

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012**

**Report No. 78 – Announced Inspection of Albany Regional Prison**

The latest report by the Inspector of Custodial Services has concluded that Albany Regional Prison is one of the state's best performing prisons. Launching his report, the Inspector Neil Morgan commented:

"Albany Prison is a maximum security facility which houses a complex mix of prisoners. It has an excellent track record in terms of security, safety and the provision of a positive environment. The prison's management team is experienced, connected with staff and prisoners, and clear in its vision and priorities. Staff are committed, pragmatic and positive. Prisoners are settled and have a positive and appropriate pro-social relationship with staff. Last but not least, the local community is actively interested in and supportive of the prison, with locally based agencies helping to provide well-coordinated re-entry services. The prison's proud record is a tribute to all."

However, the report also found that the prison faces serious challenges. It has been required to house an increased number of prisoners and a new accommodation unit has been opened. The new unit (Unit Four) does provide better accommodation for prisoners but as soon as it opened, another unit (Unit Three) was mothballed indefinitely. Professor Morgan said:

"This means that the overcrowding problem has largely been redistributed not redressed. It is very disappointing that Unit One, the oldest unit and the one in most need of replacement, must continue to operate. And some other vital infrastructure, some of which has needed attention for many years, has not been replaced, renovated or expanded. We also found that although Albany Prison does its best to keep prisoners engaged in positive activities, too many prisoners are either unemployed or under-employed. In my view, priority areas for future investment include the health centre, the education centre, new workshops to provide employment and training opportunities, the refurbishment of Unit Three and the replacement of Unit One. Given Albany's record, the state can be confident that such investments will bring long term benefits."

The report also contains the first independent case study of Indonesian prisoners in an Australian jail. The number of Indonesian prisoners has increased as a result of the growing number of people facing charges of 'people smuggling' offences. These constitute offences against Commonwealth, not State laws, but the federal government has no prisons of its own. Consequently, people convicted of offences against Commonwealth law are housed in State and Territory prisons. Western Australia has held by far the largest number of such prisoners, with Albany Prison being one of the primary locations. Professor Morgan said:

"This has become a sensitive diplomatic issue over recent months. Importantly, this report concludes that the State government, the Federal government and the Indonesian government can be satisfied that Albany Prison has generally managed Indonesian prisoners well, especially given the overcrowding pressures it has faced over recent years. Staff have been responsive and caring and the Indonesian prisoners genuinely appreciate the concern that they have been shown."

However, there are areas of ongoing concern. The most well-known of these is the imprisonment of Indonesian minors which has recently been subject to vigorous criticism by the Australian Human Rights Commission. Another is that prisoners held in Western Australian jails on people smuggling or illegal fishing charges cannot during their time in prison send home money they have earned through prison work to help support their families. In practice, this policy impacts only on Indonesian prisoners from impoverished backgrounds. It is a policy which is causing considerable distress. It is also illogical in that other foreign national prisoners, including murderers, rapists and drug traffickers, can remit money home, as can Indonesian 'people smugglers' imprisoned in some other parts of Australia.

We also found gaps which need to be plugged with respect to the transfer of health information from the Commonwealth agencies who initially hold alleged people smugglers to the Department of Corrective Services which imprisons them once they have been charged."

Neil Morgan

7<sup>th</sup> August 2012

For more detail, see the Inspector's Overview to the Report (copy attached).

Neil Morgan will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August and can be contacted on 0427 426 471.

The full Report will be available on the Inspector's website ([www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au))