

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Report No. 99 – Albany Regional Prison**

Despite performance slippages in a number of areas, the latest report from the Inspector of Custodial Services found that Albany Regional Prison was performing well in the context of a system under enormous pressure.

‘With the entire prison system presently experiencing major resource cuts, and with most facilities struggling to cope with the dropping or restriction of services, Albany had successfully managed a number of converging issues and changes at the prison. This ensured that both prisoners and staff continued to feel safe, and the prison continued to feel calmer than most metropolitan prisons. Overall, it receives a positive report card, as it has for many years,’ Mr Morgan said.

However, the Inspector said that over the past three years Albany had experienced a number of challenges that had tested its resilience, and that performance had dropped in some areas.

‘The prisoner profile has substantially changed and is now more dominated by higher security prisoners. We found that, coupled with restrictions on staffing caused by budget limitations, the positive and respectful relationships observed in the past between staff and prisoners had deteriorated. Relational security, an essential element of prison management, had therefore slipped.’

After many years of leadership stability Albany had also experienced the introduction of a new management team, whose arrival coincided with system-wide budget cuts that forced changes to staffing practices at the prison.

‘We found that the change in leadership had initially created some significant difficulties. Fortunately, the situation had eased by the time of the inspection,’ Mr Morgan said.

‘One of the measures imposed by prison management in response to large scale budget cuts was to cap daily overtime shifts. While the strategy proved successful in ensuring that the prison met its budget, there were a number of negative flow-on effects. In particular, the cuts affected prisoner access to rehabilitation, and increased the number of prisoners with nothing to do during the day.

‘Unfortunately, this is not a problem limited to Albany.’

Of particular concern to the Inspector were increased restrictions on access to education and the regular closing of workshops to allow staff to be redeployed. ‘Such practices erode the value of prisons as a place to rehabilitate and give prisoners skills to stay out of prison in the future,’ Mr Morgan said.

In summary, Albany is still a good prison, even though it has slipped back somewhat from previous years. With effort from all staff and management, a continued focus on what had made Albany such a long-term success, and appropriate resourcing, this slippage can be reversed.

Neil Morgan  
Inspector

11 August 2015

For more detail, see the Inspector's Overview to the Report and Key Findings (copies attached)

#### **For Further Media Information**

The Deputy Inspector, Mr Andrew Harvey, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 8 September and can be contacted on 6551 4217 or 0477 307 559.

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

#### **About Albany Regional Prison**

Albany Regional Prison is the only maximum-security prison outside of Perth. The prison also manages medium- and minimum-security prisoners in addition to holding a significant number of long-term prisoners.

The prison is located eight kms west of Albany, 414 kms south of Perth, and was opened in September 1966.

#### **About the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office)**

The role of the Office is to bring independent external scrutiny to the standards and operational practices relating to custodial services within Western Australia. The Office is required under its legislation to undertake an inspection of each prison every three years. The Office commenced operations in June 2000 and reports directly to Parliament.