

## MEDIA RELEASE

### REPORT NO 123 – 2018 INSPECTION OF ACACIA PRISON

#### EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2019

The latest report from the Inspector of Custodial Services has found that privately-operated Acacia Prison is a stable and generally well-run facility.

Inspector Eamon Ryan said the November 2018 inspection found that service provider Serco and its staff had, over nearly 13 years of operation, shown a dedication to innovation, flexibility and responsiveness. This resulted in services that were overall of a good standard for prisoners, getting value for money for the state, and prompt reaction when problems or issues arose.

Mr Ryan also identified strong contract management and accountability oversight as key reasons for Acacia's success as a private provider:

*The contract is very well managed by the Department, is transparent and has good governance processes.*

*There is also a strong framework of independent oversight. In addition to the regular inspections and visits of our office, Acacia is also subject to monthly visits from Independent Prison Visitors, regulation from other independent oversight agencies, and must also publically report on its operations. This all contributes to good performance.*

Areas of good service delivery included:

- Offender programs were running well and the voluntary programs were very popular
- A quality renovated kitchen had been completed
- The peer support team was strong and well-supported
- The lifers' strategy was still in place and the Lifers' Liaison Officers were a cohesive team
- The role of the Indigenous Services Coordinator
- Innovation in employment options
- Additional resources invested into health care and improved health staff morale
- Emergency management was comprehensive

The most significant issue facing Acacia, however, is the approaching end of the 15-year operating contract with the State. In May 2021, Acacia's operations must be either retendered or brought back to State operation.

Mr Ryan said the uncertainty could impact Serco's decisions to invest in ongoing needs and services at the prison, and the maintenance of staffing levels.

Despite this, Mr Ryan said Serco and the Department must maintain Acacia's positive record and ensure that services do not decline. Several areas were identified in the latest report that should be addressed despite the uncertainty. Areas identified for improvement included:

- Some areas of infrastructure had become inadequate for increased population
- The Department must address the hundreds of outstanding Individual Management Plans for prisoners at Acacia
- Crowding forcing the lifers' units to accommodate non-lifer prisoners
- Absence of Aboriginal Visitors Scheme visitors at Acacia
- Need for more employment and more traineeships
- Deterioration of the young prisoners strategy
- The Department must improve oversight of the prison maintenance contract

Eamon Ryan  
**Inspector**

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 12 November 2019 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.