



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF AN ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF
BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN

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accountable public sector.*

**Report of an Announced Inspection of
Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women**

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The Inspector's Overview

BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN: STILL PERFORMING WELL BUT IS IT REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND CAN IT BE MORE INNOVATIVE?

Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women ('Boronia') fulfils a very specific purpose. It is a pre-release facility for selected low risk women, and it aims to provide a positive living environment that replicates the 'real world' as far as possible. It seeks to empower the women to cope with the challenges they will face on release, including as mothers, and to ensure that appropriate support services are in place upon release. From the public's point of view, Boronia's ultimate goals are to enhance community safety and to reduce the social and financial costs of imprisonment by reducing recidivism.

This is the report of an inspection of Boronia conducted in March 2015. Boronia has been operating since May 2004 and this is the fourth occasion on which this Office has reported to Parliament and the public on its performance.

Viewed in terms of safety, security and decency of treatment, Boronia continues to perform well overall, as it has for over 10 years. I recognise that consistently good performance and a strong reputation are not things that are easily won: they require commitment, dedication, and a sense of purpose. However, it is also perfectly reasonable to expect that Boronia will be performing to the highest standards because it has so many advantages. It is a small facility; it has excellent, modern, purpose-built infrastructure; it houses a carefully selected group of low risk prisoners (called 'residents'); and compared with most prisons it is relatively well-resourced.

The key message in this report – and one that was conveyed at the time of the inspection – is that although Boronia is performing well, there is scope for improvement. It must be open to challenge and change and must not be defensive and content with the status quo. In an increasingly competitive environment, it needs to build on what has been achieved and to position itself for the next decade.

DOES BORONIA REDUCE RECIDIVISM?

Reducing recidivism is one of the key priorities of the Department of Corrective Services (the 'Department'), and it was the *raison d'être* of Boronia. It is a measurable outcome, and, as we have been arguing since 2006, it is something that should have been measured from the outset. However, there is still no clear evidence as to whether Boronia is actually achieving this goal. The continuing dearth of information is unacceptable, especially at a time when the government is calling for improved effectiveness and efficiency in the prison system.ⁱ

In 2014, we published our own report on the recidivism rates of prisoners who had been released up to 2009/2010 from the different prisons. We found that Boronia has a low recidivism rate compared with the state average.ⁱⁱ Internal Departmental data show the same result. However, this is not a sufficient measure: Boronia has such a selective low risk prisoner profile that lower recidivism rates are to be expected. When we factored in the residents' risk factors, we found that while Boronia was performing 'as expected', it was not performing any 'better than expected'.

i The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) is currently conducting an *Inquiry into the Efficiency and Performance of Western Australia Prisons*.

ii OICS, *Recidivism rates and the impact of treatment programs* (September 2014).

BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN: STILL PERFORMING WELL BUT IS IT REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND CAN IT BE MORE INNOVATIVE?

In 2012, the Department had supported in principle our recommendation that there should be a robust independent evaluation of Boronia's outcomes. Prior to this inspection, we therefore asked for any evidence it had in relation to this. It provided none, and its response was obtuse and non-committal:

The Department is in the process of reviewing its performance measurement framework in line with its reform program. This will be achieved by rationalising the Divisional performance indicators to a single source of truth, which will reduce duplication between levels, simplify and improve the efficacy (sic).

In response to Recommendation 1 of this report, the Department has now said there is no need for an independent evaluation because its newly-formed Women's Estate Reference Group is 'working with the Department to improve outcomes for all female offenders, which will involve an evaluation of post-release outcomes at all facilities.' I look forward to seeing these evaluations when they materialise, but note that the Department has not set any timeframe.

In summary, the Department cannot take informed investment decisions or target scarce resources to optimal effect if it lacks the evidence base. This is something to which the Economic Regulation Authority has also drawn attention. The decision to build Boronia was premised on the argument that it would reduce recidivism, and the public and Parliament are entitled to know whether it does this. Too much of the so-called 'evidence' about Boronia remains anecdotal, and selected 'good news stories' do not constitute evidence.

The situation at Boronia stands in stark contrast with the state's expectations of the privately-operated Wandoo Reintegration Facility for young men. Wandoo only opened in 2012 but if it does not achieve results, its future as a reintegration facility is at stake. It is also clear that the current contractor, Serco, will not be re-engaged unless they prove they have achieved results. Wandoo must meet a number of contractual performance requirements, many of which are based on reducing recidivism, and the Department is actively monitoring results. This information is already surfacing in political and public debate, and will, quite rightly, inform future decisions about Wandoo.

KEY FINDINGS

Boronia has a unique ambience, a clear philosophy and a strong track record with regard to safety and security. It is without any doubt the high point of women's imprisonment in Western Australia. For good reasons, it is also regarded as a national and international benchmark in terms of its design and philosophy. However, there are opportunities for improvement and innovation.

The site is in excellent shape. The gardens are beautiful, and the buildings are in a good state of repair. The calm, therapeutic qualities of the site stand in marked contrast to the state's main female prison, Bandyup. Prisoners and staff feel safe, and the Centre's approach to security has been balanced and effective.

BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN: STILL PERFORMING WELL BUT IS IT REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND CAN IT BE MORE INNOVATIVE?

In the three years since the last inspection report, Boronia has become more crowded. Its design capacity is 70 but it is now required to house up to 95 prisoners. This means that if it is full, more than half its rooms will be shared by two women. Although it is possible to place two beds in the rooms, the additional numbers have impacted on privacy and on the Centre's values and regime. Education, health and employment have not been expanded in line with increased numbers, and the ability of mothers to bond with their children, and the general family focus of the prison, has been reduced.

Although services generally remain good, they are less comprehensive, less proactive, and under growing pressure. Some of the decline is due to resource pressures, but there is definitely scope for some areas to be more proactive and innovative without requiring additional staff resources. These include support to mothers and re-entry services (Recommendations 4 and 6).

The staff who work at Boronia are carefully selected and specially trained. They are committed, professional and experienced, and have developed positive and respectful relations with the residents. The management team has many years of experience, and has worked hard to ensure not only that Boronia runs efficiently but also that it has community support and standing. At the time of the inspection, a number of HR issues were causing frustration to staff but they were relatively minor and capable of resolution by a responsive management.

In previous inspection reports, we have been very critical of the low number of Aboriginal women residing at Boronia. This was a missed opportunity to reduce recidivism and to improve those women's lives. It was also contrary to the principles of substantive equality which the Department espouses. The situation had improved in 2015, with around a quarter of the residents being Aboriginal. This is well below the levels of Aboriginal representation at Bandyup (closer to 50%), but the increase is welcome. Having a critical mass of Aboriginal women at Boronia now gives the Department and Boronia the opportunity to develop a specific re-entry strategy for Aboriginal women, and they have committed to do this (Recommendation 1).

Two of the recommendations in this report (Recommendations 2 and 5) relate to the ability of residents to undertake work or activities, or to access services, outside the Centre itself. Boronia is a pre-release centre, housing highly selected low-risk women who are heading to release. We believe that, subject to appropriate risk assessments being undertaken, and to suitable protections being in place for the women, they should be able to access a wider range of community based activities. This would be entirely in line with the Centre's objectives, and would mean that the women are better connected to support services upon release. Related to this, we also argue (Recommendation 3) for a more appropriate uniform for residents. The baggy, ill-fitting maroon tracksuits they are required to wear do nothing for their self-esteem and dignity, core values of the Centre. They also compare poorly with the clothing worn by male residents at Wandoo.

BORONIA PRE-RELEASE CENTRE FOR WOMEN: STILL PERFORMING WELL BUT
IS IT REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND CAN IT BE MORE INNOVATIVE?

LOOKING AHEAD

Boronia has achieved a great deal in its 11 years of operation. Staff, management and the Department, should be proud of what has been achieved. However, there are opportunities for improvement and reinvigoration in a number of areas and it is important to guard against complacency. Since I started in this role in 2009, I have heard senior Departmental officials say, on numerous occasions, ‘Boronia doesn’t keep me awake at night’. In a business that carries as many risks as corrections, that is understandable. But it is not enough.

Boronia in 2015 is different from Boronia in 2005. Boronia in 2020 and 2025 will be different again. The system is changing in its expectations and is examining service delivery models. In this environment, Boronia itself must be agile, responsive and innovative. Centrally, the Department should set defined outcome-based measures for Boronia, and should evaluate and report publicly on these, as it does for the privately-operated Wandoo.

Neil Morgan

10 September 2015

Fact Page

NAME OF FACILITY

Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

ROLE OF FACILITY

Minimum-security prison for women with re-entry focus. Provision for children to live with their mothers until the age of four, and for older children up to the age of 12 to have regular extended day and/or overnight stays.

LOCATION

Noongar land, suburban Perth, 8kms south east of Central Business District.

BRIEF HISTORY

The prison opened in May 2004 and replaced Nyandi Women's Prison.

PREVIOUS INSPECTION

19–25 January 2012

ORIGINAL DESIGN CAPACITY

71

TOTAL CAPACITY

95

NUMBER OF PRISONERS HELD AT TIME OF INSPECTION

91

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENCE

5

NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN HELD

24

DESCRIPTION OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS

- Community standard self-care, social housing, each with shared kitchen, bathroom, dining/lounge, laundry, and garden facilities.
- Twelve standard houses, each with five bedrooms with two bedrooms in each house doubled-up.
- Three nursery houses, each with two bedrooms designed for a mother and her child/children to share.
- Two intermediate care houses, with a total of five bedrooms.

Chapter 1

INSPECTION HISTORY, METHODOLOGY AND THEMES

- 1.1 This was the fourth inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women ('Boronia' or the 'centre'). Boronia opened in May 2004 replacing Nyandi Women's Prison as Western Australia's only dedicated, purpose-built, minimum-security custodial facility for women. Boronia is located within the metropolitan area of Perth, only eight kilometres from the central business district.
- 1.2 The three previous Boronia inspection reports produced by this Office include thorough detail about how it came to be and what it stands for.¹ This detail will not be replicated in this Report. This Report will focus on the findings of the most recent inspection and will include information based on work this Office has been doing over the last three years in the domain of women's imprisonment in Western Australia.

PREVIOUS INSPECTION 'HEADLINES'

'A Model for Good Practice, Women-centred Approaches'

- 1.3 The then Inspector, in his Overview to the first inspection report of Boronia, said that it is a model for good practice, women-centred approaches to managing female offenders in custody in almost all respects... [T]he Department must ensure that it continues to build upon its excellent performance.²
- 1.4 This first benchmark inspection took place in June 2006, two years after the centre opened, and produced highly positive findings. The then Inspector praised the centre's achievements in those two years as 'remarkable'.³ At the time, the centre was not at full capacity, which was specified as 70 residents. In fact the average population of Boronia had been under 50 since its opening two years prior.
- 1.5 The report of the 2006 inspection maps the path to the realisation of Boronia as a pre-release centre for women and explains the direction this Office encouraged in this journey. The Inspector's Overview of Report 42 provides insight into the history of the female custodial estate and this Office's influence in shaping this history.⁴

'One of a Kind' with 'Opportunities for Improvement'

- 1.6 In June 2009, when we inspected Boronia for the second time, full capacity had been reached. The headlines included 'one of a kind', 'first rate' and 'performing to a very high standard', but the report also identified 'opportunities for improvement' and 'scope for expansion'.⁵
- 1.7 The 2009 inspection found some specific gaps around the particular needs of Aboriginal women and the provision of family violence and related treatment programs, and advocated a more expansive vision for residents to engage in community-based activities in relation to education, work and recreation.⁶

1 See Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS), *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007); OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009); OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012).

2 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007) v, viii.

3 Ibid., v.

4 Ibid.

5 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009) iii-v.

6 Ibid., vi.

- 1.8 By 2009, overall prisoner numbers in Western Australia were increasing, and double-bunking was becoming a commonly used strategy to manage the overcrowding. Boronia, because of its unique role, was immune from the overcrowding pressures and was not double bunked. Whilst positive for Boronia, this did set the centre apart from other prisons, notably the overcrowded and stressed Bandyup Women's Prison ('Bandyup'). It also appeared unlikely that Boronia's innovative custodial options would be rolled out more widely.

'Reaching its Full Potential?'

- 1.9 The 2012 inspection found that while Boronia was generally still performing to a decent standard, it was not living up to its full potential as a unique and contemporary pre-release centre for women. There had been a degree of stagnation in terms of innovation and performance, and the Inspector cautioned that 'satisfaction must not be allowed to breed complacency'.⁷
- 1.10 In particular, the number of Aboriginal women living at Boronia, both during the inspection and over the three years preceding it, was unacceptably low. And we were disappointed in the limited range of community-based education, work, health and recreation activities available to Boronia residents. We also advocated a more flexible approach towards managing women with mental health needs at Boronia to allow a greater number of women to benefit from the inherently more therapeutic environment that it provided compared to Bandyup.

BORONIA IN 2015

- 1.11 We inspected Boronia for the fourth time in March 2015. The inspection team included a health expert from King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH). KEMH is Western Australia's main public obstetric, gynaecology, perinatal mental health and neonatal hospital. The doctor we engaged was from the women and newborn health division of KEMH.
- 1.12 This inspection followed our traditional methodology. Pre-inspection surveys of both residents and staff were conducted. The response rates for the surveys were good with 74 per cent (67 out of 90) of the residents completing a questionnaire and 52 per cent (33 out of 64) of staff completing one. Two team members attended the centre on the weekend to observe the social visits process and weekend recreation, prior to the official commencement of the inspection the following week. The Inspector gave his exit debrief at the end of the inspection week, which summarised the inspection team's preliminary findings. Copies of the exit debrief were also sent to the Minister and Commissioner for Corrective Services.

'Generally Performing Well' but 'Improvement Required'

- 1.13 This was the Inspector's main headline in his 2015 exit debrief. The headline points to an overall conclusion that Boronia is performing well but, after a decade of bedding in and consolidation, it needs to guard against complacency, push for more innovation, and position itself for a future in which the centre's roles will evolve and in which

7 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) iii.

comparisons are likely to be drawn with other facilities, such as the privately-operated Wandoo Reintegration Facility.

- 1.14 The Inspector presented eight challenges which should provide momentum for Boronia, supported by the Department of course, to shape its future:⁸
1. Assess if Boronia ‘works’. In both 2006 and 2012, DCS supported recommendations made by this Office for a methodologically robust and independent evaluation of Boronia’s post-release outcomes. This was never actioned, however, and the Inspector concluded that ‘this is a lost opportunity that leaves Boronia exposed’.
 2. Be open to challenge and change – Boronia must be agile, responsive and innovative, rather than defensive and content with the status quo.
 3. Implement an Aboriginal women’s re-entry strategy.
 4. Clarify Boronia’s roles when planning the women’s estate, particularly in the current climate of change that is happening in the women’s estate.
 5. Develop other women’s lower security options. The changes currently in train in the women’s estate are focused on maximum- and medium-security female prisoners. Other minimum-security options must be considered, including female-centred work camp options.
 6. Set outcome-related measures for Boronia, in keeping with the current work being conducted by the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) on improving correctional outcomes as a way to reduce the social and financial costs of incarceration.
 7. Develop women-specific rules: even though some of these have been produced in the past, they have not been fully developed or properly actioned.
 8. Implement female-specific funding models, in line with other jurisdictions that explicitly build in additional funding for women. Boronia should also be funded as a female *pre-release* centre and not as a general minimum-security facility.
- 1.15 This report works through the inspection findings and develops conclusions and recommendations that reflect the challenges posed by the Inspector.

8 Morgan N, *Exit Debrief, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women* (27 March 2015).

Chapter 2

POPULATION AND CAPACITY

- 2.1 This Office is always interested in who is at a particular facility, why they are there, and why others are not. This has been an important issue at Boronia because the centre has gone from being under-capacity to full and then crowded over the 11 years of its existence. It has also held a low number of Aboriginal women compared with their numbers in the prison population. This chapter provides an account of how the prisoner numbers and prisoner profile at Boronia have evolved over time.

FROM UNDER-CAPACITY TO FULL (2006–2009)

- 2.2 For the first two years after opening, Boronia was under-capacity by about 20 women. With a capacity of 70, it accommodated fewer than 50 women from May 2004 (when it first opened) to the first inspection in June 2006. The average number of residents over this time was 46, at times dropping as low as 36.⁹ The low numbers meant that eligible women were missing out on the benefits of placement at Boronia. The then Inspector expressed public concern at the under-utilisation of an ‘outstanding resource’.¹⁰

FROM FULL TO CROWDED (2009–2015)

- 2.3 By the time of the June 2009 inspection, Boronia had reached its capacity of 70 and the Department was confident it would remain ‘immune’ from the overcrowding pressures encroaching on the rest of the prison system.¹¹
- 2.4 However, the number of female prisoners across the state has been rising quickly since 2009 and planning for this has been wholly inadequate.¹² In response to the population pressures, there have been two separate expansions of capacity at Boronia. The first took place in 2010 when 12 extra beds were added to some of the houses, giving an official capacity (then called ‘operational capacity’) of 82.¹³ At the time of the 2012 inspection, 76 women were being held there.
- 2.5 By the time of the 2015 inspection, the capacity had increased to 95, and 91 women were actually held there.

WHAT DOES A CROWDED BORONIA LOOK LIKE?

- 2.6 The capacity expansions have been achieved by placing a second bed into selected bedrooms in standard houses throughout the centre. The site consists of 17 houses:
- Twelve standard houses, each with five bedrooms;
 - Three nursery houses, each with two bedrooms designed for a mother and her child/children to share; and
 - Two intermediate care houses, with a total of five bedrooms (one reserved for temporary ‘time outs’, not permanently occupied).

9 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007) 8.

10 Ibid., vii.

11 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009) iii.

12 See for example: OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Bandyup Women’s Prison*, Report No. 73 (August 2011); OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Bandyup Women’s Prison*, Report No. 93 (October 2014); and OICS, *Female Prisons in Western Australia and the Greenough Women’s Precinct*, Report No. 91 (July 2014).

13 At the time, the DCS website defined ‘Operational capacity’ as ‘the design capacity plus additional cells within a centre which are not intended as long term accommodation (eg. Temporary bunks/beds)’.

POPULATION AND CAPACITY

- 2.7 In order to reach the re-defined capacity of 95, all 12 standard houses had a second bed in two rooms. This means that 24 rooms have two beds and up to 48 residents – more than half the total population of Boronia – will be sharing a room.
- 2.8 This Office accepts that the Department needed to do something to alleviate the intolerable conditions at Bandyup. However, it was its own poor planning, and the decision to defer the opening of new female accommodation to late 2016 at the earliest, that had generated the problem. Boronia was paying a price. Crowding was undermining the philosophy of the centre and affecting all aspects of life for the residents, not just those who were sharing a room.
- 2.9 Personal, family and community responsibility are integral to Boronia's guiding philosophy. Women are encouraged to embrace and reflect these values through:¹⁴
- Having maximum opportunities to contact families, in particular children;
 - Living in an environment that is welcoming to children and families;
 - Living in an environment that mirrors residential community living;
 - Having maximum opportunities to make choices for themselves and their children on health, financial, lifestyle and other matters.
- 2.10 These principles and objectives were compromised by the increased numbers at Boronia. Women's choices for themselves and their children in relation to health, lifestyle and other matters were limited by the pressure on infrastructure and services. Examples discussed in this report include the following:
- Having to share a room with another woman who may be a complete stranger does not mirror community living.
 - Increasing the number of residents meant an increased demand for education, employment and health services. These were not expanded to match increased numbers.
 - The 48 residents in shared rooms did not have 'maximum opportunities' for contact with children as they were unable to have overnight visits with their child/children. This was causing distress and some resentment that the centre was not delivering what it promised.
 - Visits are essential to family contact but visits sessions on the weekend were mostly full, and there was no guarantee that residents could secure a spot.

POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

- 2.11 Of the 91 women resident at Boronia at the start of the 2015 inspection, 24 were Aboriginal (26%). Although there were a number of women from other diverse cultural backgrounds, only one was not an Australian citizen. Almost 80 per cent were from the Perth metropolitan area and another 12 per cent were from the South West region.
- 2.12 Residents ranged in age from 19 to 78 years old, with the most common age bracket being 35–44 years old (see Figure 1 below). There were five children under the age of four approved to live on-site with their mothers.

14 Department of Corrective Services (DCS), *Boronia's Guiding Philosophy* (undated). Available at <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

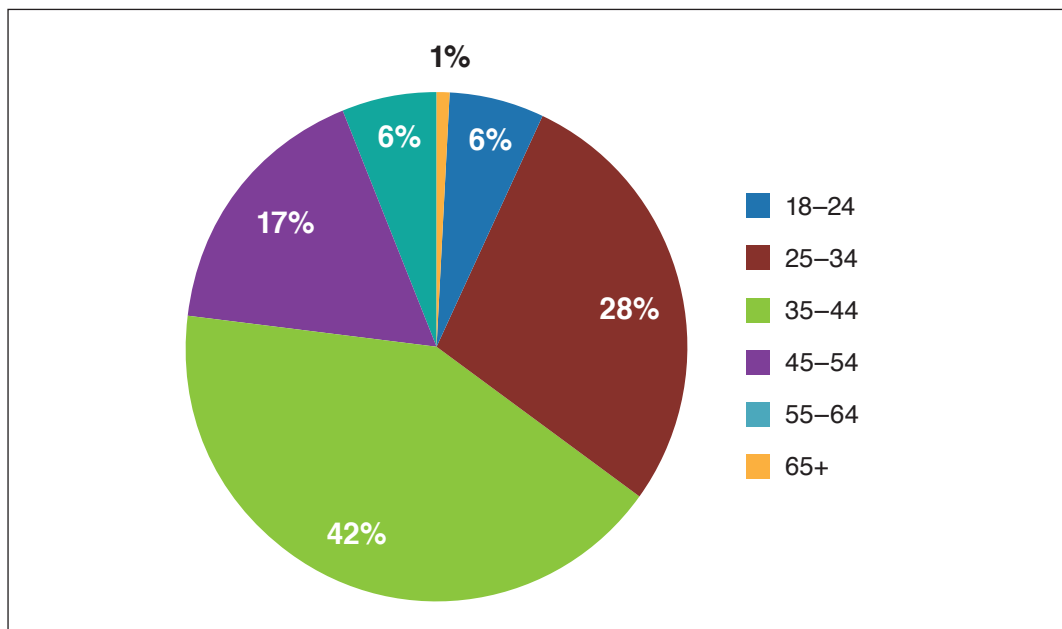


Figure 1: Age distribution of residents at Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women

- 2.13 In the pre-inspection survey of residents, 76 per cent of respondents indicated that it was their first time in prison. There were three life-term prisoners, all of whom had served at least 15 years in prison, and were participating in re-socialisation programs at Boronia. Overall, like any prison, Boronia was housing a diverse population with diverse needs.

Aboriginal Women

- 2.14 This Office has been critical of the low number of Aboriginal women at Boronia. During the 2009 inspection, 22 of 70 residents (31%) were Aboriginal. At that time, Aboriginal women made up 51 per cent of the total number of women prisoners in Western Australia. We expressed concern then that Aboriginal women prisoners were concentrated in those areas of the prison estate where conditions were poorest, and they had less access to the valuable services that were available at Boronia, prompting this recommendation:¹⁵

Across the whole of the women’s estate, the Department must provide accommodation, services and programs to Aboriginal women that cater to their identified and specific needs, customs, values and beliefs and which eliminate the structural disadvantages they currently experience. Measurable outcomes, targets and timeframes should be established and monitored.

- 2.15 In response, the Department claimed this ‘is already a key focus for the Department and therefore implementation is ongoing and part of our continuous improvement philosophy’.¹⁶ Despite these commitments, the number of Aboriginal women at Boronia decreased significantly. By the time of the 2012 inspection, only 10 of 76 residents (13%) were

15 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009) 3–7, and Recommendation 1.

16 *Ibid.*, 37.

Aboriginal.¹⁷ The 2012 inspection report again expressed concern that Aboriginal women, who are recognised as having high re-entry needs, were accessing Boronia at such a low rate. It recommended the Department:¹⁸

Ensure that more Aboriginal women have access to Boronia's re-entry services. Initiatives should include (i) identifying ways to enhance the centre's appeal to Aboriginal women incarcerated elsewhere in the prison estate and (ii) ensuring that more of the Aboriginal women who are classified minimum-security can progress to placement at Boronia.

- 2.16 In the three years since this recommendation was made, progress has been positive but there is a long way to go before Aboriginal women are equally represented at Boronia. The number of Aboriginal women at the centre has increased from 10 to 24 and they now comprise 26 per cent of the population. However, Aboriginal women comprise over 50 per cent of the state's total female prisoner population and 45 per cent of the numbers at Bandyup Women's Prison.
- 2.17 The Department's Strategic Plan 2015–2018 focuses on improving community safety by reducing recidivism. Its Reconciliation Action Plan emphasises the need to improve Aboriginal engagement, to develop partnerships with the not-for-profit sector, and to increase the number of programs run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. Boronia is a dedicated re-entry facility and Aboriginal women are a particularly victimised group with high re-entry needs and high rates of recidivism.
- 2.18 Two strategies will enhance the Department's ability to achieve its objectives at Boronia. First, there must be continuing efforts to increase the number of Aboriginal women towards a proportionate level. Secondly, almost for the first time, Boronia now has a 'critical mass' of Aboriginal women. The centre would benefit from having an Aboriginal women's re-entry strategy, including targets for engagement and outcomes. It already has a solid base of engagement with the not-for-profit sector but, like the Wandoo Reintegration Facility, it is an ideal testing ground for further innovation and engagement, including programs run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.

Recommendation 1

Implement an Aboriginal women's re-entry strategy.

17 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 7.

18 *Ibid.*, 7–10, Recommendation 1.

Chapter 3

LEADING, MANAGING AND PROTECTING

THE LEADERS

- 3.1 Boronia's senior management team is small, consisting of only four positions. It has remained constant for many years, providing Boronia with the benefit of experience, stability and continuity. In the past, this has contributed to a strong sense of unity and cohesion between management and staff.¹⁹ However, in the 2012 inspection, the Office detected signs that the management team was becoming too insular and less open to innovation. This was most clearly exemplified by the lack of progress against previous recommendations made by the Office.²⁰ The 2012 inspection report therefore made the following recommendation:
- Increase management capacity and experience through leadership development, experience at other prisons and the rotation of staff into and out of other prisons, in order to bring about more questioning and innovative approaches to current operational practices.²¹
- 3.2 The 2015 inspection found that some action had been taken in this area. The superintendent and assistant superintendent had both spent short periods acting in positions at different prisons, and staff from other prisons had also spent time acting at Boronia. Fundamentally, however, the senior management team was unchanged.
- 3.3 The senior management team are a close group and rightfully proud of Boronia's achievements. As a group, they are strong advocates for women prisoners and protective of the centre and its reputation. These are all very positive traits. However, the inspection team also found the senior management team to be unnecessarily defensive and reticent to acknowledge problems or weaknesses in the centre.
- 3.4 Boronia is generally doing well but the whole Department is in a period of change. Its strategic plan is called 'Creating Value Through Performance' and discussion is centred on performance measurement, 'benchmarking', and contestability between the public and private sectors. One of the key performance indicators is reduced recidivism. A recent report by this Office found that Boronia does have low recidivism rates, but after factoring in its low risk offender profile, it was performing 'as expected', and not above expectations.²² As the Inspector said in his exit debrief, it is vital in this climate to be 'agile, responsive and innovative, rather than defensive and content with the status quo'.

THE OFFICERS

- 3.5 A normal day shift at Boronia comprises seven custodial officers – two senior officers, two transport officers, one officer in the monitor room, and two unit officers. Any absences, emergencies (medical or otherwise) or internal escorts (for example, when an external contractor is on-site) have a significant impact because there are no 'spare' officers around the centre who can fill these vacancies or perform the medical emergency or contractor escorts.

19 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 15.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 16, Recommendation 4.

22 See OICS, *Recidivism rates and the impact of treatment programs* (September 2014) 9.

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- 3.6 This had led to Vocational Support Officers (VSOs), and particularly the Community Activities Officer, being cross deployed to cover custodial staffing roles within the centre. The Community Activities Officer was responsible for escorting residents working on the section 95 external work program to their place of work in the community.²³ When he was redeployed to cover other positions, the residents on section 95 missed out on work that day and the community agency expecting them to turn up was left without their workforce for the day. This was damaging relationships with community agencies as well as the women's re-entry program.
- 3.7 In previous reports, the Office expressed concern that staffing levels on night shift were insufficient, and recommended a review of night staffing arrangements to ensure that the centre was sufficiently staffed at all times.²⁴ The 2015 inspection found that this recommendation had been addressed by increasing night shift staffing from three officers to four officers.
- 3.8 The Office has also previously expressed concern that the proportion of female officers at Boronia is too low, suggesting that the target for female officers should be 60 per cent.²⁵ A recommendation was made to this effect, but the Department did not support it on the basis that the industrial award provided an entitlement for all officers to request a shift swap which cannot be refused on the grounds of gender.²⁶ Figures provided by the Department prior to the 2015 inspection indicated that 56 per cent of prison officers at Boronia were female, a figure this Office considers acceptable.

RELATIONSHIPS

- 3.9 The overwhelming feedback from residents was that Boronia staff treated them with respect and dignity, expressed on many occasions in phrases like 'they treat us like human beings again'. They said this presented a stark contrast to their experiences elsewhere in the prison system.
- 3.10 In the pre-inspection resident survey, 93 per cent of respondents reported a good relationship with the custodial officers. This was a remarkably positive result, best highlighted by comparison to the state average of 51 per cent. Officers displayed strong engagement with the centre's philosophy and cited their relationships with residents and the positive outcomes achieved by residents as one of the most satisfying aspects of their job.
- 3.11 By contrast, there had been a substantial deterioration in the reported relationship between staff and management. The pre-inspection staff survey indicated that perceptions of support and communication from local management had dropped dramatically from very high levels in 2012 to very low levels in 2015 (see figure below). Further analysis of the survey results revealed that these views were reflected by staff from all areas of the centre, but were most marked for custodial staff.

23 See Chapter 4 for more on section 95 work at Boronia.

24 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007) 10–11, Recommendation 3; and OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 20–21, Recommendation 5.

25 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 20–21, Recommendation 6.

26 *Ibid.*, 51.

	2015			2012		
	Poor	Mixed	Good	Poor	Mixed	Good
Support from local management	21%	36%	36%	0%	21%	79%
Communication from local management	27%	33%	33%	6%	18%	76%

Figure 2: Pre-inspection staff survey – perceptions of relationship with local management

- 3.12 Custodial staff were dissatisfied with delayed responses to long service leave requests and shift swap requests, and perceived a lack of responsiveness from management on this issue. They also felt let down by the management of overtime across the site and the impact of this on covering staff absences and vacancies.

Managing Leave and Shift Swap Requests

- 3.13 Annual leave for custodial officers is rostered to be taken during certain specified periods. If staff wish to take long service leave or swap a shift they must submit a request to be processed by the Administration Officer²⁷ and approved by the Business Manager. A common cause for complaint was the slow processing of long service leave requests and shift swap requests. Staff reported waiting weeks and even months for a response. In some cases, they said the response was not received until after the date of the requested leave or shift swap. The same staff felt that Boronia management was over-defensive and unwilling to accept that it was a real issue.
- 3.14 When asked about this by the inspection team, management said they had requested specific examples of excessively late leave request approvals, but had not received any. In contrast, we heard at least five specific examples in the course of the inspection. It is not for this Office to resolve the issue. However, the evidence indicated that some of the complaints had a genuine basis. The management team did not appear to respect the staff's concerns and had not been proactive in addressing the issue.
- 3.15 Management also said that their increased administrative workload and limited resources meant that staff could no longer expect requests to be processed as promptly as before. Certainly, Boronia's administrative support team has not increased in personnel since the centre opened 11 years ago, even though the resident population has grown. However, if undue delays are occurring as a result of increased workload and limited resources, then resources need to be adjusted.
- 3.16 Positively, the Business Manager had begun working with the local union representative to establish agreed timeframes for responses to human resources requests. This will be a useful development provided the timeframes are sensible.

Managing Absences and Overtime

- 3.17 Staff were concerned that when vacancies on the roster were not covered with overtime shifts, this impacted on their safety and workloads. They were also concerned when VSOs, and particularly the Community Activities Officer, were redeployed to cover prison officer roles because this meant that residents were not employed. Custodial staff felt that this was seriously detrimental to the Boronia philosophy.

²⁷ This position is Boronia's only resource responsible for all human resource matters and financial transactions.

- 3.18 Such concerns need to be placed in context. Like all custodial facilities, Boronia is under pressure to manage within budget and reduce spending on overtime. And because it is a small centre with a small staffing complement, it is particularly vulnerable to absences or vacancies. For example, the absence of a few staff on long-term leave (such as parental leave) had a disproportionate impact. In fact, contrary to the perceptions of staff, the centre had exceeded its monthly overtime budget and had a forecast overspend of more than \$150,000 for the 2014–2015 financial year.

Managing the Relationship

- 3.19 The Inspector, in his exit debrief, expressed concern over the poor relationship that so many officers felt they had with local management. He said:²⁸

Staff perceptions of management support and communication are a cloud at a facility that is otherwise performing well. If left unaddressed, such issues invariably lead to slippage in workplace culture.

Fortunately, the issues appear simple and not entrenched ... They can be resolved with proactive, non-defensive and open engagement on all sides, and recognising that prisons must operate within budget.

While specific examples can be disputed, management needs to acknowledge there is a problem that carries risks, and must ensure that staff feel confident that their concerns are respected.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.20 The performance appraisal and development system at Boronia was coordinated by the Principal Officer and functioning smoothly. Reviews were up to date and staff were familiar with their assessors and aware of the process. Staff performance issues were rare and there were no recent examples of remedial action being taken.
- 3.21 There is no training officer at Boronia so all training is coordinated by the Principal Officer. Where possible, training is delivered by internal staff in a regular weekly session. Mandatory training such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid is generally up to date.
- 3.22 Some time prior to the inspection, the Department had introduced a requirement that any staff undertaking external escorts of prisoners must be fully up to date with CPR training. The Corrective Services Academy, located adjacent to Boronia, had been very cooperative by allowing staff to come across as available to attend CPR training. Beyond this, however, it was very difficult for Boronia to facilitate any additional training at the Corrective Services Academy because this would generate overtime hours that the centre could not afford.

28 Morgan N, *Exit Debrief, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women* (27 March 2015).

FEELING SECURE AND SAFE

Perimeter Security

- 3.23 The 2012 inspection found some deficiencies in the physical perimeter security at Boronia. Given its location in a busy suburban area, Boronia's mesh fence was designed to blend in with its surroundings rather than stand apart from them. Whilst good in theory, in practice this meant that it presented a security risk.
- 3.24 Between 2004 and the 2012 inspection, there were 19 recorded counts of intruders into the centre – that is people breaking *in* to Boronia. The 2012 inspection concluded that many of these intrusions could have been prevented had the signage and the cameras located on the perimeter fence been of better quality.²⁹
- 3.25 This inspection found considerable improvement. Signage had increased in number and in size, the camera and microphonic detection systems had been upgraded, and Boronia had only experienced two intrusions since the previous inspection.³⁰

Internal Security – Relationships and Procedures

- 3.26 Boronia uses a range of strategies to ensure the security of the facility and the safety of residents. These include strong relational security and appropriate procedural security practices.

Relational security and perceptions of safety

- 3.27 Good relational security comes about through a good relationship between prisoners and staff. This is achieved through the interaction of staff with the prisoners as well as the ability for prisoners to access staff freely. The residents had plenty of opportunity throughout the day to engage with staff. Officers were out and about during the day, mostly assisting residents, and all the interactions we observed were positive.
- 3.28 Of the residents who completed the pre-inspection survey, 99 per cent said they 'mostly feel safe' at Boronia. This is slightly higher than the last inspection (94%) and significantly higher than the state average of 67 per cent. Feeling safe is a good indication of positive staff/resident relationships, and confirms the centre is doing well with regards to relational security. The pre-inspection staff survey supports these findings with 97 per cent of respondents saying that residents and staff get on well.

Procedural security

- 3.29 Understandably, the Department adopts Policy Directives that apply across the system, but it is also important for there to be sufficient flexibility to reflect the specific role of different facilities. The requirements at a male maximum-security prison are going to be very different from what is required at Boronia.

29 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 18.

30 One in December 2012 and another in September 2014.

- 3.30 The 2012 inspection found that, in the area of searching prisoners, Boronia had consistently failed compliance audits conducted by the Department against its policies governing the searching of prisoners.³¹ Policy Directive 26 (PD 26) requires that prisoners be strip searched when arriving at a facility and when leaving. PD 26 does allow some flexibility, by stipulating that the frequency of searches and search standards should depend on the security rating of the prison. However, it also includes specific targets for searching. For example, it prescribes that five per cent of all pedestrian movements should be subjected to a rub down search on entry into the prison.³² This presumably includes all staff and any visitors to the prison.
- 3.31 In 2015, Boronia still consistently failed to meet the prescribed targets around searching. For example, new residents to Boronia were not routinely strip-searched on arriving at the centre, and visitors to the centre were also not searched as a matter of course. Whilst contrary to the requirements of PD 26, this was in keeping with a minimum-security environment.
- 3.32 The 2012 inspection report recommended that DCS ‘Develop and implement compliance standards across the Department which better reflect the specific offender profiles, roles and activities of the various prisons’. The Department ‘noted’ this recommendation, with the non-committal comment that:³³
- The Department has a well developed set of standards and compliance framework that has been in operation for approximately five years. Over that time they have been continuously reviewed and will continue to be reviewed in the future to ensure that they remain contemporary.
- 3.33 This Office’s continuous inspection process will ensure that over-arching departmental policies like PD 26 do indeed remain contemporary and appropriate to particular facilities.

31 DCS, *Policy Directive 26 – Searches* (Updated December 2014).

32 DCS, *Policy Directive 26 – Searches – Procedures – Searches of staff* (Updated December 2014).

33 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 51.

Chapter 4

LIVING IN BORONIA

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

- 4.1 This chapter tracks the day-to-day life of Boronia residents. It looks at the activities the women engage in and the opportunities they have to look after themselves and their children and families.

Settling In

- 4.2 Boronia is a pre-release centre and as such only receives prisoners transferred from Bandyup Women's Prison and on occasion from other prisons in Western Australia that hold female prisoners. Boronia's reception area is located in the main thoroughfare of the administration building, an area that has a lot of people coming and going all day.
- 4.3 The location of the reception area compromises the privacy of the reception process. Women need to be processed through this area whether leaving the centre (either to freedom or transfer to other facilities) or entering. It was difficult for the Senior Officer responsible for managing the reception process to do so confidentially in this area.



Photo 1 : The reception area.

- 4.4 The property that residents entering the centre bring with them was stored in a room off the reception area. The processes for storing and recording the boxes of property had recently changed, resulting in improved methods of placing these into the property store and retrieving them when required.
- 4.5 The orientation process was well-managed at Boronia, facilitated mainly by peer support residents. Each member of the peer support team is part of a roster to provide orientation to new residents. The process includes a tour of the facility and introductions to key facility personnel as well as the residents with whom she will be sharing a house.

- 4.6 The same peer supporter who facilitated the initial orientation was responsible for following up with the new resident after two weeks to ensure the orientation process had been successfully completed. The new resident was also given the opportunity to provide feedback on the process through a questionnaire.
- 4.7 This Office recommended, in 2012, that Boronia update the orientation DVD that was in use at the time.³⁴ Whilst this recommendation was initially supported, Boronia management informed the inspection team that the cost of this was prohibitive. Instead, they had developed pamphlets titled 'Living in Boronia' which contain comprehensive information about the facility.³⁵ The pamphlet thus replaced the DVD as the medium through which new residents are exposed to life in Boronia. Whilst comprehensive, this medium is only effective for those residents who can read well. For those for whom literacy is a problem, updating audio-visual material would be preferable.

Employment

Working inside Boronia

- 4.8 Having most prisoners engaged in meaningful work activities is mutually beneficial: the prisoners are rewarded for their work, and the facility benefits from the work.
- 4.9 As the figure below indicates, all but four of the 91 residents at the time of the inspection were employed. Boronia is to be commended on maintaining this level of employment despite the growth in prisoner numbers.

Gratuity Level	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Cleaning party 1	2	3	1			6
F/T education		1	4			5
Garden party 1		30	4			34
Kitchen	6	18				24
Laundry		1				1
Library worker		1				1
Maintenance	1	2	2			5
Mothers with children				3		3
Not working					4	4
Section 95 ³⁶			8			8
Grand Total	9	56	19	3	4	91

Figure 3: Employment and gratuity levels (as at 23 March 2015)

34 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) Recommendation 11.

35 Black and white versions of this pamphlet are provided to the women at Bandyup before they transfer to Boronia, at which point they get the multi-coloured version.

36 Section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981* allows the provision of services for the wellbeing and rehabilitation of prisoners, which may be provided inside or outside the prison, subject to relevant rules and regulations.

- 4.10 The 10 extra residents who had recently been received were mostly deployed to the two largest on-site employers, the kitchen (which includes the servery/café, store, kitchen cleaners, supermarket, kitchen laundry and external catering) and the garden party (which includes internal and external gardens and grounds, vegetable garden, nursery, composting).
- 4.11 The officers responsible for these areas managed to absorb the extra workers, but they were clearly under some pressure. In the past, for example, kitchen workers had responsibility for providing meals for trainee prison officers going through their entry level certification at the Corrective Services Academy located adjacent to Boronia. However, no entry level officer training schools had been scheduled so far for 2015. The catering coordinator had to try to find sufficient meaningful work for all his kitchen staff even given this decline in demand.
- 4.12 The catering coordinator had submitted a business case to be able to access the kitchen at the Academy (the site of the old Nyandi Women's Prison). His goal was to increase capacity for commercial catering contracts. If successful, this would increase both the number of jobs available in the kitchen industry and also the opportunities for the kitchen workers in relation to training and skill development.
- 4.13 The centre's 2014–2015 Industries Action Plan also contained some other excellent ideas for developments in industries and employment, including the construction of a hot house/shade house, increasing crop production, increased recycling and sustainability measures, and shifting the existing workshops to allow space for new industries.
- 4.14 The inspection team also looked at employment levels specifically amongst the Aboriginal residents at Boronia. Half of the Aboriginal residents (12 out of 24) were employed in the garden party. There were no Aboriginal women employed in the maintenance team responsible for the general maintenance of the centre. The Aboriginal women were mostly satisfied with the work options available to them, except for the fact there were no Aboriginal women on the external section 95 work group. More generally, the inspection found that the section 95 work program was under-achieving.

Working outside Boronia – section 95

- 4.15 The section 95 work program includes work at various community agencies, and external catering and gardening work.³⁷ In March 2015 there were eight residents employed as part of the community work party.
- 4.16 When functioning properly, this 'section team' worked at three different charitable agencies four days per week, leaving before 9.00 am and returning by 2.00 pm. In recent months, however, this had been compromised by overtime restrictions. The officer responsible for escorting the section 95 work party was being redeployed to other positions within the centre. This was extremely destabilising for the section 95 work program. The women who were expecting to go out to work mentioned that they were left idle on those days. Inspection team members observed this to be the case too. Those agencies that were expecting the women to assist them for the day were left scrambling to find other volunteers who could come in at short notice.

³⁷ Presently Boronia provides limited catering for the Corrections Academy next door. Gardening is undertaken on the external grounds of Boronia and generally in the grounds of the Academy. Community work is undertaken by the section 95 team which has a dedicated Vocational Support Officer.

- 4.17 Past inspections have found the kind of work the women on the section 95 work party engage in to be less than meaningful.³⁸
- In 2009, the residents who were engaged in the section 95 work program at Boronia described the work they undertook as ‘monotonous’ and claimed it did not provide them with opportunities to acquire specific skills.
- 4.18 Section 95 work party residents interviewed during the 2015 inspection continued to lament the largely menial nature of their work, but they still felt proud of their contributions.
- 4.19 The overall conclusion about the section 95 work program at Boronia is that it was under-utilised (only eight residents benefitted, none Aboriginal); it was haphazard (depending on whether the section 95 officer was required for redeployment within the centre); and the work, whilst important for the agency and providing some sense of community engagement and responsibility for the residents, was not sufficiently focused on work ready skills.³⁹
- 4.20 This Office has made previous recommendations for more investment into the section 95 program at Boronia.⁴⁰ These recommendations refer not only to the use of section 95 for residents to leave the centre for work purposes but also to the use of this provision for recreation, education, medical purposes, and activities between mothers and children.
- 4.21 The 2012 inspection report recommended that Boronia expand the frequency, meaningfulness and diversity of section 95 activities. In its submission to this inspection, the Department claimed this had happened:
- Boronia has increased the diversity of activities being undertaken within the existing approved activity categories.⁴¹
- 4.22 However, no evidence was provided in support of this statement, and the inspection itself found there had been no effective increase in the amount or meaningful content of section 95 work. Effective section 95 programs lie at the core of Boronia’s philosophy. It is therefore necessary to repeat the same recommendation here:

38 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 30.

39 The Department questioned this finding saying that the work bus only has capacity for eight residents and the staff/prisoner escorting ratio is one to eight. This Office expects Boronia, in its role as a pre-release centre, to explore innovative options to challenge and expand the section 95 work program beyond these limitations, and not simply accept this as a status quo that cannot be changed.

40 See OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009) 25 and Recommendation 4; and OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 31 and Recommendation 10.

41 DCS, Updated responses to previous recommendations submitted as part of the OICS document request prior to the commencement of the Boronia inspection in March 2015.

Recommendation 2

Increase the use of section 95 of the Prisons Act 1981 to incorporate more meaningful activities for the women in respect of: (i) work;⁴² (ii) recreation;⁴³ (iii) activities between mothers and children;⁴⁴ (iv) health services (including mental health);⁴⁵ and (v) education.⁴⁶

Getting paid

- 4.23 One of the incentives for prisoners to work whilst in prison is to earn some money. The money earned is referred to as gratuities. There are different gratuity levels assigned to the different types of work available.
- 4.24 Figure 3 above includes a profile of the gratuity levels attached to the different work positions. Level 1 reflects the highest paying jobs at \$67.48 per week, while level 5 is the lowest at \$21.21 per week. Level 3, the level of gratuity the residents working on the external section 95 program were paid, is \$40.46 per week.
- 4.25 Excepting those prisoners earning the highest gratuity level, the amount of money earned for work undertaken in a custodial setting is very often a source of complaint. The payment of gratuities only at level 3 to the section 95 work party residents is undervaluing the work that they do. In addition, we have concerns about the low level of gratuities paid to mothers.
- 4.26 The section 95 team contributes directly to the community and to Departmental reputation through the work they do. Some of the work is essentially unskilled and unrewarding, such as sorting clothing donations, and some is more skilled and rewarding, such as preparing lunch for the elderly. Regardless, the work is of real value to the people and agencies they help and there is an inherent level of trust and responsibility as a prisoner in undertaking supervised work in the community.
- 4.27 At most prisons, jobs that require a system of trust in the prisoner(s) performing the tasks attract a higher level of gratuity than level 3 (for example, prisoners who clean offices and communal areas in prison administration buildings). Male prisoners who reach minimum-security status, and meet other criteria, can apply to go to a work camp. Here they can earn up to \$87.50 per week at a gratuity level only applicable to work camps (level 23). These prisoners also perform work in the community. There are no work camps for women and section 95 from Boronia represents the highest level of trust; there is a strong case for increasing the gratuities the section 95 women receive.
- 4.28 Level 4 jobs attract a weekly wage of just \$28.63, only slightly more than the lowest gratuity level. This is the wage a mother caring for her resident child at Boronia earns each week.⁴⁷ In fact, this was the lowest paid regular job at Boronia. This was at odds with

42 See [4.15]–[4.18].

43 See [4.31]–[4.36].

44 See [5.40]–[5.46].

45 See [5.18].

46 See [6.26].

47 Mothers with resident children also receive a Centrelink welfare payment, as they would do if they were in the community. See [5.27].

the philosophy and guiding principles of Boronia, which emphasise family responsibilities – a devaluing of motherhood in a centre dedicated to women’s rehabilitation.

- 4.29 The argument presented in favour of the low gratuity payment for mothers with resident children was that provision is made for mothers to access a childcare facility up to three times each week, and that this frees them up on these days to do other work and thereby earn a higher gratuity level. Whilst this may suit some mothers, this may not be appropriate for other mothers, particularly those who need to focus on rebuilding their relationship with their resident child. It will also generally not suit mothers who have babies under 12 months’ old.
- 4.30 Rather than a ‘one size fits all approach’, the transition for a mother with a resident child into the workforce should be managed on a case by case basis and always be in the best interests of both mother and child. Likewise, the gratuity profile of the women with resident children in Boronia should reflect the different needs and efforts of mothers. The current profile assumes a standard approach to parenting for all mothers with children residing with them in the centre.⁴⁸

Recreation

- 4.31 There was no formally organised recreation activity at Boronia at the time of the inspection because there had not been a recreation or activities officer in post for at least 12 months.
- 4.32 The lack of recreation opportunities was reflected in the poor survey results relating to this aspect of life in the centre. Sixty per cent of respondents to the prisoner survey considered their access to recreation poor, and 78 per cent rated the amount of organised sport at the centre as poor. In 2012 by contrast, 66 and 68 per cent of respondents respectively were ‘happy’ with both the amount of organised sport and their access to recreation. So clearly a decline in satisfaction levels over the three years between inspections.



Photo 2 : The absence of a Recreation Officer meant that there was no consistent, structured recreation program in place at Boronia.

48 See Chapter 5 for a full analysis of life for mothers with resident children in Boronia.

4.33 In 2012, residents were much more engaged with recreation than in 2015, and that inspection report commended the enthusiasm and good work of the recreation officer:⁴⁹

The present recreation officer began at Boronia in mid-2011, filling a role which had been vacant for seven months. This role is benefitting greatly from a fresh approach, with the current post holder identifying numerous opportunities to expand options available to residents, both inside and outside the centre.

4.34 Although limited to a neighbourhood walking program, the recreation officer in 2012 was utilising section 95 for recreation purposes. She was also planning to expand section 95 recreation to include other activities such as taking the women to an indoor rock climbing facility.⁵⁰

4.35 In 2015 the only ‘organised’ recreation was managed by a handful of motivated residents. These included circuit training sessions in the gym facilitated by a fitness accredited resident. Some residents arranged weekly bingo sessions which were well attended. And, depending on the interests of the women in the centre at any given time, sports like basketball and volleyball had been organised on an ad hoc basis.



Photo 3 : The gym.

49 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 36.
50 Ibid.

- 4.36 Recreation is a key element in a well-functioning prison and women need access just as much as men. At the time of the inspection, the position of recreation officer at Boronia had been advertised and we expect a reinvigorated system of recreation activities, including section 95, to be implemented.

Clothing and Bedding

- 4.37 For years there have been plans to change the Boronia residents' uniform. In 2012 we were told:
- Proposals are currently being considered to provide new clothing options for Boronia's residents. These include new outfits specifically for visits and appointments, new day-to-day clothing to be manufactured at Bandyup, and the gradual phasing out of the Boronia 'maroons'.⁵¹
- 4.38 There had been no progress on this. However, on the positive side, the survey results indicated that residents were more satisfied with the clothing (40% said it was 'good') than in 2012 (26% said it was good).
- 4.39 Regardless, it is time for the demise of the maroons. The uniformity, casual appearance and fit of this clothing is at odds with the centre's philosophy of empowerment and personal responsibility. The residents have no choice in the clothing they wear for their different daily activities, such as attending appointments, leaving the centre as part of their section 95 work, visiting with their friends, family and children, working out at the gym and so on. This is disempowering for residents and removes responsibility from them.



Photo 4 : The residents on the section 95 work program were particularly dissatisfied with the clothing, saying that it potentially identified where they were from.

51 Ibid., 35.

- 4.40 In his exit debrief, the Inspector contrasted the ‘baggy’ and ‘ill-fitting’ Boronia uniform with the casual sports-style clothing that the male residents at Wandoo⁵² wear: ‘this contrast is stark, especially for those prisoners exiting the centre’. Those residents who left the centre each day as part of the section 95 work party certainly felt the clothes drew attention to them as belonging to a particular group, just like a school uniform identifies people. They said that they were clearly not school-goers and felt it would not be difficult for a member of the public to realise where they were from.
- 4.41 This Office understands that the centre is working towards changing the clothing, and that part of this work entails implementing a new stock control system, similar to the one used in the supermarket and canteen. All clothing will be managed through this electronic system allowing for more efficient processes of managing the clothing stock on-site and streamlining ordering processes. If this materialises it will be a good outcome, but it has taken too long.

Recommendation 3

Provide new, more appropriate clothing to Boronia residents, and prioritise the issue of new clothing to the residents who leave the centre for section 95 activities.

Social Visits

- 4.42 Social visit sessions occur on the weekends. There are two sessions on both Saturday and Sunday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The maximum number of residents who can receive a social visit in one visit session is 25. Given the increased population in the centre at the time of the inspection, all four visit sessions over the course of a weekend were mostly full.
- 4.43 The number of adult visitors who can visit a resident at one time is three. There is no limit to the number of children who can visit at any one time, but the centre applies a ‘reasonableness’ test to ensure that everyone can enjoy their visit peacefully and safely.
- 4.44 Children can participate in activities facilitated by a childcare worker during the visit sessions. This worker is employed by Outcare, an external service provider contracted to provide family support and re-entry services to prisoners in metropolitan prisons. Outcare staff are also available to family members before and after the visits sessions and assist with matters such as referrals for financial assistance, information on prison procedures, negotiating with crisis accommodation and general housing services, and providing emotional support.
- 4.45 Visitors are treated respectfully by Boronia staff. Appropriate security procedures are followed but, as befits Boronia’s minimum-security status, they are not intrusive.

52 Wandoo Reintegration Facility is a minimum-security prison for males aged 18 to 28 that opened in October 2012.

- 4.46 The café in the visits centre was fully functional and very well used. This was an improvement from the previous inspection when the café had not been operational for 12 months. Residents can purchase food and drinks for their visitors from the café, the cost of which is deducted from each resident's gratuity account. It provides a good range of food options, including savoury treats like pizzas and sweet treats like cakes and pastries. Barista-made coffees are also available for purchase. Tea, regular coffee, water and cordial were also freely available.
- 4.47 This Office has previously recommended that Skype be made available for residents at Boronia.⁵³ The Department supported this in 2012 and in advising us of progress against previous recommendations, it claimed that progress against this had been 'completed' in that 'e-visit options, broader than just Skype, are being considered'.⁵⁴ Contemplating future options does not constitute complete progress against a recommendation: progress will not be complete until an e-visit system is operating at Boronia. Although not repeated here by way of a formal recommendation, this Office will continue to monitor access to e-visit options for prisoners across the state.



Photos 5 & 6 : The social visits facilities at Boronia.

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- 53 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) Recommendation 13.
- 54 DCS, Updated responses to previous recommendations submitted as part of the OICS document request prior to the commencement of the Boronia inspection in March 2015.

Supermarket and Canteen

4.48 The self-catering system at Boronia remains unchanged since the centre opened 11 years ago. Each house is assigned a weekly budget and residents in the house must purchase food and provisions for the week in line with this budget. The food items in the supermarket are categorised according to their health benefits, as either red, green or amber items. The weekly budget has limits built in which restrict the amount of ‘red’ items that can be purchased each week to ten per cent of the overall budget. These items are the less healthy choices. Residents were accepting of this system and able to manage their weekly budgets around it. They can also use money in their gratuity accounts to purchase personal items from the canteen, which is co-located with the supermarket.



Photo 7 : Fresh fruit and vegetables available for purchase in the supermarket.



Photo 8 : Meat available for purchase in the supermarket. The meat is delivered in bulk and has to be thawed and re-packaged into smaller portions which are sold in the supermarket. For this reason, the meat that is sold to residents cannot be re-frozen.

- 4.49 Survey feedback was reasonably positive: 69 per cent of the residents who responded to the pre-inspection survey said that the amount of food was good; 58 per cent said the quality of food was good; and 63 per cent rated the canteen as good.
- 4.50 Since the last inspection the catering coordinator has implemented a monthly 'audit' schedule. One of the cook instructors attends each house once a month to monitor all aspects of the local kitchen operations. He checks that the food is properly stored at the correct temperature in the fridge; that the cooking utensils are in good order (if not, they are replaced); and ensures there is no over-supply of certain food items or under-supply of others. Finally, he takes samples of prepared food from a random selection of houses each month which get sent off for testing to ensure that the food being prepared by the residents conforms to food hygiene standards. This is excellent practice.

Spiritual Services

- 4.51 There are three chaplains at Boronia, one of whom has a coordinating role. These chaplains take turns in facilitating an inclusive religious service every Sunday. A Buddhist nun continues to visit weekly. The chaplains can also arrange for the Aboriginal chaplain from Bandyup to visit Boronia at the request of residents.
- 4.52 Overall, the residents felt supported by the chaplains and were satisfied with the range of spiritual services available. Some residents felt particularly grateful to the chaplains for their guidance in assisting them in providing alternative perspectives on which they can base future life choice decisions.

Chapter 5

BEING RESPONSIBLE

- 5.1 Responsibility is a key concept of Boronia’s guiding philosophy, and features in three of its four guiding principles, namely personal responsibility (and empowerment); community responsibility; and family responsibilities. This chapter looks at the opportunities the residents at Boronia have to exercise responsibility in making decisions about their lifestyle choices. In particular, decisions about their own lives (personal responsibility) and those of their children (family responsibilities).

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.2 Boronia’s guiding philosophy describes personal responsibility and empowerment in the following way:⁵⁵

Personal responsibility increases the potential to be law-abiding and achieve a positive role in the community. Empowerment means developing a sense of value and self-worth, and confidence in the ability to create a positive future.

- 5.3 This Office has always supported these concepts: Boronia is a pre-release centre and the ability to take good decisions and to be responsible is vital to successful reintegration. However, over the course of Boronia’s history, we have become increasingly concerned that while these principles are embedded at a conceptual level, they are not being maximised in practice. Nor are they being implemented to the extent originally anticipated. The 2012 inspection found that a paternalistic approach towards the residents was sometimes impeding their ability to make decisions for themselves.⁵⁶ The report recommended that Boronia re-evaluate practices which counteracted the philosophy of personal responsibility.⁵⁷ The Department rejected the recommendation.
- 5.4 This inspection found that residents at Boronia can make choices about certain aspects of their lives, but these choices have become further restricted. This is the result of higher numbers of residents and centre or Departmental requirements. The principle of personal responsibility remains under-valued in practice.

Staying Healthy

- 5.5 Taking the opportunity to make meaningful health and lifestyle choices is integral to the concept of personal responsibility and empowerment. And being in prison does present the women with opportunities to take personal responsibility for their own health. A prison environment provides structure and order to what is often a chaotic lifestyle for many offenders.
- 5.6 The ready availability of a health service in prison makes it a lot more accessible for these women, who may not engage sufficiently with such services in the community. This, combined with the focus on residents taking responsibility for their personal health and lifestyle choices, meant the health service at Boronia was a valuable resource. This was reflected in the results of the pre-inspection survey administered to Boronia residents, 60 per cent of whom felt that the health service provided in Boronia was ‘good’.

55 DCS, *Boronia’s Guiding Philosophy* (undated). Available <at www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

56 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 47.

57 *Ibid.*, Recommendation 17.

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- 5.7 The health centre at Boronia is purpose-built and well-equipped. Staffing consists of a clinical nurse specialist and two clinical nurses. They are managed by a clinical nurse manager who is based off-site at Bandyup Women's Prison ('Bandyup').
- 5.8 Some drugs must remain controlled but in keeping with the principle of personal responsibility, residents at Boronia may keep some medication on their person to self-administer at the appropriate time each day. This included some anti-depressant medications.
- 5.9 The increase in the resident population at Boronia has not been supported with an increase in resources for key services. In fact, health resources have effectively decreased as a result of the need to service Bandyup, which is seriously overcrowded and stressed. The Clinical Nurse Specialist (the most senior nursing position at Boronia) spends two of her four working days each week away filling vacant nursing shifts at Bandyup and the other nurses must cover for the position.
- 5.10 It was clear that the health centre was trying to do the best it could in a challenging context. However, the pressure on staff was affecting the scheduling of appointments. Despite the positive survey results, many residents complained about access to the centre. They said that they felt there was a 'gatekeeper' system in place and that their access to the health centre was obstructed, particularly if they did not have a specific appointment to attend. On these occasions, they were prevented from entering the centre and had to speak to the receptionist through an intercom system outside the door.
- 5.11 Inspection team members were told that this was not a triage system, but rather an attempt to manage the increasing number of women wanting to access the health centre. We were not entirely convinced of this, however. The women had to provide, over the intercom, and potentially within the hearing of other residents, the reason they were attending the centre. The medical receptionist would then make a decision about whether they could enter or not. The basic definition of 'triaging' is deciding which patients are to be seen first. In effect, this was what the medical receptionist was being required to do. This is entirely inappropriate.
- 5.12 This situation is not going to change. Given prison population increases and budget pressures, it is unlikely that Boronia's resident population will decrease or that its health services' staff will increase. Given Boronia's unique role and selected low-risk population, there is ample opportunity for innovation in the way its health services are provided (see also 'looking ahead', below).

Mental health

- 5.13 Levels of mental illness and mental health need amongst female prisoners are very high. Some women will be so unwell and so much at risk that they cannot realistically be placed at Boronia. However, for much of Boronia's history there was an unwillingness to house even women with lower mental health needs there. The 2012 inspection also found that 'when women at Boronia 'act-up' they are swiftly returned to Bandyup because of the lack of any counselling available on-site'.⁵⁸ We took the view that, rather than

58 Ibid., 11.

expecting an already under-resourced health service at Bandyup to manage these transfers, and also to mitigate the distress the women experience over being sent back to Bandyup, Boronia should where possible manage the issue. We recommended the Department ‘change the practice of excluding prisoners on the grounds of mental health needs by sourcing and establishing a comprehensive network of community-based mental health and counselling services under section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981*.⁵⁹

- 5.14 The Department rejected this recommendation but by 2015 mental health services at Boronia had in fact stepped up. We were satisfied that women with mental health needs were not being refused access to Boronia and that there is now more effort to manage these women on-site rather than sending them back to Bandyup. Boronia now has a Prison Counselling Service (PCS) on-site, and the psychologist attends Boronia two days a week and sees between four and six women each day. The mental health nurse who was attending Boronia retired and had not been replaced, but we were told that recruitment of a new nurse was underway.
- 5.15 Residents with mental health needs that required psychiatric intervention had to go to Bandyup for an appointment with the psychiatrist who attends Bandyup once a week. These appointments often have to be cancelled or re-scheduled due to the acuity of mental health needs of the women in Bandyup.
- 5.16 Whilst the situation within Boronia had improved with regard to accepting and managing women with mental health problems, this Office remains disappointed that women are not able to leave Boronia to attend community-based mental health services under the section 95 provision of the *Prisons Act 1981*. This is a significant gap in the provision of a holistic health service to residents in a pre-release centre, and does mean some residents are missing out on services, such as those whose appointments with the psychiatrist at Bandyup are cancelled in favour of the more urgent requirements by Bandyup prisoners.

Looking ahead

- 5.17 Offender health services are changing. The Department has conducted a number of reviews and is examining alternative service delivery models. And, shortly before this inspection, the Director of Health Services departed unexpectedly and with no notice. However, apart from some generalised and rather obtuse statements, the Department centrally has shared very little about its reasoning, plans or options. Health workers at Boronia and other prisons have been unsettled by the abrupt personnel changes and future uncertainty. They deserve better communication.
- 5.18 As discussed in previous inspection reports, Boronia certainly provides a good opportunity for innovation in health service delivery. It houses highly selected low risk women who are heading towards release, and most of whom are approved for section 95 activities. The custodial environment places obvious limitations on health service provision but Boronia is conveniently located in a suburb well serviced by health services, including many that specifically target the needs of mothers and Aboriginal women. It would make

59 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) Recommendation 2.

sense for most of them to attend local community-based health services using section 95. This would fit the focus on reintegration, responsibility (personal, family and community) and empowerment.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES – NURTURING CHILDREN

5.19 The Boronia philosophy encourages residents to maintain and, if necessary, re-energise, their relationships with their families, in particular their children. This principle recognises that...⁶⁰

The restoration, maintenance and support of family relationships – with an emphasis on mothers and caregivers, their children and dependants – is essential to the well-being of women.

5.20 In keeping with this principle, residents at Boronia can apply to have a child reside with them in the centre up until the child reaches the age of four. Boronia residents can also apply to have extended visits with their children in the form of day stays and overnight visits, until the child reaches the age of 12. Up to six children can reside at the centre with their mothers, and up to 10 children are permitted to have extended day stay or overnight visits with their mothers in the centre at any one time.⁶¹

5.21 This inspection found a number of continuing strengths at Boronia but crowding pressures were impacting on this key area, and management/resident communication needed to be improved.

Administrative Arrangements

5.22 Policy Directive 10 (PD 10) contains the Departmental guidelines relating to mothers in prison and their children.⁶² This policy clearly defines the parameters and processes that prison managers and staff must observe when facilitating the connection between mothers and their children in Boronia.

5.23 The 2015 inspection found that the criteria and guidelines set out in PD 10 were being observed at Boronia. Applications by residents to have their child reside with them were considered by a Child Care Management Committee, which included a cross-representation of custodial and non-custodial staff on-site at Boronia. As prescribed by PD 10, members of this Committee formulated a care plan prior to the child entering the facility.

These care plans include:

- Restrictions for the child on contact with other prisoners;
- Areas of the facility that are out of bounds for the child;
- Any special needs the child may have;
- Programs the mother needs to attend;
- Alternate carers, both within the facility and in the community;

60 DCS, *Boronia's Guiding Philosophy* (undated). Available at <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

61 The term 'mother' used in this Report refers to the biological mother of the child/children as well as the primary carer, where it has been ascertained that this individual is the main person responsible for the custody or care of a child or children.

62 DCS, *Policy Directive 10 – Prisoner Mothers/Primary Carers and their Children* (April 2007).

- Visiting arrangements with other carers in the community; and
- Childcare arrangements that may be required to allow the mother to attend education or programs.

5.24 A review of a random sample of care plans for mothers at Boronia⁶³ showed that the plans contained the appropriate information and clearly identified the boundaries and requirements for both the mother and her resident/visiting child/children. In the case of mothers with resident children, the plans were reviewed every six months. In the case of children approved to have extended day stays with their mothers, the plans were reviewed every three months. In sum, Boronia was complying with relevant policies and procedures in managing mothers and children on-site.

The Lived Experience

- 5.25 At the time of the inspection there were five children residing with their mothers at Boronia, ranging in age from six months to three years. Mothers can nominate alternate carers for their children, both from inside the centre and in the community. The internal carers can be called on to look after the child for short periods of time (for example, if the mother needs to attend a medical or other appointment). The external carer is called on if the child needs to leave the centre (for example, if the child needs to attend a medical appointment or to comply with custody arrangements with other carers).
- 5.26 Chapter four of this Report details the relatively low level of gratuity that mothers with resident children receive.⁶⁴ Mothers can choose to work in the centre to increase their gratuity level, and to facilitate this they have the opportunity to place their child in daycare up to three days a week.
- 5.27 There are three nursery houses that accommodate the mothers and resident children at Boronia. Two mothers share each nursery house. The mothers receive the same welfare entitlements as mothers in the community. These funds are placed in a separate account which the mothers can access when purchasing items for their children through the supermarket at Boronia. There are a limited number of approved items that the mothers can use these 'Centrelink' funds to purchase, such as nappies, formula and wipes.
- 5.28 Part of every mother's care plan is compulsory attendance at a weekly 'playgroup' session facilitated by an external service provider. This occurs every Friday and is called 'Pine Tree Tots'. Attendance is compulsory for the mothers, even if they have signed their baby/child out to their external carer on that day. The sessions involve craft activities for the children, singing, dancing, structured and free play, and other activities to encourage interaction between the mothers and their children.

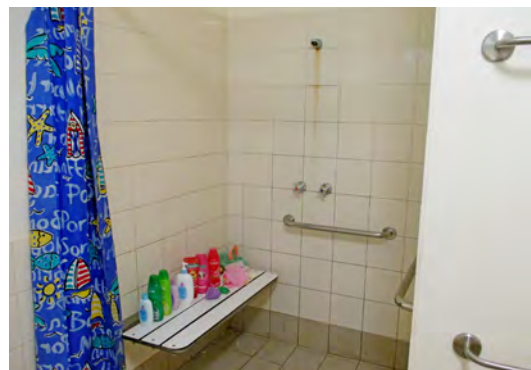
63 The plans are on TOMS: the Total Offender Management Solution. TOMS is an electronic database used to record and manage comprehensive information relating to offenders in custody.

64 See [4.26]–[4.28].

BEING RESPONSIBLE



Photos 9 & 10 : Mothers with resident children/babies could purchase these essential items using the Centrelink welfare payment they receive.



Photos 11 to 17(over page) : Snapshots of life inside a house for resident mothers and children at Boronia.



Photo 17 : (See previous caption).

The Impact of Crowding

- 5.29 The mothers who did not have children residing with them, but relied on extended visits in the form of long day or overnight visits were most impacted by the current crowding. As stated in chapter two of this report, 48 women (over 50% of the population) were sharing a room. These women could have extended day visits with their children but could not have overnight visits. Mothers who were having to share a room had a long wait for a single room (most said four to five months) before they could apply to have an overnight visit with their children.
- 5.30 This fundamentally undermined the principles behind the concept of family responsibilities. One of the value statements that supports this principle is ‘having maximum opportunities to contact families, in particular children’. The women forced to share a room were not being afforded ‘maximum opportunities’ to remain connected with their children.

Support for Mothers and Children

- 5.31 Following the first inspection in 2006, we said:⁶⁵
- The provision for mothers and primary carers who had their children residing with them or visiting them for extended periods (overnight or day stays) was substantial. The facilities were modern and the centre’s regime specifically accommodated the needs of the children.
- 5.32 In 2009 we said there was a ‘comprehensive suite of support’ provided for mothers and their children while in custody in Boronia.⁶⁶
- 5.33 The 2012 report referred to continuing ‘good processes’ but cautioned that there had been some slippage in the delivery of services.⁶⁷ It was disheartening to see, in 2015, that this slippage had continued. This prompted the Inspector to conclude: ‘we are not persuaded that there is sufficient management drive: and the breadth and depth of services appears to have diminished’.⁶⁸

65 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007) 27.

66 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 62 (November 2009) 33.

67 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 40.

68 Morgan N, *Exit Debrief, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women* (27 March 2015).

- 5.34 The mothers with resident children on-site at the time of the inspection voiced strong concerns about what they saw as a lack of engagement by management in the practical, day-to-day needs of the mothers (some of whom were first time mums); and in providing ongoing support/advice/information that is essential for mothers, and particularly new mothers.
- 5.35 Mothers with babies and toddlers in the community have a range of services they can access for information on parenting. For example they can contact the local community-based child health nurse at any time; they can make an appointment to see their GP; they can find the support of other mothers through a local playgroup or new mothers' group; they can go to the library⁶⁹ to find relevant books; or they can access the internet for information. At Boronia, however, these opportunities for additional parenting information and support were not available to the mothers with resident children. They maintained that any information they do receive comes from sharing amongst themselves. Asked who they would go to in the first instance for support and information they all said they relied on each other.
- 5.36 When management were asked the same question, they made three points. First, they said information tends to be provided indirectly, for example through articles in the Boronia newsletter. Management claimed that this non-direct approach was a better way of providing information to the mothers with resident children. However, written information in newsletters is no substitute for positive personal engagement.
- 5.37 Secondly, management said that general custodial staff have responsibilities to engage on such issues as part of their daily contact with prisoners. To a degree this is true but custodial staff do not have particular expertise in such issues, many are male, and they have other tasks.
- 5.38 Finally, management said that the women receive parenting information through one-on-one support during the mandatory weekly Pine Tree Tots sessions. However, the mothers told inspection team members these were focused solely on activities with the mothers and their children, that they were not an opportunity to ask for parenting advice, and that they did not receive one-on-one support.
- 5.39 There is no doubt that the opportunity for residents at Boronia to have their children reside with them is invaluable. However, this on its own is not enough – it does not provide any challenge to improve parenting. Rather, learning and growing occurs in an environment where there is meaningful engagement between those who have the expertise and those who need the expertise. The Inspector's challenge to Boronia to 'be open to challenge and change' and to be 'agile, responsive and innovative, rather than defensive and content with the status quo' is particularly relevant.

Recommendation 4

Improve the personal engagement between the relevant manager(s) and the mothers with resident children at Boronia to ensure this group is adequately supported and informed.

69 The library at Boronia did have some resources on parenting but these were limited, particularly considering the role of Boronia in maintaining family connections.

Promoting the Mother-Child Relationship

- 5.40 The statements contained in Boronia's guiding philosophy document that underpin the principle of family responsibilities speak to enhancing and nurturing the bond between mothers and their children, including:⁷⁰
- Participating in positive socialisation activities that promote mother-child relationships; and
 - Improving care-giving and relationship skills by accessing relevant programs and support.
- 5.41 In reality, the inspection found that mothers at Boronia were not always afforded these opportunities to nurture their relationship with their resident child/children.
- 5.42 For instance, there was some conflict between what the resident mothers told us about being able to leave the centre to attend medical appointments with their child and what centre management told us. The mothers said that their requests to accompany their children to medical appointments were, more often than not, not approved and that they had to sign their child out to the external carer. They felt quite traumatised by this, particularly when they were not able to accompany their child to their scheduled immunisations which can be most upsetting for young children and babies. The centre's response was that mothers do get to accompany their children to these appointments.
- 5.43 Overall, we are of the view that, whilst there may be processes in place to allow mothers to accompany their children to external medical appointments, the day-to-day reality of life at Boronia, such as staff shortages, often prohibited these external escorts. Further, the section below explains changes to the policy around who can escort the residents outside the centre (see [5.51] onwards) which also impacted the residents' opportunities to leave the centre with their children to attend medical appointments.
- 5.44 The inspection team was told that caring for children is not within the remit of the health service at Boronia. Whilst health checks on children visiting their mothers at Boronia for extended visits (day and overnight visits) were once performed, a recent (March 2015) directive had stopped this practice. So children entering the facility to have a day or overnight stay with their mother were not screened for any health concern. The children who came into the centre to live with their mothers for a longer period were given a brief, once-off health check when they first arrived. We were told, however, that this was so cursory that it did not provide any meaningful insight into the health of the child entering the centre.
- 5.45 Further, mothers with resident children could not participate in social, community-based activities that are generally freely available, such as new mothers' groups, which are often coordinated by the local child health nurse. Even more informal activities like meeting other mothers and babies at the park, or going for a swim with their baby/child were not available.
- 5.46 In summary, Boronia is supposed to 'normalise' life as far as possible and to re-connect residents to the community. It is therefore most regrettable that mothers with children are not able to participate in external 'family' activities. In 2012 we recommended that

70 DCS, *Boronia's Guiding Philosophy* (undated). Available at <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

section 95 should be used to enable women – subject to appropriate risk assessments – to be involved in such activities. The point remains equally valid in 2015.

SECTION 95

- 5.47 At the time of writing, 50 women at Boronia, out of a resident population of 89, were approved to leave the centre under section 95.⁷¹ Of these, only eight women were using this provision to leave the centre for work purposes.⁷² Nine were leaving the centre (not all every day, though) as part of the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP) which has its own set of eligibility criteria and approval processes separate from the section 95 provision.⁷³
- 5.48 A section 95 program operating out of a pre-release centre should be more than a handful of residents leaving for work or education/training purposes. This is particularly true at Boronia given its philosophy of personal, family and community responsibility. The opportunities for residents to exercise these responsibilities were restricted by a narrow interpretation of section 95, and a heavily risk averse approach.
- 5.49 The privately-operated Wandoo Reintegration Facility has a more innovative and progressive approach to the use of section 95.⁷⁴ For example, its residents can participate in recreation outside the facility, some organised and some informal, including walking or running around local parks, and swimming at the local public swimming pool. They may also leave the facility to go shopping for certain approved town spends items for which they have purchased vouchers.
- 5.50 Although Boronia probably houses a lower risk cohort than Wandoo, local management does not appear to have been keen to extend the use of section 95. In part this seems to be based on the need to ensure the safety of residents. This is understandable, but it has constrained the centre's ability to meet its avowed objectives.
- 5.51 The limited range of external activities was not solely the responsibility of local management. Escapes by minimum-security prisoners participating in section 95 activities had led to changes in head office requirements and processes. Approvals which had previously been done at local facility level and took a few days now had to go through a complex process of checks involving different divisions within the Department. The evidence from a number of prisons was that approvals could take weeks.
- 5.52 Amendments to Policy Directive 53, which governs access to section 95 activities, have also impacted negatively on the centre. Escorts of prisoners to external section 95 locations must now be conducted by a prison officer.⁷⁵ Previously, Boronia had relied heavily on non-uniformed staff, who had completed appropriate training in escorting

71 Information obtained from Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women on 22 May 2015. Three residents had not been approved, and the rest of the population were in the process of being assessed or awaiting intelligence reports.

72 See [4.15]–[4.20] for more on section 95 work opportunities at Boronia.

73 PEP is authorised under section 83(1)(a) of the *Prisons Act 1981*. See [6.35]–[6.42] for more on PEP.

74 See OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Wandoo Reintegration Facility*, Report No. 94 (November 2014) 27, 28.

75 DCS, *Policy Directive 53 'External Activities – Procedures'* (10 February 2015) section 2 definitions.

prisoners, to accompany and supervise prisoners. Essentially these were public servants who had received VSO training. There is not an excess of prison officers working at Boronia to use to escort residents to section 95 activities every day.

- 5.53 The Manager, Family and Community Services used to take the mothers out shopping for clothes for their babies/toddlers three or four times a year. This simple but rewarding activity required the mothers to show personal responsibility in an environment where most decision-making control has been removed. It also offered empowerment and a sense of ownership of their role as a mother. These shopping trips, obviously an intelligent part of reintegration, had never caused a security or safety problem. Because of issues that involved male prisoners in totally different situations, the Manager was no longer able to lead these activities.
- 5.54 There were a range of other activities from which the residents were also excluded as a result of the changes to the definition of supervising officer. These included access to short-term education opportunities; involvement in external recreation options; and maintaining cultural connections for the Aboriginal women through attendance at various Aboriginal-specific events.
- 5.55 Boronia management and staff were very frustrated with these changes and had flagged this with head office in the hopes of reversing this decision. They had also attempted to offset some of the negative consequences by using the Assistant Superintendent to escort women to some events, including taking 12 women to an art exhibition. Whilst this is commendable, it is not sustainable given the functions and workload of the Assistant Superintendent.
- 5.56 In summary, the Boronia philosophy claims that '[t]he innovative design and daily activities of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women mirror the responsibilities faced by women in everyday life and they support a strong community and family focus'.⁷⁶ The external activities available to Boronia residents at present are too limited. They do not mirror those available for women in the community, nor do they match the scope of what is available for young men at Wandoo. Without compromising security or safety, section 95 can be expanded in productive and helpful ways, including access to community health services, recreation, and activities for mothers and children to reconnect and develop their relationship.

Recommendation 5

Reflecting the profile of Boronia's residents, develop a more appropriate policy on escorting them to activities outside the centre.

76 DCS, Boronia's Guiding Philosophy (undated). Available at <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

Chapter 6

REINTEGRATION

- 6.1 There are a range of options at Boronia for the residents to prepare for release into their communities, and they are well-supported in this journey. Ultimately, though, the residents themselves need to steer their own course and to do so they need to feel empowered about the decisions they make regarding their lifestyle choices once they are released. This chapter looks at the services and processes in place at Boronia that facilitate this empowerment and reintegration.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Case Management

- 6.2 The case management system ensures that prisoners remain on track with their sentence requirements which should mean a seamless transition back into their communities following their sentence. A case management system that is managed with integrity and respect builds prisoners' confidence to make the right decisions both during incarceration and on release.
- 6.3 Case management means a systematic process by which individual Officers are responsible for encouraging assigned prisoners to achieve the requirements of their Individual Management Plan (IMPs). The IMP is...⁷⁷

The approved plan developed in consultation with treatment and education assessors and the prisoner. The IMP spans the prisoner's sentence through to release. It identifies prisoner needs and contains recommendations for prison placements, security classification and interventions that will assist the prisoner to live a pro-social life on release to the community.

- 6.4 Residents come to Boronia with their IMPs already developed, having been assessed either at Bandyup or a regional facility. The IMP maps out the path the resident needs to follow during her time in custody. As such, it includes education courses that would be of benefit to the resident to increase her skills and employability upon release. It also includes treatment programs – behavioural interventions needed to address the offending that resulted in incarceration.
- 6.5 The IMP, however, is a relatively one-dimensional document and does not include the specifically individual needs unique to each resident. So, for example, it has nothing to contribute to a resident's welfare needs, her needs in relation to family responsibilities, or her financial needs (such as arranging rent payments while she is in custody). This is a limitation of the Department's case management system across all prisons, and is something this Office has commented negatively on in numerous inspection reports.⁷⁸
- 6.6 Another limitation of the case management system is the provision of IMPs only for those prisoners with an effective sentence of over six months. In effect, this means that only these prisoners are case managed. Whilst one would expect that Boronia would not accommodate many prisoners with an effective sentence under six months, given the current climate of

77 DCS, *Adult Custodial Rule 18 – Assessment and Sentence Management of Prisoners* (30 April 2012).

78 See OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Bunbury Regional Prison*, Report No. 75 (December 2011) 50; OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Bandyup Women's Prison*, Report No. 73 (August 2011) 34–35; and OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Acacia Prison*, Report No. 71 (March 2011) 44.

crowding, this was not the case. Data extracted from TOMS a few weeks after this inspection showed that 24 residents at Boronia – over a quarter – did not have a case officer and were not being case managed.⁷⁹

- 6.7 The case management system was working as required for those with IMPs. It was coordinated by a Senior Officer Assessment and Case Management. This was an improvement as Boronia had previously lacked a dedicated position for this function.
- 6.8 The most positive aspect of case management at Boronia was the degree of contact that residents have with staff generally, and the relationships that develop between residents and officers, often their assigned case officer, tasked with preparing their assessment and case management reports.

Treatment Programs

- 6.9 Engaging in treatment programs to address offending behaviour builds the capacity of offenders to make different choices when confronted by the same challenges that led them to offend in the first place.
- 6.10 In 2012, the only offender treatment program being offered at Boronia was the cognitive skills program (Think First). This was facilitated by prison officers who had received special program delivery training. All other treatment programs stipulated in IMPs were only available at other prisons and residents had to complete them before being permitted to transfer to Boronia. Alternatively, if they were already at Boronia, they were transferred back to the maximum security environment of Bandyup.
- 6.11 The 2012 inspection report heralded the expansion of the delivery of treatment programs at Boronia, and it was pleasing to see this in place in 2015.⁸⁰ The suite of programs now available to residents at Boronia comprises:
- Pathways – an addictions offending program;
 - Choice, Change and Consequences (CCC) – a general offending program;
 - Think First – a cognitive skills program; and
 - Cognitive Brief Intervention (CBI) – a short cognitive skills program.
- 6.12 In order to meet the demand for treatment programs in the context of the increased numbers at Boronia, program scheduling has increased too. In 2013 and 2014 the number of residents who participated in the treatment programs offered at Boronia was 53 and 51 respectively. However, by finding ways to facilitate an additional CBI and Think First program, 88 women are scheduled to participate in programs at Boronia in 2015. This is a significant improvement to service delivery.
- 6.13 In line with the preceding discussion of section 95, and the Department’s focus on innovation, serious consideration should also be given to residents participating in programs conducted by DCS for offenders serving community based sentences. This would ensure maximum utilisation of resources by filling any empty places in community based programs, and then free up places in the prison-based programs

⁷⁹ Data downloaded from TOMS on 15 April 2015.

⁸⁰ OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 24.

for women unsuitable for external program participation. It would also assist the system to ensure prisoners are placed in a program before their earliest release date arrives. It would offer the possibility of a diversity of programs not available within the prison system at present. Finally, as an aid to reintegration and improving family relations, families may be able to participate in appropriate programs with the offender to address issues that relate back to their offending.

Education

- 6.14 The chance for prisoners to participate in education whilst incarcerated is a chance to increase knowledge and intellectual capacity. It puts them in a stronger position to make informed decisions about their lives, and increases their range of lifestyle and career options.
- 6.15 In 2015, education services at Boronia were being well-provided, despite the meagre economic environment that has impacted on such services at all prisons. In 2012, we reported that the constraints had resulted in a 42 per cent reduction in access to education and training for Boronia's residents.
- 6.16 The education centre at Boronia had coped well in this climate, and the 2015 inspection findings were more favourable. The centre is led by a campus manager whose proactive approach has led to the education centre increasing its capacity to provide courses to its residents, for example by securing more hours for training by using another facility's unused hours. This was good, innovative practice.
- 6.17 The inspection found a motivated education team, determined to do what they can to ensure all residents have the opportunity to engage with education if they want to. This included those residents at Boronia with short sentences who do not have an IMP which outlines their education needs. The education team were aware of this gap and did endeavour to assess these residents for their education requirements, and provide them with opportunities for learning.
- 6.18 Boronia has always maintained a high level of resident participation in educational activities. During the period of time for which statistics were requested prior to the inspection (1 May 2014 to 31 October 2014) an average of 73 per cent of residents were enrolled in at least one accredited module(s) of education.⁸¹
- 6.19 Over the same six month period, 48 Aboriginal women had been enrolled in courses, which represented 77 per cent of the Aboriginal population. The completion rate for the Aboriginal students was also quite high at just over 69 per cent. Data provided for completions for the 2013/14 financial year showed that across all accredited courses the completion rate was just over 70 per cent. These are good outcomes.
- 6.20 There were also a significant number of residents enrolled in vocational training, including traineeships. Over the period examined, a total of 32 women were enrolled in 179 units in horticulture, retail, hospitality and hairdressing.⁸² In addition, at the time of the inspection, the education manager reported that 11 women were participating in traineeships in hospitality, horticulture and retail.

81 DCS, Boronia Pre-release Centre, *Rehabilitation*, 6.4 *Details of education*, materials supplied in pre-inspection document request (undated) 1.

82 DCS, *Reparation 5.8* (undated), document request materials.

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- 6.21 Over the past two to three years, government departments have all had to introduce cost-saving measures. The impact on prison education services has been significant, and has meant less reliance on external service providers and closing education centres in the prisons over school holidays. Courses that may previously have been provided by external tutors now have to be delivered by internal education staff.
- 6.22 This is a big impost, particularly in a small centre like Boronia which only has three education personnel. For the residents (and all other prisoners around the state) the belt-tightening measures have meant a gap in education services four times a year between school terms. This break can be up to eight weeks long over December and January. This has occurred at all state run prison facilities, based on a decision by the Department's Education and Vocational Training Unit. This has reduced education delivery by approximately 11 weeks; students can still access the education centre but cannot access staff. In a system where students are reliant on staff to facilitate access to most course materials this effectively cuts many students' access to education.
- 6.23 The impact on residents engaged in tertiary education courses has been a reduction in the number of units they can take to just one per semester. This is because of the resources these students need to support their studies, in particular support from an already stretched staffing team. Restricting residents to studying only one unit per semester means that it will take a long time for them to complete their degree, generally longer than universities allow for degree completion.
- 6.24 This is at odds with Boronia's guiding philosophy which encourages personal responsibility, self-determination and empowerment. The value statements that support this philosophy require that residents have 'choices about education, training and employment'. Restricting their capacity to fully engage in their higher education studies is essentially removing choice from them.
- 6.25 In a pre-release facility, one would expect to see appropriately selected residents leaving the centre each day for education. They should be able to attend university or other community education centres in person, just like any other regular student. This would be more likely to assist reintegration than studying one unit per semester within the confines of Boronia.
- 6.26 Departmental policies used to allow prisoners to access external education through the relatively straightforward mechanism of section 95. However policy now dictates that prisoners can only access education activities under the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP). PEP 'is intended to enhance minimum-security prisoners' prospects of gaining paid employment following release from prison and includes work experience, vocational training, university attendance activities relating to seeking employment and paid employment'.⁸³ Whilst PEP does provide a vehicle for residents to complete their studies by attending the institution through which they are studying, the program has built in constraints that affect residents' options to use this as a mechanism to further their education.⁸⁴ At the time of the inspection only one resident was leaving the centre

83 DCS, *Policy Directive 68 - Prisoner Employment Program* (10 February 2015) [1.2].

84 See [6.38]–[6.42].

to attend an education course under this program. When education was permitted under section 95, more residents were able to access community based education and the system had worked well.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Transition Management and Re-Entry Services

- 6.27 Boronia has a full-time Transitional Manager (TM) who monitors the residents as they prepare for their release back into the community and makes referrals to the appropriate agencies. The TM interviews each new resident in their first weeks to ascertain their needs and advise them on available services. She actions their requests for identification documents, makes time to pay arrangements for outstanding fines, and provides referrals for voluntary programs, or accommodation services. Six months before release, she re-interviews the women, with a focus on their accommodation plans and re-entry service requirements, and notifies Ruah, the contracted re-entry provider.
- 6.28 Having an initial interview on transfer and a re-interview six months prior to expected release is good practice. However, the service was less easily accessible to the women at other times. The process for arranging a meeting with the TM was to put in a 'white form' to request an appointment. Some residents said that they had to wait what they considered a long time to get this appointment.
- 6.29 Ruah staff interview each resident during the six-month period prior to their release to assess their re-entry needs and whether they are suitable for the provider's pre- and post-release re-entry support and counselling services. As with other contracted re-entry providers, Ruah also deliver lifeskills courses for residents in the months prior to their expected release. An employment and training program is available for Ruah clients on release and their housing support program seeks to help them find or obtain long term, stable accommodation.
- 6.30 Outcare is another community-based service provider offering re-entry services to the residents. Outcare has long provided a family support service to visitors at Boronia on the weekends,⁸⁵ but has only recently expanded its services to offer employment services, and a re-entry and accommodation support service in conjunction with the Sisters of St John of God. This accommodation service is a valuable new resource, albeit of finite capacity, available only to women living alone and only for three months. It was the most accessible accommodation service at the time. However, Outcare required that women accepting St John of God accommodation engage in their re-entry support service. This meant they could not access Ruah's re-entry services. This was discomfoting for some women as they valued both agencies, each of which had different strengths. There may be scope for better coordination and cross-over.
- 6.31 A number of other external service providers also support residents in their efforts to prepare for release and may support them after release. These include agencies that provide drug and alcohol counselling services, counselling in relation to family violence, gambling and financial management and limited accommodation services.

85 See [4.44].

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- 6.32 While there was much about release preparation for Boronia residents that worked well, it was far from a planned and integrated approach, and there was some disjoint in information sharing between the service providers and the facility. This left the TM unclear as to whether all residents serving the last six months of their sentence had been seen early enough, and exactly how many had been engaged in pre- and post-release support services.
- 6.33 It was also not clear whether there were significant gaps in service provision or whether residents required alternative services to those already provided. Further, residents had to opt in to the services on offer through the contracted agencies, and these agencies could choose not to engage with a particular resident if they did not feel it would be mutually beneficial.
- 6.34 This Office is aware that the Department is presently reviewing both transitional management and re-entry services provision as part of its intention to develop an Individualised Integrated Case Management system. There are significant opportunities for reform and Boronia would be a good place to pilot and evaluate new initiatives. It would also be appropriate to draw lessons from the Wandoo experience.⁸⁶

Prisoner Employment Program (PEP)

- 6.35 Boronia has a full-time Prisoner Employment Coordinator who liaises with the residents continuously to assess their readiness and/or eligibility to participate in the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP). This program assists prisoners to get ready to re-engage in work when they are released, by providing them with opportunities to start engaging during their last few months of incarceration.
- 6.36 This inspection found a vastly improved utilisation of the Prisoner Employment Program than was in place during the 2012 inspection. Then, as in 2009, only four residents were engaged in the program. At the time of this inspection, nine women were on PEP at Boronia. One was in paid employment, one was on work experience, one was utilising the program for education, and six were seeking employment.
- 6.37 The greatest setback for PEP is its arduous and extended approval processes. Section 95 approval *and experience* is a prerequisite for PEP, so in the past, PEP submissions were not commenced until two or so months after a resident came to Boronia. This allowed the centre time to approve the new resident's section 95 status, and allowed the resident the opportunity to practice using this provision, before applying to participate in PEP.⁸⁷
- 6.38 The difficulty of getting women onto PEP are now compounded by changes to the section 95 approval process which mean these approvals are taking a lot longer.⁸⁸ This has had a flow-on effect to the time taken for approvals to participate in PEP at Boronia. In line with this, the Employment Coordinator now submits PEP applications soon after a new resident's arrival, rather than waiting a few months.

86 See [6.47]–[6.53].

87 Absences for PEP purposes are authorised under section 83(1)(a) of the *Prisons Act 1981*.

88 See [5.47]–[5.56].

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- 6.39 In 2012 this Office recommended that the Prisoner Employment Program at Boronia be more actively promoted and that the Departmental policy governing it, Policy Directive 68, be more flexible.⁸⁹ This recommendation was driven, in particular, by the fact that access to external education had diminished when absorbed into PEP rather than being managed through section 95.
- 6.40 Although the Department supported our 2012 recommendation, there has been little change of consequence in the flexibility of the relevant policy directive for PEP (Policy Directive 68). And while the increased number of residents involved in PEP in 2015 is positive, the vast majority are ‘seeking employment’ – they are not actually involved in work or education.
- 6.41 In summary, the ethos of Boronia as a ‘forward-looking model of imprisonment’ is that it ‘provides an opportunity to maximise each woman’s potential to positively, confidently and safely reintegrate with their families and communities following release’.⁹⁰ This is being undermined by the current restrictions on section 95 and PEP. Section 95 has been tightened up for reasons that bear little or no relation to the issues at Boronia, approvals are taking longer and are harder to come by, and the range of activities has been reduced. PEP continues to be a bureaucratically cumbersome process.
- 6.42 In our 2014 inspection report of Wandoo Reintegration Facility, we recommended that DCS ‘...further amend the Prisoner Employment Program to accelerate approval processes to facilitate timely participation in longer term education and training programs by prisoners approved for unsupervised section 95’.⁹¹ In October 2014, that recommendation was supported by the Department, which claimed it was already being addressed as an ‘existing departmental initiative’. That commitment has yet to translate into action.

Re-socialisation

- 6.43 Three residents were engaged in a Re-socialisation Program (RSP). This is applicable to prisoners subject to a life or indefinite sentence. The *Sentence Administration Regulations 2003* require that the Department provide its advice and recommendation about the inclusion of a prisoner in an RSP to the Prisoners Review Board (PRB) two years before their Statutory Review Date.⁹² A favourable recommendation by the PRB is forwarded to the Attorney General for consent before the PRB requests DCS to prepare a draft RSP for its consideration. Once approved, the prisoner is transferred to a minimum-security facility and undertakes a graduated range of activities to develop their lifeskills, facilitate their reintegration with family and develop their education or employment skills to support their safe and effective return to life in the community.

89 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) Recommendation 9.

90 DCS, *Boronia’s Guiding Philosophy* (undated). Available at <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

91 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Wandoo Reintegration Facility*, Report No. 94 (November 2014) Recommendation 3.

92 *Sentence Administration Regulations 2003*, regulation 3B. Prisoners sentenced prior to 4 November 1996 are not eligible for inclusion in Re-socialisation Programmes. The RSP is administered in accord with *Policy Directive 79*.

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- 6.44 The Re-socialisation Program at Boronia consists of three stages, each of four-months' duration. The first stage includes commencement of external work, recreation and training under section 95; accessing psychological support; and involvement with the TM in release preparation and preparing a Reintegration Leave (RIL) application. RIL allows the resident to leave the facility to spend time re-connecting with family in the community. Once the resident reaches the second stage of her RSP she may use RIL for visits up to 12-hours' duration. This increases to 24 hours in stage three.
- 6.45 A parole application is prepared which is considered by the PRB at the conclusion of the RSP. A positive recommendation, if reached, is forwarded to the Attorney General for consideration of release by Executive in Council.
- 6.46 RSPs are very intensive to develop and administer. A high level of detail is required in all relevant documentation which includes a full review at each stage of the program, not to mention the arduous application processes required for section 95, RIL and PEP. Considerable involvement is needed by the case officer and other assessment staff, custodial and vocational officers, education staff, the Transitional Manager, and senior management. The success of these RSPs at Boronia is a credit to all concerned.

A DIFFERENT MODEL?

- 6.47 Wandoo Reintegration Facility is a minimum-security prison for young adult males (18 to 28) and is Western Australia's second privately operated prison. The focus at Wandoo is on preparing offenders for release by providing them with life skills, education and training, and employment opportunities. Wandoo works closely with the not for profit sector which provides services that assist offenders with their transition back into the community.⁹³
- 6.48 Wandoo's focus is much the same as Boronia's, which is to prepare women for re-entry into the community through meaningful rehabilitation activities and work placements.⁹⁴ The two facilities operate very differently, however, with Wandoo adopting a much more holistic model of reintegration than is in place at Boronia. This difference is explained in short detail in the section below. The purpose of this comparison is not to suggest that one facility is winning over another in the re-entry area. Rather, it is to expose alternative models, keeping in mind the need for Boronia to be 'agile, responsive and innovative'.⁹⁵
- 6.49 In relation to case management, Wandoo employs a much more inclusive approach from when residents first enter the facility. There, they undergo a four-week orientation period during which every new resident is assigned and meets their case officer, further education, work, psychological, medical, re-entry and programs assessments are undertaken, and a centre throughcare planning meeting is held involving the resident and all relevant areas.⁹⁶

93 See <www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au>

94 Ibid.

95 Morgan N, *Exit Debrief, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women* (27 March 2015).

96 The term 'throughcare' refers to a more comprehensive version of case management than was in place at Boronia (and all other DCS run prisons) in that it also includes the resident's pre-release and re-entry journey.

REINTEGRATION

- 6.50 Wandoo residents have a formal case officer contact at least every month and throughcare reviews every three months, in addition to any IMP reviews that may be needed. By contrast, case officer contacts at Boronia are only required half-way between IMP reviews, in most cases just once every six months. The main difference between the two facilities regarding managing residents through their sentence is that, at Boronia, the case management system operates independently of the transition management/re-entry system, whereas they are integrated at Wandoo.
- 6.51 New residents at Wandoo also meet the re-entry service provider during their orientation period, especially to action any post-release accommodation requirement early, and the provider remains involved in all throughcare reviews. The Wandoo system has a much more explicit and regular case officer engagement for all residents, and is far more integrated, with inputs from all areas and the re-entry provider involved from the outset. It also leverages the maximum possible gains from programs, work experience, education, training and external activities for short term as well as longer term residents.
- 6.52 A significant difference between Boronia and Wandoo is that residents at Boronia have to opt in if they wish to engage with re-entry services. It is very different at Wandoo where the re-entry service is embedded in the centre, is known to each resident from their orientation and involved in their case management (throughcare) reviews throughout their stay. The service is therefore a given for all residents, and they have to specifically opt out if it is not needed or wanted. There is also clear expectation on the re-entry service that *all* residents will have a work, training or education placement on release and a satisfactory accommodation solution for each resident.
- 6.53 At Wandoo, there are incentivised contractual performance measures attached to many of these requirements. Staff at Wandoo are also kept informed of the resident's progress not only in planning for release but in the first three months after release.

Recommendation 6

Pilot an integrated and individualised case management system at Boronia Pre-release Centre which is inclusive of all residents, commences on the resident's orientation to the centre, and engages re-entry providers at the earliest possible juncture.

- 6.54 The Wandoo model cannot be transposed to Boronia and Boronia cannot be transposed to Wandoo, but there is clear scope for 'cross-fertilization' and learning, and for Boronia to draw on Wandoo's innovation.

EVALUATING OUTCOMES

- 6.55 To this point, this chapter has provided a critical overview of the suite of services available at Boronia to assist residents to transition from the centre back into their communities once they have served their sentence. The next section considers the effectiveness of these (re-entry) services, the most obvious measure of this being whether or not the women return to custody after having re-entered their communities.

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- 6.56 Ever since the first inspection of Boronia took place two years after its opening, the Office has been calling for a robust evaluation of outcomes, with the Inspector at that time stating:
- Parliament and the public are entitled to know what impact this new approach is making upon re-offending rates and ideally upon other indicators of social disadvantage.⁹⁷
- 6.57 In the 2012 inspection report, the Office said it was ‘disappointing that after seven years of operation there is no hard evidence of Boronia’s success in making a positive difference on release’.⁹⁸ A recommendation was made to:
- Commission and publish a methodologically robust independent evaluation of Boronia’s post-release outcomes, including a comparison with other male and female prisons.⁹⁹
- 6.58 This recommendation was supported by the Department and some work went into scoping and costing an independent review. Ultimately, however, none was undertaken and in 2015 the situation remained unchanged.
- 6.59 The figures that are available suggest that Boronia does have a low recidivism rate. The Department’s data indicate that 17.2 per cent of Boronia residents returned to prison within two years of release compared with a state average of 36.8 per cent.¹⁰⁰ These figures are comparable with this Office’s review of recidivism rates in Western Australia, which found that 18.8 per cent of Boronia residents returned to prison within two years of release. However, Boronia does have a highly selected resident population. Taking into account the risk factors of the residents, our review concluded that Boronia was performing *as expected* and not above expectations.¹⁰¹
- 6.60 In preparing for the 2015 inspection, the Inspector again asked the Department to provide any evidence that ‘Boronia works’ in terms of correctional outcomes. The Department’s pre-inspection written submission stated:
- The Department is in the process of reviewing its performance measurement framework in line with its reform program. This will be achieved by rationalising the Divisional performance indicators to a single source of truth, which will reduce duplication between levels, simplify and improve the efficacy (sic).
- 6.61 This is an obtuse and non-committal statement, but it does clearly show that evidence is still lacking. It is important to clarify that internal performance measures are not enough to meet the goal of comprehensive independent research and evaluation of Boronia’s post-release outcomes. It can be assumed that the Department will press Wandoo to prove it is reducing recidivism, and public sector prisons should be subject to a comparable exercise.

97 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 42 (April 2007) viii.

98 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) 48.

99 *Ibid.*, 49, Recommendation 18.

100 DCS, *Recidivism Rates – Boronia Pre-release Centre – Prison Exits 2 Years Prior to Period 1 December 2013 to 30 November 2014*.

101 OICS, *Recidivism rates and the impact of treatment programs* (September 2014) 9–10.

REINTEGRATION

6.62 Because it remains as relevant as ever, the recommendation made three years ago is therefore restated here.

Recommendation 7

Commission and publish a methodologically robust independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes, including a comparison with other male and female prisons.

Chapter 7

WRAPPING UP

- 7.1 The Inspector, in his exit debrief to Boronia and head office managers, presented eight challenges which, if accepted, would see Boronia, and the wider female prison estate, transformed into a model of excellent and innovative women-centred custodial practice. Of these challenges, the one that has emerged most prominently as a theme throughout this report has been that Boronia be open to challenge and change, ‘agile, responsive and innovative, rather than defensive and content with the status quo’.¹⁰²
- 7.2 Recommendation 6 specifically draws on this challenge and suggests that appropriate, innovative practices be replicated at Boronia when considering the future of the centre. Elements of this particular challenge are present in all of the recommendations made in this report.
- 7.3 The recommendation to implement an Aboriginal women’s re-entry strategy (Recommendation 1) emerged from the positive inspection findings in relation to the increased representation of Aboriginal women in Boronia compared to the 2012 inspection findings. We believe that Boronia is well-placed given the increase in the number of Aboriginal women to do more for this group. As Boronia is a pre-release centre, the starting point should be a comprehensive re-entry strategy specifically targeted towards the needs of this group.
- 7.4 As with previous inspections, the lack of diversity in the section 95 activities at Boronia presented again as a lost opportunity. This provision was not being used as it should be to fully realise Boronia’s purpose of preparing women for successful reintegration with their communities. Recommendation 2 re-states, word for word, the recommendation made three years ago in relation to increasing the use of this provision to provide a more meaningful range of activities for Boronia’s residents. These activities should encompass work, recreation, access to health services, activities to strengthen the connection between mothers and their children, and education. Although the Department supported this recommendation, there was no evidence of progress.
- 7.5 In keeping with recommending a more expansive approach to the use of section 95, we have also recommended that those residents who do leave the centre to engage in section 95 activities be dressed in more appropriate and less distinctive clothing (Recommendation 3). The baggy, ill-fitting maroon tracksuits they currently have to wear compare poorly with the clothing worn by the male residents at Wandoo. The women at Boronia need a uniform that is more appropriate and respectful.
- 7.6 The number of staff at Boronia who can escort residents to section 95 activities has decreased due to a change in the definition of supervising officer under Policy Directive 53. Whereas previously escorts could be supervised by public servants working at the centre who had undergone some basic training in escorting procedures, these now had to be done by staff with specific prison officer training. As stated in Chapter 5, there is not an excess of such staff at Boronia available for this purpose and so residents’ attendance at external events had declined. The previous system had worked well and had not generated security or safety issues. Recommendation 5 seeks to fix this problem.

102 Morgan N, *Exit Debrief, Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women* (27 March 2015).

- 7.7 One group that had been negatively impacted by this change were the mothers with resident children at Boronia. In the past a member of the centre's management team would escort these residents on a shopping trip to purchase items for their child/children. The mothers all mentioned that this activity had not occurred for some time, but were not exactly sure why it had stopped.
- 7.8 More generally, the mothers with resident children at Boronia felt isolated, particularly regarding access to expertise on parenting. Rather than sourcing this from one another, a more defined process should be in place that the mothers can go through to get the answers they need to their parenting questions. We have recommended improved personal engagement between management and this group as a way of achieving a more systematic and supportive approach (Recommendation 4).
- 7.9 In keeping with the Inspector's challenge to be agile and open to change, we have recommended that an integrated and individualised case management system be piloted at Boronia. This should draw on the model in place at Wandoo Reintegration Facility. There, residents are engaged in planning their own journey through their sentence towards reintegration with their communities from the moment they enter the facility. They are supported through this in a coordinated and structured way that combines the skills of Wandoo staff and re-entry service providers. Recommendation 6 suggests replicating a similar, female-specific model at Boronia.
- 7.10 In his overview to the 2012 inspection report, the Inspector said that 'after eight years, Parliament and the public are entitled to know whether Boronia's approach has actually worked in terms of reduced reoffending and other social indicators'.¹⁰³ To this end, he recommended a methodologically robust evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes. The Office had made the same point in 2006 and 2009. There had been no progress whatsoever against this recommendation by 2015. It is therefore re-stated in its entirety in this report (Recommendation 7).
- 7.11 The seven recommendations for improvements and change that have been made in this report are based on our overall perception that Boronia is doing well. Now we expect it to do even better, and to position itself for the future. This is all the more important given the indicators that the government is examining options in relation to service provision and contestability.

103 OICS, *Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women*, Report No. 79 (July 2012) iii.

Appendix 1

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Acceptance Level/Response
1. Implement an Aboriginal women's re-entry strategy.	<p>Supported</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>The Department offers a number of practical employment, education, accommodation and personal development programs to build confidence and to create a positive future. However, the Department supports the need for a re-entry strategy that is tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal women. The Department has created a new Rehabilitation and Reintegration Directorate that will provide leadership and direction for the provision of adult reintegration programs to maximise community protection and to encourage offenders towards a law abiding lifestyle.</p> <p>A key requirement of the directorate will be to lead the development and implementation of an operating model of Integrated Individualised Offender Management (IIOM). One component of the IIOM is the development and implementation of a re-entry strategy that will improve outcomes for all female offenders, with a particular focus on Aboriginal women and their families.</p> <p>The Department has recently established an external standing Women's Estate Reference Committee, which will work with the Department to improve outcomes for all female offenders, with a particular focus on Aboriginal women and their families. The Department's Reconciliation Action Plan also includes initiatives such as collaborating with Aboriginal people to help develop targeted initiatives that produce better outcomes for Aboriginal people and the development of new culturally appropriate program delivery models.</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action:</p> <p>Ensure the re-entry strategy has an adequate focus on meeting the needs of Aboriginal women.</p>

Recommendation	Acceptance Level/Response/Nominated Action
<p>2. Increase the use of section 95 of the <i>Prisons Act 1981</i> to incorporate more meaningful activities for the women in respect of: (i) work; (ii) recreation; (iii) activities between mothers and children; (iv) health services (including mental health); and (v) education.</p>	<p>Supported in Part</p> <p>Response: Boronia has commenced a review on the section 95 work activities. Placements on work parties are now in the first instance being offered to Aboriginal women, to increase their participation. To ensure more women are able to take up these opportunities, women will be rotated through this activity every 6 months.</p> <p>The recent recruitment of a Recreation Officer at Boronia will also enable a structured recreation program to be developed, which will include section 95 education activities and opportunities for mothers and children.</p> <p>The attendance of women to health related services is already enabled under section 83 (1)(c) <i>Prisons Act 1981</i> (Permits to be absent from prison).</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action: Ensure the current review of section 95 work activities includes meaningful re-entry activities where practicable.</p>
<p>3. Provide new, more appropriate clothing to Boronia residents, and prioritise the issue of new clothing to the residents who leave the centre for section 95 activities.</p>	<p>Supported – Existing Departmental Initiative</p> <p>Response: Boronia is initiating changes to provide more appropriate clothing for women on section 95 activities, including wet weather clothing, footwear and formal clothing. A new electronic stock control system for the issue of new clothing, which is linked to the TOMS Store Module, is in the final testing stages. Once the system is fully operational, the ordering and distribution of new clothing will commence.</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action: No further action required.</p>

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Acceptance Level/Response/Nominated Action
<p>4. Improve the personal engagement between the relevant manager(s) and the mothers with resident children at Boronia to ensure this group is adequately supported and informed.</p>	<p>Not Supported</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>Boronia's operating philosophy is at the core of how the centre delivers services to the women and children that pass through the centre. Family relationships for women in custody are supported and promoted for the benefit of prisoners, their families and the community. The promotion of these relationships has a strong emphasis on mothers and caregivers, their children and dependents.</p> <p>The relationship between staff and residents at Boronia is positive and this helps to support the operating philosophy of the facility. The Department believes the engagement between relevant manager(s) and mothers with resident children is appropriate with this group being provided with adequate support through personal engagement and practical family programs. The view by the majority of residents is that the support and information provided to mothers with resident children is more than adequate.</p> <p>Boronia currently provides and facilitates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Child Care Plan for Approved Residential Children. Mothers are personally involved in developing this plan, which details all support required and activities. • A Parenting and Support Service (PASS). A service provider is contracted to provide expert one-on-one advice and support, facilitate group sessions and where required provide post-release support. • CLANWA Family Support Network also provides one-on-one support where required. • YMCA provide structured activities for all children, both residential and visiting, on Saturdays and Sundays. • Edith Cowan University School of Education are also providing structured parenting activities once a week for all residential and visiting children. • Ngala publish a local newsletter which contains parenting advice and community contacts. <p>Department's Nominated Action:</p> <p>No action required.</p>

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Acceptance Level/Response/Nominated Action
<p>5. Reflecting the profile of Boronia's residents, develop a more appropriate policy on escorting them to activities outside the centre.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Response: All policies governing prison operations will be reviewed as part of the Department's Strategic Plan. The Department supports the rehabilitation and reintegration of Boronia's residents in many ways, including through facilitating their engagement in activities outside the centre. Escort policies will be reviewed in the context of the applicable legislative framework and the Department's priorities of security, safety and rehabilitation.</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action: Ensure an appropriate, risk-based approach is given to minimum security prisoners when the escort policy is reviewed and updated.</p>
<p>6. Pilot an integrated and individualised case management system at Boronia Pre-release Centre which is inclusive of all residents, commences on the resident's orientation to the centre, and engages re-entry providers at the earliest possible juncture.</p>	<p>Supported – Existing Departmental Initiative</p> <p>Response: The Department is currently developing an Integrated Individualised Offender Management (IIOM) Work Stream. Review work will include an evaluation of individual and group based treatment programs, service delivery models and the business processes that support them.</p> <p>Once this is finalised and implemented an individualised prisoners pathway will be planned from the start to the end of their imprisonment, along with continued outreach to the community.</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action: No further action required as the IIOM will be implemented at Boronia as part of the roll out.</p>

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Acceptance Level/Response/Nominated Action
<p>7. Commission and publish a methodologically robust independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes, including a comparison with other male and female prisons.</p>	<p>Not Supported</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>The Department has recently established a Women's Estate Reference Committee. The committee is working with the Department to improve outcomes for all female offenders, which will involve an evaluation of post-release outcomes at all facilities.</p> <p>In view of this committee and its purpose, there is no need for the Department to commission an independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes.</p> <p>Department's Nominated Action:</p> <p>No action required.</p>

Appendix 2

SCORECARD ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2012 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No.	Recommendations	Assessment of the Department's Implementations				
		Poor	Less than acceptable	Acceptable	More than acceptable	Excellent
1.	Ensure that more Aboriginal women have access to Boronia's re-entry services. Initiatives should include: (i) identifying ways to enhance the centre's appeal to Aboriginal women incarcerated elsewhere in the prison estate; and (ii) ensuring that more of the Aboriginal women who are classified minimum-security can progress to placement at Boronia.			•		
2.	Change the current practice of excluding prisoners from Boronia on the grounds of mental health needs by sourcing and establishing a comprehensive network of community-based mental health and counselling services under section 95 of the Prisons Act.		•			
3.	Improve levels of engagement with Aboriginal institutions and agencies, to implement in-reach and out-reach programs and activities, and to raise the profile and recognition of Aboriginal culture at Boronia.		•			
4.	Increase management capacity and experience through leadership development, experience at other prisons and the rotation of staff into and out of other prisons, in order to bring about more questioning and innovative approaches to current operational practices.			•		
5.	Ensure that the centre is sufficiently staffed at all times.			•		
6.	Conduct an analysis of gender patterns on staffing rosters at Boronia to ensure that there are sufficient female staff on each roster, and recruit and administer the rosters accordingly.		•			

SCORECARD ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE
2012 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No.	Recommendations Report No. 79, <i>Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women.</i>	Assessment of the Department's Implementations				
		Poor	Less than acceptable	Acceptable	More than acceptable	Excellent
7.	Develop and implement compliance standards across the Department which better reflect the specific offender profiles, roles and activities of the various prisons.		•			
8.	Work to ensure that prisoners continue to be able to access the level of services from State Training Providers that they had previously received, and that the total number of allocated hours is increased in line with the increasing prison population.			•		
9.	Expand the use of the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP) at Boronia by ensuring: (i) that the relevant Policy Directives are sufficiently flexible; and (ii) that all staff and managers actively promote and support the program amongst residents.		•			
10.	Increase the use of section 95 of the Prisons Act to incorporate more meaningful activities for the women in relation to five areas: (i) work; (ii) recreation; (iii) activities between mothers and children; (iv) health services (including mental health); and (v) education.	•				
11.	Produce an up to date version of the orientation DVD.		•			
12.	Reinvigorate the transition process from Bandyup to Boronia to ensure that all minimum-security prisoners at Bandyup are provided with opportunities to understand the potential benefits of Boronia, and in understanding its philosophy and requirements.		•			

SCORECARD ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE
2012 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No.	Recommendations Report No. 79, <i>Report of an Announced Inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women.</i>	Assessment of the Department's Implementations				
		Poor	Less than acceptable	Acceptable	More than acceptable	Excellent
13.	Introduce facilities to enable the use of Skype at Boronia in order to enhance family and social contacts and in line with the centre's philosophy of family engagement.	•				
14.	Ensure that resident children's needs are met in a timely manner, by the introduction of monitored deadlines for responses to requests from mothers relating to their children's needs.	•				
15.	In line with the centre's philosophy of personal responsibility, allow Aboriginal Visitor Scheme visitors and religious representatives to have access to residents' houses at the discretion of the residents.		•			
16.	Ensure, across the whole Department, that the standards for interpreting and translating services set out in the <i>Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008</i> are fully met.			•		
17.	Boronia must re-evaluate any current operating procedures which counteract its philosophy of personal responsibility and accountability.		•			
18.	Commission and publish a methodologically robust independent evaluation of Boronia's post-release outcomes, including a comparison with other male and female prisons.	•				

Appendix 3

THE INSPECTION TEAM

Neil Morgan	Inspector
Natalie Gibson	Director Operations
Lauren Netto	Principal Inspections & Research Officer
Kieran Artelaris	Inspections & Research Officer
Cliff Holdom	Inspections & Research Officer
Jim Bryden	Inspections & Research Officer
Stephanie McFarlane	Inspections & Research Officer
Kaye Towers-Hammond	Coordinator, Independent Visitor Service
Dr Felice Watt	Women and Newborn Health King Edward Memorial Hospital

Appendix 4

KEY DATES

Formal notification of announced inspection	3 November 2014
Pre-inspection community consultation	17 February 2015
Start of on-site phase	22 March 2015
Completion of on-site phase	27 March 2015
Inspection exit debrief	27 March 2015
Draft Report sent to the Department of Corrective Services	3 July 2015
Draft Report returned by the Department of Corrective Services	6 August 2015
Declaration of Prepared Report	10 September 2015

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



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