



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2018 INSPECTION OF BORONIA  
PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN

120

OCTOBER 2018

*Independent oversight  
that contributes to a more  
accountable public sector*

## 2018 Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women

Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services  
Level 5, Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
Perth WA 6000

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

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# Inspector's Overview

## BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE: A JEWEL IN THE CROWN. BUT HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S WORKING AND CAN IT DO MORE?

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This is our fifth inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women (Boronia) and it continues to be a shining light in the corrections environment.

Boronia, opened in 2004, was purpose-built as a pre-release centre to reflect life in a community setting. It is only a short distance from the Perth central business district and is hardly distinguishable from its surroundings. Boronia is in great shape which contributes to a therapeutic environment. The gardens are thriving, the infrastructure is well maintained, and the staff have a respectful and positive relationship with the women.

This is all consistent with a pre-release philosophy and is as we would expect. The women take on more responsibility as they live in a share house and must accept domestic responsibilities. They manage their daily activities much as they would if they were living at home and are subject to principles that exist within a law-abiding society. It is reasonable to expect that Boronia will perform well. It has a group of carefully selected prisoners and is reasonably well resourced. Despite the advantages, Boronia still has room to improve. In our previous reports, we have challenged Boronia to not rest on past achievements, and not to become complacent. In the current environment where there are population pressures and fiscal restraint, Boronia must continue to strive to improve and position itself to be the model for re-entry going into the future.

### HOW EFFECTIVE IS BORONIA?

It is difficult to comment on the effectiveness of Boronia as a pre-release centre. Recidivism is something that is measurable but Boronia has a carefully selected low risk prisoner cohort so that factor alone is not enough. Work we did on recidivism in 2014 shows that the reoffending rate for women released from Boronia was low. But when you consider the low risk profile of the women, it is not better than otherwise would be expected.

Since 2006 we have been calling for the Department to put in place a robust system to determine how effective Boronia is in preventing reoffending. In 2012, the Department supported in principle our recommendation that there should be a robust independent evaluation of Boronia's outcomes. Prior to the 2015 inspection we asked for evidence in relation to this. But we received nothing other than an obtuse and non-committal response from the Department relating to the review of its performance measurement framework in line with its reform program. Following our 2015 inspection the Department said there is no need for an independent evaluation because its newly formed Women's Estate Reference Group is working with the Department to improve outcomes for all female offenders which will involve an evaluation of post-release outcomes at all facilities. We noted at the time we looked forward to the evaluations which have never been done. In 2018 we find that this still has not been achieved and once again, the Department's response to our Recommendation 10 is in principle support, subject to funding. The Department advises that an evaluation framework is being developed for the newly opened Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison that will consist of both a process and outcome evaluation. We hope that this may assist in the development of an evaluation framework

## BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE: A JEWEL IN THE CROWN. BUT HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S WORKING AND CAN IT DO MORE?

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for Boronia. But what we have seen over the last decade does not give us any real confidence that this will occur.

As part of the effectiveness indicators, it is disappointing to see the number of Aboriginal women in Boronia has decreased since our last inspection. In 2015 the numbers were around 25 per cent. At the time of our inspection in 2018 they were 18 per cent. Aboriginal people are grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system and in comparison, the number of Aboriginal women in Bandyup is around 44 per cent. The reduction in the critical mass of Aboriginal women reduces the capacity of Boronia to develop specific re-entry strategies for Aboriginal women who are some of the most disadvantaged people in the community.

In 2015 we found there was a full suite of treatment programs available to female prisoners in the women's estate. Despite this we said it wasn't enough. Despite their overrepresentation, there were no Aboriginal specific programs and there was nothing specific to address violent offending which was on the rise.

To facilitate release back into the community, it is important that the women get access to programs that address their offending behaviour. Particularly as often those programs are mandatory. It is disappointing that we find in 2018, based on information provided to us by the Department in the lead up to the inspection, that the programs available at Boronia for the women are being reduced. We were advised this is to accommodate a distribution of resources following the decision to bring Wandoo back in to being a state run women's facility. While we applaud the opening of Wandoo as an alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation prison, it should not come at the expense of the delivery of programs across the women's estate.

### RISK

We are pleased to see that Recommendation 3 in relation to access to razors by the women has been supported. They will now be able to purchase them from the canteen. This may seem like a relatively small matter but was a significant frustration for the Boronia residents.

While the ban followed incidences of self-harm involving razors at other female prisons, it is not based on a risk assessment at each facility and is inconsistent with the Boronia philosophy.

Residents are encouraged to take responsibility for their decisions and actions at Boronia and the environment provides opportunities for this. The razor ban is contrary to women-centred practice, and against Boronia's own guiding principles, particularly that of personal responsibility and empowerment. Removing them suggests that the women cannot be trusted to make the right decisions at a time when they are preparing to re-enter society.

### STAFF SHORTAGES

We still believe that there are missed opportunities for the residents to undertake work activities outside of Boronia in a supervised and unsupervised capacity

## BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE: A JEWEL IN THE CROWN. BUT HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S WORKING AND CAN IT DO MORE?

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(Recommendation 1). This is a low risk group of women who are on their way to being released back into the community. We have been saying for some time that we believe the program at Boronia can be more innovative, more inclusive and provide a lot more opportunities for reintegration.

There are few women at Boronia who are engaged in external activities unsupervised. Boronia is subject to the same pressures that all other prisons experience including staff shortages on occasions. This means that if there are not enough staff to supervise the women, the external activities are impacted. The profile of the residents at Boronia is certainly appropriate for more women to be out in the community unsupervised which does not have a requirement for additional staff.

### OVERCROWDING

Infrastructure at Boronia has been maintained to a reasonable good level. But there are areas for improvement. The reception area in Boronia is a thoroughfare, lacks privacy and is subject to constant interruption. These are observations that we made in our 2015 inspection report and we find nothing has changed in 2018. It is now pleasing to see that our Recommendation 2 has been accepted by the Department and work has already commenced on upgrading the reception area. This will provide much needed privacy for women entering Boronia.

It is unfortunate that no consideration is being given to changing the management of health services at Boronia (Recommendation 7). Currently they are managed from Bandyup and the models of health care between the two prisons are fundamentally different. Boronia aims to deliver health care along the lines of its operating philosophy which is based on a community style model. Bandyup delivers acute medical care and is crisis focused. While staff are committed, and do an excellent job resourcing priorities, the focus is centred on the health needs at Bandyup, not Boronia.

### CONCLUSION

Considering the current fiscal restraint and the drive for efficient and effective services delivered by government, it is difficult to see how Boronia can justify its existence without the establishment of measurable outcomes. Yet it would be a great tragedy for women if Boronia's reason for existing was to change. Boronia can take great satisfaction from what it has achieved and what it will accomplish going forward. It is fair to say that Boronia is providing the greatest benefit to some of the least-advantaged members of society. To take it one step further, if the world was governed by logic and reason, all prisoners would have the opportunity to be re-integrated back into society through a pre-release facility.

**Darian Ferguson**  
**Acting Inspector**

**29 October 2018**

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

Section 95 programs in prisons provide invaluable opportunities for prisoners to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Through these programs, prisoners can engage in normal community activities that increases their readiness and skills.

We think that the section 95 program at Boronia missed opportunities. We have been saying this for some time now, and have made recommendations to this effect in all of our published inspection reports of Boronia. We know the section 95 profile can be more innovative, more inclusive and provide a lot more opportunities for reintegration than it currently does, and has in the past.

There was scope for the section 95 program at Boronia to be expanded through more use of unsupervised section 95. This would not require additional staff because the residents on unsupervised section 95 do not require staff supervision. The profile of the residents at Boronia is certainly appropriate for more women to be out in the community unsupervised. They are minimum-security, have been approved as suitable for section 95 activities, are nearing the end of their sentences, and are looking forward to engaging in life back in their communities.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**Increase resident participation in unsupervised community work and other activities under section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)*.**

Other findings relating to reintegration opportunities at Boronia were:

- A unique, inclusive and innovative volunteer program
- Good local processes for re-entry support
- A new model of service provision by new reintegration service providers
- Successful Resocialisation Programs for long term prisoners.

### DELIVERING THE BASICS

Boronia was a safe environment for both residents and staff. There were very low indications of drug use amongst residents, despite Boronia having introduced a policy of no strip searching. We found that intelligence gathering processes at Boronia were sufficient to identify possible drug activity without the need to strip search potential targets.

And, whilst orientation processes were good, the reception area was not suitable. The location of the reception area compromised the privacy of the reception process. And there was too much work for one person to manage.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### **Recommendation 2**

Establish a dedicated reception area which will provide privacy, security and space, and ensure appropriate staffing.

Residents complained that they were no longer able to purchase razors at Boronia. Self-harm incidents involving razors at other female prisons in recent times had led to a blanket policy restricting the use of razors at female (and male) prisons. This caused significant frustration for the residents at Boronia.

We understand that Boronia's management have sought exemption from this restriction on access to razors, but to no avail. We find this razor ban contrary to women-centred practice, and against Boronia's own guiding principles.

### **Recommendation 3**

Allow women to purchase razors at Boronia.

## RESPECT AND SUPPORT

Relationships at Boronia were mutually respectful. Ninety one per cent of the residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey felt that officers treat them with dignity, significantly higher than the state average of 42 per cent. One of the more obvious indicators of the respectful relationships at Boronia was the lack of strip searching of residents in any instance at Boronia. This was an excellent change since the last inspection, and demonstrated a commitment to a women-centred and trauma-informed approach to managing the residents.

Residents also were not restrained when they were transported off site, even though Boronia was not exempt from the contractor's policies and procedures relating to restraining prisoners. Boronia had a process to work around the requirement for a resident to be restrained whilst under escort which involved transferring the risk from the contractor to Boronia. This was a good result for the residents.

However, when residents had to attend a medical appointment at Fiona Stanley Hospital, they had to go through the secure facility there. This is a holding facility for prisoners waiting to attend a medical appointment in the hospital and is operated by the contractor, Broadspectrum. But residents only need to be processed through the secure holding facility during working hours. Should a resident need to attend Fiona Stanley Hospital after hours, she is simply escorted by a Boronia staff member through the general public access at the front of the hospital.

### **Recommendation 4**

Review the process at Fiona Stanley Secure Facility and implement changes that are more appropriate to the minimum-security rating of Boronia's residents.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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We also found that:

- Peer support was well-managed and provided valuable support.
- Aboriginal resident numbers had remained stable.
- There was more positive engagement with the Aboriginal residents.
- Aboriginal residents missed the service that used to be provided by the Aboriginal Visitors (AVS).

### SUPPORT FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

We found improved engagement with and support for mothers with resident children. This had been lacking three years ago. We had recommended improved engagement following our last inspection, but this recommendation was not supported at the time. Nevertheless, in 2018 we found that progress against this recommendation was, in fact, satisfactory.

Mothers were worried about health care for their children. On-site health services at Boronia were not responsible for the health care of resident children, unless it was an emergency. Mothers had to sign their child out to an external carer to receive medical care outside of Boronia. This caused mothers anguish and frustration.

We thought this could be addressed by allowing mothers with resident children to take their child to attend medical appointments and other activities using the unsupervised section 95 provision.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**Approve mothers with resident children at Boronia for unsupervised section 95 activities.**

We found that the parenting programs that had been in place previously were no longer operating at Boronia. This was a consequence of the contracts having been changed, and some services that were previously provided were not included in the new contract arrangements. Parenting support programs at both Bandyup and Boronia were among the casualties.

Boronia had been proactive in trying to source alternative programs for mothers with resident children, and had developed local partnerships with service providers. Whilst this was commendable, we believe the Department has a responsibility to ensure sustained and accredited parenting programs are available at Boronia.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**Department of Justice restore funding to parenting and other related programs and services to enhance connection to children and families.**

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Overall, we found that, whilst residents were satisfied with the general health services at Boronia, the model of health management at Boronia was not appropriate.

Health services at Boronia are managed off site by the Bandyup health services' manager. The role and philosophy of these two facilities are so vastly different. Bandyup is the state's maximum-security prison for women. Boronia is the state's minimum-security prison for women, who are preparing to reintegrate into their communities. There is clearly a different level of medical need among these two cohorts. Bandyup provides a 24/7 health service and manages medical crises a lot more frequently than Boronia. Boronia operates along a community healthcare model.

The two models of healthcare are so completely different. And the risk of having both models managed centrally is that the one that generates the most urgency and has the highest need (Bandyup) is the one that attracts the most resources, time and attention.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**Health services at Boronia should be managed by Boronia.**

We were pleased to find that recreation had improved. And the social visiting arrangements for family and friends was, as always, exceptional.

### EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND PROGRAMS

Employment levels were good, and employment for residents was strategically driven. Employment had a reintegration focus, and the allocation of gratuities was appropriate and equitable. Similarly, education continued to provide a good level of service with most of the resident engaged in education. The education team was strong, but working under pressure.

We found that program delivery for the women's estate had gone from bad to worse. We found the suite of programs available to women was inadequate – there are no Aboriginal specific programs for women, despite their overrepresentation in West Australian prisons; and programs addressing violent offending are notably absent.

The re-purposing of Wandoo (previously a privately-operated reintegration facility for young adult males) to a drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs' prison for women would impact on the programs available to female offenders more broadly across the prison estate. At Boronia, this meant a reduction in programs being provided.

Women were missing out on programs. And this was impacting on their chances of parole, and consequently successful reintegration. Figures obtained from the Department's offender database three weeks before the start of the on-site inspection in May 2018 indicated that 22 women had passed their earliest eligibility date to be released on parole. And so their parole had been denied. Of these 22, 14 (64%) had been denied because they had not completed a program.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### **Recommendation 8**

Provide programs at Boronia to meet demand.

## LEADERSHIP

We found positive change in the management team and improved business processes. We have commented previously about the stable management team that has been in place at Boronia for a long time. Following the last inspection we questioned whether this could be stifling innovation. So we were pleased to see significant changes in the management team, accompanied by new approaches to existing roles and responsibilities.

Staff at Boronia were, however, under pressure. And relationships between some officers were fractured. This was affecting staff morale. Management had intervened to settle the situation, although staff in general may not have had access to the work that Boronia's managers had done. Our overall message to staff at Boronia was that Boronia is a good prison and a good place to work. This message reflected that which staff conveyed both on site during the inspection and in the pre-inspection staff surveys.

The business services' team struggled with complicated human resources (HR) processes and delays at head office. These resulted in contract renewals not being processed on time, lengthy delays in processing higher duties allowances, and staff having to continue on rolling contracts.

### **Recommendation 9**

Ensure HR-related inquiries sent to head office are processed quickly and efficiently.

## EVALUATING

There is little hard evidence that Boronia actually works to reduce recidivism. We have recommended twice before that the Department commission an independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes in comparison with other male and female prisons. But there has been no progress. The government cannot take informed investment decisions or target scarce resources if it does not have evidence. The recent opening of the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison for women with drug and alcohol abuse problems makes it even more important for there to be an evaluation of the success of small facilities that target specific needs.

### **Recommendation 10**

Commission and publish a methodologically robust and independent evaluation of post-release outcomes at Boronia and Wandoo, including recidivism rates and other social measures.

## FACT PAGE

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### NAME OF FACILITY

Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

### ROLE OF FACILITY

Minimum-security prison for women with a focus on reintegration. Provision for children to live with their mothers until the age of four, and for older children up to the age of 12 to have regular extended day and/or overnight stays.

### LOCATION

Boronia is located on Noongar land in suburban Perth, 8kms south east of the Central Business District.

### BRIEF HISTORY

The facility opened in May 2004. It is Western Australia's only dedicated pre-release centre for women.

### LAST INSPECTION

22–27 March 2015

### ORIGINAL DESIGN CAPACITY

71

### TOTAL CAPACITY

95

### NUMBER OF RESIDENTS HELD AT THE TIME OF THE INSPECTION

90

### NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENCE

6

### NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN

17

### DESCRIPTION OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS

- Community standard self-care, social housing, each with shared kitchen, bathroom, dining/lounge, laundry, and garden facilities.
- Twelve standard houses, each with five bedrooms with two bedrooms in each house doubled-up.

## FACT PAGE

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- Three nursery houses, each with two bedrooms designed for a mother and her child/children to share.
- Two houses for those residents with special needs, with a total of five bedrooms.

# Chapter 1

## BORONIA IN 2018

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### 1.1 THE PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN

Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women (Boronia or the centre) is the only dedicated minimum-security and pre-release facility for women in Western Australia. It opened in May 2004, and was originally designed to accommodate 71 women nearing the end of their sentences.

Boronia is located in a suburb eight kilometres from the Perth CBD. The site is surrounded by aged care residences and university/tertiary education facilities, and is hardly distinguishable from the outside as a prison. The facility includes 17 shared accommodation houses, much like those found in any suburban setting.



*Photo 1: The houses are nestled amongst lovely landscaped gardens.*

The population at Boronia has increased, consistent with the crowding affecting all prisons across the state. Inevitably this has meant some rooms must be shared across Boronia which has increased its operational capacity to 95. When we inspected it in May 2018 the population was around 90 residents.

### 1.2 A SPECIFIC PHILOSOPHY

Boronia was purpose-built to reflect life in a community setting. This is in keeping with a pre-release philosophy. The women (who are referred to as residents) share houses and domestic responsibilities, and manage their daily activities much as they would if they were living at home. There are four principles that inform the philosophy of Boronia (DCS, nd):

## BORONIA IN 2018

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1. Personal responsibility and empowerment – residents have choices about education, employment, health and their overall lifestyle. The environment emphasises cooperation over compliance which helps build confidence in their own decision-making and empowers them to make more positive choices.
2. Family responsibilities – these are encouraged and supported at Boronia through various mechanisms, including capacity for mothers to reside with their children, to have overnight and day stays with their children, and to engage in programs and activities that promote family relationships.
3. Community responsibility – opportunities for integration with community services and people are available at Boronia which encourages and assists the residents to plan and take responsibility for their own reintegration into their communities.
4. Respect and integrity – the living environment, the operational routines, the attitudes of staff and residents are some of the features of Boronia’s environment that promote respect and encourage residents to act with integrity in the choices they make.

These principles may be unique to Boronia but they are the accepted principles of any law-abiding lifestyle. They are important principles for Boronia’s residents to prepare for life on the outside.

### 1.3 INSPECTION HISTORY

We first inspected Boronia in 2006, just two years after it had opened. This was a positive inspection, and the then Inspector suggested that Boronia was a “model for good practice, women-centred approaches to managing female offenders in custody” (OICS, 2007).

When we went back for our second inspection in 2009, we saw more opportunities for improvement. Specifically around the representation of Aboriginal women at Boronia, the need for more community-based involvement, and the lack of programs addressing family violence (OICS, 2009).

We continued to call for further innovation following our third and fourth inspections of Boronia in 2012 and 2015. We thought that the centre had been open long enough to be doing more to reintegrate women into their communities, Aboriginal women in particular. Some complacency had crept in most likely because the centre was doing well. We thought it could be doing better.

We have also consistently asked for evidence of whether Boronia works, that is how effective is it in its role of successfully preparing residents for reintegration with the community. We have recommended that the Department commission an independent evaluation of Boronia’s post-release outcomes following our inspections in 2012 and 2015. To date there has been no progress against these recommendations.



## BORONIA IN 2018

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### 1.4 THE 2018 INSPECTION

In May 2018, we inspected Boronia for the fifth time. The physical presentation of the facility was beyond comparison. The gardens were thriving. The infrastructure was still in good shape. And the overall vibe was positive. The A/Inspector mentioned this in his presentation of the interim findings following this inspection, and added that this 'vibe' was not only a result of the pleasant physical surroundings, but was also about staff and residents' attitudes and relationships.



*Photo 2: The grounds are in excellent shape.*



*Photo 3: The gardens are beautiful.*

## BORONIA IN 2018

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The inspection news was not all good though. We did find fractured relationships between some officers, too many residents with unmet treatment needs, and, possibly most disturbing, gaps in release preparation services.

### 1.5 INSPECTION METHODOLOGY

We had an experienced inspection team on site from Wednesday 23 May to Tuesday 29 May 2018. A couple of team members spent some time at Boronia on the Sunday before the inspection to observe the process around social visits and the recreation activities in place for residents on the weekends. And four of us met with groups of officers and senior officers, and the Principal Officer on Tuesday 22 May.

In April we surveyed the residents about life at Boronia. Of the 88 residents at Boronia on the day of our survey, 64 completed a questionnaire. This was a 73 per cent response rate. Staff had the opportunity to fill out an electronic survey and we also received a 73 per cent response from staff (35 out of 48 staff). The survey results provided a good snapshot of the centre for the team going into the inspection. These results are reflected throughout this report to support inspection findings, highlight any anomalies between reality and perception, and as general background information.

Between this inspection and our previous inspection of Boronia three years ago we had visited Boronia 12 times. This is our continuous inspection approach which ensures continuity over the three year period between inspections and a consistent monitoring presence. So we had a good idea of how the centre was doing before we arrived to formally inspect it.

We also had other sources of pre-inspection evidence:

- a presentation by Boronia's senior management team
- supporting documentation from the Department of Justice
- Independent Visitor reports
- service provider consultations.

# Chapter 2

## REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

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### 2.1 THE PHILOSOPHY AND REINTEGRATION

#### **Boronia's philosophy supports a reintegration focus**

The guiding principles of Boronia's philosophy are all reintegration focused. The environment and the regime provide residents a space to feel empowered to make their own decisions about their own life choices, both within and outside Boronia. This is the principle of personal responsibility and empowerment. The principle of family responsibilities confirms the importance of maintaining family connections inside for successful reintegration outside. The successful transition of women from prison to the community depends on positive social networks and involvement with the community. The principle of community responsibility encourages residents at Boronia along this journey. And finally the principles of respect and integrity support reintegration through encouraging honesty, decency and dignity.

### 2.2 OUT AND ABOUT IN THE COMMUNITY

Section 95 programs in prisons provide invaluable opportunities for prisoners to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Through these programs, prisoners can engage in normal community activities that increases their readiness and skills. Activities like sport, employment, education, social events, and the like. These activities give back to the community (reparative) and provide prisoners with insight into alternative activities and choices that are available (rehabilitative).

#### **Section 95 at Boronia missed opportunities**

We still believe that there are missed opportunities for the section 95 program at Boronia. We have been saying this for some time now, and have made recommendations to this effect in all of our published inspection reports of Boronia (OICS, 2007, p. 55 Recommendation 19; OICS, 2009, p. 25 Recommendation 4; OICS, 2012, p. 31 Recommendation 10; OICS, 2015, p. 18 Recommendation 2). We have persisted in recommending improvements to the section 95 profile at Boronia because we know it can be more innovative, more inclusive and provide a lot more opportunities for reintegration than it currently does, and has in the past.

We think mothers with resident children should be able to leave the centre to participate in community social groups like playgroups or mothers' groups. We think Aboriginal women should be able to maintain cultural connections through regular participation in community-based cultural processes. Those residents engaged in tertiary study should be able attend their lectures in person at the university campus based across the road from Boronia. And those interested in team sports should be involved in these teams at the local sporting clubs.

## REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

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### Section 95 activities were valued but limited

On 5 February 2018, 46 women (out of a total population of 86) were approved to participate in section 95 activities. This was 53 per cent of all the residents. This was slightly down from our last inspection in 2015 when 56 per cent of the residents at Boronia were section 95 approved. Even though more than half of the residents have approval to leave the centre to engage in community-based activities, only a handful of residents were leaving the centre each day to do so.

The supervision ratio for officer to residents for section 95 is one to eight – one officer for eight residents. This was one of the restrictions on the section 95 program. There were only two regularly occurring section 95 activities at Boronia – the community walking program and the community activity program.

A Community Activities Officer escorted eight residents to work at a different community agency each day of the week. This was the community activity program. These organisations valued and relied upon Boronia's support. For the Boronia residents, the work was rewarding because it made them feel that they were giving back to the community, and making reparation for their offences. Some talked about pursuing volunteer or paid work in similar areas when they were released.

The community walking program was less structured, although equally as valued. Those wanting to have an early morning walk (numbers varied but were capped at eight) were escorted on a 6am walk around the neighbourhood. This was part of the recreation officer's duties, but was being performed by the Principal Officer because the recreation officer was new in the position and had yet to receive the operational training that would allow her to escort prisoners.

There were other section 95 activities that residents were involved in. Some residents working in the kitchen used the section 95 provision to attend functions for which they had been contracted to provide catering. Residents involved in the choir left the centre on section 95 to attend performances, and we heard that the Superintendent had taken some Aboriginal women out to participate in cultural events on occasions. But these activities were not a regular fixture on the centre's section 95 program.

### Staffing arrangements also adversely affected the section 95 program

Our 2015 inspection report noted that staff shortages and overtime restrictions were reducing the amount of section 95 activity. The Community Activities Officer was regularly being redeployed to other positions within the centre, and this was 'extremely destabilising for the section 95 work program' (OICS, 2015, p. 16). This remained a problem in 2018. When the Community Activities Officer was held back in the centre to carry out other duties (for example to escort a tradesperson around the site), the section 95 team was unable to go to work.

The Community Activities Officer was also transitioning from a full-time working arrangement to a part-time arrangement of five days per fortnight. This would mean the

## REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

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eight residents employed on the community activity program would also only be employed part-time and would miss out on the opportunity to leave the centre for work every day of the week. The intention was to recruit another Vocational Support Officer (VSO) in a job share arrangement with the Community Activities Officer but this had yet to occur.

### Unsupervised section 95 opportunities were limited

The section 95 provision allows for prisoners to engage in external activities both in an unsupervised and a supervised capacity. At Boronia, though, few residents were engaged in external activities without being supervised. A few residents who worked in the gardens right out the front of the facility were considered unsupervised. And those residents leaving the centre to undertake training or employment as part of the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP) also did so unsupervised. At the time of the inspection there were only three residents leaving Boronia each day unsupervised to attend work and training as part of this program.

We thought there was scope for the section 95 program at Boronia to be expanded through more use of unsupervised section 95. This would not require additional staff because the residents on unsupervised section 95 do not require staff supervision. The profile of the residents at Boronia is certainly appropriate for more women to be out in the community unsupervised. They are minimum-security, have been approved as suitable for section 95 activities, are nearing the end of their sentences, and are looking forward to engaging in life back in their communities.

If Boronia's philosophy is really all about positive reintegration, there has to be a drive for more opportunities for the women to benefit from this. The section 95 program is the ideal conduit, but is too limited in its current form. Options for more unsupervised section 95 activities must be explored.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Increase resident participation in unsupervised community work and other activities under section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)*.**

### The volunteer program at Boronia was one of a kind

At Boronia the staffing model includes a position called Volunteer Coordinator. The role of this position is to promote and coordinate a diversity of volunteering activities that residents can engage in. This position is unique to Boronia.

The philosophical principles of personal and community responsibility were particularly evident in Boronia's volunteering program. Residents were encouraged to help out with various activities voluntarily that happen in the centre. There was no coercion though, and residents could choose whether or not they wanted to participate. And community volunteers attended Boronia to provide services and expertise and support for many

## REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

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different programs and events. Residents were exposed to the types of volunteer work available in their communities which increased the choices available to them to think about as their release became imminent.

Residents learned about volunteering at Boronia through information sessions run by the Volunteer Coordinator. The volunteer program at Boronia is called 'Spread Your Wings'. At these sessions residents were informed of the benefits of providing their time to help out around the centre for no financial gain. These were things like

- being part of a team
- learning new skills
- personal and mental wellbeing
- improved self-esteem – people feel good about themselves when helping others
- knowing that you're making a difference to communities.

So, for example, residents were already busy making craft items to sell at Boronia's annual gala day event. This event, usually held in early November each year, is an open day when members of the community can come into Boronia and purchase various things, and all the proceeds of the sales go to a specific charity. Residents can volunteer their time and skills by making things beforehand (knitwear, paintings, plants, etc.) and/or by helping out with the set-up and running of the event. We heard that three-quarters of the residents at Boronia volunteered their time in some form to assist with the gala day last year (2017).

The Volunteer Coordinator, supported by her manager (Manager Family and Community Services), has been persistent in identifying community volunteer agencies that would be willing to work with women who have a criminal record. At a recent volunteer expo that was held at Boronia, 12 such agencies were identified. One of these in particular has established a strong engagement with Boronia. Residents have been making re-usable shopping bags for this organisation which it can sell to the public. In return this agency has been selected to be part of a new strategy at Boronia called 'reintegration through volunteering'.

### **The 'reintegration through volunteering' strategy was an innovative new initiative**

The reintegration through volunteering strategy was a new initiative which aimed to connect residents with appropriate community agencies pre-release, with a view to continuing the engagement post-release as another avenue of reintegrating residents with their communities. The residents would work as volunteers in these organisations.

To this end, Boronia had worked hard to identify those volunteer-based agencies that would accept people with a criminal history as volunteers in their agency. Twelve such agencies had been selected and had agreed to work with Boronia's residents. One resident had been selected to start this process with a specific community agency and she was delighted to be involved in this strategy. The adoption of volunteering as an alternative reintegration path was innovative, and has real value.

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### 2.3 RE-ENTRY SUPPORT SERVICES

#### **Boronia has good local processes for re-entry support**

Boronia's reintegration staff are well experienced, and have good working processes in place. In many respects, there has been little change in this area since our 2015 inspection. The Transitional Manager (TM) engages with all new arrivals within two weeks of their arrival at Boronia, regardless of their release date, and then again when they are six months out from release. This is good practice. However, as we have found in previous years, trying to meet with the TM at other times can prove challenging for residents.

Boronia's Employment Coordinator liaises with the residents continuously to assess their readiness and/or eligibility to participate in the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP). This program assists prisoners to get ready to re-engage in work when they are released, by providing them with opportunities to start engaging with employers during the last few months of their sentence.

We have repeatedly criticised the lengthy approval processes required to get eligible prisoners onto PEP. Often the approvals take so long that, once they do come through, it is either too late in the prisoner's sentence to engage in the program, the employer has lost interest and has moved on, or the prisoner has even been released from prison. So, while PEP may work for some prisoners, it is not an effective pre-employment reintegration strategy.

Residents at Boronia remain affected by these lengthy approval processes. Nevertheless, there were 12 residents at the time of the inspection who had been approved to participate in PEP activities. And another 12 were waiting for approval.

The Employment Coordinator was proactive in providing other forms of employment support too, including:

- career counselling sessions co-facilitated by staff from the neighbouring Curtin University
- maintaining connections with prospective employers separate from PEP
- working with the VSOs to identify specific training and employment opportunities for residents
- hosting annual employment expos to expose residents to various workplaces.

#### **Early days for a new external re-entry service provider**

Following a prolonged tendering process, the Department has entered into a new contracting arrangement for the provision of re-entry support services at metropolitan prisons. Outcare and Ruah had been the contractors for many years, but in December 2017 the new contract was awarded to ReSet. This is a consortium led by Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, and includes Centrecare, St Bartholomew's House, and Wirrpanda Foundation. ReSet was contracted to commence services across all metropolitan prison sites from 1 April 2018.

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In our recent Wooroloo inspection report (OICS, 2018) we describe the problematic tendering, procurement, and transition phases of engaging the new re-entry service provider. Communication about what could be expected with regards to services as well as the change to the new provider, was poor. This left staff and prisoners with a limited understanding of what they could expect from ReSet services. The successful Wungening consortium tender had never intended to replace all of the services previously supplied by Outcare. Yet the message that the Department was sharing, even with our Office, was that there would be no loss of services.

Further, the Wungening led consortium had a limited time in which to hire and train new staff, and prepare services to commence on 1 April. Our inspection of Boronia took place in late May 2018, at which time ReSet were still something of an unknown quantity. The TM was referring women to their services, and ReSet staff were attending prisons across Perth to meet with new clients. But it was too early to assess how well their new model was meeting their clients' needs, and what services had dropped off.

### **A new model of service provision**

ReSet's re-entry support services are only available to those referred by Transitional Managers (TMs), and who have been assessed as medium to high risk of reoffending based on a departmental assessment. ReSet staff informed us that this cohort represents around 80 per cent of prisoners released.

Once the TM has referred a prisoner to ReSet for re-entry support, they are allocated to a dedicated ReSet case worker. This is different to the model in place under the previous re-entry service provider, which was a referral to the team attached to each specific site rather than referral to a specific case worker. ReSet refer to this model as their 'client-led service,' which seeks to individualise service provision. Support is then tailored to each individual client, and where possible, the same case worker will work with each client through to the conclusion of their services. ReSet case workers engage three to six months before release, and continue for up to 12-months post-release.

### **Eligibility for ReSet's services requires a formal Departmental assessment**

Previously, re-entry services were provided to prisoners within six months of their release, if they indicated they wanted these services. The new re-entry contractor, however, requires prisoners to be formally assessed according to their likelihood of reoffending before they are considered eligible for re-entry services with ReSet.

The Department determines an individual's risk of reoffending through assessment tools, which are also used to assess treatment needs. These departmental assessments can be time-consuming and limited resources across prisons means that there is a significant backlog of treatment assessments across the state. This was a risk, particularly for prisoners with high re-entry support needs.



## REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

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We were therefore pleased to hear at Boronia that TMs had been authorised to use their own knowledge of prisoners and their personal circumstances to come to an informed judgement of their risk of reoffending, and refer them to ReSet based on this. This authorisation came from head office management, and acknowledged that the TMs' professional knowledge and judgement of the prisoner was an adequate departmental assessment.

### **Boronia facilitates successful Resocialisation Programs for long-term prisoners**

Resocialisation Programs (RSPs) are a staged process of preparing long-term or indefinite term prisoners for reintegration into the community. The objectives of an RSP are:

- To prepare the prisoner for return to the community
- To counter the negative effects of institutionalisation
- To facilitate the reintegration of the prisoner with his/her family and the community
- To develop the prisoner's educational, employment, social and life skills (DCS, 2012).

RSPs are intensive to develop and administer. The application process is complex and each stage of the program requires review. The prisoners progress through a three-stage process of gradual exposure to external activities, including work, education, or jobseeking, and home leave. Separate approval processes must be met for section 95, Reintegration Leave (RL), and PEP, all of which are lengthy and arduous.

At our last inspection of Boronia in 2015, the prison had successfully completed its first RSP program, and was simultaneously facilitating another three. By 2018, five RSPs had been completed at Boronia, and, during our inspection, there was one in train.

We thought Boronia had done well to facilitate the RSPs as they have. The programs are resource and time intensive, but each resident who had gone through the program had been able to engage in opportunities to help them prepare for a successful reintegration into their communities.

We would, however, caution against a 'one size fits all' approach to RSPs at Boronia. Just because one resocialisation pathway suited one resident does not mean the same pathway would benefit another resident's reintegration journey. Boronia is well suited to providing a diversity of work and placement options for residents on an RSP, and residents eligible for a resocialisation program should be consulted about their preferences.

# Chapter 3

## DELIVERING THE BASICS

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### 3.1 PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

#### **Boronia is a safe environment**

Ninety-seven per cent of residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey said they “mostly felt safe” at Boronia. And 74 per cent of staff who responded indicated that they “almost always feel safe”. For staff, this was an increase from 58 per cent three years ago. Boronia is a safe environment. We did find, though, that some processes could be improved.

#### **The multiple cell occupancy risk assessments were not being done**

There were around 90 women living in Boronia during the week of our inspection in May 2018. Boronia was built to accommodate 71 residents. It was forced to increase its capacity years ago – even before our previous inspection in 2015 – to adapt to the crowding across the prison system, and has accommodated up to 95 women since then. Rooms have had to be doubled up to fit all the women in – in total 24 rooms have been doubled up at Boronia.

Policy Directive 85 (PD 85) requires that a multiple cell occupancy checklist should be completed as part of every reception process, including subsequent receptions (DCS, 2014). This should be filled out on TOMS and assesses the prisoner’s suitability to share a cell. In so doing, the checklist requires information about the nature of offending, medical issues, any alerts to or from the prisoner, and so on. These are important pieces of information, and the multiple cell occupancy checklists are important risk management tools.

But we found at Boronia that these were not being completed on each reception. A desktop exercise using information on TOMS of a random sample of Boronia residents showed that none of the residents selected had had a multiple cell occupancy checklist completed. We know that Boronia provides a safe environment for its residents. But forgetting basic security procedures is a risk for the centre.

#### **Emergency scenario testing was being conducted**

A safe environment must be maintained at all times, particularly in times of emergency. Boronia was meeting the requirements for emergency management testing. This was good practice, and particularly important for officers to maintain a sense of being able to perform their duties safely in all situations. This was key to ensuring a safe environment.

Six emergency management exercises had been completed over 2017. Five of these were desktop exercises and one was a live testing scenario. The live exercise tested the centre’s capability to respond to a fire and included medical staff. The five desktop exercises covered:

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- hostage situation
- death in custody
- major disturbance
- escape
- serious medical emergency.

### 3.2 PROVIDING A DRUG FREE ENVIRONMENT

#### **Very low indications of drug use among residents**

The centre has complied with the drug prevalence testing regime imposed on it by head office. In fact prevalence testing coincided with the first day of our on-site inspection. Forty residents were tested on this day, 44 per cent of Boronia's population. One resident returned a positive result and was transferred out of Boronia to Bandyup the same day.

Positive drug results at Boronia though are uncommon. Between 1 January and 31 December 2017, there were three groups of prevalence tests carried out on a total of 168 residents. One of these tests was conducted on the entire centre. There were no positive returns.

Commonly, drug testing of prisoners using urine samples is preceded by strip searching the prisoner as an added guarantee of the integrity of the test. At Boronia, however, strip searching of residents does not occur. The urinalysis results reflect very little change from when strip searches were being done, which indicates that strip searching is not necessarily required as part of the testing process.

We found that intelligence gathering processes at Boronia were sufficient to identify possible drug activity without the need to strip search potential targets. The evidence was that residents were not backwards in coming forward to security if they heard of any suspicious activity by other residents. They were invested in keeping their own environment safe, and this was their main motivator to feed this information through to the security team.

### 3.3 SETTLING IN

#### **The reception area was unsuitable**

We mentioned this in the previous inspection report. We said that the location of the reception area "in the main thoroughfare of the administration building...compromises the privacy of the reception process" (OICS, 2015, p. 14). Nothing had changed in the three years between inspections.

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*Photo 4: The reception area did not afford sufficient privacy.*

There is a senior officer (SO) posted in this area each day. This position has many tasks to complete each day, and we noticed the officers working in this position having to juggle and prioritise jobs. These jobs included managing the reception and property of new residents arriving at Boronia as well as observing and recording the movements in and out of the centre. Sometimes amidst this whirlwind of activity some tasks were sidelined, such as property being left unattended (sometimes still even unprocessed) in the reception area, and property being logged without the resident owner being present. Further, the SO was constantly being interrupted during the new resident intake interviews to attend to other tasks. This undermined the reception process at Boronia.

### **Recommendation 2**

Establish a dedicated reception area which will provide privacy, security and space, and ensure appropriate staffing.

#### **Property storage and processes present a risk**

The reception area has no secure storage facility to keep residents' property when they first arrive at Boronia or when preparing for exit. During the inspection, we saw a resident's property haphazardly stored in the open reception area – on tables, on top of a cupboard, and on the floor. These boxes remained in this area, which was not always attended by an officer, for a few days.

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This presents a risk both for the resident and the centre. The resident risks her property being damaged, lost or not properly recorded. And the centre risks this property being damaged, lost or not properly recorded.



*Photo 5: Property haphazardly stored in the open reception area.*



*Photo 6: Property storage facility was at capacity.*

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The property storage facility at Boronia, while well organised, was not built to store excess property for 90 residents. It was built to store excess property for 71 residents. So it was full and only just meeting need. We also found some of the storage set-up and processes could present occupational safety and health risks.

During the inspection, one resident returned a positive result to the drug prevalence testing. The consequence of this is losing one's position at Boronia and having to be returned to Bandyup. We found that the processes to clear up her belongings properly were not followed correctly.

She had been residing in a shared cell. All her property should have been removed and a cell clearance form completed by officers. When we requested a copy of the cell clearance form we found out that it had not been done. We also discovered that, when a new resident moved into the space she had left, that not all of the property had been removed.

We acknowledge the difficulty of this given that the room was shared and it would be difficult for officers to distinguish which property belonged to which resident.

Nevertheless, all cell clearances should be recorded in the proper manner to accurately record times, staff present and property removed. These processes are important because they protect both the residents and the centre from claims and complaints about missing or damaged property.

### Orientation was good

Orientation continues to be done as well in 2018 as it was in 2015. Peer support residents were responsible for most of the physical site orientation. All peer support residents were on the orientation roster. The SO working in reception advised the rostered peer support resident of any new arrivals and the estimated time of arrival. The peer support resident then escorted the new resident on a tour of the centre, pointing out the various service areas (health, education, supermarket, and so on) and introducing her to key Boronia staff. The new resident was then taken to the house she would be sharing with other residents and introduced to her new housemates.

New residents also received a comprehensive orientation booklet which they can keep for future reference. And they are required to sign a document which serves as a contract between them and Boronia. This sets out the conduct that is required of all Boronia residents, and reiterates the principles of Boronia's philosophy – personal responsibility, family responsibility, community responsibility and respect and integrity.

## 3.4 FOOD AND SHOPPING

### Residents were happy with the food

Residents' satisfaction with the food at Boronia had increased since the last inspection. Then, 58 per cent were satisfied with the quality of the food, and 69 per cent with the quantity. In 2018, 73 per cent were satisfied with food quality, and 80 per cent with the amount.

## DELIVERING THE BASICS

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Boronia is a completely self catering set-up. Residents share houses, and are allocated a budget to shop for food and household goods at the on-site supermarket, which they then use to prepare meals for the residents in their house. They can also purchase personal items from the supermarket using their private cash supplies they have accumulated by working or which they have received from family and/or friends.

The self-care system at Boronia was working well. Monthly auditing procedures were in place to ensure hygiene and good food safety practice in the residential houses. This included the sampling of prepared food for testing off site. This was excellent practice.



*Photo 7: Residents' houses were well-stocked with food.*

### Positive changes in the kitchen

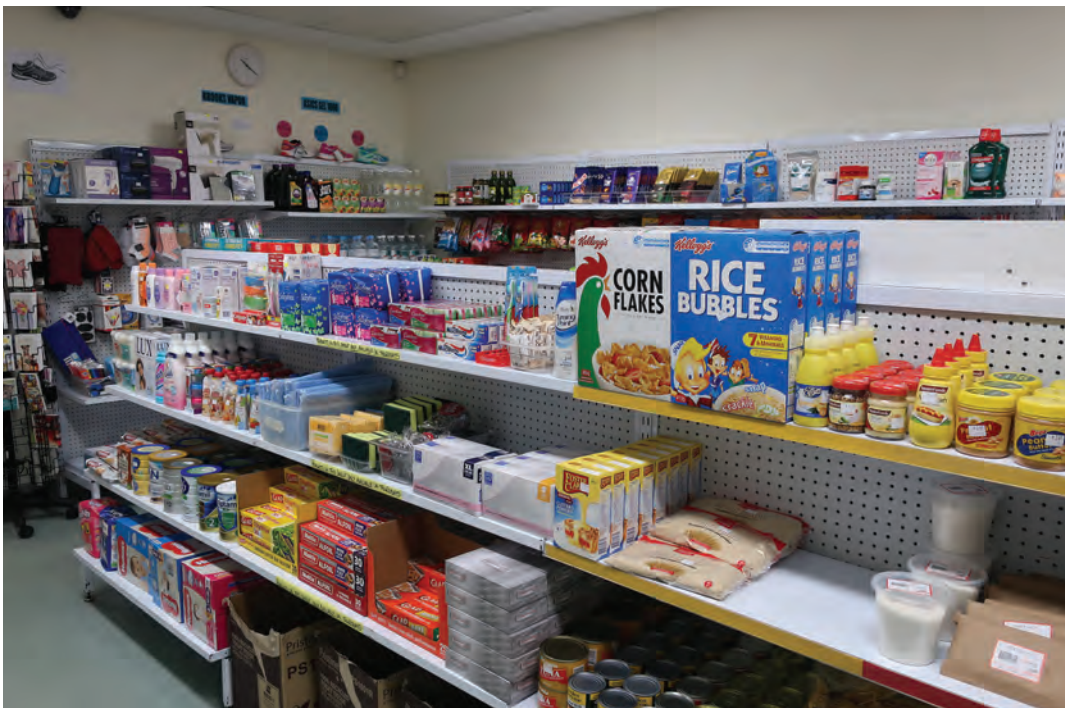
There had been a change of management in the kitchen for the first time since Boronia opened in 2004. We found the already well-established and well-managed processes and functions in the kitchen were further enhanced following a review by the new manager. Roles and functions in the kitchen have been formalised, and formal job descriptions have been developed for the kitchen workers.

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*Photo 8: Residents' houses were well-stocked with food.*



*Photo 9: The supermarket.*



## DELIVERING THE BASICS



*Photo 10: The supermarket.*

The kitchen managers and workers have a significant workload. They prepare lunches each day for up to 200 people. This includes lunch for Boronia's staff, prison officer trainees at the neighbouring training academy, the kitchen workers, and departmental staff working on site at Wandoo ahead of its official opening. This was just the regular business. The kitchen at Boronia also prepared food on a contract basis for special events,



*Photo 11: The lunches were superb.*

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such as an upcoming lunch for 170 people during Reconciliation Week. The kitchen at Boronia functioned like a well-oiled machine.

### Residents were not allowed razors

Self-harm incidents involving razors at other female prisons in recent times had led to a blanket policy restricting the use of razors at female (and male) prisons. This caused significant frustration for the residents at Boronia.

Some facilities (Greenough is one) had managed the situation by supervising the issue and return of razors. The Boronia environment is not set-up in the same way as other prisons though in that residents don't have specific times during the day when they can access the shower to shave their legs. They can (and do) do this at any time of the day making it impossible to implement this system of issuing razors at a certain time and expecting them back a short time later.

We know that management have sought exemption from this blanket restriction on access to razors, to no avail. We find this razor ban contrary to women-centred practice, and against Boronia's own guiding principles. In particular that of personal responsibility and empowerment.

Residents are encouraged to take responsibility for their decisions and actions at Boronia and the environment provides opportunities for this. Removing razors from the women implies that the women cannot be trusted to make the right decisions.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Allow women to purchase razors at Boronia.**

## 3.5 CLOTHING

### Residents have new clothes

The ill-fitting maroon tracksuits have finally been replaced. In their place is a range of professional-looking, properly-fitting clothing appropriate for the various work areas at Boronia. This was excellent progress against our 2015 recommendation to ...

Provide new, more appropriate clothing to Boronia residents, and prioritise the issue of new clothing to the residents who leave the centre for section 95 activities (OICS, 2015, p. 22 Recommendation 3).

During previous inspections residents told us how exposed they felt wearing the maroon tracksuits, especially when out on section 95 activities. They said the clothing clearly identified them as different, when all they wanted to do when they were out of the centre was fit in. Which is what Boronia is all about – reintegration.

The new clothing includes different outfits for the different types of work the residents do, as shown in the photograph below.

## DELIVERING THE BASICS



**Photo 12: The new clothing.**

Residents were pleased with the new clothing and this was reflected in the results of our pre-inspection surveys. Satisfaction with the clothing had improved. In 2015, 40 per cent of respondents said the clothing was good. In 2018 this was up to 64 per cent.

### Managing clothing stock was difficult

We did still see some residents around the centre in the maroon tracksuits. When we questioned them about this they said that there was not enough of the new clothing to go around. Management refuted this and showed us the boxes containing surplus clothing stock.

The problem was the flow of stock from the central store in the administration building to the laundry store located inside the facility from where it is distributed. A resident working in the laundry is responsible for the issue of the clothing to the residents. When the clothing at Boronia changed, so did the inventory system to keep track of the clothing in stock. This was updated to an electronic system which, if used correctly, would identify when clothing stocks were low, prompting more clothing either to be ordered or to be sent to the laundry for issuing to residents.

Unfortunately, at the time of the inspection, this system was not being used. This was a resourcing issue – the administration team did not have any spare capacity to manage the clothing inventory system. And while they said they would allow a resident to be employed

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to manage the system, this would still require a lot of supervision and oversight by a staff member and, again, there were simply no spare resources or time for this. The matter of poor resourcing in the finance/HR team is discussed in Chapter 7.

# Chapter 4

## RESPECT AND SUPPORT

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### 4.1 A RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

#### Relationships were mutually respectful

Ninety-one per cent of the residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey felt that officers at Boronia treat them with dignity. This was slightly higher than the result from the last inspection in 2015, which was 88 per cent. But it was significantly higher than the state average of 42 per cent. The majority of residents (80%) also felt that the officers apply the rules fairly, and 91 per cent said that officers are respectful when they have to conduct searches of their living areas. Again significantly higher than the state averages which were 44 and 47 per cent respectively.

We observed these respectful relationships every day we were on site during the inspection. And they were mutual, with residents behaving respectfully towards staff as well.



*Photo 13: Relationships were respectful.*

Both staff and residents also reported high quality of life scores in our surveys, both groups scoring this an eight, which was an increase for both groups from our 2015 results. Ninety-one per cent of staff said that they generally get on well with residents. And residents' scores were similarly positive, see table below.

## RESPECT AND SUPPORT

**Table 1: Resident responses to the question “In this facility, how well do you get along with?”**

	<b>Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>No Interaction</b>
VSOs	70%	0%	23%
Unit Officers	94%	2%	3%
Prison Management	80%	2%	17%
Other Staff	88%	3%	8%

### **Residents at Boronia do not get strip searched**

This was an excellent change since the last inspection. The last strip search at Boronia was conducted in July 2017, but the one before that was as far back as May 2016. This change in procedural security demonstrated a commitment to a women-centred and trauma-informed approach to managing the residents at Boronia, and was appropriate to the security and risk level of the population. And it was respectful practice.

### **Residents at Boronia do not get restrained when being transported**

There are policies and procedures about restraining prisoners when they are transported by the prisoners’ transport contractor, currently Broadspectrum. Boronia is not exempt from these policies. The risk of not restraining a prisoner under escort by Broadspectrum is the contractor’s risk and they were not prepared to assume this risk. This means that a minimum-security woman at Boronia who is allowed to leave the centre to work in the community would need to be handcuffed when entering and exiting the vehicle if she needed to be transported by Broadspectrum. Clearly this was inappropriate, and contrary to Boronia’s philosophy which is all about supporting and empowering women to be responsible for their own choices.

So we were delighted to find that Boronia’s management had developed a process to work around having to restrain the women. Residents are escorted to the vehicle by a Boronia officer, and only once they have entered the vehicle are they signed over into the custody of Broadspectrum staff. When they return to Boronia, they are met by a Boronia officer and signed back over to Boronia before exiting the vehicle and then escorted back into the centre by the Boronia officer. This eliminates the need for the use of restraints as the resident is in the custody of the centre both entering and exiting the vehicle.

Restraining minimum-security prisoners on escorts is an issue for all minimum-security facilities in the state. We certainly heard complaints about this at our recent inspection of Bunbury Regional Prison which also has a pre-release unit that accommodates over 100 minimum-security men. Boronia’s modification of this procedure was an excellent example of ‘making it work’ without compromising the dignity and respect of the women, and the ethos of the centre.

## RESPECT AND SUPPORT

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### Processes at Fiona Stanley Hospital cut across the Boronia philosophy

When residents had to attend a medical appointment at Fiona Stanley hospital, they had to go through the secure facility there. This is a holding facility for prisoners waiting to attend a medical appointment in the hospital and is operated by Broadspectrum.

When the resident arrives she is placed in a holding cell until her appointment. The officer from Boronia remains standing watch. When the time comes for her to attend the appointment, she is taken out of the cell, and escorted by Broadspectrum staff to the appointment. The resident is then left with the Boronia officer until the appointment has been completed and then she is escorted back by Broadspectrum staff.

This procedure only applied during working hours when the secure facility is open. Should a resident need to attend Fiona Stanley hospital after hours, she is simply escorted by a Boronia staff member through the general public access at the front of the hospital.

This seems a nonsensical arrangement. If residents can simply be walked through the front of the hospital after hours they should be able to be walked through the front of the hospital during working hours too. And they should not be restrained at any point during their journey through the hospital.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Review the process at Fiona Stanley Secure Facility and implement changes that are more appropriate to the minimum-security rating of Boronia's residents.

## 4.2 SUPPORTING RESIDENTS

### Case management and Integrated Individualised Offender Management (IIOM) failed to deliver

Case management refers to a relationship between an officer and a prisoner that, properly developed and maintained, should support the prisoner/resident's reintegration prospects.

The Department's case management system is meant to ensure that prisoners remain on track with their sentence requirements, which assists them in building the capacity for a successful transition back into the community. This is achieved through regular, scheduled meetings between prisoners and their assigned case officers. In every prison, each prison officer is assigned a number of prisoners that they are responsible for case managing.

The regular contact meetings between case officers and prisoners (or residents at Boronia) are mandatory and have to be recorded on TOMS. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure residents are complying with their sentence requirements as set out in their Individual Management Plans (IMPs). These plans have been developed early on in the resident's sentence and include things like appropriate prison placements, relevant

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education courses, compulsory treatment programs, and security classification.

We have long been sceptical of the effectiveness of the case management system. We think that it is limited in its capacity to assist prisoners with what they really need to make it on the outside. Completing the right education courses and intervention programs is not necessarily everything a person needs to successfully transition back into society, particularly if they are returning with very little money and/or to broken family relationships.

In 2015 we recommended that the Department ...

Pilot an integrated and individualised case management system at Boronia Pre-release Centre which is inclusive of all residents, commences on the resident's orientation to the centre, and engages re-entry providers at the earliest possible juncture (OICS, 2015, p. 45).

The Department supported this recommendation as an existing departmental initiative, citing the impending roll out of the IOM as evidence that it was addressing this. IOM was supposed to support prisoners throughout their time in prison and beyond through the development of individual plans for each prisoner.

### **Boronia was trying different approaches**

Boronia, with its settled population and women-centred operating philosophy, is uniquely placed to offer a truly integrated case management system, like the IOM. We were concerned, however, that the centre was not doing as well as it could. We canvassed opinions on a range of topics in our pre-inspection survey before we went on site to inspect the centre. One of the questionnaires we received back included a written comment that read "would be great if an officer was allocated to each prisoner who had your interests at heart, and who you could go to about anything".

This did not mean that residents at Boronia did not have case officers assigned to them, who met with them when scheduled and assisted their progress through their sentences. Indeed each resident did have a case officer, and meetings with case officers were recorded as a reporting requirement. The perception among some residents that this did not occur was, however, real.

The level of engagement between residents and staff at Boronia did alleviate some of the frustrations. Staff are well-known to residents who do feel empowered to approach staff if they need to. This in itself is a de facto system of case management. But we still thought that Boronia could do better.

We did find some evidence of an enhanced case management process at Boronia. The Manager, Family and Community Services (MFCS) had introduced monthly one-on-one meetings with the mothers of residential children, to assess their individual needs and monitor progress. This was positive, and we heard that this approach was gaining momentum and influencing interactions with different cohorts of residents at Boronia,



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including Aboriginal residents. We thought that this was an excellent example of individualised case management of high needs groups of residents. We hope this approach continues to influence good case management practice at Boronia.

### 4.3 SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

#### **Peer support was well-managed and provided valuable support**

Peer support continued to play an active and supportive role at Boronia. This was particularly the case with the orientation of new residents, who can find the change in environment and philosophy at Boronia quite challenging at first.

The team was managed by a Prison Support Officer (PSO) whose primary position was based at Bandyup but she attended Boronia one and a half days each week. This was an improvement on the previous inspection when PSO attendance was only once a week. The current PSO advocated for another half day a week at Boronia to facilitate training with the peer support team. This showed good engagement between the PSO and her team and we thought this was most positive.

The PSO was also working with the Assistant Superintendent Offender Services (ASOS) on a review of the job description for peer support members. This was to ensure that the residents on the team were an appropriate representation of all the residents at Boronia. So, for example, in selecting a new peer support member, the selection panel must consider the current representation of the team and what is missing, such as Aboriginal representation and mothers with resident children.

### 4.4 SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL RESIDENTS

#### **Aboriginal resident numbers had remained stable**

The 2015 inspection found that, after many years of concern about Aboriginal prisoner access to Boronia, the proportion of Aboriginal residents had increased, from 13 per cent in 2012 to 25 per cent three years later. The past three years has seen this sustained. At the time of this inspection approximately 20 per cent of the residents were Aboriginal women.

This was still, however, an under-representation of Aboriginal women. TOMS records indicate that on 14 June 2018 (2 weeks after the on-site inspection) there were 724 women in prisons in Western Australia. Of these, 329 (45%) were Aboriginal. And of these, 68 were rated minimum-security

We maintain the view across most of our inspections that more can be done for the Aboriginal people held in custody. And Boronia was no exception. In 2015, we recommended that Boronia implement an Aboriginal women's re-entry strategy (OICS, 2015, p. 7 Recommendation 1). We hoped this would encourage all eligible minimum-security Aboriginal women to want to engage with Boronia and the reintegration services on offer there.

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The Department supported this recommendation and provided a lengthy explanation of how this was to be implemented. This included references to the then newly established Rehabilitation and Reintegration Directorate, a new external Women's Estate Reference Committee, and rolling out the IOM system (OICS, 2015, p. 50). We have not been updated on the workings of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Directorate and the Women's Estate Reference Committee, but they appear to be defunct, and the IOM model has never eventuated. In its updated progress against this recommendation which we requested prior to the current inspection, the Department's response was a lot more brief with only the words - "Women in Prison – Prisons Standard". So we haven't seen any systemic progress against this recommendation.

### **There was more positive engagement with the Aboriginal residents**

Boronia, though, had made positive efforts to improve engagement of and with the Aboriginal residents. The establishment of an internal, resident-driven Aboriginal Services Advisory Group was the result of these efforts.

This group has a direct link with the Superintendent. Its purpose is to provide suggestions for improvement in the outcomes for Aboriginal residents at Boronia. And to assist the Superintendent in identifying appropriate services for Aboriginal women (and their children) resident at Boronia (DOJ, 2018). This group meets with the Superintendent once a month. The venue for the meetings is decided by the Aboriginal residents on the group, usually one of the residents' houses or the café in the social visits' area. The meetings are recorded and minutes are distributed to all members.

These are some of the ideas and initiatives that have been raised by this group:

- Elders' workshop
- NAIDOC activities
- requests for different culturally appropriate foods
- information sharing about Wandoo
- reviewing Aboriginal employment options.

This was really positive progress at Boronia, and showed true engagement with the Aboriginal women there.

### **Aboriginal residents missed the AVS**

There is no Aboriginal Visitor Scheme (AVS) resource allocated to Boronia, so AVS attend only when specifically requested to assist with something urgent. The Aboriginal residents missed a regular AVS service at Boronia, and certainly did not feel comfortable using the AVS 'hotline', which they viewed as culturally inappropriate. One resident commented "why would I want to talk to a machine when I am upset? It will just make me more angry, or more sad, not being able to talk to a person when I need it".

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### 4.5 SUPPORTING MUMS AND BUBS

#### Improved engagement with and support for resident mums and bubs

Nurturing family relationships is one of the guiding principles of Boronia's philosophy. This principle is most evident in the practice at Boronia that allows mothers to have their child reside with them during their time there.

Policy Directive 10 (PD 10) (DCS, 2007) is the policy that allows a mother with a child under four years to apply to have the child reside with her at Boronia. At the time of the inspection six mothers resided with their children in the three, dedicated mother/child houses (two mothers and babies in each house). This was full capacity for mother and child accommodation at Boronia.

We were pleased to find a marked improvement in the way mothers and children were managed at Boronia. A new MFCS, appointed in April 2017, had revitalised policies and practices. We found more positive engagement with the mothers with resident children and a much more receptive approach to their needs and requests.



*Photo 14: A nursery bedroom.*

We had been concerned about the mothers and resident children following our previous inspection. Then we heard from mothers that they did not feel supported by management and also felt vulnerable at times, particularly those who were new to parenting. They needed more engagement and more practical information.

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**Photo 15: The nursery garden.**

When we raised these concerns with management in 2015 we received a defensive response. So, we formally recommended improvement in this area:

Improve the personal engagement between the relevant manager(s) and the mothers with resident children at Boronia to ensure this group is adequately supported and informed (OICS, 2015, p. 33 Recommendation 4).

It was not surprising that the Department did not support this recommendation. Regardless, we came to Boronia in 2018 to find that our recommendation had been satisfactorily progressed.

Each resident mother was individually case managed by the MFCS, and encouraged to be fully engaged in planning for their child's needs. This involved monthly meetings with each mother, as well as other targeted meetings to meet residents' needs such as reintegration planning and child separation. These focused on the mother being the owner of how they were raising and managing their children, rather than the process 'being done to them'. This meant an active listening of needs and ideas from the mothers, and reflects changes to interactions with residents also seen in managing Aboriginal residents, which has been described in the section above. For example, at the time of the inspection, mothers were being encouraged to come up with ideas about the canteen and accessing more appropriate products for their children.

In response to increasing pressure across the female estate on accommodation options for mothers and resident children, Boronia is planning ways to expand the resident child accommodation options. This was proactive and we hoped that this would be positively supported by the Department.

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### **Where is the Family Links Officer?**

The mothers who had associations with the department that manages children in state care (the Department of Communities, Child protection and Family Support) were concerned that the representative who had been visiting Boronia to assist them with their cases was no longer attending. This person's title was Family Links Officer, and the position was based full-time at Bandyup.

The Family Links Officer was responsible for actioning issues related to child custody and access for residents, many of whom have children in state care. The absence of this officer means that processes to ensure women can receive supervised visits with their children, or start proceedings to obtain custody of their children cannot be initiated or progressed. This was highly stressful for mothers.

Boronia management reported that the Family Links Officer had just stopped attending at the centre, and, at the time of the inspection, had not been able to get an answer as to why, for how long, or if a replacement would be provided. This was not acceptable. The Family Links Officer provides a key service to a high needs client base and this service must be maintained.

### **Mothers were worried about health care for their children**

Policy Directive 10 states that health care to children should never be delayed and health services staff will be the first point of referral for all health problems concerning the child. Despite what the policy states, prison health services staff will not see children, except in an emergency.

If a resident child falls ill, s/he must either be signed out by the mother to an external carer who will take the child to a private doctor; or the mother can accompany the child to the external medical appointment under escort by an officer. But departmental restrictions on overtime and staff shortages mean competing priorities for staff resources and mothers stated they felt pressured to sign their children out to carers for appointments and were only allowed to go with their children as a last resort. They found this traumatic.

As mothers in the community, these residents would have access to a range of health services they can access in urgent cases, but also just to check in with a health professional about any worries they may have about their child's health. Like community health centres, GP offices, health direct telephone services and of course hospital emergency departments. Not having these resources to tap into at Boronia caused the mothers a lot of anxiety.

In Chapter 2 of this report we recommended that more use of unsupervised section 95 should be made for more residents to engage in the community work program (Recommendation 1). We see no reason why this cannot be extended to the mothers with resident children at Boronia. If they had clearance to partake in unsupervised section 95 activities, this would enable them to leave the centre with their child without having to be escorted. They could use public transport which would ease the pressure on officers and

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VSOs to have to drop them off and pick them up.

The reintegration benefits of this opportunity for the mothers at Boronia would be significant. They could participate in 'normal' activities that mothers in the community do with their children as a matter of course. Like ...

- attend the local child health clinic for their children's immunisations and information sessions
- attend mothers' groups which provide valuable information sharing opportunities
- go as a group to a park with their children
- attend medical appointments with their own doctors.

### **Recommendation 5**

**Approve mothers with resident children at Boronia for unsupervised section 95 activities.**

#### **No more parenting support programs**

The overarching principle contained in the Department's Women in Prison: Prisons Standard 28.2 is that '[W]omen prisoners are provided with programs to establish and maintain the bonds and relationships with their children' (DCS, 2016). These programs were no longer provided at Boronia.

In the past, participation in contracted parenting programs was compulsory for mothers with resident children. The program was provided by an accredited parenting support provider and residents attended weekly sessions with their children. These were opportunities to engage in structured play and movement with their children, information sharing, and generally socialising in a positive environment with their children.

Contracted service provision in prisons in 2018 has completely changed, a consequence of the Department re-tendering for these services and awarding the contracts to different providers. Some services that were previously provided were not included in this re-arrangement of the contracted service providers. Parenting support programs at both Bandyup and Boronia were among the casualties. This was counter to the Department's own commitment to women as professed in its standards for female prisoners that include "provide programs that build on parenting strengths and skills" (DCS, 2016). We do not know whether this was the result of oversight or was deliberate. Either way it is unacceptable.

Boronia has been proactive in trying to source alternative programs for the mothers with resident children to fill this gap. The centre has developed a positive relationship with the YMCA, which has commenced a playgroup on site on the weekends for residents and their children. There are also talks in train for a child specific first aid course to be delivered, as well as other programs and courses. This 'can do' approach is commendable. Particularly

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considering that any resourcing for these activities has had to be drawn from Boronia's existing budget.

Also, while it is admirable for the facility itself to work towards replacing these programs, this is not a systemic, planned and committed way for the Department to meet the obvious need of mothers in prison. It also means the Department does not have full control over what programs and services are provided.

It seems that Boronia may have been fortunate enough to find a provider willing to pay from its own resources to bring programs into the prison. This will provide important information and support programs for resident mothers, as well as those who want to improve their parenting for their kids living in the community. It will also give support for mothers playing with their children during visits sessions. But the Department should not be let off the hook because of Boronia's proactive approach, and the generosity of these community groups.

### **Recommendation 6**

Department of Justice restore funding to parenting and other related programs and services to enhance connection to children and families.

# Chapter 5

## HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

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### 5.1 STAYING HEALTHY

#### **Residents were satisfied with general health services**

Seventy eight per cent of the residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey said they thought health services were good. This is up from 60 per cent three years ago, and significantly better than the state average of 51 per cent.

Residents at Boronia have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own health in ways that they most likely have not done before. If a resident attends a doctor's appointment and is required to have any follow-up treatment, the services are available on demand at Boronia, and the resident is assured of receiving the follow-up treatment, because appointments for this will be scheduled for her and she will be called to attend these. This support is not available in the community and the responsibility to attend follow-up appointments rests with the individual. This often means that essential follow-up treatment is not followed through.

The Boronia health centre is run along a community health practice model. Residents telephone the health centre to make an appointment, just as they would on the outside. A medical receptionist books these appointments, most often for the same day, but sometimes the following day. So residents did not have to wait a few days (or even weeks as happens in some prisons) to be seen by a nurse. This was good practice.



*Photo 16: A community-style health centre.*



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*Photos 17 and 18: A community-style health centre.*

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A doctor attended the centre once a week. Residents needing to see the doctor could get an appointment easily, most often the same week they requested one. Should a resident require any follow-up treatment (such as blood tests) the doctor advises the nurses who schedule this and notify the resident when she is due to attend.

We are very concerned about the current state of health services in prisons across Western Australia. Changes to the employment conditions for the doctors who provide GP services in prisons has led to a marked decline in these services in prisons. So we were delighted to find a regular and reliable weekly GP service being provided at Boronia.

### **Residents were not satisfied with dental health services**

Only 30 per cent of the respondents to our pre-inspection survey at Boronia felt that dental services were good. Residents who need to see a dentist are escorted off site to receive this treatment at the Western Australia government dental clinic located nearby.

The service is basic, mainly fillings and extractions, and no long-term restorative treatment is available. Also, given it is a government health clinic, appointments are hard to get and Boronia is only allocated limited spots per week (we were told between three or four). And the clinic does not operate during school holidays, so residents cannot get dental treatment during these periods.

Residents were not satisfied with the dental care they had received from this clinic. Two residents we interviewed in particular had had teeth extractions that had left them in pain and needing follow-up dental surgery. Those residents who could afford it, could access their own private dentist.

### **Escorting residents to external medical appointments could be tricky**

Boronia must be credited for the number of external medical appointments they have managed to facilitate. Over the 12 month period ending 31 December 2017, 464 such appointments were successfully completed by staff at Boronia. This is a significant achievement. However, staff shortages can, and do, affect these escorts, meaning that residents can miss out on scheduled external medical appointments.

If a resident has an external medical appointment to attend, and she has been approved to leave the facility for these purposes (and other activities) under section 95, the escort can be done by one officer. If more than one resident needs to attend such an appointment, one of whom does not have section 95 approval, then two officers are required to do the escort.

The system works well when all the staffing positions are covered. However, this was rarely the case at Boronia, with restrictions on overtime impacting the centre's ability to cover every shift every day (see Chapter 7). On occasions when there were not enough officers available to conduct an escort to an external medical appointment, the appointment must be cancelled.

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Over the 12 month period ending 31 December 2017, 111 external medical appointments were cancelled at Boronia. Forty six of these (41%) were cancelled by the centre due to escorting restrictions.

Public waiting lists for specialist medical services are long. Some of these appointments have been booked months in advance. If a resident is unable to attend because she cannot be escorted to the appointment and it has to be cancelled, she goes to the back of the queue again.

### **The model of health management at Boronia was not appropriate**

The health centre at Boronia is managed by the Clinical Nurse Manager based at Bandyup Women's Prison (Bandyup), who of course also manages health services at Bandyup. We have long thought that this was not a suitable model for health services at Boronia, because the role and philosophy of these two prisons are so vastly different, and the demands at Bandyup are so high.

Bandyup is the state's maximum-security prison for women. Until about 18 months ago it was also the state's only remand facility for women. This function was transferred to Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility when it opened in mid-December 2016. So now Bandyup holds 236 sentenced prisoners, plus a handful (37) of remandees. Most (180) of the women at Bandyup are classified as medium-security, but there are 33 maximum-security classified prisoners there too.

Boronia is the state's minimum-security prison for women. All of the women at Boronia are minimum-security rated, with most nearing the end of their sentences. This is a markedly different cohort of prisoners than those residing at Bandyup.

The philosophy that underpins operations at Boronia is worlds apart from the operational regime at Bandyup. Residents at Boronia are encouraged and supported to take personal responsibility for their choices while at Boronia. The environment is such that women are given the physical and psychological space to do this. The environment at Bandyup is a typical prison environment. Women there do not have the same choices or 'freedoms' as the residents at Boronia do. Rather they are told when to get up in the morning, when to eat, when they can go to the health centre, and so on.

The health centre model at Boronia is a community-style model. This has been explained in a section above. The medical receptionist takes enquiries from residents and books appointments for them. The medical receptionists at Bandyup on the other hand have no direct contact with prisoners. They get forms that prisoners have filled out and allocate appointments from these.

There is a different level of medical need among these two different cohorts too. Bandyup provides a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week medical service and is set-up to manage acute illnesses. Medical crises occur a lot more frequently at Bandyup and health services are managed with this in mind. Residents at Boronia generally do not have acute illnesses that

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need treating. If they did, they would not be eligible for placement at Boronia in the first place because it does not provide a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week service.

The two models of healthcare are so completely different. And the risk of having both models managed centrally is that the one that generates the most urgency and has the highest need (in this case Bandyup) will be the one that attracts the most resources and time and attention. We were told that there is one full-time nurse position that is supposed to be attached to both sites and work at Boronia and Bandyup. In reality, this nurse has never worked at Boronia, because of the need at Bandyup.

### **Recommendation 7**

**Health services at Boronia should be managed by Boronia.**

#### **Mental health services were limited**

There is no mental health nurse or Psychiatrist attending Boronia. Any critical psychiatric issue has to be managed back at Bandyup. The nurses at Boronia need to be multidisciplinary in their approach to cover for this lack of specific mental health support, which includes managing the five residents on the Methadone program. And they do a good job.

We were pleased to find that there was some, albeit limited, counselling available for residents. The Prison Counselling Service (PCS) attended Boronia once a week, every Friday. The service has not been consistent at Boronia since the last inspection, however. In 2015 PCS counsellors were attending Boronia twice a week. Between then and our recent inspection in 2018 the service had disappeared completely from Boronia, then been reinstated in a reduced capacity to weekly.

Two different PCS counsellors attend Boronia, and they alternate each week. In effect, this means that a resident who is engaged with a particular PCS counsellor actually only gets to see their counsellor once every second week. This is not ideal for establishing a continuing therapeutic relationship. But we were relieved to find at least some counselling service available for Boronia residents.

#### **Chaplains kept the residents spiritually healthy**

Two chaplains visit Boronia three times a week, and a Christian church service is held every Sunday. Until very recently there was also an Aboriginal chaplain that visited Boronia, but she unfortunately had to cease her Boronia visits due to other work commitments.

The chaplains also provided grief and loss counselling, and delivered a grief recovery program. This program is also delivered at Bandyup. The residents we interviewed who had done the program were highly complimentary. They maintained that it had allowed them to reflect on their past and how grief may have influenced their decision-making and offending.

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While there was no demand for the chaplains to facilitate anything other than Christian services, these had been serviced in the past. The chaplains will process requests by residents for any religious accoutrements on a case by case basis.

### 5.2 STAYING ACTIVE

#### Recreation had improved

When we last inspected Boronia in 2015, the recreation officer position at Boronia was vacant, and had been for more than 12 months. Then, the only organised recreation activities were managed by residents, and resident satisfaction with recreation was low. Less than a quarter (22%) of the residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey in 2015 felt that the amount of organised sport was good (OICS, 2015).

Between 2015 and 2018 a recreation officer had started and stopped working at Boronia. She was recruited not long after our previous inspection and did a really good job to rebuild the recreation program, both inside Boronia and outside the centre through the community walking program and visits to the local library. She left in November 2016.

Following her resignation, the centre again had to manage without a recreation officer until just two months before our recent inspection in May 2018. During this hiatus, organising and facilitating recreation activities fell to some staff, but mostly to one committed resident, who was employed as the recreation assistant. While the efforts of the recreation assistant were impressive, the absence of a recreation officer did mean a reduced range of recreation activities available.

This extended break between recreation officers, did provide the centre with an opportunity to review the requirements for the position. Boronia is a unique custodial setting with a specific cohort. The existing recreation officer job description however, was a generic one reflecting what recreation officers are required to do in all prisons. Having some time during which the position was vacant provided an opportunity to change this and make the position requirements more specific to Boronia's population's needs. An essential criterion was included of possession of a qualification in recreation and experience in the delivery of recreation programs. The current recreation officer was recruited against these new requirements. This was good women-centred practice.

Fortunately, satisfaction levels in 2018 were much improved with the new recreation officer on board. Our pre-inspection survey revealed that 48 per cent of respondents felt that the amount of organised sport was good. A significant improvement on 22 per cent in 2015.

There was a lot of energy and initiative around recreation at Boronia. The new recreation officer was exploring opportunities, connecting with various services across the prison (such as health) as part of an integrative approach, and gradually restoring the full recreation program.

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*Photos 19 and 20: The gym was well used and in good condition.*

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### 5.3 STAYING CONNECTED

#### *An excellent visits' experience*

At Boronia residents visit with their friends and family in the café. There is a spacious indoor area set-up with tables and chairs and filled with natural light. There is also an outdoor area which is set among Boronia's beautiful gardens.



*Photos 21 and 22: The visits' facility was excellent.*

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**Photo 23: The visits' facility was excellent.**

Residents could purchase food and drinks for their visitors from the café, with the cost deducted from each resident's gratuity account. Visitors could deposit money into a resident's account prior to the visit. This café service is unique to Boronia.

The attitude of Boronia staff was key to the positive atmosphere of visit sessions. Visitors and residents alike were treated respectfully, and we observed friendly engagement by staff. Eighty four per cent of the residents who responded to our survey felt that their visitors were treated well at Boronia. This compared very well to the state average of 55 per cent. Security was appropriately nonintrusive, but staff were alert to any issues or behaviours that needed to be addressed. Overall, Boronia provided an excellent visits' experience.

### **But some important features have been lost**

The children's playground – formerly a highlight of Boronia – had been out of operation since July 2016. At more than 10 years old, the playground no longer met safety regulations. It was decommissioned, and the play equipment was removed. At the time of the inspection, almost two years after the playground was closed, the area was still a construction site.

A submission for funding to replace the playground was rejected by the Department. Boronia was forced to approach community organisations to source funds to build a new playground. They were successful in this which indicates the strong community



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connections they have fostered. But the fact that it was necessary at all reflects poorly on the Department and its support of Boronia's philosophy.

It also means that replacing the playground will take much longer. The funds donated were enough to provide the necessary equipment, but will not cover labour and other costs. The project will be coordinated internally and the construction work will be managed by residents and VSOs. This does provide good employment and training opportunities for residents.



*Photo 24: The visits' playground was a construction zone.*

Boronia had lost valuable services when the contract to provide re-entry services changed from Outcare to new a provider. Outcare had previously provided a childcare worker to provide activities for children during visit sessions. Outcare staff also provided support services to families before and after visit sessions. These services had not been replaced by the new contractor.

A resident had been tasked with setting up some toys and craft activities for visiting children in a corner of the indoor visits' area. But there was no specific supervised activity provided for them like Outcare had done. The loss of the family support service was also significant. Families had been provided with various support options through the family support service – like referrals for financial assistance, information on prison procedures, emotional support, crisis accommodation resources, and so on.

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### **Residents had good access to other forms of social and family contact – but no Skype**

Residents had high levels of satisfaction with their access to telephone calls and mail. In our pre-inspection survey, 98 per cent of respondents said it was easy to contact their family by telephone, and 94 per cent said it was easy to contact their family by mail. However, there was still no access to Skype or equivalent e-visits at Boronia. As far back as 2012, we recommended introduction of Skype facilities at Boronia (OICS, 2012). The Department supported this recommendation, stating that they were ‘undertaking a feasibility study of implementing Skype at Boronia’ (OICS, 2012, p. 53). In submissions prior to the 2015 inspection, the Department stated that ‘e-visit options, broader than just Skype, are being considered’. However, in 2018 there was still no consistent provision of e-visit options in Western Australian prisons. And none at all at Boronia.

An ‘email-a-prisoner’ system was in place at Boronia. Friends and family could sign up online and send emails to Boronia residents. The emails were received at the centre, then security screened, printed out, and delivered to the resident. There were 15 residents receiving emails via this system which was a good uptake. This system allows for easy contact by friends and family and we were pleased to see it so well-used at Boronia.

Boronia facilitated regular interprison visits to higher security prisons in the metropolitan area – Acacia Prison, Casuarina Prison, and Bandyup Women’s Prison. Boronia residents who had family members in one of those facilities were able to book a visit, and they would be escorted by Boronia officers to attend a visit session at that facility. The most recent scheduled inter-prison visit had been cancelled because of staff shortages, and this was a source of concern for local management, staff, and residents. However, such cancellations were infrequent. At the time of the inspection, Boronia had facilitated eight inter-prison visits in 2018, and cancelled one. In 2017, Boronia booked 19 inter-prison visits – 17 were successful, and only two were cancelled because of staff shortages. Boronia also successfully hosted nine inter-prison visits from prisoners at Wandoo Reintegration Facility during 2017.

# Chapter 6

## WORK, LEARNING AND INTROSPECTION

The principle of personal responsibility and empowerment is reflected in the opportunities provided at Boronia for residents to engage in meaningful activities. Residents can make choices about what work they would like to do, courses they may find interesting, training that may increase their skill set and so on. The environment and regime at Boronia also allows them the time to reflect on the choices they have made in the past that have brought them to Boronia, and the choices available to them going forward.

### 6.1 WORK

#### Employment levels were good

At the start of the inspection, only two Boronia residents were not working. The kitchen and the gardens employed the most residents. Other areas that employed smaller groups of residents were cleaning, maintenance, and the section 95 work team. There were also six residents engaged in full-time education.

**Table 2: Number of residents in each employment area as at 23 May 2018**

Work location	Number of residents employed
Garden Party	29
Kitchen	25
Cleaning Party	8
Section 95 (community work)	8
Full-Time Education	6
Maintenance	4
Mothers with Residential Children	3
Library	2
Miscellaneous	2
Not working	2
Laundry	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>

There were good processes and strategic direction guiding resident employment at Boronia. The centre had an Industries Action Plan 2017–2018 (DOJ, 2018a), which identified objectives, outcomes, and targets for each resident employment area. Further, Job Reference Manuals had been developed for all resident work positions in the kitchen, canteen/supermarket, and stores, and there were plans to extend this to positions in other areas.

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We thought this was good practice. Having job descriptions in place for work areas eliminates any confusion as to what the roles require. And linking work to strategic targets and outcomes is an accepted strategy in workplaces generally.

### Employment had a reintegration focus

The Boronia Industries Action Plan...

Demonstrates an acknowledgment that prison industries is one of a range of intervention programs intended to assist a prisoner's rehabilitation and reintegration into community and to reduce their risk of reoffending. Inherent in this action plan is a strong commitment to ensuring that opportunities to participate in prison industries is maximised with the aim to provide prisoners with vocational skills which will assist them to acquire and retain employment upon their release into the community (DOJ, 2018a, p. 2).

This focus was appropriate given Boronia's profile as a pre-release facility. There was a strong connection between the different industry workplaces and education which facilitated the promotion of traineeships in the following areas:

- gardens – Certificate II and III in Horticulture
- kitchen – Certificate II in Kitchen Operations
- canteen/Supermarket – Certificate II in Retail Services
- maintenance – Certificate II in Construction Pathways

There were 11 residents undertaking traineeships across these areas in May 2018, the same number as when we inspected Boronia in 2015.

There was good linkage between the Employment Coordinator and the VSOs responsible for the various industries. This allowed for information flow about which residents were really engaged with the work and would benefit from further training, and possible employment opportunities in the field. The Employment Coordinator had the networks and contacts to try and negotiate these for the residents.

### VSOs were highly valued at Boronia

VSOs, also referred to as Industrial Officers, are responsible for managing the various industries in a prison. Typically these are: kitchen, maintenance, gardens, laundry, but in the larger prisons can also include manufacturing and skills development workshops.

Seventy per cent of Boronia's residents who responded to our pre-inspection survey said that they get along with the VSOs at Boronia, and two-thirds said that they would approach a VSO for help if they had an issue they were concerned about. The relations between the residents and the VSOs at Boronia was good.

The VSO group was strong – well-regarded and well-integrated with other staff groups. There was a total of seven VSO positions in the various resident employment areas – two Kitchen Officer positions, two Horticultural Officer positions, one Vocational Skills

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Officer, one Community Activities Officer, and one Relief Officer. One of the Horticultural Officer positions had been vacant since the start of 2018, and had been covered by the Relief Officer.

This meant that there was limited capacity to cover any further absences. If a VSO was on leave or redeployed to other duties, it often meant that residents did not get to work that day. This problem would be largely alleviated by the recruitment of the second Horticultural Officer, which would free up the Relief Officer. Interviews for the vacant position took place during the inspection.

Unlike most other prisons, the VSOs at Boronia were not constantly redeployed to cover for shortages in custodial staffing. In recent visits to and inspections of other sites we have found VSOs covering various custodial positions, leaving their industries unattended and closed for the day. We were pleased that this wasn't happening at Boronia.

### **Allocation of gratuities was appropriate and equitable**

Throughout the prison system, prisoners are paid a gratuity for their work. There are five levels of gratuities, shown below (these are daily amounts):

- Level 1 – \$10.03
- Level 2 – \$7.67
- Level 3 – \$6.01
- Level 4 – \$4.26
- Level 5 – \$3.15

The Department's Policy Directive 25 sets out the suggested proportion of prisoners that should be receiving each gratuity level. However, it also allows individual prisons to determine the distribution of gratuities based on activities available within that prison (DOJ, 2007).

Appropriately, Boronia's distribution of gratuities was quite different to that suggested by the policy. There were more residents receiving higher gratuities, and fewer receiving lower gratuities. This reflected the fact that Boronia residents were fully engaged in meaningful work, and had earned a high level of trust. It was also in keeping with Boronia's reintegration philosophy in that it demonstrated to residents that should they choose to work and invest themselves in a job, they will be rewarded financially. This is the same model they will need to negotiate when they reintegrate into their communities.

## WORK, LEARNING AND INTROSPECTION

**Table 3: Distribution of gratuity levels at Boronia as at 23 May 2018**

Gratuity level	Suggested proportion (PD 25)	Boronia proportion
1	10%	14%
2	20%	53%
3	45%	30%
4	15%	0%
5	10%	2%

Our 2015 inspection report expressed concern about the comparatively low gratuities earned by mothers with residential children, and section 95 workers (OICS, 2015, pp. 18-19). Then, section 95 workers received a level 3 gratuity, and mothers with resident children a level 4. We argued that awarding only a level 3 for section 95 work was “undervaluing the work that they do”. And that the low gratuity rate that mothers with resident children received represented a “devaluing of motherhood in a centre dedicated to women’s rehabilitation”.

Since then, the gratuity level for mothers with residential children had been raised from level 4 to level 3. The section 95 team continued to be paid a level 3 gratuity, but they also received a weekly bonus that brought them up to the equivalent of level 2 pay. This was a great outcome.

We have found at some sites that Aboriginal prisoners are under-represented in the better jobs that attract the higher level gratuities. Luckily this was not the case at Boronia. In fact, we know that, in keeping with principles of substantive equality, some positions at Boronia had been reserved specifically for Aboriginal residents, including one of two new level 1 positions in the gardens team. Aboriginal residents, who made up 19 per cent of the total population, were well represented at the higher pay levels.

**Table 4: Breakdown of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents per gratuity level**

Gratuity level	Aboriginal residents	Non-Aboriginal residents	Proportion that is Aboriginal
1	2	11	15%
2	11	38	28%
3	3	23	11%
5	1	1	50%

### 6.2 LEARNING

#### **Most of the residents were engaged in education**

Education is an integral part of successful reintegration. Education in a prison environment provides opportunities for those who require it to catch up on missed education, and to engage in courses that will provide training and employment pathways.

Boronia offered a wide range of education and training options – from basic adult education, vocational training and certificated courses, through to bachelor-level tertiary study. The level of engagement from residents was high – 77 out of 92 residents were enrolled in education and training. This was 83.7 per cent of the total population, and included 15 out of 18 Aboriginal residents (83.3%). Aboriginal engagement was a particular focus for the education centre, and they had managed to maintain consistently high levels. And the centre had also maintained an adequate number of traineeships, with 11 residents participating in training associated with their workplaces in the kitchen, gardens, maintenance and the canteen.

The number of tertiary students was particularly high, with 15 residents enrolled in university courses at the time of the inspection. Tertiary students generate a particularly heavy workload for education staff in prisons because of departmental restrictions on prisoner access to the internet. Any online research or accessing of course materials must be carried out by education staff on behalf of students. The education team at Boronia did well to manage these students.

To further assist the tertiary students, Boronia had allowed after hours access to the education centre for these students. These students were provided with a card specifically keyed to allow them into the education centre in the evenings and on weekends so they could do their university work on the computers there. The education team at Boronia remains responsive to students' needs.

#### **A strong education team working under pressure**

The Boronia education team was small, with only two full-time positions – Campus Manager, and Prison Education Coordinator (PEC). There were three casual tutors, and staff from external training organisations also attended the centre to deliver certain courses.

The education staff, including the casual tutors, presented as a highly cohesive and supportive team. They were performing at a high level, and had managed to maintain a good level of service delivery despite ongoing budget constraints.

The Campus Manager position had been covered by two staff members in a job share arrangement. However, during our inspection, one of these staff members left Boronia to start work at the newly repurposed Wandoo Prison. This created some uncertainty about the position going forward.

## WORK, LEARNING AND INTROSPECTION

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The PEC position was doing the work of more than one person. Not only was it an administrative role, there were student contact and teaching requirements attached to the position as well. Also the tertiary students at Boronia generated enough workload for a full-time position, which the PEC had to fit into her existing frantic schedule. There was no budget for any additional staffing.

Our 2015 inspection report noted the impact of budget cuts to education across the prison system over several years. This included increasing workload for prison education staff, limiting education delivery to school term times only, and restricting tertiary students to one unit of study per semester (OICS, 2015, pp. 39-40).

The financial belt-tightening has continued over the past three years, and the education team at Boronia continue to work under pressure. The cuts have led to courses no longer being offered which have previously been popular among residents and have obvious and realisable employment pathways.

One such course was a community services course. This course can lead to work in areas like social work, case work, mental health support, and other similar fields. Its loss was most unfortunate. The education team at Boronia, however, had worked hard to secure alternate funding so the course could be reinstated and we found out during the inspection that they had secured this through Curtin University. The course was scheduled for the latter half of 2018.

The team had also managed to source free services from other community organisations. This was an effective way to maximise service delivery in a budget constrained environment, and the team's efforts are commendable. But the Department's education and training unit should not be off the hook because the team at Boronia are proactive in sourcing alternative funding and education services.

### 6.3 INTROSPECTION

Boronia provides the perfect setting for residents to reflect on their situation. By the time women obtain minimum-security and are placed at Boronia, they are generally quite settled. They have been through the traumatic experiences of having being remanded, sentenced and the early days and weeks of incarceration. The calm environment at Boronia supports the residents to think about where they have come from, the choices they have made that got them there, and how these choices can be different going forward.

The mandated offending behaviour treatment programs are an opportunity for this introspection. In 2014, we conducted a review into prisoner recidivism rates and the impact of offending behaviour treatment programs across prisons in Western Australia (OICS, 2014a). In that review we referenced research that has shown that reoffending is less likely if a person undertakes a relevant treatment program, like those available for drug addictions and sexual offending (OICS, 2014a, p. 1).



## WORK, LEARNING AND INTROSPECTION

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### Program delivery for the women's estate had gone from bad to worse

In 2015 we found that program delivery at Boronia had improved significantly on previous years (OICS, 2015, p. 38). At that time the program suite included the full range of treatment programs available to female prisoners in Western Australia:

- Pathways – addictions offending
- Choice, Change and Consequences (CCC) – general offending
- Think First – cognitive skills
- Cognitive Brief Intervention (CBI) – cognitive skills short course.

This was a real positive for the residents of Boronia, as they could access all of the benefits the centre has to offer while taking part in their required programs.

More broadly however, we have long held the view this program suite is insufficient for women. There are no Aboriginal specific programs for women, despite their overrepresentation in West Australian prisons (almost 40% of Bandyup's population in the week prior to our inspection). And programs addressing violent offending for women are notably absent, despite the known increase in violent offending by women.

In 2017, our inspection of Bandyup found that program delivery for women was not meeting demand. We were concerned that the number of female prisoners had increased, but that program delivery had decreased. And so we recommended then that the Department increase program delivery for female prisoners. The Department supported that recommendation, commenting that:

The new suite of rehabilitation and reintegration services, as a result of the recent procurement process, will be gender-specific and culturally appropriate.

The new services commence on 1 April 2018 (OICS, 2017, p. 67).

This commitment from the Department appeared to be short lived, however, because we discovered (in the lead-up to the 2018 Boronia inspection) that programs at Boronia were to be significantly reduced. This was due to a redistribution of resources that was required to support the reopening of Wandoo as a public prison.

The decision to reclaim Wandoo Reintegration Facility from its private operator, Serco, and bring it back under the state government's management was a political one. It was part of the newly elected Labor government's election commitment to tackle the "ice epidemic" in Western Australia. Wandoo was to be repurposed from a reintegration facility for young men to a women's drug rehabilitation prison accommodating up to 80 women.

We had difficulty getting any straightforward answers to our questions about how exactly Wandoo will operate – what the addiction programs will be, how they will work and who will deliver them. What we do know, though, is that there will be no additional funding for these programs at Wandoo. Resources will need to be shared from the existing arrangement of programs across the female prisoners' estate.

## WORK, LEARNING AND INTROSPECTION

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So, at Boronia this means that not only would the two cognitive skills courses be cut altogether from delivery at Boronia, but the Pathways and CCC would both be cut back to one per year (Pathways going from four courses per year in 2017 to one in 2018, and CCC from two in 2017 to one in 2018).

### Successful reintegration was compromised

Successful completion of programs that residents had been assessed as mandatory for them during their prison sentence was crucial for successful reintegration. Figures obtained from the Department's offender database (Total Management Solution – TOMS) three weeks before the start of the on-site inspection of Boronia in May 2018 indicated that 22 women had passed their earliest eligibility date (EED) to be released on parole. This means that their parole had been denied. Of these 22, 14 (which is 64%), had been denied because they had not done a program. The phrase used is 'unmet treatment needs'.

Missing out on beneficial opportunities to obtain skills and strategies that could assist residents to make better choices when they are back in their communities was only one consequence of not being able to get onto a program. Women could also not participate in other reintegration initiatives if they had not done their mandated programs. Like the PEP (discussed in Chapter 2). Or reintegration leave, which allows residents nearing release opportunity to spend some time away from Boronia with their families back in their communities.

### **Recommendation 8**

**Provide programs at Boronia to meet demand.**

# Chapter 7

## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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### 7.1 LEADING

#### Positive changes in the management team

Boronia has had a stable management team for a long time. This is positive for a prison environment, and not something we find often in prison administrations. But we have also been concerned that the long-term stability of the team at Boronia was stifling innovation, and complacent attitudes were impacting on services for residents (OICS, 2012; OICS, 2015). Changes in the management team at Boronia including additional resourcing and changes to business processes were encouraging from a succession planning perspective.

In May 2017 the management team got an ASOS position. This has increased capacity in the team substantially and relieved other senior managers of much of the resident-related work that is more appropriately placed with an ASOS position. In doing so, the ASOS has been able to improve on the work these managers had achieved by providing structure and processes around it. For example, the ASOS assumed management of the peer support system at Boronia and implemented more regular attendance by the PSO from Bandyup, established weekly PSO and peer support team meetings, reviewed the peer support application process within a substantive equality framework, and provides more consistent monitoring of the peer support system.

#### Improved business processes

In 2015 we found a marked decline in officers' perceptions of the support from and communication with Boronia's local management team. Following that inspection, the Inspector said that "staff perceptions of management support and communication are a cloud at a facility that is otherwise performing well".

The centre had worked hard to address these criticisms. These efforts had led to significant revision and improvement of the centre's communication plan to address gaps in information flow to staff. The revised communication strategy is a comprehensive document that details how communication among staff and managers will occur to ensure that there are no gaps in communication. This document sets out all the meetings that have to occur, when they need to happen, who facilitates the meeting, how and to whom the minutes are to be distributed, and where the terms of reference for each meeting group can be located. This was exceptional practice.

The result was a much improved sense among staff of support and communication from local management from staff at Boronia. In our pre-inspection survey, 51 per cent of staff who responded said they felt that communication from local management was good, up from 33 per cent in 2015. And 57 per cent said they thought the support they got from local management was good, up from 36 per cent three years ago.

## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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The Boronia Performance and Compliance Group (BPCG) was another recent business improvement measure. The purpose of this group was to monitor compliance with the various recommendations and operational instructions that they were required to progress and manage. This included outcomes from internal reviews, as well as from external sources such as our own recommendations. It also functioned as an information sharing portal and membership included all the senior managers at Boronia. So it was also a leadership group providing general oversight of service delivery at Boronia.

These business improvement strategies and processes were important succession planning strategies too. Having these in place and bedded into the centre's management operations provides a structure and knowledge base for future leaders of Boronia. This ensures that information and knowledge about how Boronia should work does not evaporate when the current holders of the knowledge leave their positions.

### Staff were under pressure

We think that Boronia is a good prison and a good place to work. Much of this had to do with the staff at Boronia and their positive attitudes to their work. Staff, in our pre-inspection survey, reported a high score relating to their quality of working life – eight, against a state average of six. But staff were under pressure.

There are vacancies in the daily staffing profile at every prison. Some of these are planned vacancies, such as annual leave and long service leave. Others are unplanned vacancies, like personal and sick leave. We heard from the human resource team responsible for coordinating the roster at Boronia that there were days when they struggled to find enough staff to cover the planned vacancies that they could anticipate, let alone the unplanned ones.

The capacity to fill all the shifts by calling officers in to work overtime has always been available, and has been a valuable resource for the local human resource personnel tasked with making sure the rosters are filled each day. But the use of overtime has become increasingly restricted in recent times as the pressure on government departments to cut spending has intensified.

The restrictions on overtime that had come into effect across all prisons were largely to blame for Boronia's staffing difficulties. These restrictions placed limits on the number of overtime shifts each prison could provide each day. At Boronia, this was limited to 1.5 shifts per day, or 11 shifts per week.

When the shifts could not all be covered, other services paid the price, such as attending outside medical appointments. If there were not enough officers on shift, and no overtime available, then the centre had no choice but to cancel the escorting of residents to these appointments. Similarly, on occasions the VSOs were used to support custodial functions when there was a shortage of officers. Sometimes this was the section 95 VSO, which meant that the external work activities were cancelled for that day.

## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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### **Relationships between some officers were fractured**

An incident had occurred in the days leading up to our on-site inspection between some officers which had caused divisiveness among officers. This overshadowed much of our inspection work, with lots of individual staff interviews being requested by officers.

We come across this kind of staff in-fighting fairly often in our inspection and liaison work. It is not our job to resolve the issues. But it is important that we hear from and listen to the officers involved in these factions as this does impact on their work and relationships with each other. At Boronia we found that the disagreement between the officers was affecting staff morale. Officers at Boronia are used to a harmonious working environment, and so when something happens to upset this, staff in turn become upset.

Our message to staff in other circumstances like this has been to acknowledge the good work that they do and, at Boronia, to acknowledge that it is a good prison and a good place to work. The evidence for that is that there were a lot more staff wanting to transfer in to Boronia than there were wanting to leave Boronia. Indeed, the information we were provided showed that, from across the state, 67 prison officers, nine SOs, one Principal Officer and eight VSOs wanted to transfer in to Boronia, and only three prison officers and one VSO had indicated they may transfer out.

We also understand that management had stepped up efforts to address the quarrel, although staff in general may not know this. Requirements of legality, confidentiality and due process limit what management can do and say, and also, frustratingly, impact on timely resolution. The Acting Inspector, in his parting message to staff after the inspection, reminded staff that addressing these issues is everyone's responsibility, not just management's, and that taking sides is not the answer.

### **The business services' team was under pressure**

The business services' team at Boronia had not grown commensurate with the increase in the resident population and the subsequent increase in custodial staffing required to manage the extra residents. Resourcing in the team was their biggest challenge.

In particular, the team missed having a finance officer position. Instead, this function was picked up by the Administration Officer and the Business Manager, in addition to their usual duties. There is someone who comes in once a week to assist with the finance work. This very part-time position was obtained through a re-structuring of the hours available for the Volunteer Coordinator position, however, a 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' type of arrangement.

We heard that Boronia was unusual in this regard and that most other facilities have a dedicated position in their business services' teams to manage the facility's finance matters. We also heard that even the yet to open Wandoo, with a prisoner population lower than that of Boronia, has a finance officer position in its staffing model.

## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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A finance officer would be a valuable resource for Boronia. The position could manage everything money-related, and would also be a big help to the VSOs who often struggle with the financial procurement system that they have to use. The position could also provide more robust accountability for controlling the clothing stock for the residents which, as reported in Chapter 3, needs a stronger stock management system.

We found that pressure the team was under was not sustainable. The Business Manager had to spend too much attention on financial minutiae to compensate for the lack of a financial officer, which left the strategic and business improvement priorities of the position with too little attention.

### Complicated HR processes and delays at head office create problems

There seemed to be an inconsistent approach among the HR officers at head office relating to what really should be standard human resource procedures. This was problematic across various cohorts of staff that we interviewed during the inspection.

Some of the problems that this had created included:

- contract renewals not being processed on time
- lengthy delays in processing higher duties allowance approvals
- positions not being finalised and staff having to continue on rolling contracts.

When a staff member's contract renewal is not signed before the existing contract expires, s/he is unemployed between contracts. This means that, not only does the staff member miss out on being paid, s/he also loses any entitlements s/he may have accumulated, like annual leave, long service leave and any extra hours worked that could be claimed back.

When someone acts in a higher paying position, and there are delays in approving the higher duties allowance for this, then that person has been underpaid for those duties for the time s/he performed them. These are standard HR processes that should be easily and quickly processed.

Whereas previously there were dedicated staff in positions who could answer the HR questions and apply the HR processes, we heard that now there was uncertainty about who was responsible for what. As a result, inquiries were either not responded to or the responses were late, and sometimes the information provided was incorrect.

### **Recommendation 9**

Ensure HR-related inquiries sent to head office are processed quickly and efficiently.

### 7.2 DEVELOPING

#### **Lots more training opportunities**

A satellite training officer is based at Boronia and coordinates, facilitates and supports training for staff at Boronia. This was an improvement on our findings three years' ago when there was no training officer in place and training was organised by the Principal Officer as an additional responsibility.

There was a current database in place of the training status and training gaps for all officers at Boronia. This was good practice, and was not in place in 2015. There was a strong engagement among officers with the training they were required to attend, which reflected the engagement by the training officer, who was present and visible around the site.

Much of the training that occurred was on a one-on-one basis. This was necessary because Boronia cannot be locked down for all officers to attend group training as occurs in other prisons. While some nuances may be lost doing individual rather than group training sessions, it was positive that training was tailored to the centre's regime.

The Business Manager had received qualifications which allowed her to provide mental health first aid training. She had already facilitated one course for officers from Boronia and some other sites. This is a most useful resource for the centre.

### 7.3 ENGAGING

#### **Community engagement processes were innovative**

Boronia has a good track record of positive engagement with the local community. We found this was still in place in 2018, but with improved governance processes which was positive.

The Community Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG) is the primary conduit through which relationships with the community are maintained. The CEAG actually pre-dates Boronia and was influential in the original design and construction of Boronia. This group includes individuals from the local community and members of Boronia's management team, and its purpose is to enhance the relationship between Boronia and the community surrounding it. Community representation includes local residents as well as representatives from local organisations and businesses.

The CEAG meets every two months. The Superintendent, ASOS and MFCS represent Boronia, with the MFCS providing the administrative support for the group – setting agendas, recording minutes and so on. She was also responsible for reviewing the terms of reference for the group. These now provide a lot more structure for the group, such as processes for nominating a chairperson, length of appointments, membership, and functions and responsibilities of the group.

## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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There was a strong commitment by Boronia to the CEAG. This link with the community provides valuable opportunities for Boronia's residents – in employment, training, reparative activities, and volunteering. The group is also instrumental in the planning around Boronia's annual 'gala day'. This is the event where Boronia can showcase its achievements publicly, with all funds generated going to a charity selected through the CEAG.

### 7.4 EVALUATING

There is little hard evidence that Boronia actually works to reduce recidivism. In 2012 and 2015 we recommended that the Department "commission and publish a methodologically robust independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes, including a comparison with other male and female prisons" (OICS, 2012, p. 49 Recommendation 18; OICS, 2015, p. 47 Recommendation 7).

The Department supported the recommendation in 2012, saying it was timely to commission an independent review subject to funding. No review was ever done.

In 2015, we made the same recommendation and the Department promised to evaluate post-release outcomes for women at all the state's prisons:

The Department has recently established a Women's Estate Reference Committee. The committee is working with the Department to improve outcomes for all female offenders, which will involve an evaluation of post-release outcomes at all facilities. In view of this committee and its purpose, there is no need for the Department to commission an independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes (OICS, 2015, p. 54).

No evaluation was ever done, and the Women's Estate Reference Committee is defunct.

In 2014, we published our own review of recidivism rates across prisons (OICS, 2014a). The review found that Boronia was performing "as expected" taking into account the services available and the prisoner cohort. This was notable because we would argue that Boronia should be performing above expectations across this measure.

We would also expect Boronia to be performing well across a range of other social measures, like how successfully women reintegrated with their communities, whether the contracted post-release services were sufficient, and whether connections with family and children were supported and maintained.

The government cannot take informed investment decisions or target scarce resources if it does not have evidence, and 'feel-good stories' or anecdotes are not evidence. The recent opening of the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison for women with drug and alcohol abuse problems makes it even more important for there to be an evaluation of the success of small facilities that target specific needs.



## LEADING, DEVELOPING, ENGAGING, EVALUATING

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In hope rather than expectation, we therefore make the following recommendation.

### **Recommendation 10**

Commission and publish a methodologically robust and independent evaluation of post-release outcomes at Boronia and Wandoo, including recidivism rates and other social measures.

# Appendix 1

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

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ASOS	Assistant Superintendent Offender Services
AVS	Aboriginal Visitor Scheme
BPCG	Boronia Performance and Compliance Group
CCC	Choice, Change and Consequences
CEAG	Community Engagement Advisory Group
HR	Human Resources
IOM	Integrated Individualised Offender Management
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MCFS	Manager, Family and Community Services
PCS	Prison Counselling Service
PEC	Prison Education Coordinator
PEP	Prisoner Employment Program
PSO	Prison Support Officer
RIL	Reintegration Leave
RSP	Resocialisation Program
TM	Transitional Manager
TOMS	Total Offender Management Solution
VSO	Vocational Support Officer
WA	Western Australia
WSO	Women's Support Officer

## Appendix 2

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# Appendix 3

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Government of Western Australia  
Department of Justice

## **Response to the announced inspection: Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women**

**September 2018**

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the announced inspection:  
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

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The Department of Justice welcomes the inspection of Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women as part of the Inspectors announced schedule of inspections for 2018/2019 year.

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

Appendix A contains a number of comments for your attention and consideration.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the announced inspection:  
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

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### Response to Recommendations

#### 1 Increase resident participation in unsupervised community work and other activities under section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)*.

**Response:**

Boronia will explore its capacity to increase resident participation in unsupervised activities in accordance with Prison Procedure 301 – External Activities.

**Responsible Business Area:** Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 June 2019  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported

#### 2 Establish a dedicated reception area which will provide privacy, security and space, and ensure appropriate staffing.

**Response:**

An upgrade to the reception area has commenced at Boronia. This includes the construction of a dividing wall to provide privacy during the reception process and improved furnishings/storage for resident's property.

**Responsible Business Area:** Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 March 2019  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported

#### 3 Allow women to purchase razors at Boronia.

**Response:**

Disposable razors will be provided to residents to purchase via the canteen.

**Responsible Business Area:** Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 October 2018  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported

#### 4 Review the process at Fiona Stanley Secure Facility and implement changes that are more appropriate to the minimum security rating of Boronia's residents.

**Response:**

Whilst the Department notes the concerns raised in the draft report regarding the attendance of medical appointments at Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH) by Boronia residents, the responsibility for facilities management, including security at Fiona

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the announced inspection:  
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

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Stanley Hospital, is the remit of Serco. All prisoners are escorted to their appointments via the FSH Secure Unit in order to prevent unnecessary risk to the general public, reduce any potential compromise to an escort and to minimise disruption to FSH operations.

**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Custodial Operations  
**Proposed Completion Date:** N/A  
**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported

### **5 Approve mothers with resident children at Boronia for unsupervised section 95 activities.**

**Response:**

All residential mothers will be risk assessed for unsupervised section 95 activities approval following the completion of ten supervised activities. This is in accordance with the requirements stipulated in Prison Procedure 301 - External Activities.

**Responsible Business Area:** Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2018  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported

### **6 Department of Justice restore funding to parenting and other related programs and services to enhance connection to children and families.**

**Response:**

Under the new contracted services, in addition to reintegration services, the Department also funds separate contracts for Parenting and Family Support Services. The Wungening led consortium were the successful service provider for these services at Boronia.

The contracts commenced 1 April 2018 and the inspection of Boronia took place in late May 2018 during the transition in process of the new services, and at which time the implementation of parenting programs was still being developed between Wungening and the Department.

Since June, Wungening have delivered two completed parenting programs, with a new program commencing in October, and intensive parenting one-on-one with all mothers with children in residence as mandated clients.

Initial feedback from Boronia and the service provider is that the parenting services delivered at Boronia have been received positively and are performing well.

**Responsible Business Area:** Offender Management  
**Proposed Completion Date:** Completed  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported

Response to the announced inspection:  
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

## 7 Health Services at Boronia should be managed by Boronia.

### Response:

The model of care across all sites in the health service is a nurse-led service working within a primary care context. The activity of both Bandyup Women's Prison and Boronia are considered as a continuum of care and are resourced accordingly. The resourcing at Boronia (as with all sites) is based on activity and clinical need.

All patients are assessed prior to transfer to Boronia to ensure that their health status is stable and that they have a level of health literacy to enable them to manage their health needs as they would in a community setting. This is part of their reintegration pathway back into the community on release.

The staffing model at Boronia was reviewed some years ago to ensure that the resourcing was correctly allocated to deliver appropriate patient-centred services efficiently. Consequently one Clinical Nurse Manager is responsible for both sites providing management and leadership to the team. This role is supported by the creation of a Senior Registered Nurse position which provides clinical leadership and is responsible for the day to day activities of the health centre at Boronia.

**Responsible Business Area:** Offender Management

**Proposed Completion Date:** N/A

**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported

## 8 Provide programs at Boronia to meet demand.

### Response:

The Department does not agree with the assertion that program demand is not met at Boronia. Programs are delivered at Boronia by both internal programs staff and externally contracted NGOs.

The programs are scheduled to meet the demand at Boronia (based on a five year schedule 2016 -2020). The following number of programs are scheduled per year:

- 2 x Addictions Offending (Pathways program).
- 2 x Cognitive Skills (Think First Program); 4 x Cognitive Brief Intervention.
- 1 x General Offending (CCC).

Currently, unmet demand for programs at Boronia is low, with only 1 person waiting to access a Pathways program; 4 people waiting to access a Think First program; and 1 person waiting to access a CCC program.

There is currently a review of Statewide 2019 programs underway to ensure the distribution of staffing resources to deliver programs is matched to program demand (including number of programs and types of programs).

**Responsible Business Area:** Offender Management

**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2019

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Part



## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the announced inspection:  
Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

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**9 Ensure HR-related inquiries sent to head office are processed quickly and efficiently.**

**Response:**

The Department will explore opportunities for continuous improvement to ensure HR practices remain compliant and obligations with Public Sector Standards are met.

**Responsible Business Area:** Office of the Commissioner  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2019  
**Level of Acceptance:** Noted

**10 Commission and publish a methodologically and independent evaluation of post release outcomes at Boronia and Wandoo, including recidivism rates and other social measures.**

**Response:**

The Department agrees that an evaluation of post release outcomes at Boronia should be commissioned, dependent on funding availability. An evaluation framework is being developed for the newly opened Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison with an alcohol and other drug focus and its use of the Modified Therapeutic Community model. It is intended that both a process evaluation and outcome evaluation will be undertaken.

**Responsible Business Area:** Office of the Commissioner  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2020  
**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle

## Appendix 4

### INSPECTION TEAM

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Andrew Harvey	A/Inspector of Custodial Services
Darian Ferguson	Deputy Inspector
Natalie Gibson	Director of Operations
Lauren Netto	Principal Inspections and Research Officer
Stephanie McFarlane	Principal Inspections and Research Officer
Jim Bryden	Inspections and Research Officer
Kieran Artelaris	Inspections and Research Officer

# Appendix 5

## KEY DATES

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Formal notification of announced inspection	18 January 2018
Pre-inspection community consultation	13 March 2018
Start of on-site inspection	23 May 2018
Completion of on-site inspection	29 May 2018
Presentation of preliminary findings	6 June 2018
Draft report sent to the Department of Justice	11 September 2018
Draft report returned by the Department of Justice	4 October 2018
Declaration of prepared report	29 October 2108

*Inspection of prisons, court custody centres, prescribed lock-ups,  
juvenile detention centres, and review of custodial services in Western Australia*



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

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

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