners' placement expectations. Between January to October 2017, 40 appeals were lodged out of 2,752 placement decisions (1.4%).

Of these, only 11 prisoners appealed placement decisions based on distance from family. Three of these appeals were upheld and the prisoners were transferred to their preferred prison as soon as possible. Eight appeals were dismissed but five of these were eventually transferred to their preferred prison at a later stage and two were unable to transfer due to management or security reasons.

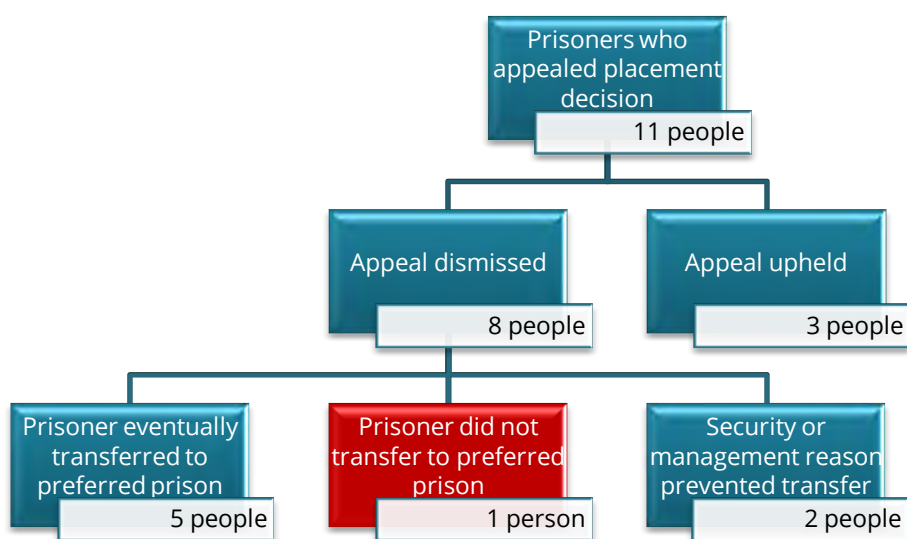


Figure 7 Placement decisions appealed by prisoners (based on distance from family)

Only one person who appealed their placement decision was unable to transfer to her preferred prison. The prisoner has transferred nine times since coming into custody in late 2010, cycling between Bandyup, Greenough, and West Kimberley prisons on multiple occasions. She has spent nearly half of her custodial sentence in the regional prisons, despite her family and friends residing in the Perth metropolitan area. In total, she spent approximately three and a half years at West Kimberley and Greenough receiving no social visits. This is in contrast with the times she was placed at Bandyup, where she received regular visits. Departmental notes regarding her placements indicate that the prisoner was unable to progress to minimum-security for some time due to the length of her sentence and this restricted some of her placement options. However, on two occasions she was moved from Bandyup to the regional prisons due to population pressures.

### Population pressures restrict placement options

Although the Department aims to place prisoners at their preferred prison, the growth in the prison population has placed pressure on the prison system. We are aware of placements that are made purely to ease population pressure, such as in our case study below. This happens often when a new facility is being filled.

Population pressures can restrict placement options for some prisoners, as well as extend the waiting period for transfers to preferred prisons. Consequently, some prisoners are placed away from their family and are unable to access social visits for extended periods throughout their sentence.

On 29 June 2018, there were 6,857 adults in custody, 616 of whom were waiting for an approved transfer to another prison (9.0%). Of the prisoners waiting to be transferred, 235 had been on the transfer list for longer than eight weeks (38.1%). The remaining 381 prisoners had been waiting less than eight weeks for their transfer (62.0%). Sometimes prisoners on the transfer list cannot be transferred due to movement alerts. Movement alerts can include:

- the need for a prisoner to complete a program or training course prior to transfer
- requirement for a medical assessment or treatment
- security reasons.

Of the 235 prisoners awaiting transfer for more than eight weeks, 169 prisoners (71.9%) had been waiting for reasons unrelated to movement alerts. Population pressures can explain much of why they still awaited transfer given about one-quarter of prisoners (waiting longer than eight weeks without a movement alert) were waiting to transfer to Acacia Prison. Acacia is the largest prison in Western Australia and the only medium-security prison. It is privately-run by Serco and operates near full capacity, with incoming transfers dependent on available beds.

About 17 per cent of prisoners had also been waiting longer than eight weeks to transfer to Bunbury Regional Prison. Bunbury offers a range of therapeutic programs and has a PRU for minimum-security prisoners. At the time of our inspection of Bunbury in September 2017, the main prison at Bunbury was operating at 50 per cent above its design capacity of 150 and the PRU was 70 per cent above its design capacity (OICS, 2018). The lack of available beds is preventing those wishing to transfer.

The following case study illustrates how population pressures have impacted one prisoner, in terms of his ability to receive social visits.

### Case study

On 7 July 2017, a prisoner was remanded in custody at Hakea Prison. Due to population pressures, he was moved to Casuarina Prison on 25 August 2017, where he stayed for just over two weeks. During his time at both prisons he received three social visits from family residing in the Perth metropolitan area.

He was transferred to Albany Regional Prison on 11 September 2017, due to population pressures at Casuarina. This was despite him having no family in Albany and indicating he did not expect to receive visits while there. He remained at Albany for over two months and did not receive a visit.

He was transferred back to Hakea on 14 November 2017 for court. He remained at Hakea for about three months, receiving three social visits. On 16 November 2017, he requested to remain at a metropolitan prison as his mother had terminal cancer and was residing in Perth.

Despite the request, he was transferred to Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison on 7 February 2018 for just over six weeks, receiving no visits. The transfer was again due to population pressures.

On the 22 March 2018, he was transferred to Casuarina for another court appearance. Upon being sentenced, the prisoner returned to Eastern Goldfields on 11 April 2018, where he stayed for just over three weeks without any visits.

He was then sent back to Casuarina on 3 May 2018 to have an initial individual management plan done. He stayed at Casuarina for only four days, during which time there was no record of a plan being completed. He was then moved back to Albany, due to population pressures. He remains at Albany and has yet to receive a visit.

Most male remandees from the metropolitan area are placed in the maximum-security facilities of Hakea and Casuarina. Overcrowding at these two prisons has placed considerable pressure on the placement of remand prisoners, with many male remandees from the metropolitan area now being placed at regional prisons. On 29 June 2018, 49 of the 106 remandees at Albany Regional Prison were either from Perth or other regional areas (46.2%), and 42 were foreign nationals. Only nine were from Albany or surrounding areas. The reception address (or family location) could not be determined for the remaining six prisoners.

## 2.4 The Department is mitigating the challenges faced by visitors but more can be done

The experience associated with visiting a prison can influence the frequency and levels of family and social support provided to prisoners. Staff are treating visitors well which is essential for the visitor to have a positive experience, but the ability to book a visit is made unnecessarily difficult by poor booking systems.

## The booking system is inefficient and outdated

The telephone-based visit booking system for social visits is a costly and inefficient system, requiring one or more staff members to manually book social visits at each prison. Social visitors have a limited window to book visits. Bookings can only be made on week days with booking times restricted to about five hours each day. Visitors also face difficulties in getting through to the booking system to book visits due to engaged signals, recorded messages, or waiting on hold for a long time.

Based on a visitor survey we conducted, 58 out of 71 respondents experienced difficulties booking visits due to an inability to get through to the visits booking phone number. Twenty-three respondents reported having to make more than 10 calls to finally get through to make their booking. Nearly a third of respondents (20) also reported that their inability to get through to book a visit stopped them, or sometimes stopped them, from visiting. Some respondents reported they had made more than 100 attempts to make a visit booking. Others reported having to spend days or weeks trying to get through.

These results were confirmed by complaints made to the Department's complaint service ACCESS. Nearly one-third of complaints made by family and community members to the Department about visits related to visit bookings and difficulties in getting through to book a visit (32.9%).

We tested the visit booking system for five prisons over several days in February and May 2018 and experienced similar difficulties at some prisons. On 7 May 2018, 10 phone calls were made to Bandyup Women's Prison and seven to Hakea Prison, between 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm. Each attempt was met with a busy signal and no option to be placed on hold or record a message. On 15 February 2018, a call to the Casuarina Prison visit booking number was answered after a 23-minute wait.

Five attempts were made to contact visitor bookings at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison on different times and days. Three were met with a recorded message which looped back on itself and never progressed to being able to make a booking. Two successful calls were answered immediately.

It is also incredibly difficult for people to cancel a booking. Between November 2017 and January 2018, 11,426 booked visits were not attended by visitors. Of these, 3,203 visitors notified the prison and cancelled the visit (28.1%). A small number of visitors cancelled their visit upon arrival due to drugs being indicated (12 visitors). The remaining 8,211 visitors failed to attend without notification (71.9%). The only way to cancel a booked visit is by calling the prison visit booking line. Cancelled visits can have a negative impact on a prisoner's mental health, as well as increase risk as prisoners are often left waiting in a holding cell for a visit that does not happen. Furthermore, not turning up for a visit on the day also means that other visitors may have missed out on the opportunity to visit. This is because the visit session may have been full when they tried to book.

Karnet Prison Farm is the only prison which facilitates online bookings for social visitors. The online booking form is easy to complete, with visitors entering details about themselves, the prisoner they intend on visiting, and the dates and times of their preferred visit. About one in five visit bookings at Karnet are currently made through the online system (20.9%). However, even this system has its limitations. Bookings cannot be cancelled through the online form, so any changes to plans or simply mistakes while making a booking may result in an unattended visit.



Bookings for social visits in the rest of the custodial estate can only be made by contacting the prison directly by phone. An online booking system should not replace bookings by phone because not all visitors will have access to the internet. However, a supplementary automated online booking system, like that at Karnet, could alleviate many of the issues associated with the current phone booking and cancellation system. This is particularly so given Western Australia's government services are increasingly becoming digitalised with online self-services designed to streamline interactions with government agencies. Online bookings offer several advantages over phone-based bookings including:

- flexibility in booking times – bookings can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- reduction in 'no show' visits (it is easier for visitors to cancel their booking online if this function is available)
- reduced workloads for visit booking staff (less manual processing)
- automated emails or text messages for confirmation and reminders of the booking.

### **Recommendation 5 – Implement an online booking system for social visits in all prisons**

#### **Prison staff treat visitors well despite intense security measures**

Social visitors are subjected to a range of security and searching procedures which are designed to reduce the introduction of contraband into the prison. Visitors experience different levels of security and searching depending on the prison they visit. These procedures can be intimidating, particularly for a person visiting a prison for the first time. Despite this, prison staff generally treat visitors well, making the visits experience as positive as possible.

Based on our visitor survey, staff attitudes or behaviour were not identified as a major barrier to visits. Most survey respondents did not consider prison security and searching procedures, including the use of drug detection dogs, to be a problem they experienced or felt they could not manage.

This is confirmed by the low level of complaints made by visitors about their treatment by prison staff. In 2017, 160 complaints were made to the Department about social visits. Of these, only three complaints were made by family or community members in relation to how staff treated visitors (1.9%).

We also observed positive treatment of visitors by staff during our site visits to Acacia, Bandyup, Casuarina, Eastern Goldfields, and Hakea prisons. Prison staff were professional and courteous towards visitors before, during and after visit sessions, providing information and explanation when needed.

#### **Family support centres provide important services that have recently been reduced**

Family and friends visiting prisoners, particularly for the first time, can feel daunted by the prison environment. They may also need information, advice, and support to assist with the visits process and the incarceration of their family member. Consequently, the Department provides a range of support services designed to assist social visitors. These are largely provided through the operation of family support centres. These centres provide facilities and services for visitors while they are waiting for a visit. They can be located external to the prison in stand-alone buildings, or within the

prison itself. The types of support provided varies depending on the prison; however, they generally include:

- information and advice to visitors about the visits process, including session times, dress code, and identification requirements
- assistance with statutory declarations and processing of visitors prior to the visit
- emotional support including family counselling or referrals to other agencies
- welfare assistance including emergency relief such as financial aid, food, and clothing
- practical support to visitors, including lockers, toilets, and refreshments – all of which are available to access prior to, and after, the visit.

Family support centres are available at most of the larger, publicly-run metropolitan prisons and some regional prisons. The support services provided at these centres are outsourced by the Department to not-for-profit service providers.

The privately-run prisons operate their own external visits centres, which provide a similar type of service. All prisons with a family support centre or external visits centre require visitors to check-in at the centre first, before proceeding through to the main prison visiting area.

Recent contract changes have reduced family support services in Boronia Pre-Release Centre, Karnet Prison Farm, and Hakea Prison. The Department's contract for Adult Justice Services rehabilitation and reintegration programs was put out to tender in mid-2017. As part of the wider tender process, the service delivery requirements for the family support centres at the metropolitan prisons changed.

At the time this review commenced (December 2017), Outcare were providing family support services for the metropolitan prisons of Bandyup, Boronia, Casuarina, Hakea, Karnet, and Wooroloo. On 15 December 2017, the Department awarded new contracts to Wungening Aboriginal Corporation (Wungening) to run the family support centres in the metropolitan area, with the new service agreements commencing on 1 April 2018. The request for tender saw a change in the service delivery requirements for the family support services, which included:

- the removal of family support services at Karnet Prison Farm and Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women
- reduced operating hours for the family support centre at Hakea Prison, including the removal of the service during weekends
- an increase of service hours at the Casuarina Prison family support centre (in line with current visiting times).

Saturdays are the busiest visiting day at Hakea, with 17 per cent of all visits being held on Saturdays. Sundays are also quite busy, representing 15.3 per cent of all visits. However, the Department's tender request removed the requirement to provide family support services at Hakea's family support centre during weekends. This presents a reduction in service for a remand prison which offers eight visiting sessions during weekends.

The handover of family support services from Outcare to Wungening did not go smoothly. Despite this, there did not appear to be any disruption to social visits at the affected prisons during the final

handover, which occurred over the 2018 Easter weekend. There were 448 successful social visits recorded for Bandyup, Boronia, Casuarina, Hakea, Karnet, and Wooroloo on Saturday 30 March (the final day of visitor processing by Outcare). This compared with 434 successful social visits for these prisons on the following day, Sunday 1 April 2018, when the Wungening contract started.

It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the new contract arrangements and change in service delivery requirements. However, we will continue to monitor any potential impacts to family support services as part of our normal inspection activities.

### Special visits provide needed flexibility

The Department makes special provisions for visits on compassionate grounds, known as 'special visits'. They give staff the option to facilitate visits in exceptional circumstances, over and above the regular visit entitlements. They also provide flexibility for visits outside set visiting hours when needed.

Between 1 November 2017 and 31 January 2018, there were 1,688 special visits recorded. This represented 3.8 per cent of the almost 44,000 successful social visits held during this time.

However, the number of special visits is inflated because the Department does not collect consistent, reliable information which accurately reflects the number of special visits provided. Over 80 per cent of special visits at Pardelup Prison Farm recorded were in fact 'e-visits' (video link or Skype visits). Similarly, Acacia Prison, Albany Regional Prison, and Roebourne regional prisons also recorded many 'e-visits' as special visits, overstating the number of special visits logged.

Special visits can be arranged for a variety of reasons including:

- a bereavement or serious illness in the immediate family
- a prisoner who has immediate family member(s) visiting from interstate or overseas
- visitors who cannot legitimately attend set visiting days
- official visits for family purposes (e.g. the Department of Child Protection may bring children into the prison to visit their parents)
- visits for some protection prisoners who are unable to attend mainstream visiting sessions.

Special visits are not referenced in departmental policy. Instead they are included in local orders and generally need to be applied for in writing by the prisoner. Supporting documentation is required to confirm the reason for the special visit and prior notice is required, except in the case of a death or serious illness of an immediate family member. Each prison is responsible for the application, approval, and recording of special visits.

## 2.5 Prisoners are not accessing their full visit entitlements

The difficulties booking, cancelling and scheduling visits, and the distance visitors need to travel to see a prisoner inevitably influences the number of visits a prisoner receives. In addition, some prisoners and their visitors may choose to have less visits that they are legally entitled to. This results in prisoners not accessing their full entitlements. Sentenced prisoners receive approximately two visits per month, while people on remand average about three visits each month.

Approximately one-third of the prison population are on remand. Although there are less people on remand, their daily visit entitlement means they should be accessing about 75 per cent of all visits. However, remand prisoners are only accessing about one-third of social visits.

People in minimum-security prisons accessed more visits than those placed in medium- and maximum-security prisons. Prisoners in minimum-security prisons averaged about four social visits per month, while those in maximum-security prisons averaged about three visits per month. Prisoners in the regional prisons of Albany, Roebourne, Broome, and West Kimberley had the lowest number of social visits per prisoner, with an average of one or less social visits per month for each prisoner.

Table 2 Number of social visits in three-month period (1 November 2017 to 31 January 2018)

Facility	Daily average population	Number of social visits	Approximate number of visits per month per prisoner
<b>Maximum-security</b>			
Albany Regional Prison	456	954	>1
Bandyup Women's Prison	227	2,146	3
Casuarina Prison	942	7,184	3
Hakea Prison	981	7,777	3
Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility	234	1,956	3
<b>Medium-security</b>			
Acacia Prison	1,463	8,409	2
<b>Minimum-security</b>			
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women	88	1,197	5
Karnet Prison Farm	344	2,731	3
Pardelup Prison Farm	91	519	2
Wandoo Reintegration Facility	55	835	5
Wooroloo Prison Farm	374	2,892	3
<b>Multipurpose-security</b>			
Broome Regional Prison	80	328	1
Bunbury Regional Prison	348	2,760	3
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison	292	1,787	2
Greenough Regional Prison	303	1,621	2
Roebourne Regional Prison	193	479	>1
West Kimberley Regional Prison	207	393	>1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,678</b>	<b>43,968</b>	<b>2</b>

Visit sessions are often not full. The maximum number of prisoners physically permitted to attend each visits session varies between facilities based on infrastructure and staffing. Potential visiting capacity was measured by multiplying the number of visiting hours at each prison by the maximum number of prisoners physically permitted to attend each session. In the three-month period from 1 November to 31 January there was 102,992 hours available for visits across all prisons, yet just over half these hours (58,421 or 56.7%) of these hours were used for visits. This means visit slots are regularly available for additional visits.

The extent to which full capacity is used varies greatly between prisons. Minimum-security prisons generally operate visits close to full capacity. Visits at Pardelup Prison Farm reached an estimated

99.8 per cent of total capacity while Boronia Pre-Release Centre operated at 92.1%. However, the number of visits at some regional prisons were well below capacity with Broome and West Kimberley regional prisons at less than 25 per cent of their potential. A breakdown of capacity by prison is in Appendix B.

It is impossible to use the data to unpick why this occurs. It could be because prisoners and visitors choose to visit less often. It may be because people were unable to cancel a booking. It could be because trying to separate groups of prisoners results in a loss of visiting capacity, or it could even be because people are simply frustrated by the poor booking system. It is likely a combination of several factors. A greater understanding of the drivers behind the lack of uptake is required to determine if further action is needed.

## Appendix A Number of prisoners receiving the remote allowance (April 2018)

Facility	Daily average population	No. of prisoners receiving remote allowance	% of prison population
Acacia Prison	1,471	72	4.9
Albany Regional Prison	468	260	55.6
Bandyup Women's Prison	258	30	11.6
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women	88	6	6.8
Broome Regional Prison	90	28	31.1
Bunbury Regional Prison	359	19	5.3
Casuarina Prison	948	58	6.1
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison	319	210	65.8
Greenough Regional Prison	305	136	44.6
Hakea Prison*	NA	NA	NA
Karnet Prison Farm	351	9	2.6
Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility	238	9	3.8
Pardelup Prison Farm	94	60	63.8
Roebourne Regional Prison	185	60	32.4
West Kimberley Regional Prison	213	140	65.7
Wooroloo Prison Farm	420	17	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,920</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>19.2</b>

\*Data was not available for Hakea Prison

## Appendix B Proportion of available visiting hours used by prisoners

The potential capacity for visiting hours of each facility was estimated by multiplying the number of visiting hours at each prison by the maximum number of prisoners physically permitted to attend each session. This was compared to the actual hours' prisoners received visits.

Table 3 Potential and estimated capacity of visits by facility: 1 November 2017 to 31 January 2018

Facility	No. of (actual) social visiting hours	Potential capacity (visiting hours)	Estimated capacity of social visiting hours used (%)
<b>Maximum-security</b>			
Albany Regional Prison	1,717	3,217	53.4
Bandyup Women's Prison	2,146	3,380	63.5
Casuarina Prison	7,184	9,152	78.5
Hakea Prison	7,777	13,338	58.3
Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility	1,956	7,280	26.9
<b>Medium-security</b>			
Acacia Prison	8,409	20,475	41.1
<b>Minimum-security</b>			
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women	2,394	2,600	92.1
Karnet Prison Farm	5,462	8,320	65.6
Pardelup Prison Farm	2,595	2,600	99.8
Wandoo Reintegration Facility	1,253	2,184	57.4
Woorloo Prison Farm	5,784	7,800	74.2
<b>Multipurpose-security</b>			
Broome Regional Prison	853	3,796	22.5
Bunbury Regional Prison	5,520	5,460	98.9
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison	2,681	3,159	84.9
Greenough Regional Prison	1,621	2,028	79.9
Roebourne Regional Prison	479	1,248	38.4
West Kimberley Regional Prison	590	3,380	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,421</b>	<b>102,992</b>	<b>56.7</b>



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Justice**

# **Response to the review:**

## **Contact with family and friends while in custody**

**November 2018**



The Department of Justice welcomes the review into Contact with family and friends while in custody and acknowledges the review key findings;

- Telephones use is high but access is not equal.
- Competition for phones increases risk.
- Overcrowding and inefficient processes are making it more difficult for prisoners to receive visits.
- Population pressures are restricting placement options.
- The Department is mitigating the barriers faced by visitors but more can be done.

The Department has reviewed the report and noted a level of acceptance against the five recommendations.

Appendix A contains a comment for your attention and consideration.

## Response to Recommendations

- 1 Consider the use of wireless technology where adding land lines is cost prohibitive.**

**Response:**

The Department acknowledges that with emerging technology and increasing population demands, there are benefits from exploring other technologies to maintain social support.

The Department is investigating alternatives to landlines as part of its transition to GovNext ICT services. GovNext vendors will be engaged to identify a fit for purpose prisoner telephony solution in Q1 2019. This solution may or may not include wireless technology.

Responsible Business Area: Corporate Services  
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2019  
Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle

- 2 Increase the remand allowance to reflect the increased costs associated with calling mobile phones.**

**Response:**

With the introduction of the new PTS call service provider the Department intends to introduce a flat fee per call for all calls across the network irrespective of call type whilst the current charging regime exists (stage 1). Once the GovNext solution is introduced then a review of the pricing will be required (Stage 2) and a new pricing model implemented.

Responsible Business Area: Corporate Services  
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2019  
Level of Acceptance: Noted

- 3 Review and update the remote allowance to reflect actual STD and international call costs.**

**Response:**

The Department maintains that it is important for prisoners to maintain contact with their family, friends and community. It is acknowledged that the requirement (as set out in Policy Directive 36) to provide remote prisoners with two free 10-minute calls per week, is not being met consistently across the State.

The Department's Operating Standards & Procedures Branch will monitor compliance of the remote phone allowance while conducting prison compliance reviews. Findings will be provided for consideration and action.

Response to the review:  
Contact with family and friends while in custody

---

A reminder will be provided to all prisons that Policy Directive 36 requires eligible remote/out of country prisoners to be provided with an allowance sufficient to cover two 10-minute calls to their family/friends, and not a set amount decided locally.

Responsible Business Area: Adult Justice Services  
Proposed Completion Date: 30 June 2019  
Level of Acceptance: Supported

**4 Provide daily visits at Roebourne Regional Prison to meet legislative requirements for remand prisoners.**

Response:  
The Department acknowledges that Roebourne Regional Prison has experienced issues in being able to meet the legislative requirements. Strategies will be developed in order to resolve the issues.

Responsible Business Area: Roebourne Regional Prison  
Proposed Completion Date: 30 June 2019  
Level of Acceptance: Supported

**5 Implement an online booking system for social visits in all prisons.**

Response:

The Department acknowledges that population pressures has resulted in deficiencies in being able to meet the demands of visits, specifically at the prisons with a large number of remandees. An online booking system would greatly assist to reduce the issue of visitors unable to contact the prisons due to wait times.

The Department is piloting interim solutions to address the volume of calls related to booking prison visits. This includes implementation of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) queuing system at Hakea Prison on 16 October 2018 with plans to pilot SMS confirmations of visitor bookings and booking visits via an online interface by December 2018. Once the pilot is evaluated, fit for purpose solutions will be extended across all prisons in 2019. For the longer term, a solution that is fully integrated with TOMS is being explored.

Responsible Business Area: Knowledge Information and Technology  
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2019  
Level of Acceptance: Supported

## Appendix D Methodology

Metadata was extracted from prison telephones for all phone calls for the selected day of Friday 19 January 2018. This data was analysed to identify the volume, type, time, and cost of calls being made by prisoners. Departmental information regarding the number of phones in each prison, installation costs, phone operating times, and call cost schedules were also examined.

A series of data sets were obtained from the Department's Total Offender Management Solution (TOMS) database, including standardised TOMS reports and customised standard query language data extraction. These data sets were used to determine demographic information, prisoner visits, placements, transfer waiting lists, and incidents.

We conducted site visits to five facilities in February and March 2018. During these visits, we observed the processing of social visitors in each prison. This included their attendance at family support centres or external visit centres, the treatment of visitors by staff, and searching and security procedures. Discussions were also held with visitors and prisoners about their experiences with social visits and phone communication.

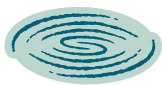
In March 2018, we distributed a visitor survey which yielded 75 responses. The survey was open to all social visitors attending Bandyup Prison, Hakea Prison, and Casuarina Prison during the month of March. The survey was designed to identify any issues or barriers which may have affected a person's ability to attend social visits, including difficulties booking visits, distance, or transportation.

We examined various departmental policy documents, as well as complaints data, visit schedules and session times, service provider contracts, and phone allowances data. Case study analyses were also undertaken, including a case study of 50 randomly selected prisoners from five prisons. Placement decisions recorded on TOMS were examined for each prisoner to identify if the Department had considered the prisoner's preferred prison location and/or family support.

Finally, meetings were held with various stakeholders, including Outcare, a not-for-profit organisation operating the family support centres at the time our review commenced. Meetings were also held with staff from the Department, including the Acting Director Sentence Management, Assistant Director Community Contracts Procurement and Administration, Assistant Director Monitoring and Compliance, Assistant Director Drug Mitigation, Security and Response Services, and Manager Aboriginal Visitor Scheme.

## Appendix E Bibliography

- Australian Communications and Media Authority. (2017). *Communications Report 2016-17*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- BBC News. (2018, July 10). <https://www.bbc.com/news/>. Retrieved from www.bbc.com: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-44775937>
- Christian, J., Martinez, D., & Martinez, D. (2015). *Beyond the shadows of the prison: Agency and resilience among prisoners' family members*. Michigan: Michigan Publishing. Retrieved from University of Michigan Groves Monographs on Marriage and Family.
- Coppola, M. (2017, November 27). *Inmate use of computer tablets in Pima County*. Retrieved from <https://techbeat.justnet.org/inmate-use-computer-tablets-pima-county/>
- Corrective Services NSW. (2012). *Maintaining the Link: A Survey of visitors to New South Wales Correctional Centres*. Sydney: Corrective Services NSW.
- Department of Justice. (2014, June 26). Policy Directive 36 - Communication. Perth, Western Australia,
- Farmer, L. (2017). *The importance of strengthening prisoner' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Minnesota Department of Corrections. (2011). *The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism*. Minnesota: Department of Corrections.
- Napier, M. D. (2017, September 22). Media Release: New developments within the Corrections Bureau. Pima County, Arizona, USA: Pima County Sheriff's Department.
- National Audit Office. (2013). *Managing the prison estate*. London: National Audit Office.
- NSW Inspector of Custodial Services. (2015). *Making connections: Providing family and community support to young people in custody*. Sydney: NSW Inspector of Custodial Services.
- OICS. (2007, April 19). Code of Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services. Perth, WA, Australia: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.
- OICS. (2016 ). *Report of an Announced Inspection of Hakea Prison*. Perth: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.
- OICS. (2016). *106: Report of an Announced Inspection of Roebourne Regional Prison*. Perth: OICS.
- OICS. (2018). *115: Inspection of Bunbury Regional Prison*. Perth: OICS.
- OICS. (2018, April). Combined 5th and 6th Round Pre-Inspection Survey Data: November 2015 to March 2017 . Perth, WA, Australia.
- Prison Legal News. (2018, January 31). <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news>. Retrieved from www.prisonlegalnews.org: <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2018/jan/31/french-officials-install-phones-50000-prison-cells/>



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

Level 5, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street  
Perth, Western Australia 6000  
Telephone: +61 8 6551 4200  
Facsimile: +61 8 6551 4216

[www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au)