

**MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON ON MONDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2016**

**Report No. 106 – Roebourne Regional Prison**

The Inspector of Custodial Services was pleased to find some positive operational changes at Roebourne Regional Prison during his most recent inspection in April 2016. Inspector Neil Morgan said that a new management team had been energetic and enthusiastic in tackling Roebourne's challenges:

'The prison had a history of poor staff morale. The picture was still somewhat mixed but there were tangible improvements. Staff were largely positive and a new Strategic Business Plan provided a good footing for further operational improvement. This is a credit to the staff group and the new management.'

Specific improvements included the re-opening, in 2013, of the women's section at the prison. Mr Morgan said:

'The 2011 decision to close the women's section except for short term remand prisoners caused anguish for women from the region and further marginalised the handful of women held there. The decision to reopen the section was very welcome.

Not only had the unit reopened, but services had improved through the appointment of a Women's Support Officer to provide support and services. To build on what's been achieved, that position should be made permanent, and the prison should appoint to its leadership team a person with specific responsibility for women.'

Mr Morgan said his 2015 review of climatic conditions in WA prisons had found that temperatures at Roebourne were 'not simply uncomfortable' but 'a significant threat to prisoner health':

'I am pleased to say that, in response to that report, the prison and the Department did take some overdue action to mitigate the risks. This included extra shading, air vents in some of the cells, misting fans, and changing the regime on very hot days.

But fundamental design flaws remain. Nothing changes my view that prisoner safety and decency require air-conditioning in residential cells.'

The report found that the new \$14 million Work Camp, located at the front of the prison, was not meeting its potential:

'The Camp has done some excellent work but has only held 10-15 prisoners, rather than the 30 it was intended to hold. This is a waste of a valuable asset.'

Mr Morgan also expressed concern at the lack of planning for custodial needs in the Pilbara:

'Roebourne's infrastructure is inappropriate and run-down, the Work Camp is under-used, and a large number of Pilbara prisoners are being held 'out of country'. There also needs to be a better way to service the courts in Port Hedland, 200km away. It is obvious that something needs to be done.

I understand that the system is struggling with a population crisis and severe financial constraints, and that this makes it difficult to plan ahead. But the point is that poor planning was a major cause of the problems and better planning is needed if we are to find a sustainable solution.

We have therefore recommended, again, that the Department produce a strategic plan for custodial needs in the Pilbara. It has, again, supported this in principle. I just hope that this support will actually lead somewhere this time. For over a decade, the Department has accepted that action is needed but at this stage there is no plan, let alone any financial commitment from government.'

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 Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and can be contacted on 0427 426 471.

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