

Media release

Report 129: 2019 Inspection of Casuarina Prison

Embargoed until 12 noon on Tuesday 12 May 2020

The Inspector of Custodial Services found that the senior leadership team at Casuarina Prison was cohesive and effective, despite some instability arising from several being non-substantive in their roles.

Inspector Eamon Ryan said this was a very important finding from the inspection of WA's main maximum security prison for sentenced men, because it faces significant future challenges as its capacity gradually increases by more than 850.

'Casuarina already accommodates nearly 1000 maximum security prisoners. It will soon open another two units with a total of 512 beds. A further project is then planned for another 344 beds sometime in 2023,' Mr Ryan said.

'This will place significant pressure on the prison and impact its ability to provide a meaningful and constructive daily regime for a very large and complex cohort of prisoners. Strong and stable leadership will be essential to minimising security and safety risks for all at the prison.'

And while the effectiveness of the leadership was a positive finding, Mr Ryan raised concerns about there being no prison specific strategic and business plans to guide and keep the expansion on track. The Department of Justice did not agree with those concerns relying instead on the development of an operating philosophy and model for the prison.

A lack of enough meaningful constructive activities for the large number of prisoners was a key concern from the inspection. Many staff and prisoners raised concerns about prisoners not having enough work, education, programs and recreation. This would only likely increase with the planned expansions.



'When the prison expands, there will be additional pressure on these essential services. This will most likely be the single most important challenge for Casuarina into the future,' Mr Ryan said.

The opportunities currently available for prisoners were generally of a good standard. Education and training continued to be a particular highlight. The quality of employment was also good, but there were high levels of unemployment and under employment.

These problems were often exacerbated by staff shortages which led to supervisory staff being redeployed to units away from activities, effectively shutting them down or significantly restricting them.

Mr Ryan recognised many of the issues facing Casuarina are not unique to the prison, but the complex and high-risk nature of the facility and its plans to significantly expand will make it essential for strong leadership, good staffing and proper planning to continue and be supported.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

For further media information:

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