

Media release

Report 127: 2019 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm

Embargoed until 12 noon on Thursday 19 March 2020

Karnet Prison Farm has maintained its role as a strong performer and provider of meaningful rehabilitation opportunities for prisoners in WA.

This was one of the main findings in the inspection report of Karnet Prison Farm released today by the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Inspector Eamon Ryan said the inspection revealed prisoners continued to have a good level of access to quality education, training, release planning, employment and community outreach activities.

'At many prisons, we have found that as more and more prisoners are placed into the facility, the opportunities to access meaningful rehabilitative activities decline. Karnet has avoided this trend, with over 90 per cent of prisoners being actively employed at the time of our inspection.' Mr Ryan said.

Encouragingly, the prison leadership were not inclined to sit on its good performance. We heard of many ideas and initiatives to expand prison industries further. Mr Ryan said this was commendable and sets an ongoing challenge for Karnet, particularly with increasing prisoner populations.

Other areas of positive service delivery found were:

- a proactive, engaged and organised peer support team
- well run social visits, with respectful management from staff
- a diverse range of recreation activities
- good health services team
- availability of Skype visits

The inspection report also highlights several challenges facing the prison.

Mr Ryan said it was disappointing to find that Karnet had still not been able to significantly improve Aboriginal prisoners' access to the prison, especially given its positive rehabilitative environment.

'For many years, we have made recommendations about the low number of Aboriginal prisoners at Karnet, and how they are missing out on its positive opportunities. This had been further eroded with the ending of the Fairbridge Bindjareb work project,' Mr Ryan said.

He was, however, encouraged by news after the inspection, that a new service provider had been engaged and the Carey Bindjareb external work program for Aboriginal prisoners had commenced.

Other areas of concern that need action included:

- assessment of future infrastructure needs and investment in farm operations to ensure continued food supply to system
- offender treatment program delivery decreases due to system-wide assessment backlogs
- decrease in Prisoner Counselling Service resources
- lack of a regular presence of the Aboriginal Visitor Scheme in the prison
- poor gatehouse layout impacting on movement control

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Thursday 19 March 2020 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.