

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON ON THURSDAY
17TH DECEMBER 2015**

Report No. 101 – Wooroloo Prison Farm

The recent inspection of Wooroloo Prison Farm by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services found signs that recent years of declining performance were beginning to be addressed. There were improvements in staff morale, staff/prisoner relations, and management consistency and accountability. However, the Inspector Neil Morgan, said there is still a great deal to be done:

Ten years ago, Wooroloo was one of the best prisons in WA but it then regressed. Prisoner numbers almost doubled and the complexity of the population increased. Changes of such magnitude required consistent, proactive local management, and appropriate head office support from the Department of Corrective Services. Unfortunately, for many years both of these were lacking: known problems were left unaddressed, the prison's culture declined to the point that it became an unhappy place, and it lacked a clear sense of identity and direction.

In May this year, we found that the prison was taking steps to improve its performance and culture, but it remains very much a 'work in progress'. The prison needs to ensure that positive local momentum is maintained, and the Department must also ensure that its policies and procedures allow the opportunities presented at Wooroloo to be maximised.

Wooroloo has set itself the goal of becoming 'Australia's leading re-entry prison', focusing on helping prisoners return to the community and reducing recidivism. However, the inspection found that budget cuts in areas such as education and training, combined with tighter central policies imposed after a spate of escapes in 2013 and 2014, were reducing Wooroloo's capacity to deliver re-entry services. Mr Morgan said:

It was understandable that there would be a tightening of policies after the escape, but it is important not to judge the majority of prisoners by reference to the irresponsible and unacceptable actions of a few.

The reality is that the number of escapes is low, and prisoners who get to Wooroloo have been carefully risk-assessed by the Department. Some still do the wrong thing, but the vast majority respond positively to the trust that is placed in them. They want to use the opportunity to improve their chances of being law-abiding citizens on release, and it is in the community's interests that these opportunities are taken.

The report made 13 recommendations relating to a wide range of issues, including security and safety, management and human resources, and offender rehabilitation. Mr Morgan noted that the Department had accepted all of the recommendations but said he was concerned that in most cases it did not commit to any further action: 'If action wasn't needed, there would have been no recommendation, and over recent years Wooroloo has been badly affected by inaction in response to previous reports.'

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 Thursday 17 December and can be contacted on 0427 426 471.

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