

MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON ON TUESDAY
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Report No. 111 – Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison: great potential, positive progress.

Replacing the old and cramped Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison with a new facility in August 2016 has provided the chance to improve outcomes for prisoners from the region, according to the latest report from the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Inspector Neil Morgan said his first inspection of the new prison in January 2017 found a world-class, state-of-the-art facility.

‘The new prison clearly shows the potential of modern purpose-built facilities that are thoughtfully targeted towards the people receiving the service — in this case mostly Aboriginal men and women from largely traditional regional and remote communities,’ Mr Morgan said.

‘However, it can only deliver on its potential with a positive culture and the human resources to match the infrastructure.’

The inspection found there was already a positive culture at the prison, with strong leadership, and good staff-prisoner relationships.

However, staffing levels were not yet at a level to allow it to operate at full capacity. As a result there were gaps in services and prisoners were frustrated with the lack of activity especially: work, training, recreation, and programs.

The regime had also been impacted by an escape that had restricted prisoner movements and closed down what activities were available.

Since January, the Inspector has continued to watch the prison’s development and is optimistic about improvements. These have included:

- re-opening the education centre
- increasing the number of employment and training opportunities
- improved opportunities for male and female prisoners to mix in supervised education, recreation and religious services
- stronger engagement by local Aboriginal organisations and support services
- an excellent arts program for prisoners with disabilities.

The report also discusses the Warburton Work Camp. Constructed at a cost of over \$13 million, the camp opened in 2011. It can hold 24 prisoners but has always been under-used. It was mothballed in late 2015, and still empty in the first part of 2017.

Mr Morgan cautiously welcomed the re-opening of the Warburton Camp in June 2017:

‘Valuable assets should not be left empty, especially when the prisons are so crowded. The community warmly welcomed the camp’s re-opening, as it gives local men an opportunity to work and prepare for release in the community.’

However the camp is still well below capacity. For much of July and August, it held around ten men. But numbers have recently dropped to just six, and only three are Aboriginal. Clearly, there must be sustained strategic initiatives to maximise the Camp's potential to improve justice services and outcomes.'

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 12noon on Tuesday 10th October 2017 and can be contacted on 0427 426 471.

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