



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Justice**
Corrective Services

Response to OICS Draft Report:

**2021 Inspection of Boronia Pre-release
Centre for Women**

November 2021

Version 1.2

Contents

Response Overview	3
Response to Recommendations	5
Appendix A: Inaccuracies and Comments.....	11

Response Overview

Introduction

On 18 January 2021, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced its inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women (Boronia) scheduled to occur from 23 to 27 May 2021. This was the sixth inspection of Boronia with inspections occurring every three years since 2006.

To facilitate the inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) provided a wide range of documentation, access to systems, policies, processes, the facility, staff and prisoners. Contractors were also made available to OICS upon request for the purpose of the inspection.

On 7 October 2021, the Department received a draft report of the inspection from OICS for review and comment. The draft report has highlighted key findings and made 14 recommendations. The Department has reviewed the draft report and provides further context, comments, and responses to the recommendations as below.

Appendix A contains further comments linked to sections in the report for the Inspector's attention and consideration when finalising the report.

Review Comments

The Department is appreciative of the opportunity to respond to the key findings within the 2021 Inspection of Boronia.

It is pleasing to note the comments made by staff and residents at Boronia reflects the Department's view that Boronia provides a safe environment for the women and that staff and residents 'mostly' or 'always' felt safe. The proactive engagement and mutually respectful relationships between staff and residents have resulted in residents stating that they would approach uniformed staff if they needed help or support which is encouraging.

Boronia is a unique facility that operates on the principles of personal, family and community responsibilities building respect and integrity when preparing women for reintegration into their communities. Boronia thrives on community engagement and reintegration services provided by community service providers.

The Inspector acknowledged the good work undertaken at Boronia's mothers and babies' accommodation, a place the mothers and babies can call home at Boronia through accommodation in the form of three houses. Currently, six mothers, two per house, care for and parent their child whilst in the Department's care. A further house has been identified for an additional five mothers / pregnant women and residential children. The mums have access to a variety of items for the children and receive childcare entitlements as they would in the community.

The Inspector noted that, over the last two years, COVID-19 has had a bigger impact on program and service delivery at Boronia compared to the rest of the custodial estate due to its community engagement model and the requirement for community service providers to visit the facility. With the easing of restrictions, visits have been restored and some services resumed. Planning and assessment of further services to re-commence is underway.

Although there have been some changes in the senior management team, the Department is proud to be able to provide existing staff the opportunities to act up and lead through succession planning. The substantive Superintendent had been in the

position from August 2018 to January 2020 and the Assistant Superintendent Operations and Security (ASO&S) has been acting in the role since January 2020.

As a collective, the senior positions at Boronia are currently occupied by experienced members of the Boronia team who are providing stable leadership for the facility, together with improved supports and communication strategies.

Regarding accommodation upon release, the Department works with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) engaged by service agreements to provide State-wide reintegration services to prisoners. Referrals to reintegration service providers are made on a risk and need basis, and all individuals, including those on remand and short sentences, are eligible for these services. Prisoner engagement with these service providers is entirely voluntary, recognising that not all prisoners want or need referral to reintegration services.

These services are primarily focused on planning for re-entry into the community. Services generally commence while a prisoner is in custody for a period of up to six months and can continue for up to 12 months post release. Service providers deliver tailored, culturally competent reintegration services to prisoners including, but not limited to, re-entry support services, transport, transitional and sustainable housing services, parenting advice and family support services.

The Department's Adult Community Corrections section assists prisoners who are under consideration by the Prisoner's Review Board (PRB) to prepare a parole plan, which includes suitable accommodation. The requirement for the prisoner to have suitable accommodation upon release is a primary consideration of the PRB in determining suitability for release to parole.

Homelessness and housing availability are complex issues affecting many people in the community. The Department's clients do not have priority access to accommodation over other vulnerable cohorts. Despite the Department's best endeavours, some former prisoners will return to their previous lifestyles putting them at higher risk of disfunction and harm.

Response to Recommendations

1 Ensure senior management positions are substantively filled.

Level of Acceptance:	Supported in Principle
Responsible Division:	Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate:	Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date:	Completed

Response:

At the time of the inspection, the substantive Superintendent had been in the position from August 2018 to January 2020. The ASOS has been acting in the role since January 2020 providing stable leadership for over 20 months.

The Department will continue to ensure consistent, stable leadership at Boronia and all other facilities.

2 The Department should explore options to improve the security and detection systems for the external fence at Boronia.

Level of Acceptance:	Not Supported
Responsible Division:	Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate:	Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracts
Proposed Completion Date:	N/A

Response:

Boronia's security detection systems are considered adequate. Regular testing is performed by staff and all faults are logged for repair with Programmed Facility Management (PFM).

As a minimum-security pre-release facility located in an urban area, there are occasional incidents involving visitors or members of the public in relation to the fence, none of which presented any risks to staff or residents. At most times these were accidental.

The external fence at Boronia is routinely monitored and controls implemented as required.

3 Create an additional position to be assigned to reception.

Level of Acceptance:	Not Supported
Responsible Division:	Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate:	Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date:	N/A

Response:

Additional supports are deployed to assist during peak periods.

4 Ensure cell sharing risk assessments are done for each resident required to share a cell.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date: Completed

Response:

Boronia residents do not share cells. They have a room and access to usual household facilities in a share house on the Boronia site.

'COPP 5.1: Prisoner Accommodation' has been implemented and details clear requirements for prison officers to complete the 'Multiple Cell Occupancy – Risk Assessment Checklist' on TOMS upon a prisoner's initial reception into prison.

Boronia has established its Standing Order 5.1: Prisoner Accommodation to compliment COPP 5.1. The standing order sets out the requirements that a shared cell/room risk assessment and cell/house placement will be completed by the Unit Manager during the orientation process as soon as practicable on arrival to Boronia.

5 Introduce programs addressing grief, abuse, and trauma.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2022

Response:

Boronia residents currently receive individual counselling to address issues that include grief, abuse and trauma. Individual counselling includes discussions about group interventions, and residents' willingness to participate in group interventions on site.

The capacity to run group programs throughout 2020/2021 was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. The Department is assessing the re-commencement of group programs at Boronia. Success of any interventions is dependent on the residents' willingness to participate in a group.

6 The Department should contract services to fix the maintenance issues at Boronia.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracts
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

The Department maintains a 24/7 breakdown response and repair service provided by PFM at all prison sites in WA, including Boronia.

In addition, Boronia also has its own maintenance team which undertakes minor repairs.

7 Increase resources and supports for health services at Boronia to engage more health promotion activities.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

Boronia provides Health promotion resources and has a dedicated display of brochures and information available to the residents.

Boronia has held Wellness days where external providers operate stalls for the residents to visit and discuss their health issues e.g. Breast screening, Quit smoking, Asthma awareness, Cervical cancer screening, mental health and cancer awareness.

In addition, the residents are also taken to Breast Screen clinics as required. Boronia has scheduled Breast Screen to visit in 2022.

All residents in custody have a 'Well Women Care Plan' which identifies their health need and any health requirements.

8 Establish a part-time Aboriginal health worker position.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

The Department notes the importance of Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW) as part of health care team. The establishment of an additional 17 AHW positions across the prison estate was approved in September 2020.

A submission for funding of the AHWs was made to the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) as part of the 2021/2022 budget process. The Department will make a further submission to secure funding under the 2022/2023 budget process.

9 Create and fill a Life Skills Officer (VSO) position to provide structured support and education in basic life skills including nutrition, food preparation and budgeting.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

The creation of a Life Skills Officer will be considered as part of the next Service Level Agreement for Boronia.

10 Implement programs to engage Aboriginal women and which reflect the diversity of the Aboriginal women residing at Boronia

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date: Completed

Response:

Boronia continues to provide programs and supports to a diverse range of Aboriginal women. Over the past two years, Boronia has offered the following programs:

Language Program in Prisons – pilot ran in 2020 for 15 residents, including Aboriginal women from the regions. This program has been funded for a further 3 years and currently running in Quarter 4 of 2021.

National Empowerment Program (NEP) facilitated by the Langford Aboriginal Association (LAA), who sourced grant funds to run the first program at Boronia. This program was delivered to 13 residents, 5 of these women transferred to Boronia from regional prisons to undertake the program. LAA and Boronia are working together to source ongoing funding for this program.

Prison to Work program funded through the National Indigenous Australians Agency is a hospitality program run through a training kitchen at the Corrective Services Training Academy for two years. The program is offered to Aboriginal women who are interested in work or training in the hospitality industry. Currently there are eight women enrolled in the program, only one is not of Noongar origin.

All Aboriginal women not from the metropolitan region are supported through e-visits, elder visits, welcome to country and transfers to regional prisons for reconnection with family and country.

The Aboriginal women are also supported through Aboriginal staff in the roles of Aboriginal Education Officer, Aboriginal Employment Coordinator, Aboriginal Chaplain and Peer Support Officer. Ongoing provision of programs and supports to the Aboriginal women at Boronia, including those from out of country, is monitored regularly by the Aboriginal Services Committee.

11 In future ensure key positions like the MFCS are appropriately backfilled over periods of planned leave.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Women and Young People
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

Key positions with known periods of leave undergo an Expressions of Interest process to recruit suitable applicants for backfilling. In the event suitable applicants are not identified, the EOI process may be repeated.

12 Source and fund a suite of family/parenting programs suitable for the needs of Boronia's residents.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services
Proposed Completion Date: 31 December 2022

Response:

The current contract with Wungening Corporation for Metropolitan Women's Parenting and Family Support services was extended to 30 June 2022 in line with the WA Government COVID-19 recovery plan.

The Department plans to undertake a co-design process to procure new services to replace the current reintegration service agreements. Services out of scope for the current service agreements may be considered as part of the co-design process, subject to approval. This co-design process will be managed by WACSAR.

13 Pilot a system of controlled online access for people in custody at Boronia.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Knowledge, Information and Technology
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

The Department has developed a Long-Term Custodial Technology Strategy (LTCTS) to assess the benefits and efficiencies of modern Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the custodial estate, including mobile technologies and increased access to digital services for prisoners.

Submissions have been made to the State's established Digital Capability Fund to procure funding to deliver foundational ICT infrastructure upgrades at custodial facilities, particularly those in the regions. This will provide the base ICT infrastructure to unlock future benefits, such as increased mobility and services to prisoners.

Submissions for seed funding have also been made to enable the implementation of the next components of the LTCTS.

14 The Department of Justice establish partnerships with relevant agencies to increase the range of accommodation options for people leaving prison.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services
Proposed Completion Date: N/A

Response:

The Department has existing reintegration services agreements with multiple NGO service providers who provide public housing properties that are used to accommodate released prisoners, under a leasing arrangement with the Housing Authority (Department of Communities). These properties are used as transitional housing for periods up to six months for each tenancy, subject to availability.

In the event housing is not available under the leasing arrangement, the reintegration services agreements also require the service providers to partner with other appropriately qualified organisations to facilitate access to additional housing stock and to assist prisoners to access alternative housing, including in the private rental market.

Rental accommodation state-wide is at capacity in both the social and private rental markets, limiting the service providers' access to additional housing. Rental agencies also have long waitlists for access to rental properties, and some are not accepting new referrals for accommodation.

Housing availability and homelessness are complex issues affecting many people in the community, and prisoners do not have priority access to accommodation over other vulnerable cohorts.

The Department will continue its efforts to secure further accommodation options. It should be noted that housing availability is outside the Department's control.