

MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON ON TUESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2015

Report No. 100 – Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women

The Inspector of Custodial Services' fourth inspection of Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women has found that it continues to perform to a good standard. However, there is no clear evidence as to whether it meets its goal of reducing recidivism, and there is scope for greater innovation.

In releasing his report from the May 2015 inspection, Inspector Neil Morgan said that

'When Boronia opened in 2004, it represented a positive change in focus and direction for women's custodial services in WA. It has always performed well, but that is to be expected because it enjoys many advantages compared with most other prisons. It has modern purpose built infrastructure, is small, accommodates only selected low-risk women, and is relatively well resourced.'

The report found that increased prisoner numbers had impacted on the Centre. While services generally remained good, they were less comprehensive, less proactive and under more pressure. Although some of this was down to resource pressures, there was also scope to improve within existing resources. Areas of concern included the ability of residents to access opportunities and services in the community, and supports for women who are mothers. The report also argued for an improved range of services for Aboriginal women.

Mr Morgan said:

'The good news is that Boronia is still performing well in terms of safety, security and decency of treatment. However, if its potential to reduce re-offending is to be maximised, there is scope for improvement and innovation. In an increasingly competitive environment, Boronia must not be content with the status quo: it must build on what has been achieved and position itself for the next decade. Given the dedicated, professional and experienced staff at the facility this should be able to be achieved.'

Mr Morgan criticised the failure of the Department of Corrective Services to act on past recommendations and to assess whether Boronia is actually reducing recidivism:

'The Department cannot take informed investment decisions or target scarce resources to optimal effect if it lacks an evidential base. The primary justification for Boronia was that it would reduce recidivism, and the public and Parliament are entitled to know whether the investment has paid off. However, the Department has never conducted a robust evaluation of Boronia's outcomes. Too much of the so-called 'evidence' is anecdotal, and selected good news stories do not constitute evidence. The dearth of information is unacceptable, especially at a time when the government's focus is on improved efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr Morgan noted that the state's expectations of the privately-operated Wandoo Reintegration Facility for young men are very different:

'Wandoo only opened in 2012 but if it does not show results, its future as a reintegration facility is at stake, and Serco are most unlikely to be awarded a further contract. Wandoo must meet specific performance expectations and, quite rightly, the Department is actively monitoring its effectiveness in reducing recidivism. It should apply the same rigour to the facilities that it runs as well as it does to its private operators.'

Neil Morgan
Inspector

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

For Further Media Information

The Inspector, Mr Neil Morgan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Tuesday 10 November and can be contacted on 0427 426 471.

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