

The trial transfer of responsibility for the transport of young offenders in regional and remote Western Australia from the police to the Department of Corrective Services has been a success, according to a review by the Inspector of Custodial Services.

The review provides an independent assessment of a 12-month trial that shifted responsibility for transporting remanded and sentenced young people in regional and remote Western Australia from the police to specially trained staff of the Youth Custodial Services division within the Department.

In launching his report, the Inspector Neil Morgan said that the review had found that an improved service was being provided to young people by staff whose core job and training was to manage young people.

'Young people clearly indicated to us that their experience of being transported, sometimes from very remote locations, had improved significantly since the introduction of the new arrangements. In particular they were positive about both the mode of transport and their treatment by staff,' Mr Morgan said.

'The trial arrangements substantially address most of the concerns this Office has raised in the past about the police transporting of young people.'

Past concerns included the types and safety of vehicles used, the distances travelled without suitable rest stops and the time some young people spent in police lockups before being transported.

However, the report also identified areas for further development and continuing improvement in the event of the arrangement becoming permanent. These include:

- The timeliness of transporting children out of police lockups;
- Improved engagement and involvement of Youth Justice Services Officers with young people in regional lockups;
- Improved conditions for children held in police lockups; and
- Continued work on strategies to reduce the need to transport children from regional and remote areas to Perth.

'Overall, however, the public should have confidence that there has been a significant improvement in service delivery, ensuring a safer, more efficient and overall more suitable service for children in contact with the criminal justice system,' Mr Morgan said.