

# Inspector's Overview

**WE SAW EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ROEBOURNE, BUT THESE WERE OVERSHADOWED BY CONCERNS ABOUT EFFECTIVE SUMMER CLIMATE CONTROL IN THE PRISON.**

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This report highlights examples of good practice across the prison that have been implemented or continued since our last inspection, and several other areas where further work is necessary. Unfortunately, all aspects of the daily prison regime were being significantly impacted by staff shortages.

But the issue that dominated the inspection was concerns about the overnight temperatures in the main accommodation units during the summer months. This is an issue that we have raised in every report we have published on Roebourne Regional Prison (Roebourne) since 2003.

For almost 20 years, we have made essentially the same recommendation in each of the eight reports published on the prison. The Department's responses over that time have varied from support (subject to funding) to rejection.

The issue once again attracted significant public attention both locally and nationally following Roebourne recording a record 50.5 degree day in January 2022.

For the five days of the inspection in March 2022, we placed tamper-proof temperature data loggers in five cells across the two main male accommodation units and one in a cell in the air-conditioned female unit. The detailed results and comparisons are set out in Chapter 5, but the evidence clearly shows that overnight temperatures in the cells without air-conditioning was unacceptable and posed a risk to the health and wellbeing of the men. The average overnight temperature in the five cells without air-conditioning did not go below 32 degrees and in the hours before midnight remained above 35 degrees.

The evidence in favour of effectively addressing the issue of overnight cell temperatures in summer is compelling, and it is difficult to see merit in counter arguments particularly those centred around cost.

On the last day of the inspection as I was leaving the prison, I was struck by a troubling contrast that left me with a very uneasy feeling as I drove back to Karratha for the flight home. Off in the distance but still visible from the prison there was a steady procession of trains heading to the port at Cape Lambert, each one carrying enormous wealth for export. This was iron ore mined from the Pilbara, the traditional lands of many of the men and women incarcerated in the prison. A prison with 86 per cent of the population identified as Aboriginal that had so many gaps in services for prisoners. Areas such as infrastructure, health, programs, education and employment were all in desperate need of additional funding.

This contrast is something we as a community need to reflect on and address if we are to genuinely close the gap and improve the lives of Aboriginal people in prison and more generally.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have two recently appointed Independent Prison Visitors who are community volunteers appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. They attend Roebourne on a regular basis providing an opportunity for the men and women to raise issues and feedback that information to our office. I acknowledge the importance of their work and thank them for the contribution they have made to our ongoing monitoring of Roebourne.

I acknowledge also the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from the acting Superintendent and staff at Roebourne and from key personnel in the Department. The men and women living in the prison who took the time to speak with us and share their perspective also deserve our acknowledgement and thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the inspection team for their expertise and hard work throughout the inspection. I would particularly acknowledge and thank Cliff Holdom for his hard work in planning this inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

**Eamon Ryan**

Inspector of Custodial Services

28 October 2022