



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2022 INSPECTION OF KARNET
PRISON FARM

151

AUGUST 2023

*Independent oversight
that contributes to a more
accountable public sector*

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of this country, and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community throughout Australia. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders, be they past or present.

2022 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm

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

August 2023

ISSN 1445-3134 (Print)
ISSN 2204-4140 (Electronic)

This report is available on the Office's website and will be made available, upon request, in alternate formats.



This document uses environmentally friendly paper, comprising 50% recycled & 50% totally chlorine free plantation pulp.

Table of Contents

Inspector's Overview	iv
Executive Summary	vi
List of Recommendations	viii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 2022 Inspection methodology	1
2 Governance	2
2.1 Leadership and Direction	2
2.2 Strategic Planning	2
2.3 Human Resources	3
2.4 Staff Training	4
2.5 The Farm (including gardens and abattoir)	4
2.6 Environmental Sustainability	6
2.7 Community Relations	7
3 Early Days in Custody	8
3.1 Reception, Admission and Property	8
3.2 Orientation	9
3.3 COVID-19 Response	9
3.4 Access to Legal Material	10
3.5 At Risk Prisoners	11
3.6 Bullying and Violence Reduction	12
3.7 Requests and Complaints	13
3.8 Encouraging Positive Behaviour	14
4 Daily Life	15
4.1 Daily Regime	15
4.2 Recreation	15
4.3 Family and Community Contact	17
4.4 Religious and Spiritual Support	18
4.5 Employment	18
4.6 Living Conditions	19
4.7 Clothing and Bedding	20
4.8 Food and Nutrition	20
5 Health and Support	24
5.1 Health Services	24

5.2	Dental Services.....	25
5.3	Mental Health and Welfare	26
5.4	Support and Wellbeing.....	28
6	Security	31
6.1	Security.....	31
7	Rehabilitation and Reparation	32
7.1	Employment.....	32
7.2	Education and Training	33
7.3	Classification, Assessments, Sentences and Case Management.....	35
7.4	Programs	36
7.5	Preparation for Release	37
Appendix 1	Bibliography.....	39
Appendix 2	Acronyms	40
Appendix 3	Department of Justice’s Response	41
Appendix 4	Inspection Details.....	47

Inspector's Overview

There is a lot to be positive about in Karnet

Karnet is a minimum-security prison farm located on the fringe of the Perth metropolitan area. The prison operates on an open style with a reasonably relaxed atmosphere offering meaningful employment and rehabilitation opportunities, and pre-release services for the majority of men who live there. This type of prison environment is not without its risks and challenges, but generally it is a well-managed prison.

It is not perfect, few if any prisons are, but the staff and prisoners told us they were generally happy and, importantly, the majority, but not all said they felt safe. Staff and prisoner surveys and our own observations during the inspection showed that relationships between staff and prisoners were generally good. The normal daily regime was very busy and productive, although it was significantly restricted during our inspection as the prison was in the middle of a COVID Code Amber alert which significantly restricted the operations.

Meaningful employment and training are areas of strength that we have noted at Karnet during this and previous inspections. Much of this comes from the various opportunities that are available, which included traditional prison industries - such as the kitchen, laundry, workshops and grounds maintenance - but also in the abattoir, on the farm and in the market gardens. In addition, some prisoners were approved for employment or activities outside the prison grounds, and for many Aboriginal prisoners through the successful Carey Binjareb program.

The prison farming operations, including the farm, dairy, egg production, market gardens and abattoir provide essential produce to the whole of the prison estate and are a vital part of the prison food chain. Karnet, like the other prison farms Pardelup and Wooroloo, needs ongoing additional investment in the farm operations, plant and machinery to ensure these vital activities continue and are sustainable. This is why we consistently make recommendations, along the lines of Recommendation 1 in this report, that the prison farms ought to be allowed to retain a portion of their revenue for capital reinvestment. Farming operations, regardless of whether they are operated commercially or out of a prison, require investment to ensure sustainability and growth. With the likely expansion of the prison population into the future, sustainability and growth of prison farming operations and food production are essential. It makes good business sense too.

I have no doubt that the Department agrees with the intention of Recommendation 1, the response to the draft of this report said as much, and it has made the same concession on previous occasions when we have made similar recommendations. But the responses always cite as a barrier the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006* and that only the State Government Treasurer can determine if an agency can retain some of the revenue it generates. What we do not know is whether the Department has ever asked. If such a request has not been made in the past, then this is strongly encouraged. If it has and been unsuccessful, then it may be time to try again.

There is a good reason why we persist with this type of recommendation and that is that many farming investments have a long lead time. Waiting until the situation is urgent or in crisis may be

too late. Just by way of hypothetical example, if the abattoir at Karnet became unserviceable due to a maintenance or safety issue, then the prison system would have to source commercially most, if not all, of the daily meat consumption across the prison estate. This would be on top of whatever the costs might be to rectify the problem.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have an Independent Prison Visitor who is a community volunteer appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. She attends Karnet 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 her work and thank her for the contribution she has made to our ongoing monitoring of Karnet.

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

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

Eamon Ryan

Inspector of Custodial Services

1 August 2023

Executive Summary

Strong leadership with good vision, despite limited formal plans

Karnet has strong leadership and generally runs well. As an integral part of Western Australia's prison system, Karnet provides food that is used across the entire custodial estate. Yet, Karnet did not have an up-to-date farm plan or prison business plan. The prison does, however, have a broad set of principles and clear vision about how the prison runs. While this did not translate into a business plan, the vision was appropriate for a minimum-security prison farm which operates well.

A need for safety, stability and continuity

The prison had managed COVID-19 commendably, particularly during the Code Amber alert. The pandemic restrictions heavily impacted operations and were unpopular with many staff and prisoners. Senior positions needed to be filled substantively to promote stability and continuity. There was also a need for more Aboriginal staff, Human Resources staff, and an Industries Manager for Karnet to reach its potential.

The farm continues to operate well but could do so much more

Although the farm continued to excel, there were still opportunities for the prison to improve and broaden production variety. The dairy could expand, the abattoir is over 30 years old and needs replacement, and a replacement program for the agricultural machinery should also be developed. These opportunities have the potential to better provide and cater for the prison estate's growth and needs in the future while increasing prisoner employment, training and skills.

Karnet has some good environmental sustainability initiatives but could do more, such as recycling waste from the kitchen and exploring alternative power sources.

Overall, life in Karnet is positive

Overall life for a prisoner at Karnet was good. The opportunity to have single cells, a more open regime, and the ability to regularly get out in the open spaces and fresh air was appreciated by the prisoners.

However, COVID-19 lockdowns heightened prisoners anxiety levels through loss of routine, social isolation and halting reintegration activities such as home leave. Despite an increase in the need for emotional and psychological support, we heard that prisoners may not ask for help as they feared that they may be transferred to a prison where more help was available. While increased counselling services may help with the issue, much needed training for the peer support prisoners would also help.

Pre-inspection surveys reflected that not all prisoners at Karnet felt safe. Further talks with prisoners during the inspection revealed that some prisoners were experiencing subtle psychological bullying. They said they were reluctant to report it for fear of reprisal and while prisoners have access to

several methods to make a complaint, some also expressed a lack of trust in the confidential mail system.

Recreation at Karnet was operating well, however, COVID-19 lockdowns during the COVID-19 Code Amber restrictions meant that recreation and social visits were limited. Although, e-visits went some way to providing an alternative method of contacting family and friends.

Living conditions

In general, the accommodation units and other buildings were clean and appeared structurally sound. However, maintenance work was needed to some of the accommodation units with the oldest accommodation units (Units 1 and 2), in need of refurbishment or rebuild.

Food and clothing were generally good, but some prisoners had complained about the quality and quantity of the food. After looking more closely into this, we found that these complaints were generated from the prison having to change to serving food in individual portion-controlled servings during COVID-19. For many this restricted the choices and variety they had been used to prior to restrictions.

Health and support

Health services were operating well although the limited number of daily escorts available had impacted many external medical appointments. Dental services were almost non-existent at Karnet, despite the prison making several attempts to provide a regular service. Once again, the restricted availability of daily escorts was a big factor in this.

Following a recommendation in our last report (OICS, 2019) the allocation to Karnet of Psychological Health Services (PHS) hours were increased to three days per week. The allocation was a positive outcome. However, attendance by a counsellor had been inconsistent. This was due to the position being vacant and then back-filled through a shared arrangement with another prison. Due to resource shortages, PHS had not conducted group counselling work in the 12 months leading up to the inspection. This meant prisoners had not been able to access group support, as an alternative to one-on-one counselling.

In general, prisoners with higher mental health needs were not transferred to Karnet as the allocated psychiatrist only attended monthly. Mental health supports for Aboriginal prisoners were also inadequate with no allocated Aboriginal Visitors Scheme workers and no Aboriginal health worker.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
Recommendation 1 Karnet, like other prisoner farms, should be permitted to retain a portion of generated revenue for farm reinvestment.	6	Noted
Recommendation 2 Karnet should review the storage arrangements and implement changes to ensure secure storage of valuable property.	9	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 3 Provide mental health training to all peer support prisoners.	12	Supported
Recommendation 4 Resource Karnet to facilitate all escorts.	25	Not supported
Recommendation 5 Provide regular, reliable and appropriate dental services for prisoners at Karnet.	26	Noted
Recommendation 6 Increase mental health services at Karnet.	27	Supported in Principle

FACT PAGE – KARNET INSPECTION



NAME OF FACILITY

Karnet Prison Farm.



LOCATION

Karnet is located on Noongar land, 78 kilometres south of Perth.



INSPECTION DATE

17-22 July 2022



ROLE OF FACILITY

Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet) is a minimum-security prison for adult males, with a focus on preparing prisoners to re-enter the community. Karnet is a working farm, and a vital link in the Department of Justice's food supply chain. The farm includes an abattoir and dairy, and produces fresh meat, milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables for the wider prison system. These areas also provide opportunity for prisoner employment and training.

HISTORY

Karnet was originally commissioned as a prison in 1963, known as the Karnet Rehabilitation Training Centre. At that time, it held around 60 men.

ACCOMMODATION

The prison is made up of four accommodation units. Units 1 and 2 are the original accommodation blocks, which we have previously described as being in urgent need of replacement (OICS, 2013; OICS, 2010). This has not occurred, although some refurbishment has taken place (OICS, 2016). In the past, Unit 2 primarily housed people sentenced for sexual offences, but the changing demographic and the impact of COVID-19, means the population within this unit was more mixed. Unit 3 is a self-care unit made up of four separate houses with shared kitchen, bathroom, and living areas. Unit 4 is the newest accommodation unit made up of transportable 'dongas'.

NUMBER OF PRISONERS HELD AT COMMENCEMENT OF INSPECTION

287

CAPACITY

366

13% OF PRISONERS WERE ABORIGINAL



Karnet typically holds prisoners who are towards the end of their sentences and prepares them for release into the community. It also accommodates minimum-security rated prisoners with sexual offence histories. However, unlike other prisons, they are not held in protection. All prisoners placed at the prison must agree to this arrangement. It can cause tension and always needs to be monitored.

1 Introduction

This was the eighth inspection of Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet) conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office). The inspection took place in July 2022.

1.1 2022 Inspection methodology

The 2022 inspection took place when many prisoners and staff had or were recovering from COVID-19. The prison was enforcing COVID-19 restrictions which included minimal movement and contact between prisoners and very limited access into the prison. Only essential staff were permitted to enter. This was referred to as a Code Amber.

This made for an unusual inspection as our access to prisoners and staff was limited. We spoke to fewer prisoners and interviewed some staff by phone.

The on-site inspection was conducted over 10 days and included formal and informal meetings with management, staff, and prisoners who were not affected by the COVID-19 restrictions.

Prior to the on-site inspection, surveys were conducted with both prisoners and staff. The results helped determine the focus of the inspection and provided a source of primary evidence during the inspection. We also met with various community agencies and organisations that delivered services inside the prison.

The Inspector presented preliminary findings to staff and management at the conclusion of the inspection. Feedback was also provided to the Peer Support Prisoners.

2 Governance

2.1 Leadership and Direction

Lack of stability in senior management positions

Well managed organisations need stability at senior levels. During the inspection we found that of the six senior management positions, only three were filled substantively. There were acting appointments for the Assistant Superintendent Operations, Assistant Superintendent Offender Services (ASOS) and Principal Officer positions. At the time of the inspection the acting ASOS was on leave with an uncertain return date.

Fortunately, the substantive Superintendent had been in place for some time, and officers in the acting positions were experienced staff. However, some staff found it challenging to respond to ongoing changes in management approaches and decisions.

There were a variety of reasons why the substantive occupants were not in place including accessing developmental opportunities across the custodial estate. **However, we encourage the Department to ensure that as far as possible, senior positions at Karnet are substantively filled to promote stability and continuity.**

2.2 Strategic Planning

Karnet's leadership has a clear vision for the future

Organisations that operate at optimum levels have clearly articulated plans that set their direction, culture and operating philosophy. While Karnet did not have a current business plan, the leadership did speak to a broad set of principles around how the prison runs. While this may not translate into a business plan, the vision was appropriate for a minimum-security prison farm:

To be a centre of excellence for the successful re-entry of prisoners into the community, supporting prisoners to integrate with a law-abiding lifestyle and therefore ensure a safer community'.

We were provided with a five-year Strategic Farm Management Plan 2014-15 to 2018-19 written by the Department's Primary Production Coordinator. While this plan was now outdated, the mission was still relevant.

To provide a variety of agricultural products including meat, milk and eggs to public prisons throughout Western Australia to an agreed schedule and at an agreed quality in the most cost-effective way. Simultaneously, providing meaningful employment, education and training opportunities to offenders and assisting them in developing the necessary skills for successful reintegration into the community'.

The Superintendent had a strong vision for Karnet into the future. We were told of potential initiatives that could, with further investment, be implemented at Karnet. These could increase

production, and create additional jobs, skills and training for prisoners. However, it was unlikely that these would be fully realised unless they were part of a longer-term strategic initiative established in conjunction with prison industries and supported by the Department.

We encourage the prison to explore this further, noting the absence of an up-to-date farm plan and an agreed prison business plan were gaps that could be filled.

2.3 Human Resources

Operational staffing numbers were maintained but absences affected the prison

Departmental data showed that as at 31 March 2022, the staffing levels at the prison were close to the approved levels. Karnet was down 3.5 prison officers, five Vocational Support Officers (VSOs) and 0.6 administration staff. But the data did not reflect the challenges that Karnet has had to deal with.

There were additional pressures on staffing as COVID-19 infections increased in the community and transmission occurred within the prisons. To assist with the management of COVID-19, the Department developed strict protocols for staff who were required to isolate if they contracted COVID-19 or were close contacts. This meant that Karnet, like many other prisons, had periods where many staff were unable to attend the workplace.

Where possible, vacancies were backfilled through overtime or the redeployment of staff. The Section 95 prisoners, (permitted under the *Prison Act 1982* (WA) to work outside the prison), were restricted from going out of the prison because of COVID-19 restrictions, so the VSOs in charge of those teams were always available for redeployment.

Staff showed flexibility filling vacant positions and overtime shifts, but this was not seen as a long-term solution. Overtime has a negative financial impact on the prison's budget, and it can also cause significant burn out in the workforce.

Concerns relate to the numbers of administrative staff

We were told that the number of administrative staff at Karnet had not increased in line with the rising prisoner population. Although Karnet had a farm manager, it did not have an industries coordinator like we see in many other prisons. This placed additional pressure on the Business Manager, particularly given Karnet has a significant industries component beyond the farm operations. **There was a case for an industries coordinator position to be considered for Karnet** to reduce the load on the Business Manager and allow that position to adopt a more strategic approach to the coordination and management of the various industries in the prison.

While processes remain manual and paper based, **a further case can be made for the allocation of more resources in Human Resources (HR) at Karnet**. Many of the manual systems and processes used by HR staff in prisons are labour intensive and outdated. Considerable time and effort were required to process HR transactions.

The prison would benefit from more Aboriginal staff

Thirty-nine prisoners in Karnet (approximately 13%) were Aboriginal. Yet, only two out of 130 staff identified as First Nations people (approximately 1.5%).

We have for a long time said that the presence of Aboriginal staff encourages Aboriginal prisoners to become more engaged with prison operations and helps build stronger relationships between prisoners and staff. Experience also shows that Aboriginal prisoners often sought out Aboriginal staff for assistance, support and improved cultural understanding. To be fair, the Department seldom, if ever, disagrees on this, but notes the practical difficulties faced by them in attracting and retaining Aboriginal staff. Nevertheless, it is worth saying again, that **the prison would benefit from recruiting more Aboriginal staff.**

2.4 Staff Training

Karnet was struggling to meet mandatory training requirements

Karnet has one full time satellite training officer. To manage social distancing requirements during COVID-19, the training officer was asked to vacate the training room which was relocated to the old welding workshop. Attempts were made to make the workshop presentable as a training facility by putting up screens to hide the industrial equipment, but it was not fit for purpose and was lacking in associated resources.

Consequently, Karnet struggled to maintain its Key Performance Indicators in relation to critical skills training. Only senior first aid (86%) and radio voice procedures (100%) achieved more than a 70 per cent of completion rate. Most areas of training were between 60 and 70 per cent but some were as low as 32 per cent. However, the areas with lower completion rates included skills such as batons, use of force, and cell extractions which were rarely required at Karnet.

The lower completion rates were largely attributed to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. The Training Officer maintained good records and targeted those who needed refresher training to maintain their essential levels of competence.

2.5 The Farm (including gardens and abattoir)

The farm continues to be a productive resource

The farm produced large amounts of food for use in the prison system. It supplied all the meat and milk, and around two-thirds of the eggs used across the custodial estate.

While the farm is run by the prison, it also falls under the remit of the Prison Industries branch in head office. From an overall planning and strategic perspective, prison industries treat the three prison farms (Karnet, Pardelup and Wooroloo) as one large farm with three locations, each with separate budgets.

The Department's Prison industries are also responsible for the development of the Strategic Farm Management Plan 2014-15 to 2018-19. We were told this had not been updated due to the Primary

Production Coordinator position being vacant. We also heard that this position has since been filled as of July 2021 and that at the time of the inspection, work had commenced on a new plan that would be established within 12 months. In the interim, prison industries seek to coordinate farm activities and held quarterly integrated farm meetings.

Karnet has a high-quality dairy herd

The dairy produces in excess of two million litres of milk each year from a large Holstein Friesian herd. The farm had more than 430 dairy cows and the Dairy Officer was involved in an artificial insemination program to improve the genetic diversity of the herd. This resulted in a cow from Karnet being judged Western Australia's best two-year old Holstein in the Semex-Holstein Australia On-Farm Competition in December 2021. The Dairy Officer had left in February 2022, but the prison was still trying to recruit a suitable replacement.

Dairy provided opportunities for additional employment

Prison management said there were opportunities to improve the dairy and provide additional employment for prisoners. Currently, excess milk was sold to a local cheese maker. However, we heard that there were opportunities for the prison to engage in cheese and yoghurt production which would put additional dairy products back into the prison system and provide prisoners with additional training and skills.

While it would require investment in both infrastructure and machinery, the benefits may be worth the investment. **This is an initiative that the Department could consider.**

Some abattoir improvements but more needed

Some positive improvements had occurred in the abattoir including works to expand the freezer capacity. The abattoir was over 30 years old and we were told needed replacement to allow for greater production for the future but also provide contemporary working conditions for the prisoners. Budget submissions had been made to replace the abattoir without success.

It seems logical that at some point replacement of the abattoir may be required to meet the Department's growth and future food supply needs.

No replacement program on the farms

Staff voiced concerns about aging machinery and equipment. We heard that there was no replacement program, particularly for farm machinery, which meant reliance on old equipment that was often in need of repair and sourcing parts was difficult. As a result, some machinery was out of service for lengthy periods. Farms and industries in the community upgrade their equipment regularly to remain productive and competitive.

The prisoners working on the farm would also benefit from access to more contemporary equipment to enhance their skills and employment prospects upon release.

Given the importance of Karnet's primary production to the prison system, it is concerning that a replacement program is not in place. We heard it was often easier for the prison to hire essential machinery and equipment than it was getting approval to purchase new items. We acknowledge agricultural machinery and equipment is expensive. However, it would make sense that a portion of the revenue created by Karnet, and other prison farms, be allocated to the replacement of the machinery and equipment that is used to generate that revenue. This would enable the facility to also dispose of machinery and equipment while it had some residual value.

Recommendation 1

Karnet, like other prison farms, should be permitted to retain a portion of generated revenue for farm reinvestment.

2.6 Environmental Sustainability

Karnet had some good recycling initiatives but there was scope to go further

Prisons are high users of energy and resources and generate an enormous amount of waste. Karnet, was no exception. While the prison recycled the usual items like bottles, cans and cardboard, Karnet was also recycling items such as toothbrushes and razors and planned to recycle other large use items in the future.

Karnet had also taken positive steps to find suitable replacements for items of single use plastic. The Government released Western Australia's Plan for Plastics which, in the short term 2020–2023, will result in the phasing out of plastic plates, cutlery, stirrers, thick plastic bags, straws and polystyrene/plastic food containers. Karnet had already identified a replacement for the single use plastic cutlery and was working through the old stock of these items. They had also sourced a cardboard alternative to the plastic food containers. It was positive they had plans in place to meet the requirements of the Plastics Plan.

The canteen area drove several recycling initiatives, including the introduction of reusable shopping bags, razor and bottle recycling, and donated clothing.

There was also recycling on the farm. The effluent from the dairy was fed into three ponds and the liquid waste was separated and spread onto paddocks as required. The solid waste was collected from the ponds approximately once a year and composted with the green waste from the gardens to be reused on the farm.

Karnet was self-sustainable for water but experienced water stress during periods of drought. However, we heard that as part of Alcoa's good will for any inconvenience or disruption during their mining activities surrounding the prison, they had provided two new water tanks. These replaced the old tanks which needed repair.

There was an opportunity for a solar farm at Karnet. Using renewables would provide some security in relation to their power needs. And although there were some solar panels in use, there was room to expand. This could potentially increase training and jobs for prisoners that may enhance

employment opportunities on release. **We encourage the Department to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of moving to solar or another renewable power source.**

There were also opportunities for Karnet to recycle kitchen waste. Dehydrators can reduce food waste to approximately 10 per cent of its original volume. That waste can then be used on the farm or composted further for use in gardens. Like solar, it potentially provides additional employment and skills for prisoners.

2.7 Community Relations

Karnet had positive relationships with the community

During our pre-inspection meeting with service providers for Karnet, the feedback we received was positive. Service providers felt that the relationship they had with the prison was good, when on site they felt safe, and they were treated with respect by staff.

Karnet had a community consultation group but it had not met since late 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was hoped the group would meet again when restrictions were lifted, and the prison and the community returned to normal.

The prison had excellent relations with several community groups including the Serpentine/Jarrahdale Shire, Alcoa, Carey Bindjareb and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. These relationships had resulted in training opportunities, particularly for Aboriginal prisoners and productive work for the Section 95 teams.

The training provided by the Carey Bindjareb project was exclusively for Aboriginal prisoners. Carey Bindjareb had been closed for the two months prior to our inspection because of the pandemic. The program engaged 12 Aboriginal men in a range of work-ready skills for mining and related industries. It included some day excursions off-site for various site visits, training sessions and driver training. Men were largely guaranteed employment on completion. However, there could be a significant gap between completion of the program and release. Due to the commencement of mining operations by Alcoa, the program's operational base was moving from a house across the road from the prison entry to a purpose-built large shed outside the front gate.

3 Early Days in Custody

3.1 Reception, Admission and Property

Poor design but operated well

Reception is the first point of contact for an incoming prisoner and plays a major role in transitioning into what can be a new and unfamiliar environment. For many prisoners arriving at Karnet, it is their first introduction to a minimum-security prison.

The reception infrastructure was well maintained and modern but was not conducive to a free-flowing process. For example, there was:

- limited clothes storage for prisoners leaving the prison each day to undertake approved external activities which resulted in prison clothing being kept in cardboard boxes in the shower area
- only one shower and change room, but often more than one prisoner was going out or returning at the same time – each one also had to be searched
- only one holding cell, so this made it difficult to keep the sterile zone for arrivals and prisoner searches, especially during COVID-19 restrictions.

There were sound procedures in place in the event a new prisoner was COVID-19 positive. Staff had supplies of Personal Protection Equipment and there were good procedures and practices around isolation, medical screening and COVID-19 cleaning.

Property storage an issue but prisoners had good access

Like many other prisons, Karnet faced challenges storing prisoner property. As a minimum-security pre-release prison, many prisoners there had accumulated a lot of property throughout their time in custody. Further, prisoners rated minimum-security usually had access to more items through canteen and town spends, which often increased their property holdings.

Excess property is an issue for many prisons throughout the state with some facilities managing prisoner property limits well and others not so well. In many cases prisoners arriving at Karnet had excess property with them. Prisoners were encouraged to sign out any excess property. However, some prisoners did not have anyone in the community to whom they could send their property. As such, excess property was stored at the prison in ventilated sea containers. There were limits on the numbers of items permitted in a cell, but prisoners could request access their property on a regular basis to exchange CD's, Xbox games and books.

Valuable property needed better storage

When inspecting the storage facilities for prisoner's valuable property we saw that there was property held outside the secure cabinet. Larger items that would not fit inside were tagged and

stored on top meaning there was access to anyone who entered the room. The room was secure and only the reception staff had a key. However, all valuable items should be secured properly.

Recommendation 2

Karnet should review the storage arrangements and implement changes to ensure secure storage of valuable property.

3.2 Orientation

Orientation process was thorough

Similar to our last inspection, orientation processes at Karnet were good (OICS, 2019). There was a structured orientation for incoming prisoners to learn about prison life at Karnet. Peer support prisoners welcomed new arrivals in reception and went through an orientation booklet with them. This outlined how the prison worked, ways to keep busy and sources of support. The library workers also produced a handout which they updated regularly, this covered matters not already covered in the orientation booklet and provided more informal information the prisoner needed. Once in their unit, officers took prisoners through an orientation checklist covering things such as the anti-bullying policy, work placements and release planning. Peer support prisoners also led tours of the facility, but for obvious reasons this did not extend beyond the fence to the farm and surrounds.

In our prisoner survey, sixty-five per cent said staff helped them 'okay' or 'very well' when they arrived. This was less than in 2019 (78%), but still higher than the state average (57%). Prisoner satisfaction with the amount of information offered upon arrival (45%) had also fallen since last inspection (66%) and is just higher than the state average (43%).

3.3 COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 restrictions were tough

Some prisoners and staff complained that the COVID-19 restrictions at Karnet were excessive and not in line with community restrictions or practice at that time. However, the tight restrictions had allowed the prison to get on top of the COVID-19 outbreak and progress the return of staff that were restricted entry during the Code Amber.

As the inspection was held during the Code Amber, we saw firsthand the impacts of the restrictions and heard from both staff and prisoners that communication during this time could have been better. However, we were told that that information was made available only when it was accurate and unlikely to change.

Code Amber restrictions removed non-essential staff from the prison. This caused some angst and we heard many complaints from non-custodial staff, saying that the restriction made them feel secondary and unimportant. It was a hard stand but reduced the opportunities for COVID-19 to enter the prison.

Hindsight can be beneficial if used right

With the benefit of hindsight, there were some lessons that could be worth considering should there be another similar situation:

- better phone access, longer calls or even free calls during lockdowns or times of reduced visits
- better use of e-visits including but not limited to less restrictive use of PPE
- peer support prisoners to be more widely available (across units)
- ways to mitigate mental health impacts of increased isolation
- modified recreation (small groups of men with a similar health status exercising together)
- provision of education, employment and transition services (smaller groups, remotely).

We were told that there was no ability to draw on experienced senior staff from elsewhere to fill key leadership roles – which were vacated due to COVID-19 infection or isolation requirements - at the height of the outbreak. This would have relieved some of the pressure felt by senior staff across the prison.

Hindsight is not just about things that can be improved but also identifying those things that were done well:

- Essential industries operated using volunteer unskilled prisoners (e.g. no loss of meat production from the abattoir, eggs were collected, and milking operations continued).
- Animal welfare was also maintained using volunteer workers.
- Portion-controlled meals were sent to the units (although, in the future some means of keeping the food hot will be necessary).
- Staff were willing to cover for others and do what was necessary to keep the prison operating.

3.4 Access to Legal Material

Good access but upgrades needed

Karnet had a well-stocked library with a standalone legal reference computer and four other computers available to prepare legal documents, parole plans and other applications. Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, prisoners had good access to the library as it was opened for almost 12 hours per day. However, during the Code Amber, the restrictions meant there was no access to the library.

The dedicated computer for legal material had been sent away in December 2021 to be repaired and upgraded. It had only returned a few weeks before the inspection, but then had to be sent away again as it was still not operating properly.

3.5 At Risk Prisoners

Lockdown exposed gaps in mental health supports

Our inspection standards state that at-risk prisoners should be identified promptly and have access to supports and counselling within the least restrictive regime that keeps them safe (OICS, 2020, p. 12). We were told that Karnet's reception officers completed an at-risk assessment whenever a new prisoner arrived and any concerns that were identified as part of this process were referred on to medical staff. This was good practice at a time when people were often unsettled. The Department supported our 2019 recommendation to increase the counselling services available and advised us that a stepped model of care had been introduced to assess the level of a support required (OICS, 2019).

Staff respondents to our pre-inspection survey were positive about their training around working with at-risk prisoners. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents said they had received adequate training in suicide prevention. Eighty-three per cent thought suicide prevention and at-risk management was either mixed or acceptable.

But it emerged during the inspection process that many prisoners had unmet or emerging mental health needs. According to peer support prisoners, these gaps were more evident during lockdown due to the loss of routine and social interaction. And because reintegration activities such as home leave had stopped, prisoners due for release were increasingly anxious that they were not ready for release.

Prisoners were reluctant to seek help

Even though some prisoners needed emotional or psychological support, we heard they might not seek it for fear they would be transferred from Karnet to a prison with more mental health resources. For this reason, one prisoner told us 'people are reluctant to come forward if they are falling down'.

Prisoners were clear in the pre-inspection survey that they would go to peer support if they needed help. This placed peer support prisoners under pressure to manage the wellbeing and disclosures of their peers, even though most were not trained in mental health first aid or suicide prevention. Sometimes relationships were strained if a prisoner spoke to a peer supporter about self-harm but expected them to maintain their confidentiality.

Peer support prisoners faced a dilemma in reporting, or not reporting, that a prisoner had thoughts of self-harm. If a report was made and the prisoner was transferred, then other prisoners may not trust peer support again. If peer support prisoners did not report the mention of self-harm, they risked the prisoner self-harming. They also risked losing their position as peer support. **Peer support prisoners should be given training to give them confidence to carry out their responsibilities.**

The Department had well-embedded strategies to monitor and support vulnerable prisoners. The Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG), coordinates the At-Risk Management System (ARMS) and the Support and Monitoring System (SAMS). Departmental data showed there were no prisoners on ARMS and six on the SAMS list. We heard that prisoners on ARMS were not usually held on site.

Recommendation 3

Provide mental health training to all peer support prisoners.

3.6 Bullying and Violence Reduction

Prisoners felt safe

Eighty-eight per cent of surveyed prisoners told us they felt 'mostly safe' at Karnet. This is well above the state average (72%). Staff agreed that most people were the right fit for Karnet, behaved appropriately, and the risk of transfer was a deterrent that helped with behaviour management.

An anti-bullying policy was approved in February 2020 that promoted a whole of prison approach to creating a violence-free culture. This was positive.

Everyone minds their own business.

Other prisoners are well behaved.

General fear of being transferred out stops almost all physical violence.

Being in minimum security respected by staff.

Quotes from prisoners about feeling safe.

Anti-social behaviours occurred, and some cohorts felt targeted

Despite the high proportion of survey respondents reporting they mostly felt safe, not everyone at Karnet felt this way. Nine per cent of prisoners surveyed reported feeling 'mostly unsafe'. Half of the prisoner survey respondents were from the same unit at Karnet which might account for this sentiment. Ninety-one per cent of staff respondents thought that bullying between prisoners occurred 'sometimes' or 'often'.

There are still people that are prejudiced and will say hurtful things about my offending. They are in the minority but bring down the atmosphere and make me feel intimidated.

If people know you are from protection, you are constantly harassed although minimum is meant to be equal across the board, some people will never change.

The passive bullying and discrimination become overwhelming at times.

The bullies are like a pack of wolves.

Quotes from prisoners about feeling unsafe.

Although there was an area for former protection prisoners, not everyone felt safe living in an open prison close to mainstream prisoners who did not all buy into Karnet's minimum security ethos. We heard from staff and prisoners that some prisoners still lived with intermittent, but ongoing harassment which made their lives difficult.

Prisoners in Unit 2 had limited faith in the anti-bullying policy and so some incidents went unreported. We heard they preferred to put up with the subtle psychological bullying than face repercussions for reporting it. **Some prisoners thought staff should be more observant and proactive in enforcing the anti-bullying policy, so the onus was not on the victim to raise an issue.**

Bullying by its nature, often happens under the radar and so could be difficult for staff to respond to. Without cameras in the accommodation areas, Karnet was reliant upon its minimum-security culture as the backbone of safety and violence reduction. **We encourage management to revisit and strengthen inclusivity initiatives to ensure all prisoners can live safely and free from harassment at Karnet.**

3.7 Requests and Complaints

Limited knowledge or trust in the confidential mail system

Prisoners had several options to make requests or complaints while in prison. We saw request and grievance forms in some of the units to help with this process. There was also a confidential mail system, whereby prisoners could make confidential contact with an independent oversight agency. Agencies include but are not limited to this office, the Ombudsman, and Health and Disability Services Complaints Office. There are 13 agencies accessible through the yellow confidential envelopes.

Karnet has limited confidential mail boxes located in areas outside the reception building, canteen and the medical centre. This is to allow access by prisoners with the least chance of them being observed. However, some prisoners still placed their confidential envelopes in the normal mail boxes. This resulted in officers having to handle the envelopes. While it was a mistake by the prisoners it created a lack of confidence in the system for some.

Although staff had a good understanding of the confidential mail system, when questioned, not all staff were aware of the location of the confidential mail boxes with some staff suggesting to us that it went in with the regular mail.

We conduct tests of the confidential envelope system from time to time and have found no evidence of staff tampering with the confidential mail. Due to the number of prisoners at Karnet that did not trust the system, we will continue to monitor its usage.

Instead of using confidential envelopes, surveyed prisoners told us they would go to VSOs, peer support prisoners or their peers if they needed assistance. But not all concerns could be addressed in this manner. It is important that confidential alternatives are trusted and functioning.

3.8 Encouraging Positive Behaviour

Relationships between staff and prisoners were positive

Prisoners who responded to our survey reported good relationships with staff. Eighty-three per cent of staff thought custodial staff and prisoners got on 'generally well'. Only three per cent said it was 'generally poor'.

Prisoners wrote positive comments about staff, several telling us they were approachable and promoted a positive environment.

Because the prison was in lockdown, we saw less staff and prisoner interactions than usual. But what we did observe was positive, friendly engagements in workplaces, such as reception and the kitchen. Staff clearly knew their workers as individuals and were appreciative of their commitment and work ethic. Prisoners thought most staff acknowledged their 'low risk' status and so treated them with respect. Prisoners agreed that respect flowed both ways. They felt trusted and took pride in their work.

However, we heard from some Aboriginal prisoners, that they did not always feel respected by staff, especially if they were asking for help.

4 Daily Life

4.1 Daily Regime

Most prisoners were busy and engaged before the lockdown

Prison regimes should be purposeful and maximise time out of cell (OICS, 2020, p. 18). Before the COVID-19 lockdown, 75 per cent of surveyed prisoners thought their time was spent doing useful activities. Karnet prisoners also rated their quality of life at 6.50 out of 10, higher than the state average of 5.17. The day was structured so that prisoners could work, study, join programs, or recreate, including in the evening. Prisoners were not locked in cells overnight, but a curfew was in place from 10.30 pm until 5.30 am.

However, not everyone was happy with the daily regime, even before the Code Amber lockdown. Some general comments in the prisoner survey referenced having too much 'dead time', including when industries were closed due to staff redeployment, or while waiting for approval to work outside the fence. Not everyone working in the prison thought they were meaningfully engaged, with some saying their work was menial.

Because the prison was in lock down at the time of the inspection, non-essential industries, education and programs were unavailable. Many prisoners had little to do and were out of routine. We were told that this affected their mental health and wellbeing.

We agreed with management that expanding the farm's footprint could create more purposeful employment opportunities and support more prisoners to develop skills and a work ethic, readying them for release.

4.2 Recreation

Satisfaction with recreation was high

Our pre-inspection survey found that recreation was a highlight at Karnet, and the recreation timetable was impressive and diverse. Opportunities for active recreation included a gymnasium which was open between 5.30 am and 9.00 pm. It had a range of cardio, fixed weight and free weight equipment. There were also sports activities, competitions on the oval and bush walks for prisoners approved under Section 95. Eighty-six per cent of prisoners said the amount of organised sport was good. This was a 35 per cent increase from last inspection (51%) and higher than the state average (35%).

Various passive recreation activities were timetabled. Sixty-eight per cent of prisoners said access to other recreation was good compared to 55 per cent last time, well above the state average of 34 per cent.

The library was the recreational hub, and usually opened from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm. Although it was small, between 60 and 70 per cent of the prison population visited each day and prisoners had

developed an impressive loan system. Given its popularity, we think the library would benefit from a more frequent resupply of books and DVDs from the central library at Casuarina Prison. There was also a music room adjacent to the library, and quiz and bingo nights were timetabled there.

93% of prisoners
thought library access
was good compared to
50% across the prison
estate

The recreation team was dedicated to improving their service

A third recreation officer started in March 2022. The plan was to offer a consistent range of programs over four to six weeks, so that prisoners had routine and continuity. There would be additional evening staff coverage to allow safe, extended opening hours of some services. In preparation for this, the team surveyed prisoners to evaluate the recreation program and identify unmet needs. **Although COVID-19 impacted delivery of the plan, recommendations to improve the service, such as offering a gym induction, had already been implemented. This was evidence of good practice.**

Staff and prisoners working in the recreation area were an asset to the service, showing commitment, motivation and vision. They met with each other regularly and collaborated well. Even during lockdown, they were problem solving and planning how to improve services and access.

COVID-19 paused recreation

Physical activity supports goal setting and mental wellbeing. So, when the prison went into a Code Amber lockdown and access to all types of recreation was stopped, it was a big loss for prisoners. Without recreation, they lost routine and an avenue to let off steam. Passive recreation fell away also. The library closed and without books or DVDs, prisoners had little to distract them while sitting in cells.

Staff and prisoners thought recreation should be available in line with community standards and had ideas about how to run safe, socially distanced activities in the new high case load environment. They suggested for example, that the recreation team could offer a mobile DVD library and outdoor fitness sessions, unit by unit.

We encourage Karnet to think about how programs and activities could look, should the prison face a future lockdown or similar events, so that the gap in services could be offset. Recreation services should be commended for their proactivity in trying to progress a safer recreation program for the prison community.

4.3 Family and Community Contact

Prisoners had less contact with family and community, and many were struggling

Regular access to loved ones is a protective factor for people in prison and in 2019, we found that prisoners could maintain good connections with family through social visits (OICS, 2019). But like many other services, and in line with management of COVID-19, social visits had been reduced over the past two years. They stopped altogether when Karnet went into a Code Amber lockdown.

Last inspection, 75 per cent of surveyed prisoners said it was easy to contact family through visits. In 2022, this had fallen to 32 per cent and satisfaction with social visits was already on a steep decline even before the Code Amber lockdown. Many prisoners reported that visits were among the least satisfying things about Karnet. They told us that one hourly visit per week, was not enough.

Prisoners told us their mental health and wellbeing was declining because they felt socially isolated and disconnected from loved ones and social supports. Prisoners across the estate were grateful for free phone calls which were offered in 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions first took hold. But in 2022, this was not repeated. Units could not mix, and inter-prison visits had stopped. **We think the prison should do all it can to maintain family links which may mean exploring free or longer phone calls if there is another lockdown or similar disruption.**

E-visits had just re-started but feedback was mixed

After a successful trial, Karnet made e-visits available in 2019. This was an important alternative for people who did not receive social visits. It meant that when prisons closed their doors because of COVID-19, Karnet was well positioned to keep families connected.

However, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, e-visits had been stopped and restarted just before our inspection. We saw five private booths in the social visits room where prisoners could access a 20-minute e-visit once a week. They could see several family members, pets, and the inside of their home, all at the same time. Staff thought this helped re-establish connections.

But some prisoners had a different perspective. They questioned having to wear a mask and disposable gloves during the e-visit, even though the COVID-19 cleaning team sanitised the area between calls. Others said it was hard to read facial expressions and communicate meaningfully with children. Masks were said to scare the children. They compared a 20-minute e-visit unfavourably with a two hour in-person visit.

Aboriginal prisoners said e-visits were not culturally appropriate and some communities lacked the technology.

There had also been some issues with the internet connectivity which meant the connection was not reliable.



Photo 1: E-visit cubicles

4.4 Religious and Spiritual Support

Strong chaplaincy supports were unavailable because of COVID-19 protocols

Last inspection, we found chaplaincy support to be strong and well established (OICS, 2019, p. 6). Over 26 years, the coordinating chaplain had provided spiritual care and supported prisoners of many faiths. Although other team members had resigned or retired over the past year, feedback on the services were still positive. Forty per cent of surveyed prisoners said they were able to practice their religion and 89 per cent of staff respondents thought chaplaincy was an acceptable service. This was up from 78 per cent last inspection.

Before the Code Amber restrictions, Catholic and Anglican church services were available to prisoners. A Muslim visitor led prayer time and Buddhist monks offered meditation. Prisoners ran groups for Jehovah's Witnesses, bible study and took over Muslim prayer time when needed. Resources for Hindu, Sikh and Jewish prisoners were also available. Chaplains offered a special type of support to individual prisoners that was not available through other services. They were available to help people after a loss, act on referrals from staff, or were there if someone just needed a friendly ear to listen. The support was missed by many during the restrictions.

4.5 Employment

Karnet provided good gratuity and incentive opportunities to prisoners

Karnet was a working farm reliant on prison workers to ensure production was maintained. As such, the prison allocates a high proportion of prisoners to higher gratuity levels than we have found at

most other facilities. This includes consideration that some workers began their day at 4.00am, worked 10-hour days, six or seven days a week, and took on more than one job.

Departmental data showed that all prisoners were earning some level of gratuity. The table below sets out the gratuity profile in August 2021:

Table 1: Karnet Prison Gratuity Profile August 2021

Level	Number of prisoners	Percentage of population
1	67	18.3
2	162	44.3
3	129	35.2
4	8	2.2
5	0	0

Recognition of extra work, or duties requiring additional specialised training, had also been implemented through a system of bonus payments. This was applied to cleaners and laundry workers required to undertake work related to COVID-19 cleaning and services to the designated COVID-19 isolation unit.

4.6 Living Conditions

Infrastructure was aged but cleanliness and hygiene standards were good

We have been concerned about the amenity, decency and suitability of the original accommodation infrastructure at Karnet (Units 1 and 2) for many years. Dating back to our 2010 inspection we have advocated to replace these original accommodation blocks (OICS, 2010).

Unit 3 was self-care with separate houses, and the newest donga accommodation of Unit 4 was in noticeably better condition than the older units, but still showed signs of age.

Despite years of concern, the original blocks remain, and prisoners lived in infrastructure with limited cosmetic refurbishment. During the regular Karnet operational regime, the impact of poor unit conditions was lessened by the amount of time prisoners spent out at activities. However, during the inspection when the prisoners were restricted to units due to COVID-19 protocols, prisoners felt the cramped, cold and degraded conditions more acutely. There were visible signs of wear and degradation such as rust, concrete/grout discolouration and holes in walls.

This was further exacerbated by prisoners having to recreate, eat and conduct all other activities within the cells, as those two units (Units 1 and 2) had limited communal spaces.

Consequently, prisoner experience of living conditions had declined from three years earlier. Sixty-eight per cent of survey respondents told us accommodation conditions were 'good' (down from 76%) and only 54 per cent thought bathroom facilities were 'good' (down from 66%).

Despite the above, it was clear that regular routine cleaning took place to maintain worn facilities in as good a condition as possible. **If no action is taken to improve these units, we would expect the decline to continue.**

4.7 Clothing and Bedding

Clothing and bedding were of a good standard, and the laundry operated well

As a busy working prison with a variety of places of employment, clothing and laundry services were important to ensure clean clothing was available for prisoners. Each work area had a designated uniform, and this was laundered daily. There were also good processes and practices to separate and launder COVID-19 clothing and bedding.

Upon arrival, prisoners were provided with a kit of everyday prison uniforms, including personal issue underwear. Prisoners had good access to laundering for these items every weekday through the laundry, and a good process was in place to 'swap out' worn or unserviceable items.

The laundry was well managed by a VSO and a small team of workers. Even during COVID-19 restrictions, the laundry was designated an essential service and continued operations. Specially trained workers provided laundry services to isolating prisoners and were paid a bonus gratuity for the additional training and work undertaken. Prisoner satisfaction with the laundry service had increased slightly from 75 per cent up to 77 per cent which was significantly higher than the state average of 56 per cent.

However, prisoners were dissatisfied with bedding. The prison had experienced some difficulties in securing supplies of mattresses, pillows and doonas earlier in the year, a problem experienced across the system. At the time of the inspection we were told that supply problems had eased.

4.8 Food and Nutrition

The quality and quantity of meals provided was good

The Department had recently committed to more rigorous oversight of the meals it provides to prisoners through the appointment of a chef instructor at Karnet and the regular independent assessment of meals. This is consistent with the new Commissioner's Operational Policies and Procedures COPP 6.3 *Prisoner Food & Nutrition*.

We were provided with the most recent menu assessment for Karnet conducted in November 2021 (Golding, 2021). The overall findings were positive. These included:

- Special diets were being provided appropriately.
- The food available provided appropriate energy requirements.
- The amount of food was appropriate for age and physical activity of prisoners.

All food at Karnet was cooked fresh and served the same day. Fresh fruit was available in each unit for prisoners.



Photo 2: Fruit readily available in the units

The kitchen was overseen by an experienced chef instructor who provided a high standard of guidance and instruction to workers. Traineeships were available to prisoners to gain qualifications.

As shown in table 4.2 below, there had been a steady decrease in the food budget since 2019-2020 down to \$3.36 per meal, but there was a slight increase proposed for the 2022-2023 budget to \$3.50 per meal.

Table 2: Karnet Prison Meal Budget by Year

Year	Daily ration cost	Cost per meal	Prison produce provisions	External provisions
2019-2020	\$11.88	\$3.96	\$1.98	\$1.98
2020-2021	\$10.38	\$3.46	\$1.73	\$1.73
2021-2022	\$10.08	\$3.36	\$1.68	\$1.68
2022-2023	\$10.51	\$3.50	\$1.75	\$1.75

Given inflation and increases in food and delivery costs, only time will tell if the increase is enough to not impact on the quality and quantity of the food and prisoners' health and wellbeing.

Prisoners were dissatisfied with meal provision during COVID-19

Karnet has historically returned very high satisfaction rates for food quality and quantity in our pre-inspection surveys. In 2022, while satisfaction with the quantity of food remained high (84%) satisfaction with the quality of food had dropped to 57 per cent.

This large drop was surprising given the positive dietician assessment, our observation of the food during the inspection, and our experience of eating at the prison. Further investigation found that the issue most likely laid with the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the dining arrangements over the months leading up to the inspection.

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, prisoners not accommodated in self-care would attend the main dining room for meals. Different options for meals would be placed in a bain-marie and prisoners would select from what was on offer. This meant they could have more of the things they preferred and leave options they did not like. This minimised waste and maximised satisfaction.

COVID-19 changes meant prisoners were restricted to units and provided pre-packaged meals with a bit of everything. Self-care prisoners could no longer self-cater, and uninsulated trolleys of meals were bought up mid-afternoon and would sit for some time before being served as the evening meal. This meant prisoners received food they may not like and was sometimes cold by the time they ate. We were concerned that the meals sat in uninsulated containers for lengthy times without monitoring of the temperature of the food or the container. Kitchen staff informed us that the amount of food wastage had also increased.

When reviewing the implementation of COVID-19 measures, Karnet should examine the meal arrangements so dissatisfaction and wastage can be minimised, and quality and food safety can be maintained and monitored.

Prisoners were satisfied with the canteen service

The canteen at Karnet provided an extensive assortment of products for prisoners to purchase. The range included foods to supplement meals, snacks, stationery, toiletries, hobby and craft materials and tobacco products. It included several healthier option foods and snacks. Systems were in place for all prisoners to have fair and regular opportunities to make appropriately priced purchases.



Photos 3 and 4: Well stocked canteen

The canteen was spacious, clean and well organised. Appropriate record keeping, audit and stocktake processes ensured accountability, controls and security. The longstanding canteen officer had recently left the role and recruitment was in train to secure a new officer.

Prisoner experience of the canteen service remained positive as it had been in 2019. Seventy-four per cent of prisoner survey respondents approved of the canteen service.

5 Health and Support

5.1 Health Services

On site health services had increased doctor access

The health centre was staffed by a dedicated team of nurses and operated seven days per week. But some health staff were uncomfortable with the absence of a 24-hour on-site health service. They cited the prison's more remote location from an emergency hospital and the on-average older prisoner population with more complex health needs.

The on-site General Practitioner (GP) hours had increased and the GP was present four days per week. This helped reduce wait times to general community standards and was a stark contrast to the period before the current GP commenced, when Karnet went 18 months with no dedicated service.

The health team provided chronic disease planning and management for patients. The level of demand was high given the aging population of which approximately 44 per cent had complex health needs.

But nursing staff instability was a cause of some concern at the time of the inspection. Absences and vacancies meant that the centre was only just covering basic services. There was uncertainty at the time of our inspection around a number of positions, for example the Clinical Nurse Manager had been on extended leave and some contract staff were nearing the end of their appointment but were unsure if their contracts would be renewed.

Most allied health services had returned after absences due to COVID-19

There was relief for prisoner patients when ancillary health services were reintroduced after the last inspection. Prisoners had access to regular physiotherapy, podiatry, and optometry. More uniquely, Karnet had a phlebotomist who provided on-site pathology every fortnight.

However, the COVID-19 Code Amber interrupted these services and only 'essential services' had been permitted to provide care. None of the allied services were being delivered when we inspected. Patients being cared for under chronic disease management plans felt the impact. Many of these patients needed regular access to allied health services for the proper management of ongoing conditions.

Limited escorts restricted medical appointments

Other than court and some planned transfers, Karnet was responsible for its own escorts for all other prisoner transport needs. Karnet was resourced for just two external escorts per day. As a minimum-security prison, it should be able to facilitate external appointments for reintegration purposes as well as medical, dental and allied health escorts. But Karnet could not meet this need and due to being limited to two escort per day, often had to choose which area received the escort. Escorts were also impacted by staff shortages and cancelled when escort staff were redeployed to operational duties.

Health staff had to assess which external health appointments to prioritise and which to cancel. Some said they felt professionally at risk by this, and it also risked patients losing their place in the public appointments queue.

In the 12 months prior to the inspection 150 individuals attended 408 external appointments, of those 58 were emergencies and the rest were scheduled appointments. However, there were also 219 cancelled health appointments.

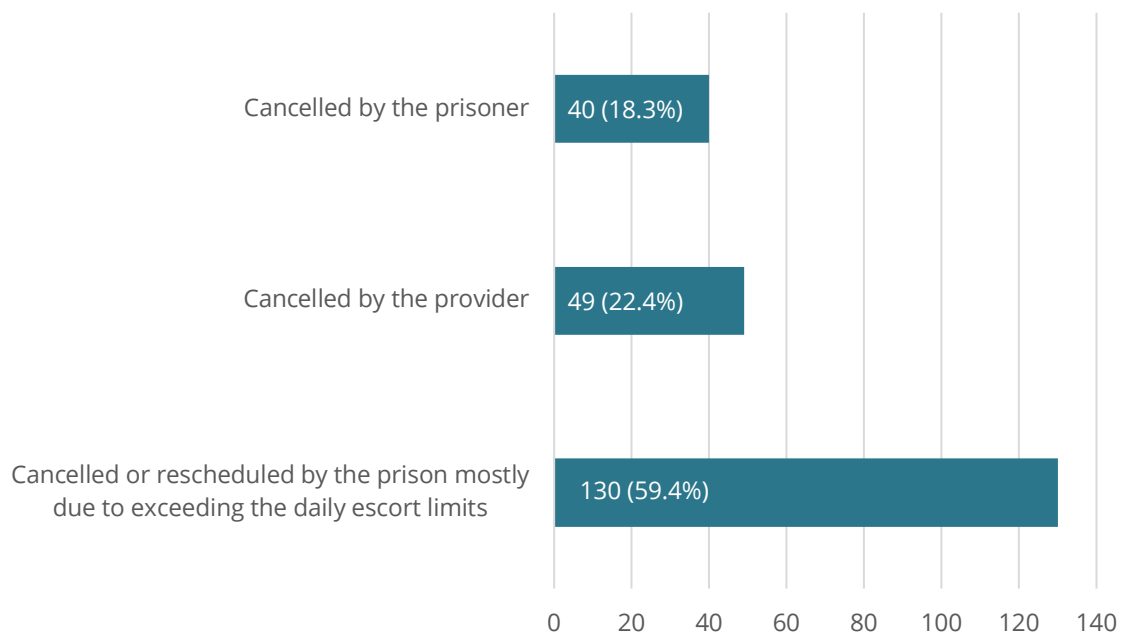


Figure 1: Cancelled health appointments

Recommendation 4

Resource Karnet to facilitate all escorts.

5.2 Dental Services

Dental services were almost non-existent

There were over 40 patients on the dental waitlist, of which only four prisoners had attended a dental appointment in 2022. One patient had been waiting for an appointment for three years.

The prison had an assessment and triage system, and allocated patients a rating from priority 1 (highest priority) down to priority 3. Karnet had 20 priority 1 patients on its list. All other patients faced a very long wait, as new urgent cases were often assessed as a higher priority.

A combination of factors contributed to poor dental access for Karnet's prisoners:

- There was only one community-based clinic that offered Karnet prisoners a very limited number of appointments, and this was well short of meeting the level of demand at the prison.

- Appointments were centrally booked via head office, and so there was limited flexibility in scheduling and a degree of double handling.
- External escorts were limited to two per day.
- If an escort was late, the provider could refuse to see the prisoner and cancel the appointment. This had happened twice in 2022.

Karnet had trialled accessing a local private dentist on a user-pays basis. While this provided another method of access it did not prove successful as clients did not always pay and the issue with escorts also remained. Eventually the arrangement broke down, but it **was commendable that the prison sought alternatives and we encourage them to continue trying to find a solution.**

Recommendation 5

Provide regular, reliable and appropriate dental services for prisoners at Karnet.

5.3 Mental Health and Welfare

Karnet lacked adequate mental health support services

Staff at Karnet voiced concerns about the lack of resources allocated to manage and support prisoners with emerging, situational or diagnosed mental health concerns. We heard from staff and prisoners about the stress and anxiety associated with release (for example, reconnecting and reintegrating with family and friends, finding work and suitable housing and, avoiding old behaviours). This was particularly relevant for prisoner nearing the end of long periods in prison.

Since our 2019 inspection, Karnet had been required to share its full time Mental Health Nurse (MHN) allocation with another facility and so the service now only ran one day a week. However, the shared arrangement lacked reliability as the other facility took priority. State-wide shortages also meant that there was no consistent service at Karnet.

This placed undue pressure on primary health staff, who were not mental health specialists, to fill the gap. They told us that often prisoners who were struggling were sustained in knowing they had an appointment scheduled. But we also heard it compromised their relationships with patients when they had to advise them that their MHN appointments were cancelled.

Following a recommendation in our last report (OICS, 2019), the allocation of Psychological Health Services (PHS) hours to Karnet was increased to three days per week. The allocation was a positive outcome. However, actual attendance by a counsellor had been inconsistent, due to the position being vacant and then only back-filled through a shared arrangement with another prison.

We were also told that PHS had not conducted group counselling work in the past 12 months due to resourcing shortfalls. This meant prisoners had not been able to access group support, as an alternative to one-on-one counselling.

We understand that prisoners with higher mental health needs were not transferred to Karnet because of limited intensive level support - the allocated psychiatrist only attended on a monthly basis.

Mental health supports specifically for Aboriginal prisoners were also inadequate. The prison did not have an Aboriginal health worker or allocated Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) workers. There was a dedicated Prison Support Officer (PSO) working with the prisoner peer support group, although the team had not been provided Gatekeeper or other mental health training. Many said they felt ill-equipped at times to carry the burden of others' mental health issues.

Poor prisoner experience of mental health supports was reflected in our pre-inspection survey. Prisoner views on mental health services had declined since 2019 by one per cent to 12 per cent of respondents stating the services were 'good' and 36 per cent that they were 'poor'. Twenty-five per cent said they did not use the service.

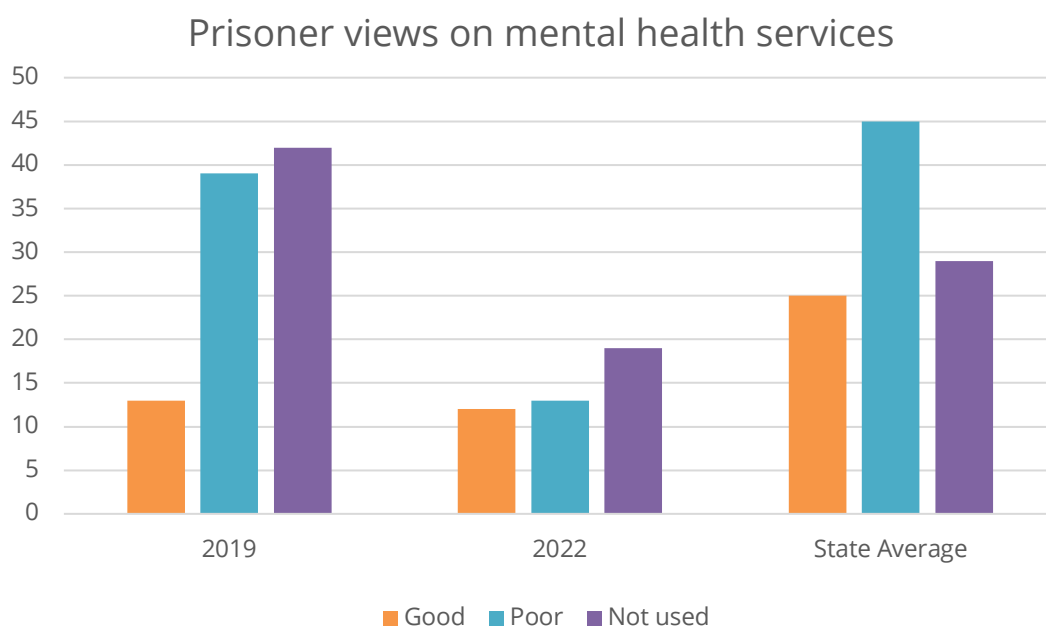


Figure 2: Prisoner views on mental health services

In the response from the Department we were informed that a full-time counsellor was appointed at Karnet in January 2023.

Recommendation 6

Increase mental health services at Karnet.

Limited support for substance withdrawal and addiction

Prisoners did not feel supported to overcome substance use. Only 12 per cent of our pre-inspection survey respondents said help was available through some kind of drug treatment program. The methamphetamine program which was run by the Allied Drug and Alcohol Programs and Treatment

alliance (ADAPT) – offering six half day sessions - was completed successfully. However, the Pathways drug treatment program had been stopped mid-course because non-custodial staff were unable to enter the prison during the Code Amber. This caused stress to those nearing release and who were concerned about completing Pathways in time for parole applications.

The prison offered a methadone replacement program but there was no MHN to provide support and counselling. **This may be addressed by appointing a substantive MHN and re-evaluating the reduced hours of service.**

Prisoner led Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous groups, operated in the past but had stopped with COVID-19. However, we heard they would recommence once restrictions were lifted.

5.4 Support and Wellbeing

Supports that help Aboriginal people feel culturally safe need strengthening

There were 292 prisoners at Karnet of which 36 prisoners identified as Aboriginal (12%). Of those twenty-four were from the Perth metropolitan area and 11 were from the Kimberly, Pilbara, Midwest, Wheatbelt and Southwest. Most people off country were at Karnet voluntarily, to attend programs or for social visits.

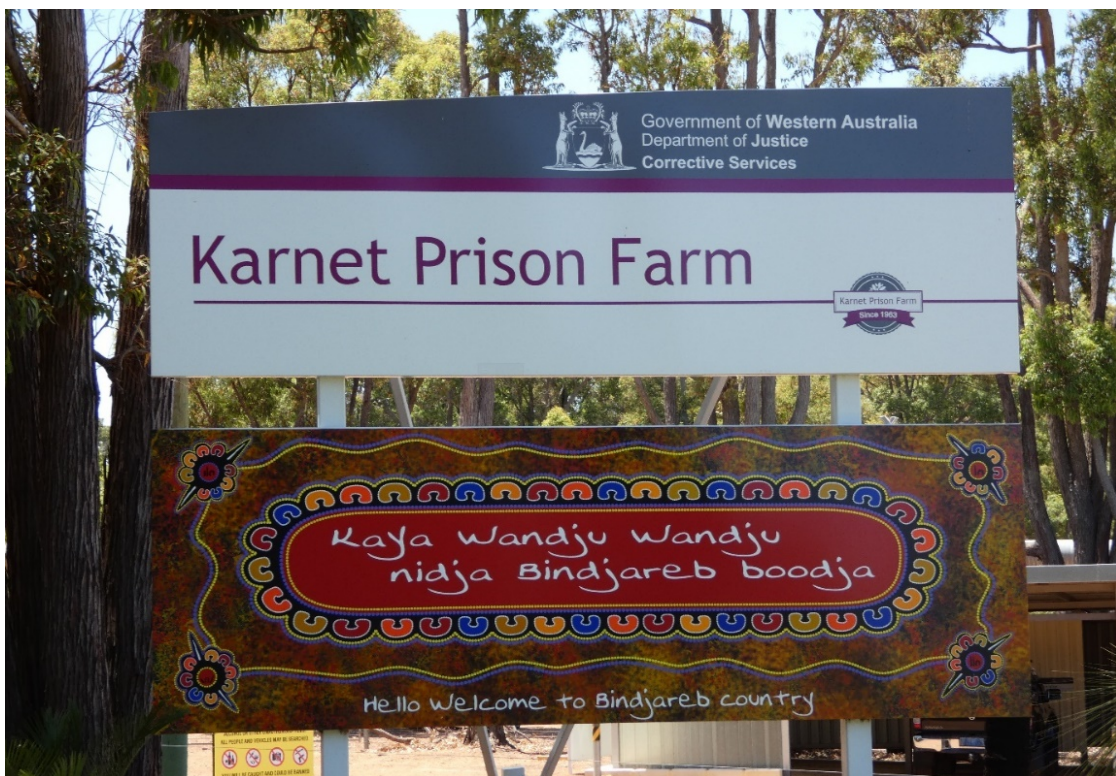


Photo 5: Indigenous welcome sign

Karnet has aboriginal art on the *Welcome to Karnet* sign at the entrance to the prison and a mural depicting the six Noongar seasons in the visits room. These are important acknowledgements of the Traditional Owners of the land. But the Aboriginal prisoners we met with during the inspection,

thought the prison could do more to be a truly culturally safe place. They wanted greater visibility of their cultures which might involve:

- more Aboriginal staff
- regular time at the firepit and cook ups with locally sourced kangaroo
- more cultural workshops such as tool making
- Elders from a range of cultures on site to grow cultural and spiritual connection for people off country
- language classes and genealogy support.

Aboriginal prisoners also wanted a regular forum with management to share their perspectives on cultural issues at the prison. We understand that Karnet had a range of mechanisms to strengthen cultural safety, such as the Prison Council and Aboriginal Liaison Group. But Aboriginal prisoners were either not aware of them or did not view them as meaningful drivers of change. **We encourage Karnet to increase engagement and tap into the rich cultural knowledge that prisoners shared with us during our meetings to help strengthen relationships with Aboriginal people.**

The Department supported our 2019 recommendation that tailored and compulsory diversity training be delivered to all staff (OICS, 2019). Seventy-six per cent of surveyed staff thought they had received adequate cultural awareness training which was a big improvement on 43 per cent last inspection. However, while two-thirds of staff respondents said there was respect for and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, only a third of surveyed prisoners thought staff respected and understood their culture. Aboriginal prisoners thought some staff lacked cultural understanding of family, especially after a loss. Some prisoners thought staff were less likely to help Aboriginal prisoners, especially if they were speaking up about their needs.

Peer support team operated well but COVID-19 restrictions took a toll

The peer support prisoners impressed us with their dedication to their role. Overseen by an acting PSO, they were a culturally diverse team comprising of three full time peer support workers and approximately 13 volunteers. Three of the team were Aboriginal men and from different parts of Western Australia. This was important for the cultural safety of regional men.

Staff and prisoners agreed that the peer support team provided a valuable service to the prison community. Before lockdown, they moved around the prison and provided a proactive, outreach service, including in units other than where they lived. They welcomed and oriented new prisoners to the facility, assisted with parole plans, and offered welfare and emotional support when people were struggling. But only a couple of the team had done the Gatekeeper suicide prevention course, and disability awareness training. Surveyed prisoners identified peer support as their main source of help in the prison, so it is important that as volunteers they are provided training in mental health and support.

When the prison went into lockdown, peer support prisoners were restricted to their unit. This significantly restricted the level of support they could offer other prisoners. We heard that some

Aboriginal men lived in units where there were no Aboriginal peer supporters. We also heard that several other men could not connect with the team member whom they trusted and had built rapport.

As the library was also closed, it was difficult for peer support workers to access the computer to prepare parole plans. And because the weekly team meetings with the acting PSO had stopped, so too had the emotional support they provided each other.

As the go to support for many prisoners, we encourage the prison to ensure the peer support network is accessible, even during periods of extended lockdown.

The Aboriginal Services Committee was on the right track

Karnet had an Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) which met quarterly. It was attended by departmental representatives, a range of administrative and operational prison staff, as well as prisoners. Having a broad membership is good practice and the committee provided leadership to improve outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners.

Minutes from the meetings indicated that Karnet was focussed on improving outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners. Initiatives identified for action in 2021 were similar to what prisoners were telling us they wanted in 2022. Although there was still some work to do, and COVID-19 restrictions had hindered progress, this was encouraging and indicated that the ASC was listening to what prisoners wanted. **Revisiting some of the previously planned actions that got held up, such as extending cultural activities to non-Aboriginal prisoners, may help strengthen multiculturalism and reduce conflict.**

6 Security

6.1 Security

Improved mobile phone reception had surprising benefits

Improved mobile phone reception is not something we usually note as a positive in a prison. However, given the remote location and expanse of the farm, it was a positive for the safety of staff and prisoners. The improved mobile phone reception allowed for better reception of any fire alerts sent over the SMS system. It also meant better and more reliable communication for farm staff in the case of an emergency and similarly for escort officers and Section 95 officers.

New and upgraded cameras on the perimeter fence line provided better coverage and higher clarity making identification of vehicles and persons easier. The upgrades to the cameras in the two multi-purpose cells also improved monitoring of at-risk prisoners.

Another layer of security had multiple uses

The prison had invested in a very impressive drone which had significant capabilities that assisted with security, the safety of staff and prisoners, and the welfare of farm animals.

The drone provided enhanced security with capabilities of detecting people outside the perimeter fence and in photographing vehicles and people when the need arose. The zoom on the camera was strong and the drone had a loud speaker which the operator used to communicate with persons being observed. It could also be used to monitor prisoner activity within the prison or on the farm.

The drone could also be used to identify approaching bushfires and assess their direction and speed and feed this information back to the control centre. This allowing for timely decisions and warnings to be issued to staff and prisoners on the farm of the approaching danger.

While the security and safety aspects of the drone capability were impressive, it could also be used to manage farm animals, the condition of infrastructure, and water supply issues.

Internal gatehouse unchanged but improved operations

The internal gatehouse infrastructure remained unchanged since the last inspection. This was unsurprising as the Department did not support our recommendation to review the layout of the gatehouse to improve functionality' (OICS, 2019). However, procedures had improved. Senior officers and staff consciously controlled entry doors and managed the numbers of people in the gatehouse at any one time. While some of this was also due to the COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing, it was clear that these practices had improved the control over the gatehouse and should remain into the future.

There were some external improvements as well with an extension to the entry of the prison. Again, while driven by COVID-19 restrictions, the shelter provided seating and protection from the elements and was a welcomed improvement.

7 Rehabilitation and Reparation

7.1 Employment

Good employment figures but working outside the gate was difficult

Almost all prisoners at Karnet had meaningful work. Sixty-one per cent had Level 1 or Level 2 gratuities which is higher than most other prisons.

But staff were concerned about changes to the eligibility criteria for working outside the fence in industries, on the farm and on Section 95 teams. VSOs told us that eligibility, described as an abridged Section 95 assessment, had been tightened since new departmental policies became effective and it was much harder to get the workers they needed.

There were also other complicating factors impacting on worker numbers.

Karnet received prisoners close to the end of their sentence, so the turnover was high and new prisoner workers had to be trained. Prisoners who were subject to deportation risk were generally ineligible for work outside the fence, but they were often well qualified and eager to work. All prisoners had to complete their assessed program needs before they could work outside the fence.

All of this meant that work areas inside the fence, such as the kitchen, abattoir and laundry, often had to employ more workers than they actually needed.

Section 95 was doing great work, when they got out

As mentioned above getting to work outside the fence was a difficult process however, once outside there was a strong section 95 program, with three VSOs, a dedicated work shed, and appropriate vehicles and trailers. The work undertaken was diverse, ranging from cleaning local road verges, to more skilled work such as the refurbishment and location mapping of fire hydrants and footpath repairs. The teams were also available in a bushfire emergency to assist with filling water bombers. But VSO vacancies and regular redeployments impacted the program and usually meant only one or two teams got to go out on a regular basis.



Photo 6: Prisoners assisting with filling water bombers

Section 95 activities were suspended state-wide on 25 February 2022 in anticipation of a COVID-19 surge when borders reopened. At Karnet it was suspended again in March 2022 due to the Code Amber restrictions in the prison.

However, it was positive that Section 95 assessments could be completed and signed off within the prison, reducing the time for approvals.

7.2 Education and Training

Karnet usually offered excellent adult education & training

Education and employment had a good base level of staffing at Karnet comprising of the Education Campus Manager, two Prisoner Education Coordinators (PECs) and six part-time tutors. However, at the time of our inspection the clerical position was vacant. The centre had one traditional classroom, one computer room, a general work room (with a board table), a study room and a small art room. They were also able to occasionally use program rooms.

Education staff were designated to be “non-essential” and were ordered to work off site when the Code Amber was implemented at Karnet. They said this was frustrating and left them feeling like they were not an important part of the prison team. It meant that education staff had no capacity to assist students with their studies, or course assignments, including students preparing for end of semester exams. Consequently, education at Karnet lost at least a term of deliverables, impacting the whole semester. Staff working off site could only apply for extensions for the trainees and external students.

Adult Basic Education was generally well covered at Karnet including access to programs such as Standing on Solid Ground, early general education, and the certificate in general education for adults. Noongar language studies were offered in 2021 but the level of take-up was limited.

Karnet had a wide range of vocational training opportunities and offered more traineeships in diverse fields than any other Western Australian prison. From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, Karnet recorded 147 traineeship enrolments (for 49 Aboriginal prisoners and 98 non-Aboriginal prisoners) in a total of 1,791 units. The Carey Bindjareb program offered various training courses in conjunction with EETS and external providers and was clearly a great asset for Aboriginal prisoners.

There were 76 traineeship completions (for 41 non-Aboriginal and 35 Aboriginal trainees).

Despite good enrolment numbers, in some areas completion rates, as shown in the table below, were not high. The education centre was targeting higher completion rates in 2022.

Table 3: Education Completions 2021

Area	Enrolments	Completions
Adult basic education	606	46%
ASETS Vocational	823	56%
SCH/TAFE	1692	57%
Fee for service	547	18%
Traineeship	3734	30%
Tertiary	64	25%

We heard that the skills workshop at Karnet had effectively been shut for two years. Reopening it may offer a solution to some of the skilled worker shortages discussed earlier and a pathway to post-release employment. **It may also make sense for the skills workshop to be relocated inside the fence to make it more accessible to all prisoners, although we appreciate that tool security would have to be safely managed.**

Staff limited in helping prisoners with external courses

Karnet had a strong cohort of post-secondary students doing TAFE, university preparation, and university studies. This required considerable support from staff to access digital resources and communicate with lecturers on the students' behalf.

However, prisoners told us that popular business studies courses offered by Trainwest, other than Workplace Health and Safety, had been restricted. We understand that this was because many courses had moved to online modules and delivery was only available to people with internet access – something that is not available to prisoners. This was disappointing as Trainwest had offered courses at discounted rates to prisoners for many years. In the absence of the Department implementing a satisfactory technological solution, prisoners' access to digital resources and learning opportunities is likely to reduce further.

7.3 Classification, Assessments, Sentences and Case Management

Backlog of Initial Individual Management Plans and reviews impacted prisoner management

Hakea Prison has responsibility for completing Initial Individual Management Plans (IMP) for Karnet prisoners. At the time of our inspection there were 24 outstanding IMPs, and some were up to nine months behind. This was an increase from 15 reported in the December 2022 Assessment Monitoring Report.

Outstanding treatment assessments were the main reason for the delay in completion of Initial IMPs at Karnet. Assessments at Karnet were being done online from Hakea, and it was likely that the COVID-19 shutdown, which restricted prisoner movements at Karnet, may have contributed to this delay.

While fewer than 10 per cent of prisoners at Karnet had outstanding Initial IMPs, many more had been affected prior to arrival at Karnet. Some by delays in Treatment Assessments and/or IMP completions, others had been held up from transferring to the minimum-security prison and many had not completed programs in a timely way.

Once in Karnet, the lack of program completion also impacted on eligibility to work outside the fence, to gain Section 95 work or activities, and eligibility for reintegration leave or Prisoner Employment Program (PEP).

But the delays were not all due to Hakea or other prisons as overdue IMP reviews that Karnet was responsible for had increased from only one in December 2021 to 44 on 13 July 2022. Sentence management had to prioritise parole reports over IMP reviews. Parole reports were up to date, but this slippage in IMP reviews was concerning and resulted from the following factors:

- the loss of the Senior Officer Assessments position at Karnet since the last inspection
- occasional cross-deployment of sentence management staff
- periods of leave when no backfill was available
- high workloads and complexities of reporting and
- the COVID-19 lockdown which had stopped non-essential contact with prisoners.

Sentence management contributed effectively to release preparation, working with peer support, the Transition Manager (TM), and community corrections officers to prepare parole plans, including for those on resocialisation programs and other special needs. However, it is expected that if the backlog of IMPs and treatment assessments are not addressed it will ultimately impact on those prisoners' chances of parole.

7.4 Programs

Criminogenic program delivery seriously impacted by COVID-19 restrictions in the first half of 2022

COVID-19 had caused some delays and reductions in programs in 2020 and 2021. However, it had most impact in 2022. Two programs started in 2022, a medium-intensity program for people with sexual offences in March and a Pathways program in May. However, both were suspended which meant no programs were delivered in the first quarter of 2022.

Voluntary programs did not escape the impact of COVID-19 restrictions

Karnet had a few high-quality voluntary programs, including ReSet parenting programs which were funded by the Department and ran as often as possible over the last few years.

The delivery of both Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) and Sycamore Tree, which were run by independent groups, stopped for much of the pandemic. They were suspended during the Code Amber shutdown at the time of the inspection, but we understand that they have since resumed.

As well as sharing positive new ways of thinking, relating and behaving, AVP offered suitable prisoners the opportunity to train as co-facilitators in future programs delivered in prison, and after release, in the community. Sycamore Tree had victims of crime meeting with offenders and discussing empathy, the effect of crime, taking responsibility, changing behaviour and making amends. We were told that the Prisoner Review Board appeared to regard participation in these programs favourably when considering a parole application. However, they were not generally considered an adequate substitute for offender programs that a prisoner had been assessed as needing but had been unable to undertake.

Ideally programs should be completed before transfer to Karnet, but often not possible in practice

The management team at Karnet suggested it would be best if prisoners completed programs before transferring to Karnet. Prisoners with outstanding program needs were ineligible to work outside the fence on the farm, on Section 95, or to participate in reintegration leave or PEP. While completing programs before transferring to Karnet would be ideal, it does not appear to be practical.

Transfers to Karnet were often delayed by late Initial IMPs, and when a prisoner arrived at Karnet it often took a considerable period before their identified program needs could be addressed. In some cases, this was well after the prisoner's earliest eligibility date for parole.

If prisoners are to be sent to Karnet with outstanding IMPs or program needs, then the prison should be adequately resourced to provide these immediately on arrival. This would allow prisoners to progress to release preparation in a timelier manner.

7.5 Preparation for Release

COVID-19 restricted the work of the Transition Manager

The Transitional Manager (TM) was required to leave the prison on the day the prison entered Code Amber restrictions and work in the shared services building out the front of the prison. This allowed for provision of limited services to prisoners, mostly without any direct engagement, and increased the backlog of work faced upon return.

The TM put out a checklist to prisoners as part of orientation which listed some of the services that could be requested. A more detailed list was provided to prisoners via the transition prisoner workers six months before planned releases. Available services included:

- referrals to re-entry providers such as ReSet, Uniting Care West, Outcare, and Centrecare
- referrals to voluntary programs
- referrals to other visiting agencies such as Gosnells Legal Centre, Legal Aid, Curtin University (for tax/financial counselling) and Jarrahdale Veterans Transition Centre
- license renewals, obtaining Medicare cards and other forms of ID
- special support to prisoners on Resocialisation Programs – of which there were 12 at the time of the inspection.

Departmental data indicated that 174 Karnet prisoners engaged with ReSet since January 2020, but very few continued their engagement on release. We heard that prisoners mainly wanted help with accommodation. Some men also needed encouragement on the value of engaging with voluntary programs.

COVID-19 restrictions also impacted employment services, but we did see some positive engagement

In February 2022, all Section 95 and PEP were suspended due to state-wide COVID-19 protocols and then Karnet's Code Amber status. Many prisoners were affected by these suspensions over the last two years.

The Employment Coordinator (EC) was designated to be a non-essential worker during the Code Amber and was based at Rockingham Community Corrections with little direct contact with prisoners.

Outside the periods of COVID restrictions, the EC engaged with prisoners in their last six months and issued them with a pre-release checklist offering participation in the Outcare Career Development workshops and other employment services. This workshop ran monthly at Karnet providing training in work finding and interview skills, developing a resume and advice on disclosing convictions. It also had an offender career specialist who released prisoners could visit seek help with finding employment.

In 2021, seven men were engaged in paid PEP, but all had found their own work through friends, family or a former employer. Some PEP applications were for the purpose of finding work, but most were for prisoners on resocialisation programs. In the past, prisoners visited Workskil in the community where they could access a job network computer to search for work. However, the Senior Management Team at Karnet felt that it was more efficient for prisoners to look for jobs through in-prison education on finding employment.

Engaging with a skilled employment network officer in the community was highly valuable for those trying to re-enter the community, particularly for those at the end of a long sentence. They assisted prisoners with such things as:

- resumes
- work finding skills
- obtaining a functioning email account
- accurate information on the job market.

Workskil also had a designated officer allocated to work with ex-offenders.

In addition to PEP, section 95 prisoners had been allowed to attend training sessions with potential employers, such as Alcoa.

The EC told us they had a range of employers ready to consider offering work to prisoners approved for PEP. But although PEP assessments were done quickly at Karnet, approvals through head office sentence management remained slow. It meant that some potential employers pulled out of the process due to the length of time it had taken. While we were told that four months was the average, it appeared that for the seven paid PEPs that went ahead last year, the average approval time was almost six months. This appeared to be a long time for such assessments, and it is entirely understandable that employers might withdraw from the process because of delays. **The Department should look to reforming processes to improve timeliness.**

Appendix 1 Bibliography

Golding. (2021). *Karnet Prison Farm Menu Assessment*. Perth: Unpublished (Department of Justice).

OICS. (2010). *Report of an Announced Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm, Report No.67*. Perth: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

OICS. (2019). *2019 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm*. Perth: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

OICS. (2020). *Revised Code of Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services*. Perth: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Appendix 2 Acronyms

Term	Expansion of Abbreviation
ADAPT	Allied Drug and Alcohol Programs and Treatment
ARMS	At-risk Management System
ASC	Aboriginal Services Committee
ASOS	Assistant Superintendent Offender Services
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Program
AVS	Aboriginal Visitor Scheme
COPP	Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DOJ	Department of Justice
GP	General Practitioner
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MHN	Mental Health Nurse
MPU	Multi-Purpose Unit
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PEP	Prisoner Employment Program
PHS	Psychological Health Services
PMDT	Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team
PRAG	Prisoner Risk Assessment Group
PSO	Prison Support Officer
SAMS	Support and Monitoring System
TM	Transitional Manager
VSO	Vocational Support Officer

Appendix 3 Department of Justice's Response



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

Response to OICS Draft Report:

2023 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm

July 2023

Version 1.1

Response Overview

Introduction

On 25 March 2022, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2022 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet). The inspection was scheduled to occur between 17 and 22 July 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 30 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 six 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

Karnet continues to demonstrate its value and importance within the prison estate by preparing prisoners to re-enter the community through the provision of a range of opportunities for employment and training. Additionally, Karnet prides itself on being the vital link in the Department's food supply chain producing fresh meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables for the wider prison estate.

The Department notes the inspection took place when many prisoners and staff had or were recovering from COVID-19 and extends its appreciation for the way OICS was able to work within the restrictions and limitations to undertake the inspection.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only impacted operations and service delivery at Karnet, but custodial facilities statewide. Restrictions implemented within our high-risk custodial settings were mandatory and necessary.

While the impact of COVID and the associated facility restrictions cannot be overstated, Karnet's ability to maintain much of its operations and service delivery in 2022 is a testament to the dedication of senior management and staff at the facility, and also its hardworking cohort of prisoners. Karnet's Superintendent has been instrumental in establishing a number of partnership agreements and projects that serve to increase employment, training and education opportunities for its prisoners, who are typically at the end of their sentences. This helps develop transferable job skills in preparation for reintegration into the community. The Superintendent was recognised in the 2023 Australia Day Honours List for outstanding commitment to improving the lives of those in his care, being awarded an Australian Corrections Medal.

It is not surprising therefore to note the positive findings in relation to the various activities, meaningful work options, and other initiatives made available at Karnet. These include numerous recreation options, extended recreation hours, bushwalking for Section 95 approved prisoners, library access, structured sport, and quiz and bingo nights to name a few.

Karnet's Section 95 program performs strongly in the delivery of work and training opportunities to prisoners via on-site and community work projects. The issues surrounding the Section 95 eligibility and application process are noted, and the Department is continuously exploring options to enable greater prisoner participation in the program, without compromising the safety and security of the community through the screening process. Activities are tailored for the prisoner taking into consideration their participation in home leave, full time involvement in the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP), or full time meaningful vocational work towards trade certificates within the prison.

It is acknowledged that staff redeployment impacts the delivery of the Section 95 program. While this is unfortunate, at times it is necessary to provide the adequate staffing levels within the facility to critical services that will ensure minimal impact on operations and the safety of both staff and prisoners.

Most recently a team of Section 95 approved prisoners commenced landscaping, fencing and other external work at two Department owned houses next to Hakea Prison as part of a refurbishment project to convert the houses into office accommodation. The two offices will serve as hubs for staff to write up case reports and deliver timely specialist services to prisoners in prisons located in the south metropolitan corridor.

The recycling initiatives launched at Karnet promote a culture of sustainability and resourcefulness. As noted by OICS, Karnet has been innovative in its recycling practices, expanding to include not only standard recyclable materials such as bottles, cans and cardboard, but also items such as toothbrushes, razors, clothing, and biological farm waste for soil revitalisation and composting. Karnet's efforts in sourcing replacements for single use plastics should also be commended for enabling the facility to meet the requirements of the Western Australia's Plan for Plastics. These efforts demonstrate a commitment from both staff and prisoners for ensuring the facility is recycling wherever it is able, which is not only beneficial to the facility, but also to the community and the environment.

The Department acknowledges the farms within the custodial estate, including Karnet, require investment to upgrade infrastructure and modernise machinery and equipment to improve production and its farming operations. As acknowledged by OICS, agricultural machines and equipment are expensive. The Department also notes the recurring recommendation from OICS regarding the reinvestment of generated revenue back into the farm. Whilst it supports the intent of the recommendation, the Department is bound by the *Financial Management Act 2006* whereby only the State Government Treasurer may determine whether an agency retains any revenue it generates.

The Department continues to progressively invest significant funds in its farms. More recent investments at Karnet included upgrading the infrastructure and machinery in the dairy and the abattoir. The abattoir, dairy and egg production operations at Karnet provide prisoners with additional and unique work and training opportunities not available at other prisons throughout the custodial estate.

Additionally, Karnet works with several business and community organisations such as Alcoa, the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale and Carey Bindjareb as well as the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to explore further ways to enhance farm operations and provide further work and training opportunities for prisoners.

Karnet has flourished over the years under the leadership of an experienced Superintendent and from time to time, as with any organisation, will have senior leadership positions filled on an acting basis. Staff are given the opportunity to learn new skills and act in leadership roles which is an important aspect of their career development and succession planning. Furthermore, the Department makes every attempt to ensure that those appointed to act in senior leadership positions are provided with appropriate mentoring and support to undertake the role and deliver the expected outcomes.

The Department acknowledges Aboriginal employees bring an invaluable perspective and insight through lived experiences and help shape and ensure services are culturally safe and appropriate.

The Department's Aboriginal Employee Talent Pool focuses on the development and advancement of the existing Aboriginal workforce. Employees who register will be assisted by the Diversity, Inclusion and Aboriginal Workforce Development team to develop their careers with the Department.

The Aboriginal Career Opportunities Register will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers to choose a career with the Department. People who register will be provided culturally appropriate application support and advice as well as guidance throughout recruitment processes. They will be informed of job vacancies and referred to available positions as they arise.

Business areas are reminded of Commissioner's Instruction 39: Interim Arrangements to Fill Public Sector Vacancies. Interim arrangements support direct appointments through individual assessment of merit to meet the Department's aspirational Aboriginal employment target of 7.25 per cent.

The Department notes the findings and the six recommendations made in the 2022 Inspection of Karnet. One recommendation is supported, two are supported in principle due to potential practical impediments, two are noted due to the recommendations impacted by decisions that are beyond the Department's control and one is not supported.

Response to Recommendations

1 Karnet, like other prison farms, should be permitted to retain a portion of generated revenue for a farm reinvestment.

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

Response:

The Department supports the intent of this recommendation, however, is bound by the *Financial Management Act 2006* whereby only the State Government Treasurer may determine whether an agency retains any revenue it generates.

2 Karnet should review the storage arrangements and implement changes to ensure secure storage of valuable property.

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

Response:

Karnet will review its prisoner property storage and will consider the installation of additional secure cabinets to enable storage of large, bulky and valuable items.

3 Provide mental health training to all peer support prisoners.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The Suicide Prevention Governance Unit (SPGU) was established in February 2023 which oversees the delivery of suicide prevention training to staff and peer support prisoners.

The Department has been delivering the 'Talking About Suicide' training program since early 2022 at both metropolitan and regional custodial facilities. As of June 2023, over 300 staff and peer support prisoners had received the training, with further sessions scheduled for 2023.

The SPGU is working in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission (MHC) to develop a Gatekeeper training program tailored specifically for delivery in a custodial setting.

4 Resource Karnet to facilitate all escorts.

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

Response:

Karnet facilitates all external appointments for reintegration purposes. Medical appointments are determined on a needs basis. External health appointments are triaged by Health staff who determine the priority with escorts facilitated accordingly.

5 Provide regular, reliable and appropriate dental services for prisoners at Karnet.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

Dental care to prisoners is provided by the Department of Health's Dental Health Services, which advises the provision is in line with community standards.

6 Increase mental health services at Karnet.

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

Response:

Prisoners at Karnet have on-site support from a Prison Support Officer, Prison Counsellor (PHS) and primary health services. Where specific mental health needs are identified, referrals can be made to the mental health nurse who may in turn make a referral to the monthly in-reach Consultant Psychiatry provided by State Forensics Mental Health Services.

Prisoners with higher priority mental health issues and care needs are generally not transferred to Karnet. As of April 2023, there were no prisoners at Karnet with a Priority 1 or Priority 2 rated mental illness. Most of these prisoners are seen monthly or reviewed more closely if a prisoner's mental health deteriorates.

Triage interviews are usually weekly with new admissions. The needs identified in the report (e.g., general stress and anxiety, reconnecting with family and friends, finding work and suitable housing). do not require involvement of specialist clinical mental health staff.

Appendix 4 Inspection Details

Previous inspection		
18 March - 5 April 2019		
Activity since previous inspection		
Liaison visits to Karnet Prison	9 visits	
Independent Visitor visits	16 visits	
Surveys		
Prisoner survey	17 – 24 May 2022	154 responses (49%)
Staff survey (online)	16 May – 4 June 2022	36 responses (24%)
Inspection team		
Inspector	Eamon Ryan	
Deputy Inspector	Darian Ferguson	
Director Operations	Natalie Gibson	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Liz George	
Inspections and Research Officer	Jim Bryden	
Inspections and Research Officer	Cliff Holdom	
Community Liaison Officer	Joseph Wallam	

Key dates	
Inspection announced	25 March 2022
Start of on-site inspection	17 July 2022
Completion of on-site inspection	22 July 2022
Presentation of preliminary findings	15 August 2022
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	30 May 2023
Draft response received from Department of Justice	27 July 2023
Declaration of prepared report	1 August 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