



GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2022 INSPECTION OF CASUARINA PRISON

150

JULY 2023

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## 2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison

Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services  
Level 5, Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
Perth WA 6000  
Whadjuk Noongar Boodja

[www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au)

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# Inspector's Overview

## CASUARINA PRISON, HOW BIG IS TOO BIG?

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The changes we have seen in Casuarina Prison over the past few years have much broader implications beyond building new units and expanding bed capacity. It poses an obvious question: *How big is too big?*

The overall bed capacity has grown to 1,386 (or 1,514 if you include Unit 18, which is currently being used as a temporary youth detention facility). With further planned expansion the total capacity will be close to 1800, making it the largest prison in Australia.

But Casuarina is so much more than a large prison. It currently has a number of specialised units including: the Special Handling Unit, the Special Protection Unit, the Crisis Care Unit, the State Infirmarium, and the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre. And, as part of the current expansion, a High Security Unit and two new accommodation units together with support buildings are under construction. Further expansion planned but not yet commenced, include: a Forensic Mental Health Unit, an expanded Infirmarium, a High Dependency Unit.

We welcome the addition, or expansion, of these specialised units as the services and care they will provide are desperately needed. But the expansion comes with significant risks and there is a responsibility to consider and address them now.

We flagged several of these risks in the report from our last inspection of Casuarina in September 2019 (OICS Report 129, 2020). We highlighted many similar issues to those contained in this report, including the ability to provide a meaningful and constructive daily regime, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and the impacts of daily staff shortages. We concluded our overview of the 2019 inspection with the following observation:

*Perhaps the single most important challenge for Casuarina into the future will be its ability to provide a meaningful and constructive daily regime for the large and complex population it will be expected to manage.*

That observation is equally applicable today as it was three years ago, in fact it is probably more important now.

This report highlights yet again significant issues arising from staffing shortages - and this is not isolated to custodial staff - and the flow-on impact this has on services for prisoners such as: recreation, employment, education, industries, programs, health services, and mental health services. We also identified that even if the prison was close to fully staffed there are simply not enough meaningful activities to keep the current population engaged in a constructive daily regime. Consequently, high numbers of men are sitting idle in their units on a daily basis and this is a cause for significant concern, not just the absence of rehabilitation activities but also from a security and safety perspective. This is not just our opinion as these concerns were shared with us by many staff and members of the management team.

Casuarina needs to have a clear vision and strategic direction, so there is clarity around where it sits within the wider prison system and how it is expected to manage such a

## CASUARINA PRISON, HOW BIG IS TOO BIG?

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complex facility with many different cohorts of prisoners. This was the reason why we made Recommendation 1. The Department's response supported this recommendation as a current project, noting that the scope for the current expansion was being extended to include development of an Operating Model and that a review of the resources required would be carried out.

In our view the implementation of this recommendation cannot wait for a point in time in the future. The current situation being experienced in Casuarina and the challenges and issues we have identified in this report create an immediacy to doing this work. Most importantly, Casuarina needs to be adequately staffed and resourced to cope with the expanded population, deliver the specialised services, and offer a meaningful and constructive daily regime to all prisoners sent there.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have three Independent Prison Visitors who are community volunteers appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. They attend Casuarina on a regular basis providing an opportunity for the men placed there 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 Casuarina.

We received considerable support and cooperation throughout the inspection from the Superintendent and staff at Casuarina and from key personnel in the Department and I am very grateful for their contribution to our inspection work. The men living in Casuarina who took the time to speak with us and share their perspectives also deserve our acknowledgement and thanks.

I acknowledge and thank Dr Emma Crampin, expert health and mental health adviser, and also Ms Janet Connor, our expert education adviser, for their significant contribution to our inspection work.

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 Kieran Artelaris for his hard work in planning this inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

**Eamon Ryan**

Inspector of Custodial Services

26 July 2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **A COMPLEX PRISONER GROUP AND A COVID-19 OUTBREAK PRESENTED CHALLENGES**

Casuarina continued to house many of the state's most difficult-to-manage prisoners. It was increasingly challenging to manage risks and identify safe placements for all prisoners. The proportion of Aboriginal men in the prison had grown to 43%, and 53% of the total population were on remand.

Casuarina experienced a COVID-19 outbreak in April–May 2022 with cases peaking at around 250 prisoners and 55 staff unavailable to work because they had either tested positive or were close contacts. Ultimately, the outbreak was brought under control and serious adverse health outcomes were avoided.

### **CASUARINA LACKED STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND FACED INSTABILITY IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT**

Casuarina had continued to expand, and prisoner numbers had increased significantly. More new functions were expected with the ongoing expansion works, including a high security unit, a forensic mental health unit and a high dependency unit. With so many different (and not always compatible) functions, it was increasingly difficult to identify a clear purpose and philosophy for the prison.

Most of the senior management team were only acting in their roles, particularly on the operational side of the team. Importantly, however, Casuarina benefited from a substantive Superintendent who was experienced and highly respected by his team.

### **CUSTODIAL STAFF ABSENCES WERE IMPACTING PRISON OPERATIONS AND MORALE WAS LOW**

Casuarina experienced significant shortages of custodial staff on a regular basis. There was an average of 20 custodial staff on personal leave and 58 on workers' compensation leave each day. This was an extraordinary level of absence that impacted on almost all aspects of prison operations and services.

Short staffing was cited by prison officers as one of the main reasons for low morale. Other reasons included lack of communication from senior management particularly in relation to the expansion program, the extent of change occurring in the prison, the impact of COVID-19, and the tightening up of their conditions of employment.

### **THE ORIENTATION PROCESS HAD BEEN DISRUPTED AND LEGAL RESOURCES WERE LIMITED**

From around December 2021, custodial staffing shortages and redeployment of staff meant that new prisoners were not receiving an orientation to the prison. The backlog reached a peak of around 500 in August 2022 but had been reduced to around 200 by the time of our inspection.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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We were concerned that the library and particularly the legal resources failed to meet the needs of a prison population of over 1,100 (and rising). Poor access to limited resources meant it was increasingly unrealistic for any prisoner to effectively prepare for their defence or appeal while at Casuarina. This was a particular concern given the increased proportion of remand prisoners.

### **THERE WAS A BACKLOG OF DISCIPLINARY CHARGES AND USE OF FORCE REVIEWS**

Casuarina had very limited punishment cell capacity. The prison prosecutor could not present disciplinary charges to the Superintendent or a visiting justice if there were no punishment cells available. The result was a backlog of more than 300 charges, dating back more than 18 months to February 2021.

Use of force incidents had increased but there had been no local use of force committee meetings for over a year. There was a backlog of more than 100 use of force incidents that had not been reviewed for compliance.

### **SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION COHORTS WERE COMPLEX BUT MANAGED WELL**

Use of confinement and management regimes at Casuarina appeared to be applied fairly and prisoners were treated with respect and dignity. The Special Handling Unit managed a complex mix of prisoners, but management worked well with staff to find ways to better balance the risks and needs of the cohort.

A multitude of factors were complicating the placement of protection prisoners. As a result, protection prisoners were dispersed across as many as eight different units. Casuarina had done well to manage the various risks without compromising prisoner safety.

### **THE DAILY ROUTINE WAS RESTRICTED AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN OLDER UNITS WERE POOR**

Casuarina had been unable to run a normal daily routine for months because of chronic staff shortages. As a result, prisoners had far fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful activity such as recreation, education or employment.

The condition of the older units at Casuarina was deteriorating, accelerated by the fact that the number of prisoners in each unit had doubled. Communal showers were grimy and mouldy. Carpets in unit day rooms were so ingrained with dirt that cleaning efforts were no longer effective. Maintenance issues including damaged ceilings and broken windows had not been addressed.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### STAFF SHORTAGES AND REDEPLOYMENT IMPACTED ON ACCESS TO RECREATION

The recreation program was severely impacted by custodial staffing shortages. Recreation officers were frequently redeployed to cover staff shortages in the units, which meant that recreation operated at reduced capacity or closed altogether. We remain concerned that access to structured recreation is likely to worsen as the prison continues to expand. There is still no provision for additional recreation infrastructure associated with the increase in prisoner numbers.

### THERE WAS GOOD SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL PRISONERS BUT RESOURCES HAD NOT INCREASED

Aboriginal prisoners received good support from Aboriginal staff in key positions, such as the Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services, Prison Support Officers, Aboriginal Mental Health Worker and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme. Kaartdijin Mia, meaning ‘knowledge place’ in Noongar, is a cultural and learning space located within Casuarina. It was a positive space, highly valued by staff and prisoners. Despite the significant increase in Aboriginal numbers at Casuarina in recent years, there had been no increase in resources for Kaartdijin Mia.

### STAFFING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES CONTRIBUTED TO MORE LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Recruitment and retention of health staff was difficult because the prison system offered fewer job entitlements and incentives compared to the Department of Health. There was a shortage of clinical rooms in the outpatients building and the infirmary infrastructure was old and outdated (but was being replaced in the next stage of the expansion project).

The staffing and infrastructure issues contributed to more limited access to primary health care for prisoners. Requests to see a medical officer were triaged by the nursing team and the first appointment was usually with a nurse. If an appointment was made with a medical officer, the likely wait for an appointment was two to three months.

### STAFF SHORTAGES AFFECTED DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Casuarina was experiencing staff shortages in the mental health team and Psychological Health Services team, which impacted delivery of services in those areas. Most of the available resources were taken up by crisis services for prisoners at high risk and there was limited capacity for ongoing counselling.

Casuarina was frequently managing prisoners who were suffering from severe mental illness because there were no beds available at the Frankland Centre, the state’s only secure forensic mental health unit.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **SUPPORT FOR PRISONERS WITH A DISABILITY WAS LIMITED AND UNCLEAR**

At Casuarina, 70 prisoners (about 6% of the total population) were flagged with a disability alert on the Department's offender database. However, this was likely to be an underrepresentation of the true numbers. We found the pathway for a prisoner to receive additional disability support was unclear and there was confusion about the process for making applications to the National Disability Insurance Scheme

### **THE PEER SUPPORT TEAM AND ABORIGINAL VISITORS SCHEME PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE**

At the time of our inspection, there were 37 prisoners employed as peer support workers. We found the team to be dedicated and committed to their role of supporting other prisoners. Some peer support prisoners had completed a Certificate IV in Mental Health and a disability training course. These were excellent initiatives that should be made available more regularly to the whole peer support team.

The Aboriginal Visitors Scheme was valued highly in the prison but only one of four part-time positions was filled. Poor remuneration and high workload contributed to turnover of staff and made recruitment more difficult.

### **MALLEE REHABILITATION CENTRE OFFERED A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO IMPRISONMENT**

One of the most significant developments at Casuarina since our previous inspection had been the opening of the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre ('Mallee'). A residential alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation program called Solid Steps was run in partnership between custodial staff and private providers Palmerston and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. The program appeared to be working well and feedback from participants was very positive, but it was too early for formal evaluation.

We found strong, collaborative relationships among both custodial and non-custodial staff who were highly motivated to be involved in the program and support the participants. Prior to the opening of Mallee, custodial and non-custodial staff completed training on trauma-informed practice. This training was highly valued by staff. However, staff who had joined the unit after opening did not receive this training.

### **THERE WAS A BACKLOG IN SENTENCE PLANNING AND A SHORTFALL IN PROGRAM DELIVERY**

The Individual Management Plan (IMP) is the key sentence planning document that sets out a prisoner's security classification, prison placement, education and training needs, and program requirements. At Casuarina, there were around 120 overdue IMPs, some up to 12 months overdue.

There was a significant shortfall in program availability. There were 564 identified program needs at Casuarina. Of those, 135 (24%) would not be available to the prisoner during their time in custody.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH JOBS FOR THE GROWING PRISONER POPULATION**

Unemployment and underemployment within the prisoner population remained very high. There were about 350 prisoners not working, and another 250 employed in unit jobs. This meant 600 prisoners at Casuarina – about 54% of the population – had very little to do all day.

Vocational and Support Officers (VSOs) who run the industries workshops were regularly redeployed to cover prison officer shortages in the units. Without VSOs, the workshops did not open, and prisoners stayed in their units instead of going to work. The prison's ability to keep workplaces open was also affected by vacant VSO positions and unplanned absences.

### **THE EDUCATION CENTRE WAS BUSY AND PRODUCTIVE BUT CAPACITY WAS TOO LOW**




There were 30 full-time and 19 part-time students attending the education centre each week. There were also other prisoners engaged in part-time education who were employed in other areas of the prison. The education centre was operating close to maximum capacity but for a prison population of more than 1,100, the overall participation rate was low.


Although education was running well and providing great benefit to those involved, too few prisoners were able access it. Infrastructure in the education centre had not expanded in line with the rest of the prison. As a result, its capacity was fundamentally too low.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
<b>Recommendation 1</b> Develop a clear vision and strategic direction for Casuarina within the wider prison system.	5	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Recommendation 2</b> Identify and address the reasons for high levels of personal leave and workers' compensation leave at Casuarina.	7	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Recommendation 3</b> Implement a more comprehensive orientation process.	12	Not supported
<b>Recommendation 4</b> Improve legal resources and increase access for prisoners, particularly those held on remand.	14	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 5</b> Provide appropriate resources for timely local use of force reviews.	18	Supported
<b>Recommendation 6</b> Ensure regular rotation of staff in the master control room.	19	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Recommendation 7</b> Increase prisoner access to structured recreation.	30	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 8</b> Provide additional resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.	33	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 9</b> Implement a more effective and efficient medical appointment system.	36	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Recommendation 10</b> Increase Psychological Health Services resources at Casuarina to accommodate the continuing expansion of the prison.	40	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 11</b> Establish an on-site disability coordination role.	40	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 12</b> Provide ongoing training for peer support prisoners.	41	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Recommendation 13</b> Fill the vacant AVS positions.	42	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 14</b> Provide trauma-informed training for new staff working in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.	46	Supported
<b>Recommendation 15</b> Increase prisoner access to education with additional resources and infrastructure.	53	Supported – Current Practice / Project

## FACT PAGE

 <b>NAME OF FACILITY</b> Casuarina Prison	<b>ROLE OF FACILITY</b> Casuarina Prison is a maximum-security prison for male prisoners. Originally intended primarily for sentenced prisoners, it now also holds a significant number of remand prisoners. It also provides specialist statewide services in the Special Handling Unit, Special Protection Unit, Infirmary, Crisis Care Unit, and Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.
 <b>LOCATION</b> The prison is located on Noongar land, 35 kilometres south of Perth.	<b>HISTORY</b> Casuarina Prison opened in 1991, replacing the colonial era Fremantle Prison. Its original design capacity was for 397 prisoners. With double-bunking of cells, the prison population increased to around 530 by 1998. A major riot occurred on Christmas Day in 1998, which prompted additions to security infrastructure.
 <b>INSPECTION DATE</b> 5-15 September 2022	<p>The prison population continued to rise, reaching 690 in 2010. Two new accommodation units were built, providing 128 new cells (256 beds). The first of these opened in late 2012. The next major expansion started in 2019, with work commencing on four new units with a total of 256 cells (512 beds). These opened in 2020 and 2021. In July 2022, one of these four units was designated as a temporary youth custodial facility, managed separately from Casuarina Prison.</p> <p>Further expansion works were ongoing at the time of this inspection.</p>



<b>NUMBER OF PRISONERS HELD AT COMMENCEMENT OF INSPECTION</b> <b>1,124</b>  957 STANDARD ACCOMMODATION  167 SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOMMODATION	<b>CAPACITY</b> <b>1,386</b>  1,137 STANDARD ACCOMMODATION  249 SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOMMODATION
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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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This was the eighth announced inspection of Casuarina Prison ('Casuarina') conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services ('the Office').

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Casuarina opened in 1991, replacing the colonial era Fremantle Prison as the state's main maximum-security facility for male prisoners. The prison runs several specialist units to which prisoners from around the state can be sent as necessary:

- Special Handling Unit (SHU) – for prisoners who present a heightened security risk, threat to staff or other prisoners, or escape risk.
- Special Protection Unit (SPU) – for prisoners who are at special risk from the mainstream prisoner population.
- Crisis Care Unit (CCU) – for prisoners at risk of self-harm.
- Infirmary – for prisoners who require periods of pre-hospital preparation, or post-hospital recuperation, and for those where medical needs fall short of hospitalisation. There is also a separate wing for prisoners with impaired mobility who are physically unable to live in a regular unit.
- Mallee Rehabilitation Centre – for prisoners seeking to address alcohol and other drug addictions. The nine-month Solid Steps program is based in Unit 15 and runs as a modified therapeutic community.

The original design capacity of the prison was 397, primarily in single cells. Over the years, double-bunking had become increasingly widespread. During this inspection, more than 80% of prisoners in standard accommodation were sharing a cell.

More recent additions to the prison have included units made up entirely of double cells. Two new units were opened in 2012–2013, adding 128 new cells (and 256 beds). Another four new units were opened in 2020–2021, adding 256 new cells (and 512 beds). This brought the total capacity of the prison to 1,514 (including 249 special purpose beds). However, in July 2022, one of the newest units (Unit 18) was annexed as a youth custodial facility, removing 128 beds from Casuarina's capacity. So total capacity at the time of our inspection was 1,386.

Further construction was under way as part of a major expansion that had effectively been ongoing since 2019. As mentioned above, four new units (Units 15–18) had already been completed and opened. Another two units were under construction, adding 128 cells (256 beds). A support building for the new units and an industries building were due for completion around the time of our inspection. A high-security unit was also under construction, scheduled for completion in mid-2023. Other scheduled works included a forensic mental health unit, expanded infirmary and high dependency unit, but these were yet to commence. Some sort of construction was expected to be ongoing until at least 2024. When complete, Casuarina's capacity will be over 1,800 and it will be the largest prison in Australia.

## INTRODUCTION

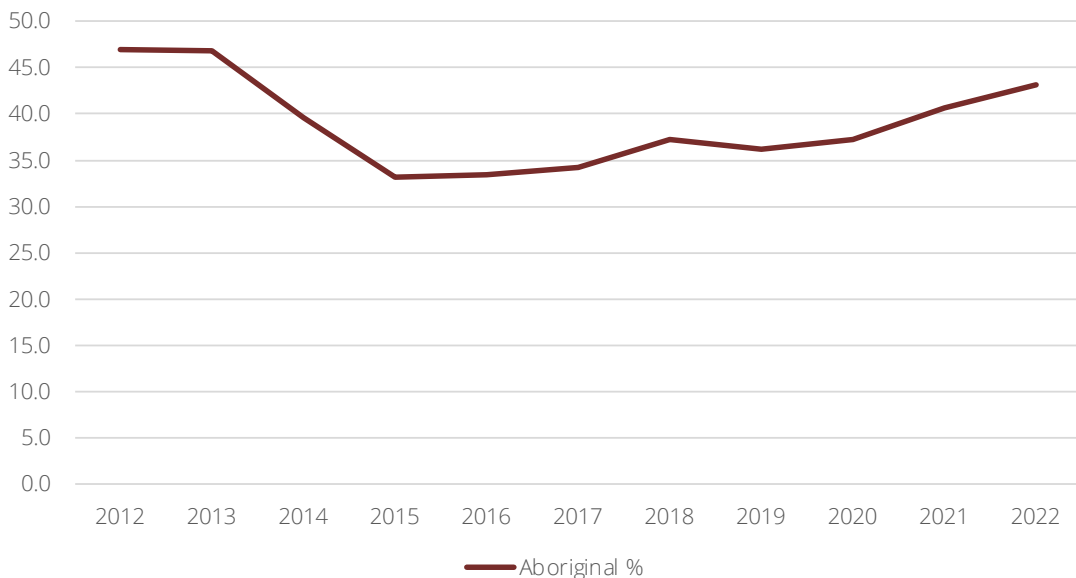
### 1.2 CASUARINA IN 2022

#### Casuarina managed a large and complex population of prisoners

At the start of our inspection, there were 1,124 prisoners at Casuarina. Of these, 957 were in standard accommodation and 167 were in special purpose accommodation, which included management cells, infirmary and crisis care, Special Protection Unit, Special Handling Unit, and the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre. This meant that standard accommodation was at 84% of capacity. However, full capacity could only be reached by double-bunking almost every available cell. Casuarina held a significant number of prisoners who, for a variety of reasons, cannot share a cell.

Casuarina continued to manage many of the state's most difficult-to-manage prisoners. In the various special units within the prison, there were prisoners suffering from serious physical or mental illness, prisoners who presented a risk to themselves, prisoners who presented a risk to others, and prisoners who were at risk from others. It was increasingly challenging for the prison to manage these risks and identify safe placements for all prisoners [see 4.6].

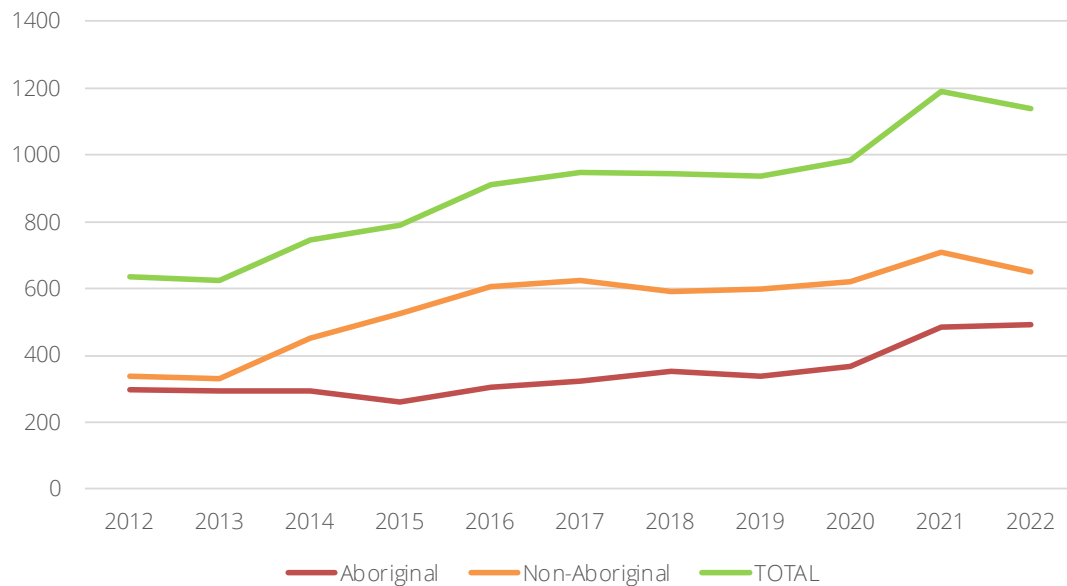
Aboriginal over-representation had increased since 2019, with Aboriginal men making up 43% of the average daily population in 2022.



**Figure 1: Proportion of Aboriginal prisoners in average daily population, 2012-2022**

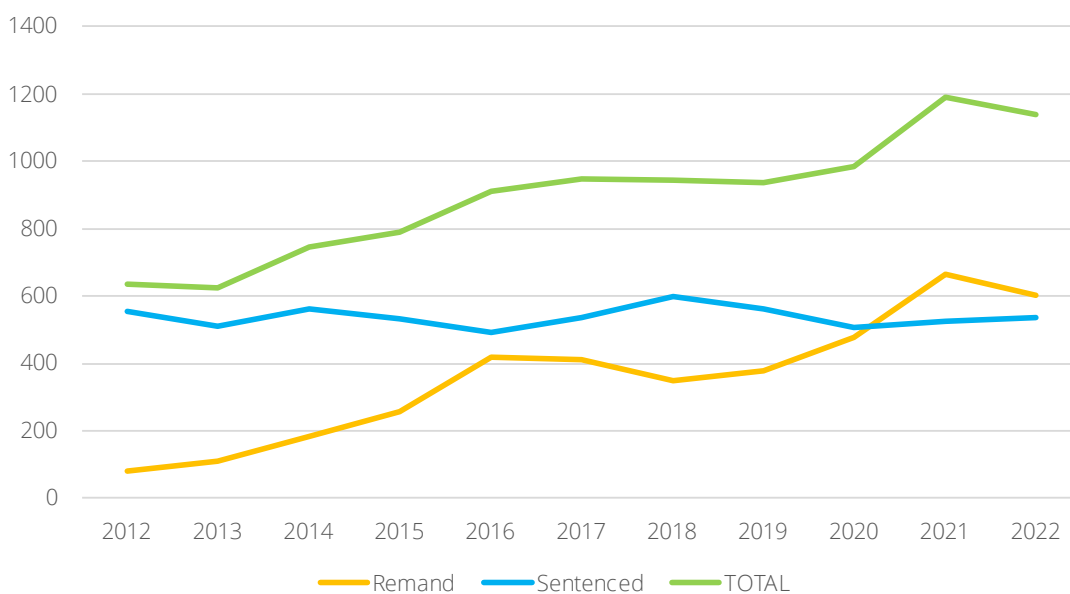
The proportion of Aboriginal men was lower in 2022 than it was 10 years earlier – 47% in 2012 compared to 43% in 2022. But in raw figures, the average daily number of Aboriginal men had increased by about 200 – from 298 to 490.

## INTRODUCTION



**Figure 2: Average daily prisoner population by Aboriginality, 2012-2022**

Casuarina was originally intended to house mainly long-term sentenced prisoners, but this had shifted significantly over the last decade. In 2022, 53% of the population (or about 600 prisoners) were on remand. For the first time, we were inspecting Casuarina with more remand prisoners than sentenced prisoners. This had major ramifications for the operation of the prison and the management of prisoners.



**Figure 3: Average daily prisoner population by legal status, 2012-2022**



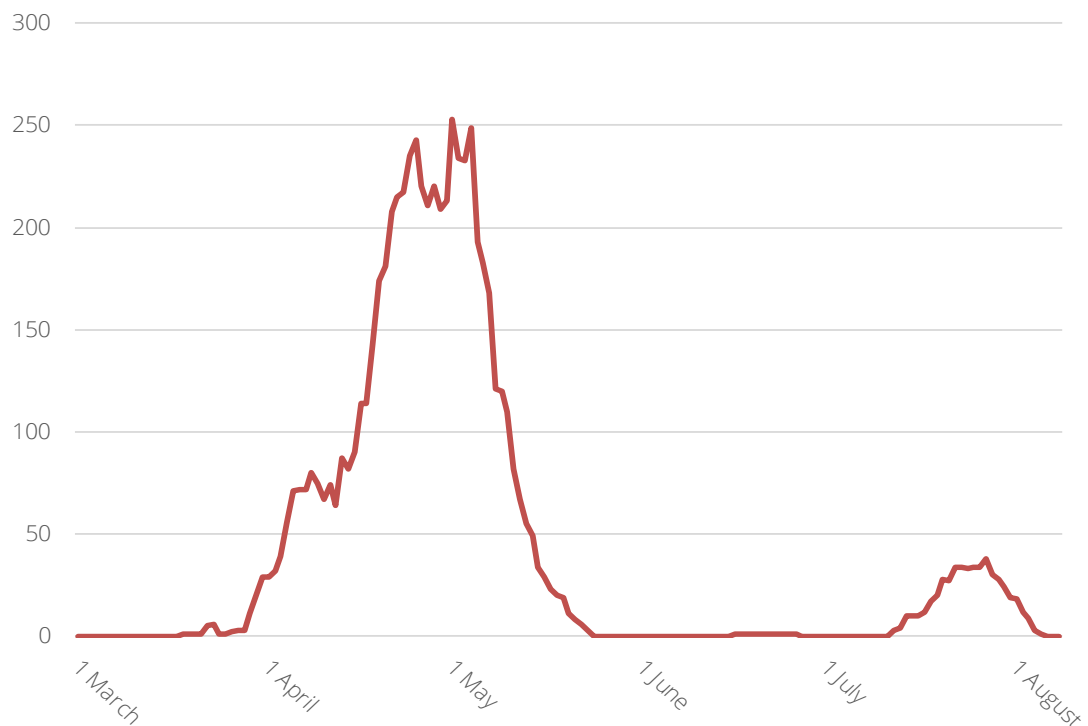
## INTRODUCTION

### An outbreak of COVID-19 was challenging but ultimately brought under control

Casuarina experienced a COVID-19 outbreak among the prisoner population in April–May 2022 with cases peaking at around 250. At this point, COVID-19 was in every unit of the prison. Staff were wearing full personal protective equipment in every unit. The challenge was compounded by positive cases spreading through staff ranks at the same time. At its worst, there were 55 staff unavailable to work because they had either tested positive or were close contacts. Isolation requirements imposed by the Department of Justice ('the Department') in the prison system were stricter than those in the general community. This recognised the high risk that COVID-19 presented to prisons because of the large numbers of people in confined spaces and the prevalence of pre-existing health conditions within the prisoner population.

Casuarina suspended all activities for four weeks because staffing was so low, and to control spread of the virus. During our inspection, we found that some services were still recovering from that time.

Ultimately, the outbreak was brought under control and serious adverse health outcomes were fortunately avoided. There were no deaths (or even hospital admissions) recorded as a result of the outbreak. This may be attributed to the high vaccination rates among the prisoner population. A smaller outbreak in July 2022 was well managed and confined to one unit.



**Figure 4: COVID-19 case numbers within the prisoner population, March–August 2022**

# Chapter 2

## GOVERNANCE

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### 2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

#### Casuarina still lacked clear strategic direction

During our 2019 inspection, we observed that there was no strategic plan or business plan in place. Casuarina was facing many changes and challenges related to the growing size and complexity of the prison population and the major expansion project that was ongoing. In our view, this heightened the importance of developing a strategic plan to articulate future goals and plans for the prison and we made a recommendation to this effect (OICS, 2020a, pp. 6–7).

The Department did not support this recommendation, stating that prison operations were instead based on an operating philosophy and operating model aligned with the Department's strategic plan. They did not see the need for a strategic plan specific to Casuarina. The Department's response also stated that Casuarina's operating philosophy and model would not be developed until the various changes associated with the expansion project were finalised (OICS, 2020a, p. 53).

Given this stance, we were not surprised to find that there was still no business plan in 2022. But our concerns about the lack of strategic direction for the prison remain. For several years, the Department had been working on establishing the purpose of each prison and how it fits into the wider system. The aim was to optimise operations and use of resources across the prison system. Unfortunately, this work had still not been finalised and the project was ongoing at the time of this inspection.

In the meantime, Casuarina had continued to expand, and prisoner numbers had increased significantly. The nature of the prison had been fundamentally changed but this had been driven by the need for prison beds rather than being guided by a long-term strategic plan. Remand prisoners now made up more than half of the population. The prison had taken on an entirely new function, running a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre (Unit 15). Although managed separately, a youth detention facility was operating in Unit 18 and this had impacted on Casuarina in various ways. More new functions were expected with the ongoing expansion works, including a high security unit, a forensic mental health unit and a high dependency unit.

With so many different (and not always compatible) functions, it was increasingly difficult to identify a clear purpose and philosophy for the prison. Our view remains that Casuarina needs strategic direction to manage the recent changes and those still to come, and to enable the prison to move forward in a planned and cohesive manner.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**Develop a clear vision and strategic direction for Casuarina within the wider prison system.**

## GOVERNANCE

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### 2.2 HUMAN RESOURCES

#### **There was instability in senior management positions and workload was high**

Casuarina had established several new positions in the senior management team in recognition of the new units that had opened and the ongoing expansion of the prison. This included a Facilities Manager, an Assistant Security Manager, and a third Deputy Superintendent position overseeing the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre and the other new accommodation units. There were also two new Assistant Superintendent positions reporting to the new Deputy Superintendent.

However, most of these positions had not yet been substantively filled. In addition, one of the pre-existing Deputy Superintendents had been seconded to lead the expansion project management team and another had been seconded to oversee the management of youth detainees in Unit 18. Permanent appointments to other vacated positions had been delayed until there was more certainty around restructuring related to the prison expansion.

The flow-on effect was that most of the senior management team were only acting in their roles, particularly on the operational side of the team. Of 12 operational positions, only one had a substantive occupant. There had been regular movements in and out of positions and staff on the floor complained that it was difficult to keep track of who was acting in which role. But there had been some progress towards stabilising the senior management team with recruitment processes for the vacant Deputy Superintendent positions nearing completion. Filling of other vacant positions was expected to follow. The business services side of the senior management team was relatively stable in comparison.

The growing size and complexity of the prison coupled with the prison expansion project meant that the administrative workload was very high. The operational management structure was under review because the senior management team had recognised that a realignment of responsibilities was needed to effectively manage such a large prison.

The instability and the growing workload were challenging for a senior management team still coming to terms with the increased size and population of the prison. Importantly, however, Casuarina benefited from a substantive Superintendent who was very experienced and highly respected by his team. And despite the instability, the senior management team functioned well under his leadership. But they were clearly under pressure and this will continue as the prison grows ever larger and more complex in the coming years.

#### **Custodial staff absences were impacting prison operations**

Casuarina was experiencing significant shortages of custodial staff on a regular basis. There were 21 vacant positions within custodial staff ranks. This represented a vacancy rate of about 4% which was within an acceptable range. However, custodial staff absences were very high, and this was the primary factor contributing to daily staff shortages.

## GOVERNANCE

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Between 1 July 2021 and 30 April 2022, there was an average of 20 custodial staff on personal leave and 58 on workers' compensation leave each day. This was an extraordinary level of absence that impacted on almost all aspects of prison operations and services.

The situation had been compounded in 2022 by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to limit transmission within the prison system, the Department had implemented particularly strict protocols for staff who contracted COVID-19 or were close contacts. At the peak of the outbreak, there were 55 staff unavailable to work for these reasons. Fortunately, by the time of our inspection this had eased and the impact on the prison was greatly reduced.

Staff shortages could be covered by asking staff to work overtime shifts. This had a financial cost and the Department had placed a cap on the amount of overtime that could be used. However, the greater problem for Casuarina was finding enough staff willing to work overtime, which was increasingly unattractive to an already stretched workforce. The prison was frequently unable to fill all available overtime shifts.

Casuarina (like all prisons) had an adaptive regime that provided guidance on how the prison should operate in the event of staffing shortages. This typically included redeployment of staff, with the flow-on impact on services increasing depending on the severity of the shortages. Areas like the library, gymnasium, and non-essential industries workshops frequently operated at reduced capacity or were closed altogether. At its most extreme, when there were not enough prison officers to run all accommodation units at once, prisoners were locked behind wing grilles or even in cell on a rolling basis. The overall effect was that prisoners had less time out of cell, less time outdoors and less access to meaningful activity, all of which contributed to increased tension and undermined efforts at rehabilitation.

Addressing the high level of staff absences was clearly a priority, and the Department had sought to tighten up controls around personal leave to ensure staff were acting strictly in accordance with the industrial agreement. Unfortunately, this was widely perceived by staff as part of an attack on their working conditions and entitlements. There was also active engagement with head office to case manage workers' compensation claims.

Although we did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the reasons for Casuarina having so many claims, the answer must be in identifying and addressing the underlying causes of high rates of workers' compensation and daily staff absences.

### **Recommendation 2**

Identify and address the reasons for high levels of personal leave and workers' compensation leave at Casuarina.

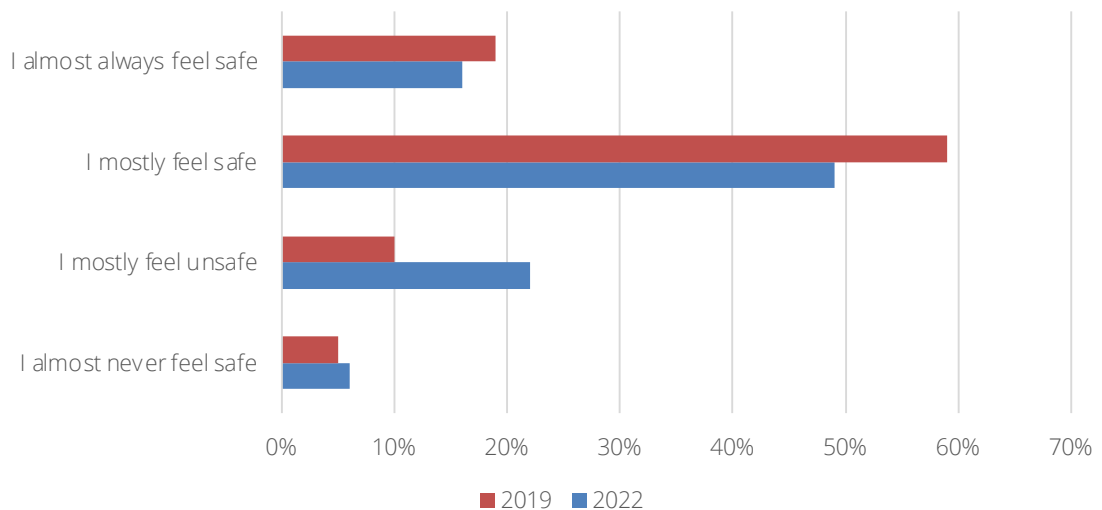
## GOVERNANCE

### Custodial staff morale was low

Given the high level of staff absences, it was not surprising that custodial staff morale appeared to be low. Staff absences created something of a vicious cycle – whenever an officer took a day off work, it placed a greater burden on their colleagues (through extra work or overtime), which increased stress and frustration of staff and prisoners, which raised the likelihood of further absences. Indeed, short staffing was cited by prison officers as one of the main reasons for low morale. Other reasons raised included lack of communication from senior management particularly in relation to the expansion program, the extent of change occurring in the prison, the impact of COVID-19, and the tightening up of their conditions of employment.

Our pre-inspection staff survey results reflected this fall in morale. Respondents rated their quality of working life at 5.5 out of 10, down from 6.2 in 2019 and significantly lower than the state average of 6.7. Similarly, work-related stress was rated at 6.75 out of 10, up from 6.5 in 2019 and higher than the state average of 5.9. The survey also revealed negative views towards local management and head office – only 15% of respondents said that support from local management was good and 47% said it was poor. Views of head office were even more negative, with four% rating support from head office as good and 70% rating it as poor.

Some staff expressed increased concern for their personal safety. Again, this was reflected in our staff survey. There had been a significant increase in the number of respondents stating they mostly felt unsafe (up from 10% in 2019 to 22% in 2022).



**Figure 5: Staff perceptions of personal safety at Casuarina Prison, July 2022**

These and any other concerns of staff will need to be considered and addressed in order to stabilise staffing levels, which will be crucial as the prison continues to expand.

## GOVERNANCE

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### **New human resources processes were being trialled and promised efficiency gains**

The prison system has long been dependent on labour intensive and inefficient human resources processes and practices. Staff are engaged in transactional, paper-based tasks such as processing overtime and leave, drawing up rosters and managing the attendance record. While these functions are essential for the running of the prison, they are time consuming without adding value to the management of human resources.

Positively, the Department had chosen Casuarina to trial the implementation of a new electronic rostering system. This had the potential to introduce some much-needed efficiencies through the automation of processes. However, we found that the new system was not yet fully functional, and many processes still needed to be checked manually.

Following our inspection, the new electronic rostering system was rolled out for all prison officers across the state by early June 2023. The Department advised that the system included timeclock, rostering, Higher Duty Allowance, and overtime functionality. It had been designed around existing service level agreements, rotation patterns and rosters. It allowed officers to request shift swaps, indicate their availability for overtime and view their rosters remotely.

### **Casuarina was struggling to meet its mandatory staff training requirements**

Casuarina was struggling to meet requirements in relation to critical skills training such as first aid and resuscitation, use of force, batons and restraints. The Department's target for all prisons is to have at least 80% of custodial staff up-to-date, but Casuarina's figures were around 60 to 70%.

Staff training had been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak in April–May 2022 and the prison was finding it difficult to catch up. The Training Officers kept records of the training that had been completed by officers and focused on those who needed to undertake refresher training to maintain their levels of competence. But with the ongoing high rates of staff absence resulting in regular redeployment of staff, often they were unable to be released for training. This was concerning because Casuarina is the largest maximum-security facility in the state and manages a complex and high-risk cohort of prisoners.

## **2.3 PRISON DESIGN AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **The original design philosophy of the prison had not been maintained**

In previous inspections, we observed that the campus-style layout of Casuarina contributed to a calm atmosphere (OICS, 2017, p. 49; OICS, 2020a, p. 14). The interior of the prison was characterised by open spaces, with trees, lawns and gardens, and this environment had a positive effect. In 2022, this remained true in the original part of the prison, but the newer areas looked much different.

The new units (Units 15–18) are built closer to each other and the surrounding infrastructure. There is very little open space in this part of the prison, apart from the

## GOVERNANCE

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recreation yards inside the units. Space that previously existed around Units 13 and 14 was being filled with new construction including an industries building, a support building and two new accommodation units. It appeared that the original campus-style design philosophy had been abandoned in favour of fitting as much infrastructure as possible into the available space.

The landscaping in these newer areas also failed to match the standard of the well-maintained lawns and gardens in the original prison. Although the unit recreation yards were generously sized with basketball courts and lawn, they looked stark and bare when compared with the established trees and gardens in the older units. Outside the new units, landscaping was limited, with paths and roads edged with bare sand and gravel, giving the whole area an unfinished feel.

The physical environment makes a big difference to the mindset of both staff and prisoners. It was disappointing that this appeared to be valued less than it was 30 years ago when Casuarina was first built.

### **Casuarina had benefited from new infrastructure but was still stretched**

Casuarina was originally designed for less than 400 prisoners, and in 2022 was holding more than 1,100. There had been some major additions with new accommodation infrastructure, however, the existing units remained unchanged and overcrowding in those units continued. Cells designed for one continued to house two prisoners. Prison infrastructure had been extremely stretched in many areas for many years.

Prior to 2019, there had been no significant additions to supporting infrastructure. However, the expansion project, that commenced in 2019, had so far delivered:

- a new kitchen
- expanded social visits centre and new official visits centre
- new support buildings including program/education rooms and video link facilities
- refurbished and reconfigured outpatients area (but no increase to capacity).

The capacity of other supporting infrastructure including the education centre, gymnasium, and industries workshops had not increased. When complete, the expansion project will bring additional industries infrastructure and there will be additional space available for education. But given the projected size of the prison after expansion, we remain concerned that even the new infrastructure will not be sufficient to meet demand. For example, the new industries building will not provide enough jobs for all the prisoners who are currently unemployed or underemployed. And demand in all areas will be exacerbated by the increase in prisoner numbers.

# Chapter 3

## EARLY DAYS IN CUSTODY

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### 3.1 RECEPTION

#### **Reception infrastructure remained inadequate, but an upgrade was planned**

The reception centre was an increasingly busy area as the prison continued to expand. During our inspection, there were an average of 30–40 prisoner movements each weekday, including prisoners transferring in or out of Casuarina and temporary absences such as medical appointments and court appearances.

In our previous inspection, we observed that reception infrastructure was under pressure as prisoner numbers increased (OICS, 2020a, p. 20). We identified the main concerns as:

- There were only two holding cells, which was insufficient to safely manage different cohorts of prisoners.
- The sally port was too small for most prisoner transport vehicles.
- There was not enough storage space for prisoner property.

In 2022, we found there had been no change and these issues remained. However, the expansion project included renovation of the reception centre. Positively, reception staff reported that they had been closely consulted on the design.

### 3.2 ORIENTATION

#### **The orientation process had been disrupted by staffing shortages**

From around December 2021, custodial staffing shortages and redeployment of staff meant that new prisoners were not receiving an orientation to the prison. The problem was exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak in April–May 2022 and resulting restrictions on activity within the prison. By August 2022, the backlog of prisoners requiring an orientation had reached around 500.

The senior management team recognised this as a significant problem and ensured that the orientation officer position was no longer redeployed. An additional position was also assigned to address the backlog. By the time of our inspection in September, the backlog had been reduced to about 200. However, we were concerned that the process was limited to the orientation officer meeting with each prisoner and completing the orientation checklist. This was perhaps understandable in the circumstances but orientation at Casuarina had previously been much more comprehensive (OICS, 2020a, pp. 20–21). We would particularly like to see more involvement from the Prison Support Officers and the peer support team.

The relevant Commissioner’s Policy and Procedure (COPP) sets out requirements for orientation and Casuarina did not appear to comply in some areas, including the content of the orientation handbook (DOJ, 2021a). It was also clear that the orientation process was not meeting the needs of prisoners. In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, we asked prisoners if they had received enough information on arrival to understand how the prison works. Only 21% of respondents said yes and 65% said no.



## EARLY DAYS IN CUSTODY

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### **Recommendation 3**

Implement a more comprehensive orientation process.

### 3.3 REMAND PRISONERS

#### **There was limited distinction between remand and sentenced prisoners**

As noted earlier, one of the most significant changes in Casuarina's prisoner population in the last 10 years was the increase in remand prisoners [see 1.3]. Remand prisoners typically require a higher level of service than sentenced prisoners. They need access to legal resources and frequent contact with lawyers, and Casuarina's capacity to respond to these needs had improved with the opening of a new official visits centre and new video link facilities for court appearances [see 3.4].

Often remand prisoners also present with more intensive medical and welfare requirements and are generally less settled than sentenced prisoners. During our inspection, we found little additional support available for remand prisoners and they complained that they had less access to rehabilitative programs, education and training because of their unsentenced status.

Our inspection standards reflect national and international standards that require remand prisoners to be managed differently to sentenced prisoners in recognition of the fact that they are unconvicted (OICS, 2020b, p. 9). However, there was little to distinguish the management of remand and sentenced prisoners at Casuarina. This is equally true of all prisons in Western Australia.

Casuarina recognised the principle that remand prisoners are entitled to more frequent visits, but this was not possible in practice. There was also recognition that remand prisoners are not required to work except at their own request. Those who opt not to work received a base gratuity payment (Level 5). Apart from this, remand prisoners were treated much the same as sentenced prisoners.

There are many rights of remand prisoners that are not consistently available at Casuarina (or anywhere in the Western Australian prison system). These include:

- separation from sentenced prisoners
- single cell accommodation
- wearing your own clothing.

The Department's policy on remand prisoners (COPP 4.1) recognises some of these rights, but only 'as far as practicable' or at the Superintendent's discretion. In reality, these rights are not a feature of the regime at Casuarina or anywhere else in the Western Australian prison system.

## EARLY DAYS IN CUSTODY

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### 3.4 ACCESS TO LEGAL RESOURCES AND SERVICES

#### **New official visits and video link facilities provided improved capacity and function**

Since our last inspection in 2019, Casuarina had opened a new official visits centre. This provided a spacious and modern facility for prisoners to meet with official visitors such as lawyers, police and service providers from the community. There were 18 standard interview rooms plus two rooms that had been set up with recording equipment for police interviews.

The new centre incorporated information and communication technology that allowed more access to virtual meetings, with 10 interview rooms equipped for Microsoft Teams meetings and four electronic tablets available for Skype meetings.

Staff in the official visits centre managed bookings and appointments effectively and efficiently and reported that capacity in the centre comfortably met demand. Official visitors reported that the new centre provided a much-improved visiting experience.



***Photo 1: The new official visits centre was spacious and well-equipped.***

Similarly, the new video link facilities located in Support Building 2 had increased capacity and provided improved technology to facilitate court appearances and other video links. There were 10 fully equipped rooms capable of communicating with courts or any other

## EARLY DAYS IN CUSTODY

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party via internet, video link, or telephone. This had greatly assisted in meeting the needs of the increased remand population. Legal resources in the library were inadequate and access was limited

The library was open only on weekdays for 4.5 hours per day at best. It was not uncommon for the library officers to be redeployed to other parts of the prison to cover staff shortages, which meant the library would be closed. In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, 78% of respondents assessed access to the library as poor, up from 63% in 2019.

There were four computers available in the library for prisoners to work on letters, parole plans, documents relating to their trial or anything else. However, the computers were not networked, which meant that prisoners were not able to save files onto a private drive, so any work needed to be printed. And only one of the four computers was connected to a printer.

The library had a small collection of legal textbooks, mainly outdated and of little relevance. The two library officers had no training as legal librarians and no access to online case law databases. They could only source case law that was freely available and located using internet search engines. Prisoners could access a database of legislation available on two of the four computers within the library. This was an online database, but internet access was not permitted in the prison library. Instead, the provider mailed compact discs to the library supervisor containing updates to be loaded onto the computers. There was a growing risk that this outdated service would stop being offered by the provider.

Overall, we were concerned that the library and particularly the legal resources failed to meet the needs of a prison population of over 1,100 (and rising). Poor access to limited resources meant it was increasingly unrealistic for any prisoner to effectively prepare for their defence or appeal while at Casuarina. This was a particular concern given the increased proportion of remand prisoners.

### **Recommendation 4**

Improve legal resources and increase access for prisoners, particularly those held on remand.

# Chapter 4

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

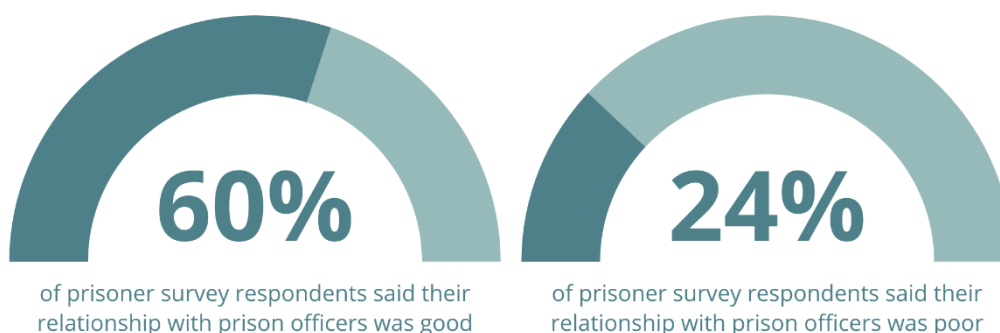
### 4.1 ENCOURAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

#### Positive interaction between custodial staff and prisoners had decreased

One of the most important features of any prison is the relationship between custodial staff and prisoners. A good relationship with positive interactions brings many benefits. It improves safety and security because staff have better awareness of issues within the prisoner group. And it contributes to prisoner rehabilitation when staff model pro-social communication and behaviour.

Unfortunately, frequent short staffing at Casuarina meant that prisoners were regularly locked behind wing grilles, which greatly reduced any contact with staff. Even when prisoners were unlocked, we found that staff were more likely to withdraw to unit offices and spend less time in the wings interacting with prisoners. Staff themselves acknowledged decreasing interaction with prisoners invariably blaming short staffing and the elevated workload they faced as a result.

We observed some good interactions between unit staff and prisoners, particularly in some of the specialist units (such as Unit 1 and the Special Handling Unit) where there is a focus on working intensively with prisoners who are difficult to manage. The security team also stated that staff continue to receive and pass on good intelligence from prisoners. In our prisoner survey, there were many comments about good officers who helped to make prisoners feel safe. But there were also many comments about bad officers who were described as aggressive or uncaring, and unaware of what was happening in the wings.



#### Incentives for positive behaviour were increasingly limited

Our inspection standards require that prisoners 'are encouraged to develop pro-social behaviours and responsibility for their actions' (OICS, 2020b, p. 15). The Department's own policy states that '[t]he system shall reward a prisoner's good behaviour with eligibility to increased privileges and a lower level of supervision' (DOJ, 2022b, p. 4). At Casuarina, the main incentives available to reward good behaviour are 'earned supervision' level, and placement in the self-care unit (Unit 7). Earned supervision gives prisoners access to extra privileges such as an increased canteen spend limit, increased telephone account limit, and more electrical items in cell. But perhaps the greatest

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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incentive for those with earned supervision status was placement in self-care. This gave prisoners the opportunity to cook meals for themselves and live in a less crowded and more settled environment with fewer lockdowns.

Unfortunately, this opportunity was reduced because of limited capacity in self-care. There are 48 self-care cells in Unit 7. Capacity was increased to 59 via double-bunking some years ago (which in itself undermined self-care as an incentive). There had been no further increase in self-care capacity, meaning this area lagged far behind the growth in other areas of the prison. When Casuarina opened in 1991, self-care beds represented about 12% of total capacity. By 2022, that proportion had dropped to only 4%. This undermined Casuarina's ability to incentivise good behaviour.

One wing in the protection unit (Unit 6) was available for protection prisoners on earned supervision, and all prisoners in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre (Unit 15) were granted earned supervision status as an incentive for their participation in the Solid Steps rehabilitation program. Overall, about 13% of prisoners at Casuarina were on earned supervision but only 5% were in the mainstream population. We were concerned that earned supervision and self-care were increasingly unattainable for the average prisoner at Casuarina.

We acknowledge that the high remand population had reduced demand for self-care because it was previously available only to sentenced prisoners. But in January 2022, self-care was opened to long-term remand prisoners who have been at Casuarina for six months or more. This was an appropriate move, recognising the increased numbers facing long periods on remand.

### 4.2 PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

#### **There was a significant backlog of disciplinary charges**

Sections 69 and 70 of the *Prisons Act 1981* set out a range of minor and aggravated prison offences with which prisoners can be charged. Charges are prepared by a prison prosecutor and heard by either the Superintendent or a justice of the peace (known as a visiting justice).

A second prison prosecutor position had been established at Casuarina in early 2021 in recognition of the rising prison population. However, this second officer was frequently redeployed to cover staff shortages elsewhere in the prison. This affected the capacity of the prison prosecutors to prepare and present charges. More problematic, however, was the shortage of available punishment cells.

The Multi-Purpose Unit (MPU) that had traditionally been used for this purpose was now mainly used for short-term placement of prisoners directly following an incident. Local management preferred to keep it as empty as possible to provide flexibility in the event of a critical incident. In Unit 1, several cells used for punishment had been occupied long-term by prisoners who had security alerts in both the mainstream population and the protection unit.

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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Consequently, Casuarina had very limited punishment cell capacity. The prosecutor could not present charges to the Superintendent or a visiting justice if there were no punishment cells available.

The result was a backlog of disciplinary charges. There were more than 300 charges outstanding, dating back more than 18 months to February 2021. There were also about 190 incidents for which charges had not yet been considered. This situation was very similar to the findings from our previous inspection in 2019 (OICS, 2020a, p. 18). It contributed to poor staff morale because staff lacked confidence in the disciplinary process. And it allowed prisoners to think that they could commit prison offences without facing consequences. The negative implications for safety and security in the prison were obvious.



***Photo 2: A cell in the Multi-Purpose Unit.***

### 4.3 USE OF FORCE

#### Use of force incidents had increased and no local reviews were occurring

Use of force incidents had increased at Casuarina between 2020 and 2021. The use of physical control and restraints increased from 27 instances to 120, and the use of chemical agent increased from three instances to 21. This was consistent with our previous finding that changes in reporting requirements and more accurate reporting had resulted in an increase in use of force incidents in the Department's data (OICS, 2021c).

However, we were confident that this represented a genuine increase in use of force incidents at Casuarina (not just an increase in reporting) because it coincided with an increase in use of hand cuffs and placements into temporary separate confinement. The reasons for the increase were unclear but the increase in prison population had no doubt contributed.

**Table 1: Use of force incidents, 2020–2022**

Type of incident	2020	2021	2022
Physical control and restraint	27	120	68
Cell extraction	1	2	1
Chemical agent	3	21	25
Restraints bed	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>94</b>

The increase in use of force came at a time when local reviews had stalled. At the time of our inspection, there had been no local use of force committee meetings for over a year. There was a backlog of more than 100 use of force incidents that had not been reviewed for compliance. This was because a key member of staff had taken parental leave and we were told that there was nobody with the appropriate skill set to cover this absence. The senior management team said they did not have capacity to carry out this work without a dedicated resource.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Provide appropriate resources for timely local use of force reviews.

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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Although there had been no formal reviews, local management had recognised a need to emphasise the importance of de-escalation techniques. They made presentations to Senior Officers, highlighting situations in which force was used unnecessarily and encouraging staff to use force as a last resort. Following this, local management had observed positive changes in the way that staff had managed incidents. This was supported by the data showing a reduction in use of force incidents in 2022.

### 4.4 PROCEDURAL SECURITY

#### The master control room was due for upgrade

A complete overhaul of the master control room was due to commence shortly after our inspection. This would address the many issues related to old and failing security systems throughout the prison. Having previously observed that the Department had missed an opportunity to upgrade security systems during the expansion project (OICS, 2020a, p. 15), we were pleased to find that this had been included in the second stage of the project. We saw very high-quality vision from cameras that had been installed in the new parts of the prison. All cameras and security systems will be upgraded to this standard.

For the time being, however, many of the issues that we identified in our inspection three years earlier persisted. Alarms and faults were constant, often exacerbated by ongoing construction works. It was a challenging environment for the two control room officers who worked 12 hours straight in the master control room without relief. We have previously suggested that, in order to maintain a high level of vigilance, staff should spend no longer than two to three hours at a time in the control room (OICS, 2014a, pp. 43–44; OICS, 2020a, p. 15). We made a recommendation to ‘[r]eview staffing and relief arrangements for the master control room’ in our previous inspection report (OICS, 2020a, p. 15). In response, Casuarina updated local procedures to ensure rotations occurred every two hours. However, this no longer appeared to be happening. We maintain that it is good practice to regularly rotate officers in the master control room.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Ensure regular rotation of staff in the master control room.

#### Security team resources had increased but regular redeployment persisted

As part of the prison expansion, the security team received significant additional resources, including an Assistant Security Manager, additional Senior Officer Security, additional Security Officer and an administration assistant. In total, there was a team of 12 working under the Security Manager and this level of resourcing was sufficient. However, as we found three years ago, redeployment continued to have a significant impact on the security team. Security officers were regularly redeployed to cover shortages elsewhere in the units. According to their own records, in the four months prior to our inspection, the security team had lost an average of more than 1,200 hours per month to redeployment.



## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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Staff continuity is important in security and without it the workload builds up. Many of the tasks that form the foundation of security work, such as listening to telephone calls and screening letters, require a substantial investment of time. Lost hours meant the security team was often more reactive than proactive. Security officers regretted their lack of capacity to spend time inside the prison, interacting with staff and prisoners. As a result, prison officers in the units were less engaged with the work of the security team.

Despite this, the security team reported that prison officers were passing on a good amount of quality intelligence. But they would like more opportunities to promote security awareness and intelligence gathering among staff.

### **Awareness of and compliance with new policies and procedures was variable**

One of the significant developments since our last inspection had been the completion and implementation of the COPPs. This was a Department-wide initiative carried out by head office aimed at consolidating all policies and procedures into one set of documents. Each prison was responsible for writing Standing Orders that provided more specific guidance for that location where necessary. It was certainly a valuable outcome to reduce the number of documents that staff had to refer to for any given task.

However, support for implementation was limited. All training for the new COPPs was online and it was the responsibility of individual officers to complete. Some of the COPPs were lengthy and staff complained that it was difficult to find the time to read, let alone comprehend the documents. Many of the COPPs replicated the old policies and procedures but where changes had been made, this was not necessarily highlighted. As a result, awareness and compliance was variable. Staff were generally not aware of changes unless they were specifically relevant to their role.

## **4.5 SPECIAL MANAGEMENT REGIMES**

### **Confinement and management regimes were governed well, and prisoners were treated respectfully**

Use of confinement and management regimes at Casuarina appeared to be applied fairly and in accordance with policy. An analysis of a sample of supervision plans found reasons for placing prisoners on restricted regimes and their access to entitlements were consistent with policy. Supervision logs also indicated that prisoners were regularly receiving access to their daily entitlements and recreation time as required.

Prisoners serving time in confinement or on a management regime also appeared to be treated with respect and dignity. We observed staff interacting with prisoners in the MPU and in Unit 1 in a respectful manner, answering prisoner queries and providing information about their ongoing placement. Both Unit 1 and the MPU were calm and quiet when we observed them. This finding is consistent with our previous inspection of Casuarina, and observations completed during our broader review of confinement and management regimes across the estate (OICS, 2020a, pp. 17–18; OICS, 2022b).

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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### **The Special Handling Unit managed a complex mix of prisoners**

The daily routine within the Special Handling Unit (SHU) had been impacted by the increasingly complex risk factors presented by prisoners residing in the unit. This included:

- conflicts associated with ongoing court proceedings
- an increase in prisoners with severe mental health issues
- prisoners prone to violence towards others
- prisoners who refused to recreate with others.

The balancing of these risk factors had resulted in limited time out of cell during the day. SHU prisoners are entitled to a minimum of three hours out of cell per day (DOJ, 2021c). However, this was often difficult to achieve because of the limited interactions allowed between many of the prisoners. Facilitating out of cell time for individual prisoners, in addition to other daily tasks, was also proving difficult for staff.

Despite these challenges, management were finding ways to increase out of cell hours. Daily exercise hours were being recorded and submitted to the Deputy Superintendent daily, providing management with good oversight. Management also appeared to work well with staff to find ways to better balance the risks and needs of the cohort. This resulted in a group of four prisoners being permitted to socialise together, and smaller groups of two also sharing out of cell time. This was beneficial for the prisoners but was also helping to ease the pressure on staff.

## **4.6 PROTECTION PRISONERS**

### **A Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team had been established**

Casuarina had established a Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team (PMDT) as required under a new policy introduced in November 2021 (COPP 4.10). The purpose of the PMDT is to scrutinise applications for protection to ensure only prisoners with a genuine risk are segregated (DOJ, 2021b). At Casuarina, the PMDT is comprised of the Assistant Superintendent Special Units (ASSU), the Security Manager, mental health staff where applicable, and any other relevant stakeholders.

Consultation occurred by email when an application for protection placement was received or when an existing protection prisoner was seeking to exit into mainstream or transfer to a different facility. This enabled the PMDT to address new applications or exit requests quickly.

The PMDT had formalised the collaboration between the ASSU, security and mental health in the assessment process. Prior to this, there were no formal requirements for the ASSU to collaborate with others when making their decision. The establishment of the PMDT had therefore improved the rigour of protection assessments and ensured Casuarina was compliant with COPP 4.10.

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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However, the PMDT at Casuarina did not review existing protection prisoners. Under COPP 4.10, the PMDT is responsible for conducting six-monthly reviews of each prisoner with protection status to ensure their ongoing placement is necessary (DOJ, 2021b, p. 6). At Casuarina, this review process had remained with staff in the protection unit. Previously, we found that the reviews of protection alerts by unit staff were perfunctory and ineffective (OICS, 2022a). We had hoped that the PMDTs taking responsibility for this process would ensure these reviews were more rigorous.

### Protection cohort complexities created placement challenges

Prisoners requiring protection have historically been housed in two areas of Casuarina:

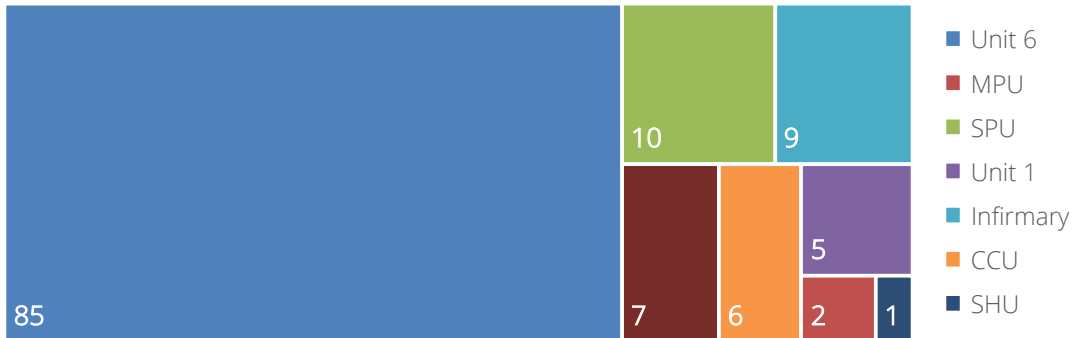
- The protection unit (Unit 6) for prisoners who need to be separated from the mainstream population because the nature of their offence puts them at risk or because of conflicts with other prisoners.
- The Special Protection Unit (SPU) for prisoners deemed especially at risk who would not be safe even in the protection unit.

During this inspection, however, we found that a multitude of factors were complicating the placement of protection prisoners. This included:

- inter-personal conflicts and risks, resulting in protection prisoners requiring protection from other protection prisoners
- prisoners in denial about their need for protection
- protection prisoners presenting as management issues, being placed in Unit 1 long-term
- aged and infirm protection prisoners being placed in the infirmary
- high-profile and high-risk prisoners being placed in the SPU and SHU
- protection prisoners becoming informants against other protection prisoners
- protection prisoners being placed in the MPU until a placement at another facility was secured.

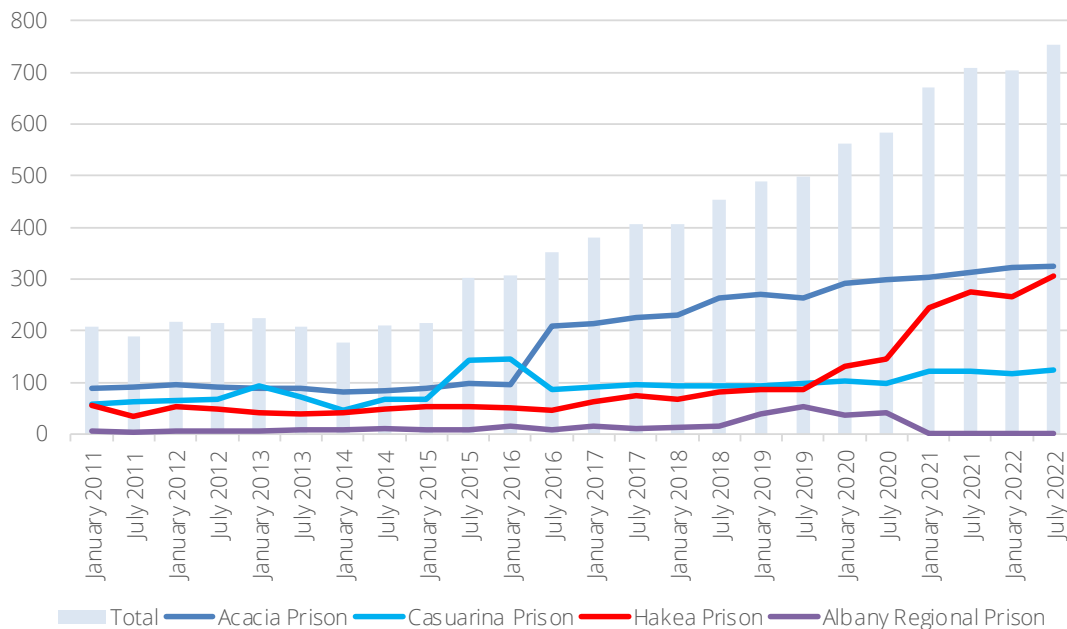
As a result, protection prisoners were dispersed across as many as eight different units. While this was not ideal, we acknowledge that these decisions were made in the interests of the prisoner's own safety in response to challenging circumstances. Casuarina had done well to manage the various risks without compromising prisoner safety.

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY



**Figure 6: Number and placement of protection prisoners, September 2022**

The increasingly complex dynamics within the protection population at Casuarina reflected a broader change in the profile of prisoners seeking protection in Western Australia (OICS, 2022a). Traditionally, prisoners have sought protection due to the nature of their offences, which have placed them at risk if they resided in the mainstream population. More recently, there has been an increase in prisoners seeking protection due to threats from others. This may be linked to associations with gangs, debts owed, or involvement in high-profile offences. The total population of protection prisoners across the prison system has more than tripled since 2011, peaking at 753 in July 2022



**Figure 7: Total number of protection prisoners in Western Australia, January 2011 – July 2022**

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY

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Casuarina had plans to move the protection unit from Unit 6 to Unit 14 when the next stage of the expansion project was complete. This would increase capacity by about 20 beds but would not necessarily provide more placement options to better manage competing risks. We believe the Department and the prison should consider whether Casuarina should be running two separate protection units. This will require evaluation of protection prisoner numbers and trends across the system.

### **The Special Protection Unit offered few meaningful activities for prisoners**

Prisoners in the SPU were generally confined to the surrounds of their unit and, as a result, had limited access to meaningful activities. Prisoners informed us they have no access to treatment programs, and they are worried about how this will impact their parole applications. They also have no access to a legal library and no access to a computer. However, recently they had been able to request books from the library and a teacher had started visiting the unit once a week.

We have previously raised concerns about the lack of meaningful activities available to prisoners in protection, and the impact this can have on their mental health (OICS, 2022a). Prisoners in the SPU are even more restricted than general protection prisoners. Given their limited interactions with others, greater effort should be made to provide SPU prisoners with more meaningful activities, such as access to education.

# Chapter 5

## DAILY LIFE

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### 5.1 REGIME

#### **The daily routine for prisoners was restricted by custodial staff shortages**

Our overarching recommendation arising from the 2019 inspection was to ‘ensure that Casuarina provides a full regime of meaningful activities for prisoners as it continues to expand’ (OICS, 2020a, p. 48). We were concerned that growing numbers in the prison meant it would become more difficult to give prisoners the opportunity to fill their days constructively.

During our 2022 inspection, this remained a significant concern. Elsewhere in this report we discuss shortfalls in recreation capacity [5.5], program availability [8.2], prisoner employment positions [8.3], and spaces in education [8.4]. The overall impact was that there were hundreds of prisoners in Casuarina every day who did not have enough to do.

The situation was exacerbated by Casuarina’s inability to run a normal routine for months because of chronic staff shortages. The adaptive regime commonly involved redeployment of staff from areas like recreation and industries (that provided meaningful activity for prisoners) to cover staff shortages in the units. As a result, prisoners had far fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful activity. For the majority of Casuarina prisoners, the concept of a constructive regime had been lost. Lack of activity impacted on prisoners’ physical and mental health, and undermined efforts at rehabilitation. The higher number of idle prisoners had implications for safety and security, and contributed to an increased workload for unit staff.

### 5.2 LIVING CONDITIONS

#### **Hygiene and living conditions were poor, especially in the older units**

The accommodation units at Casuarina ranged in age from more than 30 years to barely two years old. Accordingly, living conditions for prisoners varied greatly. The newest units (Units 15–18) were clean, bright and relatively spacious. However, they did suffer aesthetically from a lack of landscaping in the recreation yards and unit surrounds [see discussion at 2.3]. The absence of gardens and trees may have also contributed to the fact that these units were said to be especially hot in summer.

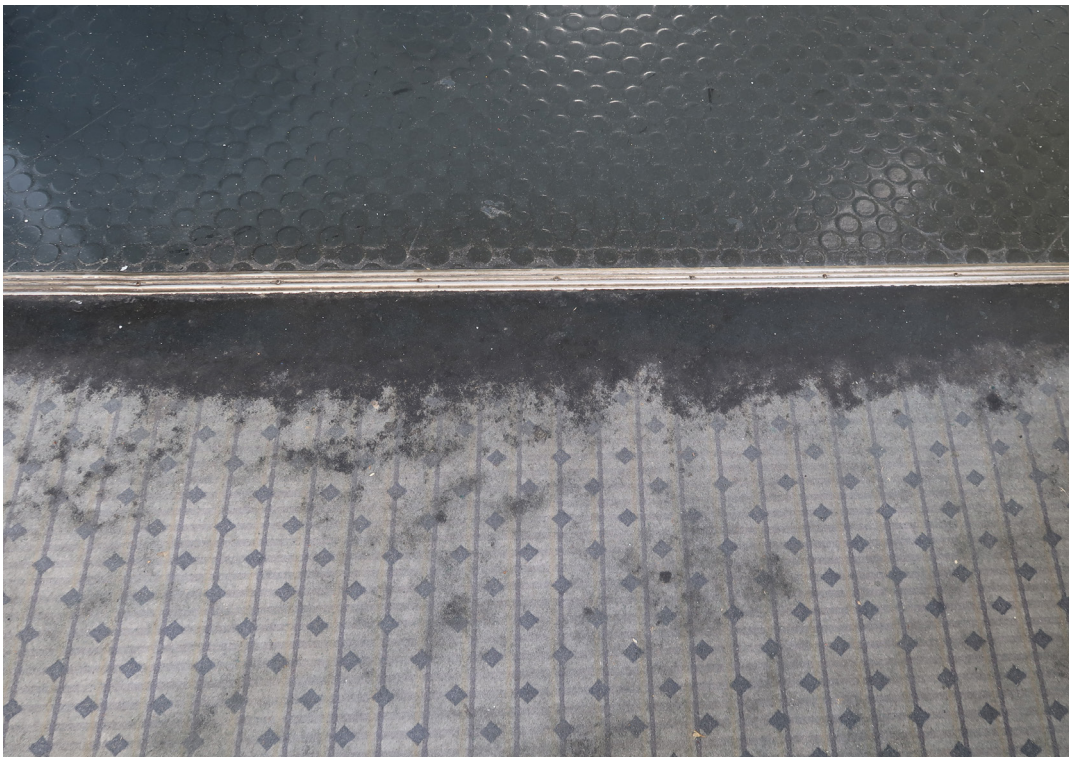
In our previous report, we noted that the condition of the older units at Casuarina was deteriorating, accelerated by the fact that the number of prisoners in each unit had doubled (OICS, 2020a, p. 11). This trend continued in 2022. Communal showers were grimy and mouldy. Carpets in unit day rooms were so ingrained with dirt that cleaning efforts were no longer effective. Maintenance issues including damaged ceilings and broken windows had not been addressed. We observed litter strewn outside the day rooms in some units, presumably thrown out the windows from inside. This included food scraps, paper and plastic debris.

DAILY LIFE

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***Photo 3: Grimy and damaged tiles in a communal shower.***



***Photo 4: Carpet in a unit day room ingrained with dirt.***

## DAILY LIFE

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We heard that the number of unit-based cleaning jobs had increased to improve employment options for prisoners. But the state of some units suggested that this was not effective. The lack of staff supervision for cleaning and the slow response to maintenance issues was another impact of staff shortages and redeployments. It was also true that the damage caused by juvenile detainees in Unit 18 had diverted maintenance resources away from the other accommodation units.

The cleanliness of cells varied depending on the motivation of individual prisoners. Most prisoners had to eat their meals in their cells because there were not enough tables in the day rooms, and this increased the risk of pest infestations. Cockroaches had been a persistent problem at Casuarina, and it was so bad last inspection, we recommended eliminating the cockroach infestation in the units (OICS, 2020a, p. 12). Casuarina had explored several different pest control options and although the cockroaches had not been entirely eliminated (and probably never will be), their prevalence was reduced, and we heard less about the problem from prisoners.



### 5.3 CLOTHING AND BEDDING

#### Laundry processes were sound but the quality of clothing and bedding varied

The laundry operated seven days a week, employing up to 18 prisoners per day in two shifts (one week on, one week off) and washing 18 tons of clothing and bedding per week. The laundry was considered an essential industry, so the two laundry officers were not subject to redeployment. The laundry operated efficiently and complied with industry standards of infection control.

With Casuarina now such a large prison, it was increasingly difficult to keep track of clothing and maintain standards. Although there were processes to remove old and damaged clothing from circulation, we observed prisoners wearing over-sized and threadbare clothing. Prisoners also complained about pillows and mattresses. Local policy specified that both pillows and mattresses remained in cell rather than moving with the prisoner. We saw pillows that were old, flat and stained.

During our 2019 inspection, we noted all clothing was shared. The failure to provide personal clothing, particularly underwear and socks, fell below the standard of decency that we expect (OICS, 2020a, p. 31). In 2022, prisoners could request a personal laundry



## DAILY LIFE

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bag for underwear and socks and could buy their own personal items from the canteen. All other clothing was bulk-washed by the laundry.

### 5.4 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTACT

#### **Some visit sessions had been lost but increased e-visits were welcome**

There were four, one-hour visit sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays this dropped to two, one-hour sessions because the prison was locked down in the morning for staff training. On weekends and public holidays, the number of visit sessions increased to six sessions each day. We were pleased to see a late visit session (starting at 4.15 pm on weekdays and 4.00 pm on weekends/public holidays) to accommodate visitors who could only visit after work as well as allowing children to visit after school.

However, when Unit 18 was annexed as a youth custodial facility, Casuarina had to accommodate separate visit sessions for the young people. This meant that Casuarina prisoners lost one session each weekday and two each day on the weekend. The adult prisoners were compensated for this with increased access to e-visits.

E-visits were available daily from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm on weekdays and all day on weekends in 30-minute time slots. Although there were only four e-visit booths available, Casuarina managed an extremely high number of e-visits. In 2021, there were a total of 9,650 e-visits – more than 800 per month. But considering Casuarina had an average daily population of almost 1,200 over that period, it still meant a significant proportion of the population were not accessing regular e-visits.

#### **Rules around physical contact during visits were confusing and frustrating for prisoners**

COVID-19 restrictions had impacted on social visits in several ways. Early in 2022, visits had been cancelled entirely for two weeks and numbers in the visits centre were limited for about five months. At the time of our inspection, there were no longer any limits on numbers, but prisoners and their visitors were still required to wear face masks. There was also confusion around whether physical contact between prisoners and visitors was permitted.

Contact restrictions had certainly been in place for several months. This was a source of distress for prisoners and was frequently raised during our inspection. We observed some inconsistency during visit sessions, with some officers allowing limited contact. Further investigation revealed that the rules had very recently been relaxed to allow intermittent contact between prisoners and child visitors under the age of 12. This was really limited to an embrace at the beginning and end of the visit. By the time of writing, contact restrictions had been removed and reasonable physical contact between prisoners and their visitors was once again permitted.

## DAILY LIFE

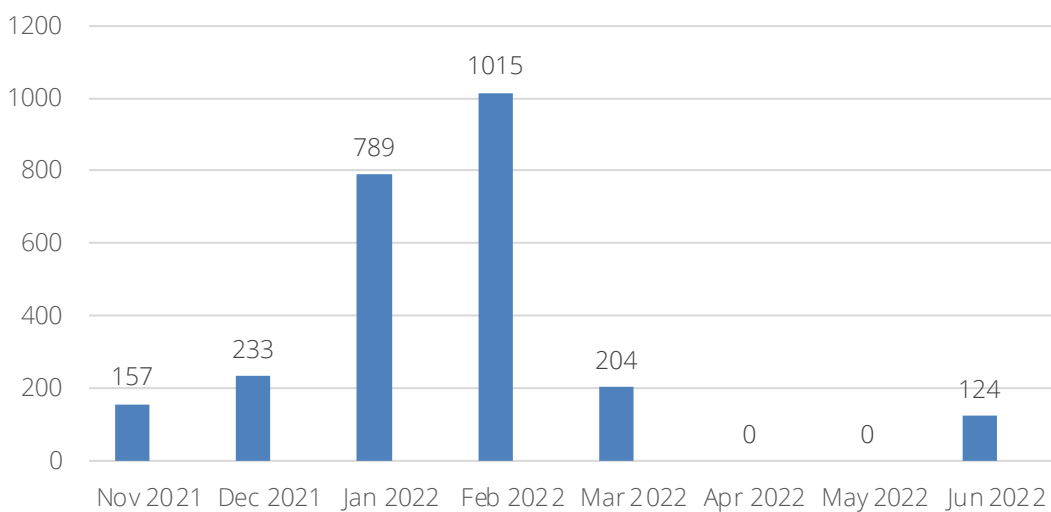
### 5.5 RECREATION

We found a comprehensive and varied recreation program in place at Casuarina. This was driven by four committed and experienced recreation officers. The program provided access for each of the 18 accommodation units to the gymnasium twice a week. This was an impressive scheduling achievement given the size and complexity of the prisoner cohort at Casuarina.

However, the recreation program was severely impacted by custodial staffing shortages. Recreation officers were frequently redeployed to cover staff shortages in the units, which meant that recreation operated at reduced capacity or closed altogether. Custodial staff shortages also meant there were often not enough officers available to escort prisoners from their unit to the gymnasium, so they would miss out on their allocated recreation time that day. The frustration the recreation officers felt about this cannot be overstated.

Given that meaningful activity was so limited for prisoners, recreation should be treated as a higher priority. We have previously observed that there is more to prisoners having regular access to structured recreation than just the actual physical exercise (OICS, 2020a, p. 33). Recreation has potential rehabilitative value and known mental health benefits. It builds motivation, encourages discipline, goal setting and achievement, and promotes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

In our previous report, we recommended that Casuarina '[i]ncrease prisoner access to structured sport and recreation' (OICS, 2020a, p. 33). Unfortunately, in 2022 we found that access had not increased. In fact, our prisoner survey indicated that satisfaction with access to the gymnasium had declined substantially, with only 17% of respondents saying this was 'good'. This was down from 32% in 2019. Data on the number of prisoners accessing the gymnasium also illustrated the impact of staff shortages.



**Figure 8: Number of prisoners accessing the gymnasium, November 2021 – June 2022**

## DAILY LIFE

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Recreation was closed completely in April and May 2022 because of the COVID-19 outbreak, and the numbers in June 2022 were also affected. But the low numbers in other months were the result of short staffing and the redeployment of the recreation officers. For a prison with a population over 1,100, this level of access is inadequate.

We remain concerned that access to structured recreation is likely to worsen as the prison continues to expand. There is still no provision for additional recreation infrastructure associated with the increase in prisoner numbers. The need to keep prisoners occupied with constructive activity means that recreation is more important than ever in the prison regime.

### **Recommendation 7**

**Increase prisoner access to structured recreation.**

#### **The oval was rarely used and most recreation was unit-based**

While access to the gymnasium was limited, the oval was rarely used at all. Many prisoners said they had not been to the oval to exercise or play sport for over 12 months. Staff confirmed this was accurate. Positively, an AFL competition was under way at the time of our inspection, but participant numbers were severely limited. Only those prisoners selected in one of the competition teams could go to the oval, and this was a very small proportion of the population.

Casuarina benefits from grassed recreation yards in each accommodation unit. These are secure and can only be used by prisoners from that unit. When unable to use the oval or gymnasium, prisoners were at least able to spend time outside exercising in the recreation yards. Prisoner recreation workers could access trolleys of recreation equipment that they made available to prisoners recreating in the units.



**Photo 5: A unit recreation yard.**

## DAILY LIFE

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### 5.6 FOOD

#### **Despite some design flaws, the kitchen operated well**

The kitchen was less than three years old, having been constructed in the first stage of the expansion. A number of flaws and poor design choices had been identified once the kitchen was in operation. This included inadequate drainage, cramped work areas, and insufficient freezer space and storage space. Despite this, kitchen staff ran a good operation, catering well for the current prison population and with capacity to cope with the impending increase in numbers.

Food hygiene was monitored adequately and subject to regular independent assessments, and the menu had recently been assessed by a dietician. The kitchen was preparing about 200 special diet meals per day for prisoners with allergies, vegetarians, halal diets, low-fat or soft food requirements. Meal deliveries to Unit 6 were managed to prevent kitchen workers tampering with food for protection prisoners.

Prisoner meals were prepared using a cook-chill method – ingredients were cooked and blast-chilled on day one, stored in a cool room on day two, and delivered to the units in trolleys on day three. Meals were reheated in the units before serving. Prisoners often complained that this cooking method contributed to unappetising meals. In our prisoner survey, only 25% of prisoners rated the food quality as 'good' and 72% said it was 'poor'.

### 5.7 CANTEEN

#### **The new canteen had more space, but prisoners wanted different stock**

The canteen had moved into the former boot shop. The new canteen provided more storage space to cater for the growing prisoner population and had been set up for good workflow. There were four canteen officers and 12 prisoners employed in the canteen. They worked five days a week but there were plans to increase to seven days when the prison population reached 1,500.

Orders were packed in the canteen and delivered to the units. There were good processes around packing of orders and particular care was taken with tobacco products, which had high value as a currency within the prison.

Prisoners had hoped that the new canteen would bring an increase in the variety of items on the canteen list. But in their view, this had not happened. Many prisoners complained that most of the food options were unhealthy and they had no opportunity to provide input on canteen stock. In our prisoner survey, only 37% of respondents said the canteen was good. This was down from 49% in 2019.

### 5.8 RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

#### **Chaplains provided valuable support to prisoners**

Five chaplains provided 14.5 chaplaincy days per week at Casuarina. Chaplaincy services were well regarded and used by prisoners. There had been 11 baptisms in the past month and up to 50 prisoners attended Sunday services in the chapel. Prisoners also explored

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their faith through bible study groups, weekend fellowship sessions and prayer groups.

Chaplains had good access to prisoners and moved freely around the units. Prison officers viewed the chaplains as a valuable resource and would often refer prisoners to the chaplains for support. In fact, the chaplains were increasingly called upon to provide support for prisoners because of limited access to psychological counselling [see 6.3].

Chaplaincy services at Casuarina were barely meeting current demand. While up to 50 prisoners could attend a service on a Sunday, there would be 100 or more on the list hoping to attend. Demand is only likely to increase as expansion works continue and prisoner numbers rise.

### 5.9 ABORIGINAL SERVICES

#### **There was good support for Aboriginal prisoners**

Aboriginal men continued to be the most over-represented group at Casuarina and numbers were increasing. Since our last inspection in 2019, the proportion of Aboriginal prisoners had increased from 36% to 43% and average daily numbers had increased from 339 to 490.

Aboriginal prisoners received good support from Aboriginal staff in key positions, such as the Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services, Prison Support Officers, Aboriginal Mental Health Worker and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme. These staff worked well together to support Aboriginal prisoners. This was best exemplified following the death in custody of an Aboriginal man at Casuarina in August 2022. These staff, with support from local management, worked to immediately organise prisoner gatherings, sorry time, funeral attendance, and ultimately a live video stream of the funeral (paid for by the prison). These actions helped the prisoner group to settle and grieve. This was an example of an excellent, culturally appropriate response to a tragic incident.

#### **The Aboriginal Services Committee failed to address disadvantage**

Casuarina ran a quarterly Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) meeting. This was a requirement for every prison in the state in accordance with the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan (DOJ, 2022d, p. 19). The meetings included representatives from most business areas and tracked the demographics of Aboriginal prisoners and discussed involvement and opportunities in the various areas of the prison. However, there was little evidence of new initiatives arising from the ASC process and Aboriginal prisoners were still fundamentally disadvantaged at Casuarina. A high proportion were unemployed, and those with jobs were more likely to be earning lower gratuity levels [see 8.3]. Furthermore, only 6% of Aboriginal prisoners were on earned supervision compared to 19% of non-Aboriginal prisoners.

Aboriginal staff perceived a lack of cultural awareness among non-Aboriginal staff, and the Department as a whole. Only 19% of prisoner survey respondents felt that Casuarina staff understood their culture, and only 24% felt that staff respected their culture.

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### **Kaartdijin Mia was a valuable space but limited by staffing**

Kaartdijin Mia, meaning ‘knowledge place’ in Noongar, is a cultural and learning space located within Casuarina. Kaartdijin Mia provided cultural support, basic education and structured voluntary programs for Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) prisoners. Aboriginal prisoners were also able to attend Kaartdijin Mia for ‘yarning’ sessions, with family and countrymen from other units, who they might not otherwise see. It was a very positive space, highly valued by staff and prisoners.

Like most areas of the prison, Kaartdijin Mia had been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak in April–May 2022 when all activity in the prison ceased. It was also affected by staff shortages because prisoners were only allowed to attend if prison officers were available to supervise. If there was one prison officer in attendance, Kaartdijin Mia could host 12 prisoners and this increased to 50 if there were two officers. The prison had agreed to prioritise staffing on days that programs were running but it was common for Kaartdijin Mia to be completely closed at least one day a week.

Despite the significant increase in Aboriginal numbers at Casuarina in recent years, there had been no increase in resources for Kaartdijin Mia. It was increasingly difficult for the Coordinator Aboriginal Services to meet the needs of the prisoner population on her own.

Kaartdijin Mia is a unique and extremely valuable feature of Casuarina. Every effort should be made to ensure that the service it provides to Aboriginal prisoners can be maintained as the prison grows.

### **Recommendation 8**

Provide additional resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.

# Chapter 6

## HEALTH AND SUPPORT

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### 6.1 PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE

#### **Routine health screening and assessment was not happening**

Prisoners did not undergo a formal initial health assessment on arrival at the prison. Casuarina relied on the fact that prisoners would have received a health screening on intake at Hakea before being transferred to Casuarina. They also relied on previous information recorded in the Department's medical records database.

However, the process at Hakea was brief and did not include screening for cognitive or neurodevelopmental disorders so it was likely that these may be missed. Anything else not picked up at Hakea or not already in the medical record from a previous period of incarceration would not be identified at Casuarina.

Prisoners were not routinely seen by a medical officer at any time following admission. Annual health assessments were rarely completed. The health service could only respond to proactive requests to be seen or clearly sick prisoners. One member of staff described it as a 'sickness service' rather than a health service.

#### **Staff relationships were good, but retention was difficult in the prison environment**

As in all Western Australian prisons, health care at Casuarina was run through three operational streams with separate lines of management – general health services, mental health services, and Psychological Health Services (PHS).

Despite this complicated operational structure and significant staffing challenges, staff reported that the relationship and cooperation between the different health streams was good. This had not always been the case at Casuarina, so this was a credit to the efforts of all involved. Health services staff also reported generally reasonable relationships with custodial staff. While we heard of isolated incidents in which health staff had felt inappropriate demands had been made, there were no major tensions apparent.

However, there was a legacy of previous conflict and bullying claims within the nursing team. There was a high level of personal leave and workers' compensation leave (up to 9 staff). We understand that health staff in the prison system have access to fewer job entitlements and incentives compared to Department of Health staff, which may explain why there was high turnover and recruitment was a constant problem. Most of the nurses had been employed for less than a year and many had no previous prison experience. Seven of 29 nurse positions were vacant (24%). The nursing team had also been required to divert some resources to cover certain tasks related to the young people placed in Unit 18.

Doctors in the prison system are employed as medical officers. The medical officers at Casuarina were not specialist general practitioners but had a variety of experience. Three out of four medical officer positions at Casuarina were filled.

## HEALTH AND SUPPORT

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### **Infrastructure limitations impacted on health services**

The outpatients building in the health centre was newly extended and refurbished but this work had failed to adequately address capacity issues. There was a shortage of clinical rooms so when the psychiatrist and three medical officers had been accommodated there was very little other space.

The rooms were designed with two separate doors opening onto the shared corridor, so they were being used as if they were two rooms. This meant two prisoners receiving care in a room at the same time or a prisoner being seen in the corridor. This meant that privacy and dignity could be compromised. However, we did not see this occurring during our inspection. There were relatively few prisoners at any one time in the outpatient area, which may reflect the inefficiency of the appointment system and the high rate of non-attendance (discussed below).

There was only one designated mental health room, apart from the room allocated to the psychiatrist. This was a room designed for high-risk assessments. It had a glass panel between prisoner and clinician and the prisoner's side was entirely visible to the main corridor through a large glass window. This meant the prisoner was visible to anyone walking past, prisoner or staff alike. The room had an unfortunate resemblance to a non-contact interview room and did not offer a comfortable, confidential or therapeutic clinical space.

### **Access to primary health care was problematic for prisoners**

The staffing and infrastructure issues contributed to more limited access to primary health care for prisoners. Requests to see a medical officer were triaged by the nursing team and the first appointment was usually with a nurse. If an appointment was made with a medical officer, the likely wait for an appointment was two to three months.

The lack of efficiency of the appointment process – documented below – was well known but no solution had been identified.

Appointments were scheduled to start at 9.00 am. However, in reality the medication rounds did not finish until 9.30 am so the health centre was not fully staffed until then. The last possible morning appointment before the lunchtime lockdown was at 11.15 am, leaving limited real time for appointments.

The medical officer lists had up to 12 patients per day but sometimes fewer than a quarter of these would be seen because the prisoner did not attend. This might be because the prisoner had a conflicting court or legal appointment or some other activity that they chose to attend instead. They might be unaware of their medical appointment or they might have decided that they no longer needed it. Prisoners pointed out that because they waited so long for an appointment, the problem had often resolved itself.

One prison officer who regularly worked in the outpatient area had developed a process to track appointments, locate prisoners and maximise attendance, but this worked less well if other staff were filling the role. In addition, most prisoners were given a pass and permitted to walk to the health centre unescorted and the time they took to arrive could



## HEALTH AND SUPPORT

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vary. The whole situation was less than satisfactory because it reduced prisoner access to health services and failed to maximise the use of valuable health resources.

### **Recommendation 9**

**Implement a more effective and efficient medical appointment system.**

#### **Allied health and specialist services were available but dental services were an issue**

Casuarina provided regular access to physiotherapy, podiatry and optometry, and a recent welcome addition was a dietician. Medical officers reported that they could access specialist investigations and referrals for their patients without difficulty.

Dental services were clearly a problem. This is a longstanding issue throughout the prison system, which was examined in detail in our previous review on this topic (OICS, 2021b). Numerous prisoners at Casuarina complained about dental services and health staff reported that a disproportionate amount of their time was taken up managing dental pain and infections due to the lack of dental provision. The crisis had peaked at the time of our inspection because there had been no dentist visiting the prison for three months. Even before then the service had been quite limited. Positively, within six weeks of our inspection, two new dentists had been engaged to provide five day per week coverage between them.

#### **Prisoners with extremely high care needs were managed well in the infirmary**

The infirmary had 20 beds, with 15 of them occupied by prisoners whose needs meant they would have to be there on a long-term basis. To a large extent, it operated as an aged care facility. There were five carers per shift employed on contract via a non-government organisation, supplementing the usual nursing staff.

The staff managed a group of men with extremely high care needs and appeared to do this well from the physical care perspective. For example, the rate of ulceration and skin breakdown was reported to be low. The Clinical Nurse Manager spoke proudly about their achievements with this group. Patients included a man with Huntington's disease, three with advanced Parkinson's disease, one with an acquired brain injury and one with high-level quadriplegia. These were patients that other prisons would struggle to support.

The treatment room space in the infirmary was limited and one of the available rooms was the common area that the three safe cells opened into. This meant that any clinical interaction happening in that room could be interrupted by prisoners being moved into or out of safe cells or disrupted by noise from those cells. Privacy would be difficult to maintain in this environment.

The unit benefitted from a good outside space featuring well-kept lawns and garden beds. However, the lack of proper ventilation was reportedly a problem in the summer months, as the number of men with incontinence problems in the infirmary resulted in an unpleasant smell on hotter days. There was also a room stacked up with old, unused or broken furniture and apparatus.

## HEALTH AND SUPPORT

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We understand that many of the infrastructure issues that exist in the infirmary would be addressed in the next stage of the Casuarina expansion, which is planned to deliver an extension to the infirmary and a high dependency unit.

### **New strategies were needed to cater for the ageing prisoner population**

As the prison population ages, it will become important to have well established ways of managing end of life care (OICS, 2021a). We heard about a recent experience where the health services team had successfully applied for a dispensation so that a terminally ill prisoner did not need to be resuscitated at end of life, consistent with his wishes. The team were grateful that they had been able to manage this man's death in a humane way in the infirmary. Prior to this, there was a universal expectation that resuscitation would be performed regardless of the prisoner's wishes and how futile the attempt may be. This requirement was only relaxed if the prisoner had been moved to external palliative care.

There was no palliative care or end of life pathway within the prison system that could include advanced planning and decision-making with a prisoner and their family. This is something that will be increasingly necessary as the prisoner population ages.

Similarly, a dementia care pathway which aims to identify cognitive impairment, treat reversible causes, and provide suitable support at various degrees of severity would also be valuable.

## **6.2 MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

### **Staff shortages affected management of a heavy mental health services workload**

The mental health team managed a caseload of about 150 ongoing patients as well as dealing with new referrals, at-risk management, alcohol and other drug counselling, and prescribing pharmacotherapy.

The staff retention and recruitment issues affecting the general health care team were equally present in the mental health team. At the time of our inspection, the substantive mental health Nurse Unit Manager was acting in another role so one of the Clinical Nurse Consultants was acting in the Manager role. However, there was no backfill for the Clinical Nurse Consultant position. Mental health nurses were also particularly concerned about being moved at short notice to cover shortages at other prisons. They believed this was impacting the stability and safety of the team at Casuarina.

After a period with very limited psychiatric services available, Casuarina now had three psychiatrists providing 0.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) coverage. This was an improvement but still clearly a low level of service provision given the size of the prison. There was a weekly mental health multi-disciplinary team meeting, including PHS and medical officers where relevant. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the different streams of health services, and particularly between mental health and PHS, was said to be stronger than it had ever been.

There was one Aboriginal mental health worker and she added great value to the team

## HEALTH AND SUPPORT

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and the wider prison. She pointed out, however, that it was important for cultural reasons to also recruit a male Aboriginal health worker. For a prison the size of Casuarina, more than one of these positions was clearly needed.

### **Concerns that inexperienced staff were exposed by lack of support and governance**

Mental health nurses had concerns about a lack of orientation and supervision. There were a number of staff in the team with minimal or even no mental health experience. We were told that they received minimal orientation then picked up a caseload that they managed without any formal supervision. There was a lack of staff operational meetings and limited clinical governance. There were also concerns shared with us that this was leading to clinical risk and junior staff working outside of their scope. It was felt that head office was remote and not necessarily supportive when there were serious incidents.

At the time of the inspection, there was nobody in the lead psychiatry role at head office and the psychiatrists wanted to feel more included in the governance of their teams both at prison and head office level. They felt they were left with accountability for service provision without being able to influence it. They said that there should be psychiatry representation in the clinical governance structure, and in the absence of a lead psychiatrist, an alternative representative should be identified.

### **The lack of forensic mental health beds in the public system impacted on Casuarina**

The lack of access to forensic beds and the lack of access to acute care for prisoners with severe mental illness continued to cause significant problems. Casuarina was frequently managing prisoners who were suffering from severe mental illness because there were no beds available at the Frankland Centre, the state's only secure forensic mental health unit.

However, there was a workaround in place known as a 'turnaround appointment'. Prisoners were referred on a Form 1A, taken to the Frankland Centre, examined by a psychiatrist, placed on an inpatient treatment order, given compulsory treatment such as depot (injected) antipsychotic medication, and then their legal order revoked and discharged back to Casuarina. Yet, even this workaround only provided for a subset of patients – those for whom a depot antipsychotic is an effective treatment.

Having acutely mentally ill prisoners who desperately need inpatient treatment held at the prison was universally accepted by everyone we spoke to as inhumane. It was entirely inequitable when compared to those with physical health problems who are transferred by ambulance to hospital. When beds at the Frankland Centre could not be accessed, there was no formalised agreement at Casuarina or across the prison system regarding when a prisoner should be transferred to a public hospital emergency department on a Form 1A.

At the time of writing an announcement had been made about the future of forensic mental health care, including a significant increase in bed capacity. But this help, while welcomed, is a long way off from improving the current situation in prisons.

### 6.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH SERVICES

#### **A lack of resources in Psychological Health Services was exacerbated by vacancies**

PHS provided crucial support to prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide. We found a dedicated team that maintained a positive outlook, despite busy caseloads and several vacancies.

Both clinical supervisors were currently acting in their positions and their substantive positions had not been backfilled. As a result, the clinical supervisors were expected to maintain their existing caseloads while providing clinical supervision to other counsellors.

There were seven FTE counsellor positions, but three positions were vacant (including the two substantive positions of the acting clinical supervisors). This placed pressure on an already under-resourced team. Casuarina had an average daily population of about 1,140 so even with full staffing this equated to one counsellor for more than 160 prisoners. With the current vacancies the ratio increased to one counsellor for 285 prisoners.

#### **PHS was largely limited to crisis services**

The primary role of PHS was to assess and provide support for those on the At-Risk Management System (ARMS), which managed prisoners deemed to be at risk of self-harm. PHS were key contributors to the Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG), which reviewed and assessed risk for prisoners managed on ARMS and decided if they should remain on ARMS. We found the process was efficient and included strong multi-disciplinary input. However, high workloads associated with ARMS and PRAG meant that there was limited capacity for ongoing counselling and only prisoners at higher risk could access the service.

New PHS clients were triaged and assessed as either low, moderate or high risk. PHS aimed to see high risk cases within two weeks, medium risk within six weeks and low risk within three months. However, the workload meant low risk cases were rarely seen and instead referred on to either the Prison Support Officers, the chaplain or the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker. We spoke with many prisoners during our inspection who complained that they had been unable to access counselling.

PHS staff expressed concern that opportunities to carry out therapeutic work with prisoners were increasingly disappearing. This obviously had implications for the psychological health of prisoners, but also impacted on staff satisfaction and retention. We heard that continually performing risk assessments was less fulfilling professionally for counsellors. We were told that supervisors tried to manage this by giving each counsellor a diverse case load including a small number of clients requiring longer term interventions that allowed them to exercise a broader range of skills.

In our previous inspection report, we recommended an increase in PHS resources and the Department recruited four additional counsellors. However, staff turnover and ongoing vacancies combined with the growing prisoner population meant that these additional resources were still not meeting demand. A further increase in resources will be needed to address this and account for the continuing expansion of the prison.

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### **Recommendation 10**

Increase Psychological Health Services resources at Casuarina to accommodate the continuing expansion of the prison.

## 6.4 DISABILITY SUPPORT

### Support for prisoners with a disability was limited and unclear

People with disabilities are over-represented in prison. These disabilities may include intellectual, psycho-social and physical disabilities. An Australian study found that while 2.9% of the general population had an intellectual disability, this rose to 15% of prison populations (Baldry, Clarence, Dowse, & Troller, 2013). These prisoners often require additional support while in custody.

At Casuarina, 70 prisoners (about 6% of the total population) were flagged with a disability alert on the Department's offender database. However, this was likely to be an underrepresentation of the true numbers.

We found the pathway for a prisoner to receive additional disability support was unclear and there was confusion about the process for making applications to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Many people we spoke to seemed to think it was somebody else's responsibility with the result that nobody was actually doing it. This was a considerable gap for the prison, and ultimately prisoners, that needed to be addressed.

The Department's policy on prisoners with a disability was similarly unclear. The policy states that the Disability Coordination Team shall:

- a) assist with obtaining information to determine whether the prisoner is a client of the NDIS
- b) assist in contacting the relevant case managers if the prisoner is a client of the NDIS
- c) if necessary, assist in making a referral to the NDIS
- d) complete a desktop assessment to determine if a disability flag and/or guardianship flag is required on the offender database.

However, it is unclear who the Disability Coordination Team supports in making referrals. Clarity around who is responsible at prison level is needed across the system, but particularly at Casuarina – and other large metropolitan prisons – where prisoners with disability are likely to be more concentrated. Demand for disability support at Casuarina is only going to increase when the high dependency unit opens, and this should be considered when determining additional resources needed for that unit.

### **Recommendation 11**

Establish an on-site disability coordination role.

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### 6.5 PEER SUPPORT AND WELFARE SERVICES

#### The peer support team played an important role

At the time of our inspection, there were 37 prisoners employed as peer support workers. There had been as many as 50 but several had recently been released to freedom or moved to other facilities. Over half (21) were Aboriginal prisoners. The peer support prisoners were paid a mix of Level 1 and Level 2 gratuities, reflecting the trust and responsibility associated with their role.

We found the team to be dedicated and committed to their role of supporting other prisoners. The team was coordinated and guided by two experienced Prison Support Officers and had frequent meetings. However, some peer support prisoners felt undervalued by custodial staff and felt they could do more. Peer support prisoners explained that they were only allowed to visit and support prisoners in their own unit. While they understood this was to reduce the opportunity for trafficking of contraband, they felt there were missed opportunities to support their fellow prisoners. This was especially true for Aboriginal prisoners, who wanted to speak to their own family and kin.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the peer support prisoners were unable to provide support to prisoners in the orientation wing. While the health risks that necessitated this are acknowledged, peer support prisoners were concerned about prisoners new to Casuarina and the impacts of isolation on their mental health.

Peer support prisoners had last received Gatekeeper suicide prevention training in December 2021. Some had also completed a Certificate IV in Mental Health, which was most impressive. These prisoners attended the course one day a week for 10 weeks. A smaller number had completed a disability training course. These were excellent initiatives that should be made available more regularly to the whole peer support team. Peer support prisoners provide an essential service in supporting other prisoners and can often feel the emotional burden of such responsibility. It is therefore imperative that the Department provides them with the appropriate training.

#### **Recommendation 12**

**Provide ongoing training for peer support prisoners.**

#### The Aboriginal Visitors Scheme was valued in the prison but under-resourced

Casuarina had four part-time Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) positions, each representing 0.7 FTE. However, at the time of our inspection, only one of the positions was filled and that person was on annual leave. The position was not backfilled and with no other AVS staff on site, referrals were neglected.

The AVS was valued highly in the prison, partly because the one AVS visitor had extensive experience at Casuarina and was well respected. However, it was difficult not to conclude that the AVS is under-valued within the Department. AVS visitors are at the lowest pay

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level in the public service, which is extraordinary given the value of the work they do. The vacancies at Casuarina meant that the workload was high – too much for one person to manage – and this situation was often replicated in other prisons. Coupled with poor remuneration, this contributed to high turnover of staff and made recruitment more difficult.

We understand that the Department has commenced a review of the AVS with plans to address many of these concerns. However, at the time of writing the outcome of this review was not known.

The AVS originated from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC, 1991). It is a crucial mechanism for reducing deaths in custody. It is important for the Department to ensure AVS positions are filled in order to provide adequate support for Aboriginal prisoners.

### **Recommendation 13**

Fill the vacant AVS positions.

# Chapter 7

## MALLEE REHABILITATION CENTRE

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### 7.1 TREATING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE

#### **Mallee Rehabilitation Centre offered a different approach to imprisonment**

One of the most significant developments at Casuarina since our previous inspection had been the opening of the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre ('Mallee'). Based in the newly commissioned Unit 15, Mallee opened in October 2020, running a residential alcohol and other drugs (AOD) rehabilitation program called Solid Steps. The program was referred to as a modified therapeutic community because the custodial environment made it difficult to provide all the elements of a true therapeutic community.

Solid Steps was run in partnership between custodial staff and private providers Palmerston and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. Participating in the program was voluntary and based on the premise of 'community as method', requiring buy-in from staff and participants alike. The program was founded on principles from cognitive behaviour therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy and mindfulness.

The unit had a maximum capacity of 128 prisoners, but one wing was being used as a programs space. This was partly because the unit had not been designed for the purpose of running a residential AOD program. The maximum number of participants agreed upon by the prison and Solid Steps staff was 90. When the next stage of the expansion project is complete, the plan is for Mallee to move to Unit 20. This unit was designed for purpose and should provide a suitable long-term home for the Solid Steps program.

#### **The program appeared to be working well but it was too early for formal evaluation**

We found Mallee to be a positive and energised environment. Participants spoke highly of the program with many telling us that this was the first time they believed they could remain AOD free once they returned to the community. Many participants told us that they had spent several years in custody, often cycling in and out, and this was the first time that they had hope for their future.

Multiple participants told us that the program worked so well because they were in a safe and supportive environment. Unlike general living units, they did not have to 'put on armour' when they returned to the unit. When observing the community group meetings, it was clear that participants were fully engaged, and it was positive to see real displays of vulnerability and self-awareness.

Participants in the program had a full schedule, including community group meetings, psycho-education classes and time for exercise. The program was well resourced and included a dedicated PHS counsellor, mental health support and an occupational therapist. One of the occupational therapist's roles was to co-facilitate the literacy group, which was run during school terms once a week. It was common for participants to have low levels of literacy, often linked to trauma associated with schooling, language disorders or disabilities. This level of multi-disciplinary resourcing was extremely valuable and set Mallee apart from most other areas of the prison system.

Mallee had clear governance processes, including a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)



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meeting and an Operational Review Committee (ORC). These committees had clearly defined roles:

- the MDT managed the program referrals and exits
- the ORC managed operational issues, which were discussed and brought to the MDT for approval.

We observed an MDT meeting where we saw robust discussions and each member of the team participating and sharing their perspective. Decisions from the meeting were clearly documented. We were told that a key principle was to manage issues at the lowest level and only escalate when necessary. Staff said this was working effectively.

Another key component of the program was holding participants to account through ‘assertive communication’ and use of a card system to highlight both positive and negative behaviours. The different types of cards and warnings are outlined in the table below.

**Table 2: Warning / Card system in Solid Steps program at Mallee**

Warning/Card	Description	Duration
Verbal	This may be issued by staff or senior members of the program.	N/A
Awareness	This may be issued by staff or senior members of the program.	N/A
Green	Effort and achievement – Positive input and work within the community.	N/A
Yellow	Moderate breach – Recommended by staff and approved by MDT e.g. poor attitude to participation	6 weeks
Amber	AOD use including dilution and positive tests. Only one amber card can be issued per participant for their program duration. Approved by MDT.	Remainder of program
Red	Serious breach – Recommended by staff and approved by MDT – Any aggravated prison offences – Removed from course and Mallee.	Can re-apply after 2 months

Solid Steps staff told us that participants listened to and learnt from other participants. They often struggled when they first entered the program and were resistant to or confronted by the open and direct feedback provided in community group meetings. However, once they saw the benefits displayed by higher stage participants, they quickly adapted to the program.

Participants, especially in the later stage of the program, were given opportunities to grow and develop their skills. This included roles such as the Mallee Coordinator, Assistant Mallee Coordinator and Wing Mentors. Stage 3 participants and participants who had graduated could co-facilitate psycho-education classes. This provided an opportunity not only to develop their confidence, but also to give back to the community.

The program ran for approximately nine months and was divided into six stages, each named after one of the Noongar seasons:

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**Table 3: Stages of the Solid Steps program at Mallee**

Stage	Duration (approx.)	Description
Readiness – Makaru	2 weeks	Introduction to Mallee and therapeutic community (TC) approach
Orientation – Djilba	2 weeks	Transition from readiness to Stage 1 Commencement of participation in community groups / sessions
Stage 1 – Kambarang	Week 1–8 (Assessment after Week 3)	First level education group Develop TC values and processes Cultural awareness
Stage 2 – Birak	Week 8–16	Second level education group Practice TC values and processes Around 10 weeks participants may be asked to be a buddy
Stage 3 – Bunuru	Week 16–32	Commitment to exit plan Third level education group Role model TC values and processes Buddy-Community roles Develop vocation plan
Graduate transition – Djeran	Completed Solid Steps Program	Post program transition Commitment to exit plan Role model TC values and processes Mentor and support for all participants

Participation rates for Aboriginal men were encouragingly high – up to 40% of the Mallee population. Having Wungening as a partner was valuable in this regard, ensuring cultural support, including visits from Elders. Aboriginal participants told us they felt their culture was respected and they were given the opportunity to teach and learn from one other.

Departmental data indicated that the program was having positive results. There had been 111 graduates from the program, with a rate of return to prison of approximately 10%. This recidivism rate was considerably better than Casuarina’s overall rate of 39% and the average across the state of 32%. However, Mallee had only been in operation for two years, so it was still too early to assess the success of the program.

The program was undergoing evaluation by the Department’s Western Australian Office of Crime Statistics and Research. Results were originally due around the time of our inspection, but we were told the evaluation timeline had been extended because the sample size was too small to perform robust analysis. Evaluation will be crucial to determining if the Solid Steps program is working as intended and we await the results with interest.

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### **Custodial and non-custodial staff worked collaboratively for positive outcomes**

We found strong, collaborative relationships among both custodial and non-custodial staff. Despite the fact that two separate organisations were delivering the program in partnership, staff told us that they did not consider themselves to be Wungening or Palmerston staff. Rather, they all considered themselves to be Solid Steps staff. It was clear they were working towards the same outcomes for participants. They explained that each organisation brought different strengths to the partnership and this benefited the participants. For example, Palmerston had many years of experience delivering therapeutic communities, and Wungening had many years of experience servicing Aboriginal people.

Custodial staff were selected to work in Mallee via expression of interest. We found them highly motivated to be involved in the program and support the participants. They had high levels of morale and spoke about their love for the job. This was a quite a contrast to custodial staff in other areas of the prison. The Mallee staff clearly wanted to help the participants change their lives and took great job satisfaction from doing so.

Participants spoke highly of both custodial and non-custodial staff in Mallee. They had good relationships with staff and clearly respected them. Prior to the opening of Mallee, custodial and non-custodial staff completed training on trauma-informed practice. This training was highly valued by staff. However, staff who had joined the unit after opening did not receive this training. Both staff and participants said they could tell which staff had not received the training and that this could undermine the program. It was disappointing to find that the training was no longer available to new Mallee staff. An understanding of trauma is essential for staff working in a therapeutic community and the success of Mallee so far is founded on this.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**Provide trauma-informed training for new staff working in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.**

More broadly, our view is that trauma-informed practice is so important and so widely applicable that it should be rolled out to all custodial staff in the prison system, not just Mallee staff. However, this view has not gained traction within the Department.

# Chapter 8

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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### 8.1 ASSESSMENT AND CASE MANAGEMENT

#### **New staffing arrangements in the assessments team had positive results**

The assessments team at Casuarina were converted to public servant positions on 1 July 2022, having previously been prison officer positions. Most were former prison officers, but two were former Community Corrections Officers (CCOs). The CCOs contributed new knowledge and contacts which were said to have enhanced the quality of parole reports. This increased diversity was important, as were the external links. Also important, and one of the main reasons for the change, was that the assessments team could no longer be redeployed to cover custodial staffing shortages elsewhere in the prison. This allowed them to focus on and manage their own workloads far better.

It was also interesting to note that a separate team of CCOs was based at Casuarina for the Solid Steps program in Mallee Unit. This provided an assessment role for prospective participants and community-based parole reports for those due for release within four months of completing the program. We will follow with interest how prison assessment roles evolve and whether there will continue to be an effective mix of staff from other prison and community corrections roles.

#### **The system backlog in assessments persisted**

Assessment and sentence planning processes are crucial to facilitating the progress and movement of prisoners through the prison system. The Individual Management Plan (IMP) is the key sentence planning document that sets out a prisoner's security classification, prison placement, education and training needs, and program requirements. According to Department policy, the initial IMP should be completed within six weeks of a prisoner being sentenced (DOJ, 2022a, p. 12).

For male prisoners in the Perth metropolitan area, initial IMPs should be completed at Hakea Prison ('Hakea'), which serves as the entry point and assessment centre for the prison system. However, since at least 2015, Hakea had struggled to manage the assessment workload associated with a rising prison population, and this had been exacerbated by staff shortages and redeployments (OICS, 2016, p. 66; OICS, 2018, pp. 10–12). This had resulted in a backlog of IMPs, and more prisoners moving to Casuarina (and other prisons) without a completed IMP.

During our 2016 and 2019 inspections of Casuarina, there were 200 or more prisoners with overdue IMPs in the prison. In 2022, despite the Department's efforts to address the problem in the intervening years, there were still around 120 overdue IMPs. Some were up to 12 months overdue.

The consequences of this sort of delay were significant, both for individual prisoners and for the system. Prisoners without an IMP were unable to start addressing rehabilitation needs. For many, this could lead to parole being delayed or denied. For the system, this meant higher numbers in custody, and higher numbers in overcrowded maximum-security facilities. This came with a higher financial cost to the taxpayer. The safety of the

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community was also affected because if rehabilitation needs remain unaddressed, the risk of reoffending increases.

In previous reports we have questioned the ongoing viability of Hakea retaining sole responsibility for initial IMPs for all male prisoners in Perth (OICS, 2016, p. 66; OICS, 2018, pp. 10–12). The Casuarina assessments team felt that it would be more efficient if they had responsibility for initial IMPs for prisoners in their prison. They would be better placed to manage this workload than Hakea staff who must either travel to Casuarina or carry out their work remotely.

### **Case management was up to date but delivered little value to prisoners**

Under the Department's case management policy, all prisoners with an IMP must be assigned a prison officer as their Case Officer. The Case Officer is responsible for meeting with the prisoner every three to six months (depending on sentence length remaining) and completing contact reports (DOJ, 2022c). At the time of our inspection, there were about 350 prisoners requiring case management at Casuarina and case management assignments and contact reports were largely up to date.

However, the Department's current form of case management exists only to encourage prisoners to adhere to their IMP. It is only available to those prisoners who have an IMP, ignoring long term remandees, shorter term prisoners ineligible for an IMP, and those for whom an IMP has not been completed. This meant that most prisoners at Casuarina – around 69% – were not case managed at all. For those prisoners who were case managed, the process was largely ineffective. The size of the prison, and the staff rostering, and shift structure meant that case officers and prisoners rarely developed a meaningful relationship. Contact was too infrequent and failed to make any real contribution to prisoner welfare or preparation for release.

We have long criticised the Department's extremely limited case management. It does not reflect the kind of case management specified in the Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia to which the Department subscribes. The principles describe prisoner case management as 'holistic', 'structured', 'integrated', 'end to end', and 'multi-disciplinary'. Prisoners are 'supported and encouraged by staff to address their criminogenic needs' through programs and services (Corrective Services Administrators' Council, 2018, pp. 23–26). The system currently in place aspires to these principles but in practice falls well short of them.

## 8.2 OFFENDER PROGRAMS

### **Program delivery in the first half of 2022 was affected by COVID-19 restrictions**

The Department has a suite of programs aimed at addressing offending behaviours. The assessment process determines each sentenced prisoner's program requirements. If a prisoner refuses to participate in programs or if the program is simply unavailable, this can affect security ratings and parole recommendations. Low availability of programs was a common complaint in our prisoner survey and in conversations with prisoners during our inspection.

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The outbreak of COVID-19 in the community and then in the prison in the first half of 2022 meant that very few offender programs were able to commence. In fact, only three programs had commenced by the time of our inspection in September. Table 4 below illustrates that this was a significant decrease from previous years. However, the situation improved with another four programs commencing between September and the end of 2022. Three of these were Pathways programs that were delivered under contract by an external provider.

**Table 4: Number of offender programs delivered at Casuarina Prison, 2020–2022**

Programs by category		2020	2021	2022
Addictions offending	Pathways	4	5	5
Cognitive skills	Think First	1	0	0
General offending	Medium Intensity Program	1	2	1
Violent offending	Intensive Program	1	0	0
	Not Our Way	1	1	0
	Stopping Family Violence	1	2	1
	Violence Prevention Program	1	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>

Our analysis of the Department’s data indicated a significant shortfall in program availability. At 31 August 2022, there were 564 identified program needs at Casuarina. This did not necessarily equate to 564 individual prisoners requiring a program because some required more than one program. However, of those identified program needs, 135 (24%) would not be available to the prisoner during their time in custody. In a further 116 cases (21%), the prisoner was found unsuitable to participate for a variety of reasons including health, cognitive functioning, culture, previous failure to complete or refusal to participate. This meant that, at best, only 55% of the identified program needs within the Casuarina population would be addressed.

Unmet treatment needs are very frequently cited by the Prisoners Review Board as a reason to defer or deny parole to prisoners. It follows that many prisoners are likely overstaying in custody because of unavailability of programs they need. It is also concerning that prisoners with serious offending behaviours are not receiving the interventions supposed to address those behaviours. But there are much broader questions around the delivery and suitability of programs throughout the prison system.

The Department commissioned a major review of programs delivered in 2019, which questioned the efficacy and governance of most its programs and recommended significant changes in program delivery (Tyler, 2019). There had been little progress since then, but we understand the Department is undertaking a further review.

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### Offender programs staff were marginalised

The programs officers who facilitated offender programs were all based off site. They had no permanent office space or representative within the prison. Program managers based in head office liaised with the Deputy Superintendent Offender Services and relevant administration staff to schedule and book programs. The external providers running the Pathways program had ongoing use of a specific programs room but space for other programs had to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, often competing with education and other service providers.

For some years now, programs staff said they felt marginalised at Casuarina. They were also feeling increasingly unsupported within the Department. They spoke of a poor organisational culture within the programs branch, which contributed to a high staff attrition rate. They expressed concerns at limited professional support and training. We heard that four-year trained psychologists who had been involved in program facilitation over many years were not supported by the Department to gain their registration, and the Australian Psychological Society no longer granted registration to four-year trained graduates. This meant some programs staff were technically unqualified for their jobs because eligibility for registration was a job requirement.

The contrast to the level of support and integration enjoyed by the Solid Steps program run in Mallee could not have been more stark. Most fundamentally, Solid Steps benefits from having an entire unit and support building as a base. There is a Deputy Superintendent and two Assistant Superintendents who have specific oversight of the program and program staff and their managers are based on site. The program is supported by a dedicated occupational therapist, mental health staff, and PHS counsellors. Offender programs have none of these resources and appear neglected by comparison.

## 8.3 EMPLOYMENT

### There were not enough jobs for the growing prisoner population

In our previous inspection report, we highlighted multiple comments and recommendations we have made about the shortage of meaningful employment available to prisoners at Casuarina (OICS, 2020a, p. 40). Failure to expand industries infrastructure as the prison has grown means that the number of available jobs has fallen further and further behind the number of prisoners. We have also highlighted the issue of underemployment. Many prisoners have jobs inside their unit and some of these provide meaningful work. However, there are 20–30 unit workers in each unit and there is not enough work to keep them all meaningfully occupied. Most of the jobs are unskilled and undemanding (such as basic cleaning or pushing meal trolleys) and typically require no more than one to two hours of work per day. This is not meaningful.

In 2022, unemployment and underemployment remained very high. Data from 16 August 2022 indicated there were about 350 prisoners not working, and another 250 employed

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in unit jobs. This meant 600 prisoners at Casuarina – about 54% of the population – had very little to do all day.

We found that, based on infrastructure and staffing, industries at Casuarina could realistically employ a maximum of about 230 prisoners on any given day. This equated to only 20% of the prison population. There were at most another 100 jobs in other areas of the prison including peer support, Kaartidjin Mia, recreation, administration, the library and the infirmary. There were also around 50 prisoners engaged in full-time or part-time education and around 90 in programs.

Casuarina had recognised the need to increase employment positions prior to the opening of new units in 2020–2021. New positions were identified throughout the prison. Several industries began operating seven days a week and some introduced split shifts, with each shift working alternate weeks. This gave more prisoners access to work but with fewer working days. This was as much as the prison could achieve without additional infrastructure and staff but there was still a significant shortfall.

A new industries building was under construction as part of the expansion project. However, it would be used for different purposes to facilitate other construction works and would not be available for industries until 2024. The next stage of the expansion would also bring another substantial increase in the prison population. The capacity of the new industries building would barely account for that growth and would not address the existing shortage of employment.

### **Staff shortages and redeployments further reduced prisoner employment options**

Vocational and Support Officers (VSOs) who run the industries workshops were regularly redeployed to cover prison officer shortages in the units. VSOs have completed abbreviated custodial training, which allows them to carry out limited tasks in the units. The impact of VSO redeployment on the industries area was significant. Without VSOs, the workshops did not open, and prisoners stayed in their units instead of coming to work. Essential work areas, such as the kitchen, bakery, and laundry, were always kept open. But non-essential workshops were frequently shut down, reducing prisoner access to employment.

The prison's ability to keep workplaces open was also affected by vacant VSO positions and unplanned absences. There were 17 vacant VSO positions (about 17% of the total VSO workforce) and personal leave and workers' compensation leave levels were also high.

Morale was low among VSOs who were frustrated about being regularly redeployed away from their workplaces. They complained that they were rarely able to perform the jobs they were employed to do. They were also concerned at the length of time it was taking to fill vacancies.

### **Aboriginal prisoners experienced higher levels of unemployment and lower pay**

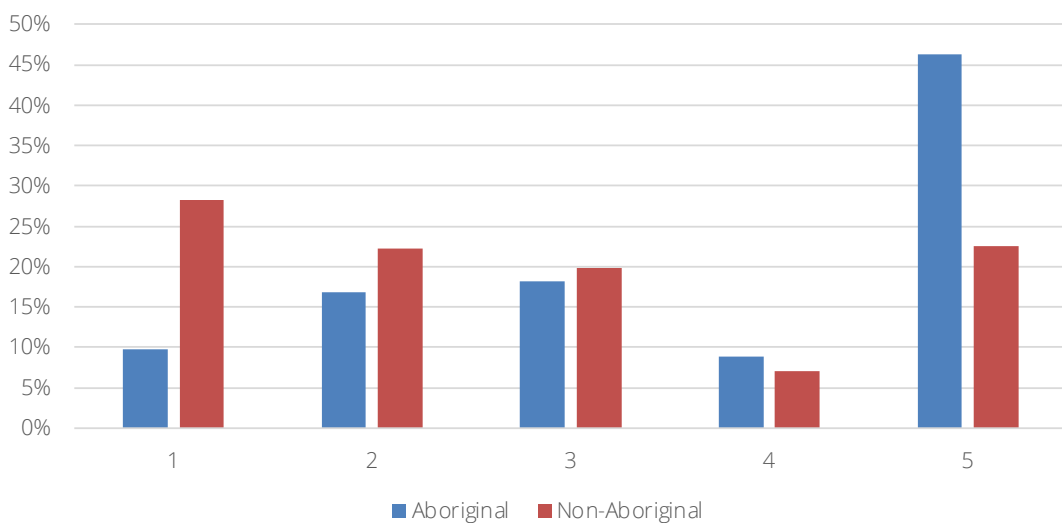
Our previous reports have found that Aboriginal prisoners at Casuarina experienced higher unemployment and lower gratuity payments (OICS, 2014b, p. 77; OICS, 2017, p. 30). In our 2020 inspection report, we recommended Casuarina '[i]ncrease employment levels



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for Aboriginal prisoners' (OICS, 2020a, p. 42). Unfortunately, despite some efforts to address the issue, there had been little improvement.

Data analysis showed that 44% of Aboriginal prisoners were not working compared to only 21% of non-Aboriginal prisoners. Similarly, Aboriginal prisoners were under-represented at higher gratuity levels and over-represented at lower gratuity levels.



**Figure 9: Proportion of prisoners at each gratuity level by Aboriginality, 31 August 2022**

### 8.4 EDUCATION

#### Education was well staffed with enthusiastic teachers and trainers

There were two Campus Managers at Casuarina – one with responsibility for traineeships and other vocational education in the industries area, and the other managing Adult Basic Education. Since the previous inspection, a new Senior Campus Manager position had been established. Unfortunately, none of these three managerial positions were filled by permanent appointees at the time of our inspection. This potentially impacted stability as Prison Education Coordinators were acting in Campus Manager positions and may also constrain their ability to make significant changes.

The education team also comprised seven Prison Education Coordinators, an Art Project Officer, and two clerical officers. Casual tutors were engaged as needed and the centre was able to employ up to four prisoners as peer tutors to support education programs. In July 2022, an Aboriginal Education Worker was employed and there were plans to employ a second one.

The education staff tailored offerings to meet the needs of their students, providing a range of experiences and meaningful educational outcomes. They worked hard to adapt training materials to meet prisoners' education needs, within the constraints of each unit

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of competency. A good example was the project unit in which individuals or groups worked on a task of their choosing. At the time of our inspection, they were refurbishing and painting guitars. There was also a creative writing unit and the 'Gavel Club', which developed public speaking skills and ran in conjunction with Toastmasters Western Australia.

### Education was still recovering from COVID-19 disruptions and limited by capacity

Education was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak in April–May 2022. Delivery ceased entirely for that period and recovery took some time. By the time of our inspection in September, most courses were running again but the centre was still in the process of returning to full education provision.

During our inspection, there were 30 full-time and 19 part-time students attending the education centre each week. Aboriginal prisoners were well represented with 20 full-time students and nine part-time students, about 59% of the total. There were also other prisoners engaged in part-time education who were employed in other areas of the prison. The education centre was busy and productive, operating close to maximum capacity. But for a prison population of more than 1,100, the overall participation rate was low. Although education was running well and providing great benefit to those involved, too few prisoners were able access it.

Infrastructure in the education centre had not expanded in line with the rest of the prison. As a result, its capacity was fundamentally too low. With the next stage of the expansion, there were plans for education to occupy one of the Support Buildings, which would provide a significant increase in classroom options. An increase in education staff and resources will also be required. This will be crucial to re-establishing a constructive regime for Casuarina prisoners and must be a priority.

### **Recommendation 15**

**Increase prisoner access to education with additional resources and infrastructure.**

### There was a focus on building foundational literacy and numeracy

The main focus of education was building literacy and numeracy skills, with units of competency from Entry to General Education (EGE), Gaining Access to Training and Employment (GATE) and Certificate I, II and III in General Education for Adults on offer. The education staff had mapped a pathway of units that provided prisoners with the opportunity to build their literacy and numeracy skills. There was no wait list for access to literacy and numeracy education at the time of our inspection.

Successful completion of Adult Basic Education units potentially provided a pathway to other training options available at Casuarina. Unfortunately, there were limited mid-level qualifications (Certificate II and III) available for prisoners to progress through.

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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Consideration could be given to creating a meaningful mid-level education pathway, which would enable prisoners to continue to build their literacy and numeracy and develop work readiness skills.

A wide range of short courses that equipped prisoners with employability skills were offered each term, including working at heights, confined spaces training, infection prevention cleaning, first aid, barista, and forklift. Most courses accommodated 10 students and were oversubscribed with long waiting lists. Careful consideration was given to selection of participants, with a focus on the benefits to the individual prisoner and their circumstances.

### **There was a wide range of traineeship opportunities**

Traineeships and apprenticeships combined education with authentic on-the-job training that equipped prisoners with credentials and skills to increase their future employment prospects. There was a wide range of traineeship opportunities and it was pleasing to see apprenticeships available. At the time of inspection, 33 traineeships and three apprenticeships were being undertaken.

Traineeships were offered in Cleaning, Food Processing, Horticulture, Kitchen Operations, Laundry Operations, Product Manufacturing, Supply Chain Management and Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Production Operations. The bakery offered apprenticeship opportunities, involving 36 months of work and training at a Certificate III level. Education had identified potential to offer traineeships in other industry areas such as Furniture Making, Engineering and Graphic Design.

### **Education staff recognised the importance of digital literacy**

The education centre was well provisioned with computers. Three classrooms had eight computers each, and there was a dedicated computer room with a printer. Prisoners were able to save work to a local drive. Those prisoners studying university courses had access to laptops, which they could take back to their units.

Digital literacy is integral to all workplaces and essential for successful post-prison transition. It was pleasing to see that education staff identified opportunities to integrate computer use and digital literacy into the units they delivered. In addition, the Workplace Skills units were computer based and a GATE unit offered basic computer education. Further opportunities to give prisoners exposure to technology and build digital competence should be encouraged.

We note that the lack of secure internet access will continue to be a limiting factor for prison-based education, with many higher Certificate level courses (such as Certificate IV in Business) no longer available because of mandatory online components.

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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### 8.5 PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

#### **Additional resources helped with re-entry workload, but service gaps remained**

Casuarina had established a second Transitional Manager position in recognition of the prison's expansion and particularly the additional workload associated with the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre. Indeed, 50% of the second Transitional Manager's time was devoted to Mallee. The Transitional Managers were assisted by three prisoner workers (transitional clerks), including one in the protection unit.

Prisoners were offered the opportunity to engage with re-entry support at six months prior to their release date. The transitional clerks assisted prisoners in completing a pre-release checklist to identify transport and accommodation arrangements, obtain identification documents and license checks, apply for re-entry case work assistance, and access other voluntary programs or services. Another checklist was issued at two months before release. The Transitional Managers reported that they had engaged with 1,979 prisoners since June 2021, an average of more than 100 per month.

In that same period, 340 prisoners had received assistance from contracted re-entry service providers, ReSet, Outcare and UnitingCare West. Some prisoners have less than six months left to serve by the time they are sentenced. In these circumstances, any referrals or service provision were more difficult to achieve. We had concerns about whether the re-entry services were providing the level of support or the type of support that prisoners needed.

Most prisoners seen by re-entry services were discharged from case management before release, even those like the Mallee prisoners who were motivated to succeed. There were very few accommodation placements available for released prisoners and this was the primary concern for many. Prisoners also told us it was not clear when case workers would be able to get back to them and this caused considerable anxiety as they tried to ensure they were prepared for release.

The Transitional Managers accepted self-referrals by prisoners to a suite of voluntary programs addressing topics including parenting, alcohol and other drugs, small business and career development. Unfortunately, all voluntary programs had been suspended for a period of about 12 months at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such courses are a valuable alternative for those unable to undertake IMP programs, including remand prisoners, so their prolonged absence was a significant gap. Most of these had since resumed by the time of our inspection.

#### **There were opportunities for prisoners to link with employment on release**

The Employment Coordinator assisted prisoners with career counselling, high risk licence renewals, police clearances, registrations of interest for employment, job searches and interviews with prospective employers. The Employment Coordinator had a part-time assistant but had not been allowed to utilise a prisoner worker.

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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An impressive list of prospective employers had delivered presentations and workshops to prisoners over the last 12 months, and several had returned more than once, especially to see those expressing interest. Interviews were facilitated either on site or via virtual meeting. One training agency claimed to have placed 83 ex-prisoners in construction work. Another specialised agency helped Aboriginal prisoners step into work on release. The Employment Coordinator continued to support some released prisoners in employment, helping them with transitions to further work or training.

The Employment Coordinator gave special attention to prisoners in Mallee, visiting the unit weekly along with one of the Transitional Managers and the Senior Education Campus Manager. Prisoners in Mallee generally had high motivation to secure employment on release.

# Appendix 1

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## Appendix 2

### ACRONYMS

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Expansion of Abbreviation</b>
ASC	Aboriginal Services Committee
ASSU	Assistant Superintendent Special Units
CCO	Community Corrections Officer
COPP	Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure
DOJ	Department of Justice
EGE	Entry to General Education
GATE	Gaining Access to Training and Employment
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MPU	Multi-Purpose Unit
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PMDT	Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team
SHU	Special Handling Unit
SPU	Special Protection Unit



# Appendix 3

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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

## **Response to OICS Draft Report:** **2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison**

**June 2023**

Version 1.1

Response to OICS Draft Report:  
2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison

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## Response Overview

### Introduction

On 9 May 2022, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison (Casuarina). The inspection was scheduled to occur between 5 and 16 September 2022.

To assist with the inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) facilitated the provision of a wide range of documentation, including policies, procedures, statistics, as well as access to systems, custodial facilities, staff and prisoners upon request from OICS for the purpose of the inspection.

On 16 May 2023, the Department received the draft inspection report for review and comment.

The Department has reviewed the draft report and provides further context, comments, and responses to the 15 recommendations made following the inspection.

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

### Department Comments

Casuarina currently operates as the state's largest maximum-security facility, placing the highest priority on community and staff safety, while also providing a safe, secure, responsive, just, and humane environment for prisoners.

Casuarina provides a wide range of services to sentenced and remand prisoners, ensuring prisoners are engaged in constructive activities. This includes structured recreation programs, educational, vocational training and employment opportunities, and treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the individual needs of the prisoner population.

The prison's operations are also designed to control, evaluate and facilitate the transfer of prisoners to medium and minimum-security prison facilities throughout the state via Assessment and Sentence Management (ASM) processes.

Unique in its position, Casuarina houses and manages a variety of specialist units to which prisoners from around the state are sent, each cohort requiring specialist services and specific methods of management to ensure the security of the facility, and safety to themselves, staff, and other prisoners. These cohorts include high-risk prisoners within the Special Handling Unit (SHU), prisoners requiring protection from other prisoners within the Protection Unit, elderly prisoners and prisoners with serious medical conditions or impairments within the infirmary, and prisoners seeking to address alcohol and other drug addictions who participate in a modified therapeutic community within the Mallee Unit.

As expansion construction works at Casuarina progress, additional specialised units will be established. These include a High Security Unit to manage prisoners with high-risk behaviour who do not meet the requirements for placement in the SHU, a dedicated Mental Health Unit for treating critically mentally unwell prisoners, and a dedicated unit for the placement and management of prisoners who are unfit to stand trial due to mental impairment; or have been acquitted on the basis that they were of unsound mind at the time of the offence.

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Originally intended to accommodate sentenced prisoners of all security ratings, Casuarina's remand population has grown to support Hakea Prison as the Department's main maximum-security remand facility for male prisoners. To effectively manage and service the increase in remand prisoners, Casuarina has opened new official visits and video link facilities.

The new official visits centre provides 18 interview spaces for prisoners to engage with official visitors, including lawyers and community service providers, plus two additional interview rooms with recording equipment for the purposes of police investigations. Of the new interview rooms, 10 were equipped with information and communication technology enabling greater online communications with official visitors using Microsoft Teams and Skype. The new video link facilities have increased Casuarina's capacity for court appearances, with 10 rooms equipped with audio-visual technology.

In addition to this new infrastructure, in January 2022 self-care eligibility was expanded to include long-term remand prisoners who have been held at Casuarina for six months or more, allowing more prisoners to participate in self-care activities to improve their independence and life skills.

A further infrastructure improvement at Casuarina includes a planned complete upgrade of the master control room under the second stage of the expansion project. The upgrade will see the installation of high-quality security systems to match the standard in quality of systems installed in new areas of the facility and will also address the infrastructure and security shortfalls identified within the master control room in previous draft reports.

Casuarina's current expansion project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2024. It is expected to further increase the prison's bed capacity and specialist statewide functions within the male custodial estate. Once the expansion has been completed, Casuarina will be the largest prison in Western Australia.

The scope of the expansion project is being extended to incorporate Operational Readiness Planning comprising the development of an Operating Model that will consolidate Casuarina's role and functions in the future. This will include the principles and objectives for meeting the specialised needs of the diverse cohorts accommodated at Casuarina. A review of the resources required to operationalise the additional beds within the specialist units and to support service delivery across the facility will also be undertaken.

It was pleasing to note the good management and effort of staff at Casuarina in controlling the outbreak of COVID-19 that occurred at the facility in April-May 2022. This is a further testament of Casuarina's ability to effectively manage operations, particularly in unique and challenging circumstances when considering quarantine and isolation requirements of managing prisoners with COVID-19, and staffing pressures brought on by the unavailability of 55 officers who also tested positive or were a close contact. Casuarina's efforts in controlling the outbreak and reducing the number of COVID-positive prisoners dramatically from 250 in mid-May 2022 to zero by the end of the same month are commended.

Casuarina benefits from having a substantive and highly experienced Superintendent whose skills, experience and leadership continues to ensure the facility operates efficiently and effectively against the backdrop of custodial staffing challenges as well as the growing size and complexities of the prison population.

The OICS report validates this through acknowledgement of Casuarina's effective management of its specialist units including the SHU, the infirmary, protection

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prisoners and the good governance processes and treatment of prisoners on confinement and management regimes.

The report noted that Aboriginal staff provided good support to Aboriginal prisoners and the Mallee Unit alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation program was working well. Mallee graduates had a return-to-prison rate of about 10 per cent.

Peer support prisoners at Casuarina were also found to be dedicated and committed to their role, with some completing mental health and disability training courses.

The Department notes the findings in the 2022 Inspection of Casuarina and has supported 14 of the 15 recommendations, two of which are supported, six are supported in principle due to potential practical impediments, six are part of current practice and/or projects currently underway and one is not supported.

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## Response to Recommendations

### 1 Develop a clear vision and strategic direction for Casuarina within the wider prison system.

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported – Current Practice / Project  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### Response:

Casuarina has been undergoing several extensive expansions over the years increasing its specialist statewide functions and bed capacity, with further expansions currently underway as part of stage 2 of the Expansion Project. Stage 2 is scheduled to deliver additional new and refurbished infrastructure to accommodate high-risk and high-need cohorts. This will further increase Casuarina's bed capacity and specialist statewide functions within the male custodial estate.

The scope of the current expansion project is being extended to incorporate Operational Readiness Planning comprising the development of an Operating Model that will consolidate Casuarina's role, functions, and strategic direction in the future. This will include the principles and objectives for meeting the specialised needs of the diverse cohorts accommodated at Casuarina. A review of the resources required to operationalise the additional beds and to support service delivery will also be carried out.

### 2 Identify and address the reasons for high levels of personal leave and workers' compensation leave at Casuarina.

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported – Current Practice / Project  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### Response:

Corrective Services is a high-risk environment in which staff are exposed to volatile and stressful situations daily, including the risk of assaults resulting in personal leave and the potential for workers' compensation. These issues are prevalent statewide and not restricted to Casuarina.

Casuarina continues to manage personal leave and workers' compensation matters in accordance with the Prison Officers' Industrial Agreement. The implementation of the new Workforce Management System (WFS) in June 2023 has improved processes surrounding personal leave and staff wellbeing through greater monitoring and oversight.

The Department also continues to work collaboratively with RiskCover to manage workers' compensation claims, including improving investigation processes to verify claims, and work closely with staff to assist them in their recovery and returning to work as soon as practicable.

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### **3 Implement a more comprehensive orientation process.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

The Department considers the current orientation process at Casuarina to be robust and comprehensive.

However, redeployment due to staffing challenges has impacted the delivery of orientation to prisoners. This is being addressed through monitoring the redeployment across the custodial estate to ensure critical functions, such as orientation, continue to be delivered with minimal impact.

### **4 Improve legal resources and increase access for prisoners, particularly those held on remand.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

The Department is currently investigating options for the expansion of prisoner access to legal resources not just at Casuarina, but also statewide. This includes assessing the feasibility of accessing subscription-based case law databases while also considering the security risks associated with prisoner use of computers that have network capability.

### **5 Provide appropriate resources for timely local use of force reviews.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

Casuarina is reinvigorating its local use of force committee to ensure the timely review of use of force incidents.

In addition, the Operational Compliance Team will undertake compliance monitoring of the completion of use of force reviews at Casuarina.

### **6 Ensure regular rotation of staff in the master control room.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported – Current Practice / Project  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

The requirement for the regular rotation of staff in the master control room is part of the duty statement for custodial staff rostered to this location.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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The Superintendent will issue a notice reminding staff of the requirements of the duty statement to ensure regular staff rotations occur within the master control room.

### **7 Increase prisoner access to structured recreation.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

The Department acknowledges access to structured recreation within the gymnasium has been impacted due to the redeployment of recreation officers.

Redeployment across the custodial estate is being monitored to ensure critical functions, including access to recreation, continue to be delivered with minimal impact.

However, prisoners continue to have access to unit-based recreation yards providing them with additional opportunities to recreate.

### **8 Provide additional resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Adult Male Prisons

#### **Response:**

Kaartdijin Mia is currently resourced based on an agreed service level agreement.

In addition, two Aboriginal Mental Health Workers, five Prison Support Officers and four Aboriginal Visitors work collaboratively with the Coordinator Aboriginal Services to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.

The Department will continue to assess the allocation of resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia as the expansion of Casuarina progresses.

### **9 Implement a more effective and efficient medical appointment system.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported – Current Practice / Project  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

#### **Response:**

Clinical staff have commenced the process of reviewing Echo notes for prisoners scheduled for inter-prison transfers to identify those who have existing medical appointments booked, and ensure those appointments are re-booked at the receiving facility. This prevents the duplication of medical appointments for prisoners transferring as original appointments will be cancelled once rescheduled at receiving facilities.

It is anticipated this process will improve the efficiency of the medical appointment system statewide and will continue to be monitored to measure its success.

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**10 Increase Psychological Health Services resources at Casuarina to accommodate the continuing expansion of the prison.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

**Response:**

The shortage of trained counsellors is a nationwide issue and not just restricted to the Department and its facilities.

PHS has continued to operate rolling recruitment processes since May 2022 and as a result, there is currently only one vacant PHS position at Casuarina as at 31 May 2023.

**11 Establish an on-site disability coordination role.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

**Response:**

The Department established the Disability Services Unit Project in January 2023 which is currently developing a business case to fund additional systems, staff and the capability to address this recommendation.

**12 Provide ongoing training for peer support prisoners.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported – Current Practice / Project  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

**Response:**

Three units from the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work are currently available for enrolment by peer support prisoners at Casuarina. Although this course is targeted towards peer support prisoners, it is available for participation by all prisoners at Casuarina.

As of June 2023, a number of prisoners from Casuarina have completed the course units and the Department continues to encourage further participation.

**13 Fill the vacant AVS positions.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

**Response:**

The Department continues to undertake rolling recruitment processes to fill Aboriginal Visitor vacancies. The current classification and remuneration of Aboriginal Visitor positions continues to create challenges in the successful recruitment and retention to the positions.



## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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The Department is in the process of reclassifying all Aboriginal Visitor positions to an appropriate level based on the service provision of the role, which will then be advertised for recruitment.

### **14 Provide trauma-informed training for new staff working in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.**

<b>Level of Acceptance:</b>	Supported
<b>Responsible Division:</b>	Corrective Services
<b>Responsible Directorate:</b>	Operational Support

#### **Response:**

The initial staff employed in the Mallee Unit at Casuarina received 2 weeks induction training at the Corrective Services Training Academy. The trauma-informed content, totalling approximately 8 hours, was embedded throughout the 2 weeks of training and delivered by the WA Mental Health Commission, Palmerston Association and other NGOs.

To replicate this training for new Mallee staff in isolation would not be feasible.

The Academy and Casuarina will work collaboratively to identify and determine an efficient option for the new Mallee staff to complete identified trauma-informed practice training prior to commencing duties within the Mallee Unit. The objective will be for Casuarina to establish the capability to manage this training internally (face to face or online) or through an external provider.

### **15 Increase prisoner access to education with additional resources and infrastructure.**

<b>Level of Acceptance:</b>	Supported – Current Practice / Project
<b>Responsible Division:</b>	Corrective Services
<b>Responsible Directorate:</b>	Offender Services

#### **Response:**

The Department continues to explore ways to increase prisoner access to education at Casuarina. An additional 30 toughened laptops were purchased to support flexible access to education for prisoners, including access in cells and other areas of the prison. The laptops are configured for educational use and mirror the standard build for student computers at all prison sites.

Numeracy and literacy assessment tools are installed on the laptop to allow students to be assessed on their current level of literacy and numeracy. In addition, to support their assessment and rehabilitation and reintegration requirements, services can be facilitated via the laptops which have preloaded educational programs and courses.

As the expansion project progresses, consideration will be given to further resources and infrastructure to expand educational services to prisoners at Casuarina.

# Appendix 4

## INSPECTION DETAILS

<b>Previous inspection</b>		
8–16 September 2019		
<b>Activity since previous inspection</b>		
Liaison visits to Casuarina Prison	14	
Independent Visitor visits	14	
<b>Surveys</b>		
Prisoner survey	27 & 29 June 2022	446 responses (38%)
Staff survey (online)	20 June – 4 July 2022	194 responses (29%)
<b>Inspection team</b>		
Inspector	Eamon Ryan	
Deputy Inspector	Darian Ferguson	
Director Operations	Natalie Gibson	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Lauren Netto	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Liz George	
Inspections and Research Officer	Kieran Artelaris	
Inspections and Research Officer	Cliff Holdom	
Inspections and Research Officer	Charles Staples	
Research and Review Officer	Cherie O'Connor	
Research and Review Officer	Ryan Quinn	
Community Liaison Officer	Joseph Wallam	
Office of the Custodial Inspector, Tasmania	Belinda Chamley	
Office of the Custodial Inspector, Tasmania	Sam Christensen	
Health consultant	Dr Emma Crampin	
Education and training consultant	Janet Connor	
Student intern	Rachel Hedges	
<b>Key dates</b>		
Inspection announced	9 May 2022	
Start of on-site inspection	5 September 2022	
Completion of on-site inspection	15 September 2022	
Presentation of preliminary findings	25 October 2022	
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	16 May 2023	
Draft response received from Department of Justice	11 July 2023	
Declaration of prepared report	24 July 2023	

*Inspection of prisons, court custody centres, prescribed lock-ups,  
youth detention centres, and review of custodial services in Western Australia*



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

Level 5, Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
Perth, Western Australia 6000  
Whadjuk Noongar Boodja  
Telephone: +61 8 6551 4200

[www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au)