



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2019 INSPECTION OF  
KARNET PRISON FARM

127

JANUARY 2020

*Independent oversight  
that contributes to a more  
accountable public sector*

## 2019 Inspection of Karnet Prison Farm

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# Inspector's Overview

## KARNET PERFORMS STRONGLY, BUT IS UNDER PRESSURE IN SEVERAL AREAS

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This report sets out our findings and recommendations following an announced inspection of Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet) in March and April 2019.

Karnet has a long history of offering prisoners meaningful training, rehabilitation and preparation for end of sentence release. It operates as a working farm and makes a significant contribution to the food supply chain for the entire prison system. Some Karnet prisoners also undertake valuable community work which assists in their reintegration and preparation for release.

At the time of our inspection, the prison held 366 prisoners and over 90 per cent of them were actively employed.

During the inspection, we found that most prisoners were settled, engaged and reasonably happy to be at Karnet. These are key pre-conditions necessary to create an environment that is productive and supports the potential for prisoner rehabilitation.

There have been several challenges faced by the prison since our last inspection but it now has a stable leadership team which will hopefully provide certainty and consistency for the prison into the future.

We have been constant over the years in calling for a greater level of involvement of Aboriginal prisoners at Karnet, both in the numbers sent there and the supports for them once they are there.

This report once again highlights opportunities for improvement in this area. On a positive note, since our inspection we were very pleased to see the re-commencement of the Bindjareb program, in partnership with Carey Training, and the first cohort of Aboriginal prisoners graduating in early December 2019.

Karnet, like most prisons, faces challenges in dealing with prisoners' mental health issues. Since our last inspection, a full time mental health nurse has been engaged and there has been good progress in the services provided for prisoners. Sadly, many of the gains have been offset by a reduction in support from the prison counselling service.

Both clinical care and counselling are essential and necessary components of an effective system that supports prisoners experiencing mental health issues. This is an area in need of immediate attention.

We heard of many opportunities and initiatives to expand prison industries at Karnet and there was a high level of enthusiasm evident from prison leadership. We encourage the Department to consider the costs and benefits that expansion opportunities offer.

I would like to acknowledge the cooperation and support we received throughout this inspection from the Superintendent and staff at Karnet and from key personnel in the Department.

It is also important for me to acknowledge the significant contribution of our inspection team, including our two independent consultants. For various reasons, several members

## KARNET PERFORMS STRONGLY, BUT IS UNDER PRESSURE IN SEVERAL AREAS

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of the team contributed to the planning and drafting of this report and I acknowledge their collective contribution.

**Eamon Ryan**  
**Inspector**

16 January 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This was our seventh inspection of Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet), conducted in March and April 2019. The inspection was guided by our Code of Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services. The findings and recommendations in this report are based on evidence gathered from multiple sources throughout the inspection process.

Karnet had a proactive, engaged and organised peer support team, led by a long-term Prison Support Officer (PSO). They continued to provide an exceptional service to prisoners. Karnet had also established a prison council as a representative forum for prisoners.

We have reported on the low number of Aboriginal men accommodated at Karnet since 2007. This remained an issue at the time of the 2019 inspection – there were 39 Aboriginal prisoners, equating to only 11 per cent of the prison population. There was some evidence of structural disadvantage for Aboriginal prisoners, with only seven per cent receiving the highest gratuity level, compared to 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal prisoners. Some services for Aboriginal prisoners were less than effective, such as the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme which did not have a regular, physical presence at Karnet.

Many Aboriginal prisoners felt that staff did not understand or respect their culture. Our staff survey revealed that 47 per cent of prison officer respondents did not feel they had received adequate training in cultural awareness. Only 35 per cent of uniformed staff had completed cultural diversity training.

Prisoners maintained good connections with family and friends through social visits. Seventy-five per cent of prisoner survey respondents said that it was easy to maintain contact with family through visits. Visitors stated that the visits process operated efficiently, and staff treated them well. The one shortfall was the lack of adequate toilet facilities for visitors while they waited for their visit to commence.

Skype visits had been trialled prior to our inspection. By October 2019, Skype was functional, and available as an alternative visiting option. This was a very positive development.

Prisoners were satisfied with the diversity of active and passive recreation options. The gymnasium is one of the most well-equipped in the system, and the library and music room are similarly well-resourced.

The clinical health care staff at Karnet are a very experienced, dedicated, and motivated team. About 10 per cent of Karnet's prisoner population were aged 65 years and older, and associated geriatric and chronic health issues increased workload for nursing staff. A reduction in general practitioner (GP) services had caused issues since the previous inspection, leading to wait times of 4–6 weeks. However, GP attendance was increased after our inspection, which has considerably improved the service provision for prisoners.

There was no Aboriginal health worker employed at Karnet. Nor had there been any progress in establishing an Aboriginal-centred health service or in-reach partnership with an external Aboriginal medical service.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Most of the complaints received about health services related to accessing dental care. There was no on-site access to a dentist at Karnet, with a limited service provided by a nearby private clinic. The waitlist for urgent dental care had increased by 30 per cent since our 2016 inspection, affecting an estimated 25–30 per cent of Karnet's population. Since the inspection, the private clinic has increased services to the prison, and there has been considerable progress with the dental waitlist.

A full-time Mental Health Nurse had been employed, increasing mental health coverage substantially since our last inspection. However, the Prison Counselling Service (PCS) presence had dropped from three days per week to one. The reduced service was further affected by PCS vacancies throughout 2018, and for several months there was no service at all.

The education centre was operating well and provided a comprehensive program of accredited and non-accredited courses and traineeships. The education and training program is well designed, with particular emphasis on adult literacy and numeracy as well as traineeships. Around 40 per cent of the prisoner population was engaged in education, including 19 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners. But any expansion of education was limited by inadequate infrastructure.

Most prisoners were meaningfully employed, but maintaining this was a constant challenge. Workshops and staff were under mounting pressure to keep production and employment up and running despite staff shortages impacting all work areas.

A good proportion of the prisoner population was approved to leave the prison to undertake activities in the community. But far fewer were actually participating in community work. Only eight prisoners were regularly working in the community. There were also prisoners participating in various recreational activities in the community, and some prisoners worked externally under the Prison Employment Program.

The sentence planning team at Karnet managed assessments and case management well. However, a significant system-wide backlog in assessments was having an impact. At the time of our inspection, there were 45 prisoners at Karnet without an Individual Management Plan (IMP). This meant prisoners were serving their time without their education and training needs, or offending program requirements being met, or even assessed. The Department of Justice had introduced strategies to address this backlog.

Program delivery at Karnet had decreased because treatment needs were unknown. The statewide IMP backlog meant there was a low number of prisoners at minimum-security who had been assessed as requiring a program. Several of the programs scheduled for late 2018 were cancelled due to insufficient participants identified.

A range of staff from various service areas of the prison worked hard to keep reintegration opportunities open to eligible prisoners. These included the sentence planning team, Transitional Manager, Employment Coordinator, senior managers, PSO, and even the peer support prisoners.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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There had been a change in the contracted re-entry service provider since the last inspection in 2016. We heard positive feedback about the new service provider, ReSet. They were active in the prison, and prisoners requiring their services could access them.

The physical layout of the gatehouse made it difficult to control the movement of staff and visitors. The small area easily became crowded with people entering or leaving the prison, and this often triggered the motion sensitive automatic sliding entry doors. This meant that the exit door could not open so people were stuck in the gatehouse.

There were mixed perceptions about relationships between officers and prisoners. Staff and prisoner survey results indicated that these relationships were positive. However, some staff we spoke to said that they thought that their connections with prisoners were not as good as they used to be. They attributed this to the increase in the prisoner population, and increased paperwork that kept them stuck inside the unit offices.

At the time of our inspection, only one member of the senior management team was substantive in their position. This instability was affecting staff morale and prisoner services. Positively, within a few months of our inspection, all members of the Karnet senior management team had returned to the prison. This should provide certainty and consistency for the prison moving forward.

Karnet is a vital link in the Department's food supply chain, providing eggs, milk, and meat products for prisons across the state. However, farm output is struggling to meet demand from the growing prisoner population. To ensure continuing self-sustainability, infrastructure in the abattoir, dairy, and other industries will need to be replaced and expanded soon.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### RECOMMENDATION 1

Deliver tailored and compulsory cultural diversity training for all staff.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase counselling services to prisoners at Karnet.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Review the layout of the gatehouse to improve functionality.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Assess the costs and benefits of expanding prison industries at Karnet.

## FACT PAGE

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### NAME OF FACILITY

Karnet Prison Farm

### ROLE OF FACILITY

Karnet Prison Farm is a minimum-security prison for adult males, with a focus on preparing prisoners to re-enter the community. Karnet is a working farm, and a vital link in the Department of Justice's food supply chain. The farm includes an abattoir and dairy, and produces fresh meat, milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables for the wider prison system. These areas also provide opportunity for prisoner employment and training.

### LOCATION

Karnet is located on Noongar land, 78 kilometres south of Perth.

### BRIEF HISTORY

Karnet was originally commissioned as a prison in 1963, known as the Karnet Rehabilitation Training Centre. At that time, it held around 60 men.

### CAPACITY

366

### NUMBER OF PRISONERS HELD AT COMMENCEMENT OF INSPECTION

366

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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This was the seventh inspection of Karnet Prison Farm (Karnet) conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office). The inspection took place in March and April 2019.

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Karnet is a minimum-security prison for adult males. It was originally commissioned as a prison in 1963, known as the Karnet Rehabilitation Training Centre. At that time, it held around 60 men. In 2019, the operational capacity of the prison was 366.

Karnet traditionally holds a significant cohort of minimum-security rated sex offenders. Unlike other prisons, they are not held in protection, and all prisoners placed at the prison must agree to accept this arrangement. The cohabitation of sex offenders and mainstream prisoners can however, cause tension.

Karnet typically holds prisoners towards the end of their sentences and prepares them for release into the community. Karnet is a working farm, and a vital link in the food supply chain of the Department of Justice (the Department). The farm includes an abattoir and dairy, and produces fresh meat, milk, eggs, fruit, and vegetables for the wider prison system. These areas also provide opportunity for prisoner employment and training.

There are four residential units. Units 1 and 2 are the original accommodation blocks, which we have described in the past as being in urgent need of replacement (OICS, 2013; OICS, 2010). This has not occurred, although some refurbishment has taken place. In the past, Unit 2 primarily housed sex offenders, but rising prisoner numbers and a changing demographic mean the population of this unit is now more mixed. Unit 3 is a self-care unit made up of four separate houses with shared kitchen, bathroom, and living areas. Unit 4 is the newest accommodation unit at Karnet, and is made up of transportable 'dongas'.

### 1.2 RECENT INSPECTIONS

#### 2013 inspection

Karnet was benefitting from the recent arrival of a strong and stable senior management team. They had developed a strategic vision and were embedding new processes. While these were good developments, many staff were experiencing change fatigue. Most prisoners were taking advantage of Karnet's education, training, employment, and recreation opportunities. Relations between staff and prisoners were positive and respectful.

The greatest change had been the significant increase in prisoner population – Karnet had added 24 bunk beds in existing cells, and a new unit of 64 beds, bringing operational capacity to 326. This was accompanied by an increase in custodial staff, but there was no increase in administrative staff or support services. Also, the prison infrastructure was old and showing signs of disrepair.

## INTRODUCTION

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### 2016 inspection

In 2016 we found that Karnet remained a desirable placement for prisoners, with high participation in traineeships and skilled work. However, there had been limited progress since 2013, and there were opportunities to do more.

Some of the issues we found at the time included:

- inability to complete required treatment programs in a timely manner
- inadequate mental health and dental services
- inaccessibility of visits for family and friends without private transport.

However, prisoners valued the relative freedom at Karnet, and day-to-day services were functioning well. These areas included reception and orientation, peer support, active and passive recreation, and the quality of food. There was also positive feedback regarding the general feeling of safety. Some excellent training and employment opportunities were available, including the Fairbridge Bindjareb Project for Aboriginal prisoners. Resettlement services were working well, and resocialisation programs for long-term or complex case prisoners were functioning effectively.

Communication between custodial staff and management was strained in 2016. Staff appeared to have generally good relationships with prisoners, but there was room to improve overall communication.

### 1.3 2019 INSPECTION METHODOLOGY

The on-site inspection was conducted over 10 days, and included formal and informal meetings with management, staff, and prisoners. Prior to the on-site inspection, surveys were distributed to both prisoners and staff at Karnet. The survey results assisted in determining the focus of the inspection and provided a source of primary evidence during the inspection. We also met with various community agencies and organisations that deliver services inside the prison.

The inspection was guided by the Office's Code of Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services. The findings and recommendations in this report are based on evidence gathered from multiple sources throughout the inspection process.

The Deputy Inspector presented preliminary findings to staff and management at the conclusion of the inspection. Further details about the inspection team, and our process leading up to and during the inspection can be found in Appendix 4.

# Chapter 2

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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### 2.1 TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

#### **Karnet had a proactive, engaged and organised peer support team**

The peer support team at Karnet continued to provide an exceptional service to prisoners who need or request it. They are led by a long-term Prison Support Officer (PSO) who allowed the team discretion to make decisions and do their work.

There were 14 prisoners on the team at the time of the inspection. Three of these were full-time peer support workers who received a gratuity for doing peer support work. The rest undertook the role as volunteers, in addition to other paid employment in various roles across the prison. They were compensated for their peer support work with a \$10 weekly bonus above what they earned from their prison jobs. This was good practice.

The members were active around the prison, and for the most part, this was facilitated by officers. However, we heard that some officers were reluctant to allow the peer support prisoners access to accommodation units that were not their own. This should be accepted as part of their role in ensuring that prisoners are settled and supported.

We were particularly impressed with the work the peer support prisoners did in orienting new prisoners to the site, and in assisting prisoners with preparing their parole plans. This was most useful for officers and those working in sentence planning. Peer support workers ensured that the initial parole plans had all the necessary information before these were submitted to sentence planning for further quality control. This ensured a more streamlined process which did not further encumber the already stretched sentence planning team.

#### **Karnet had established a prison council as a representative forum for prisoners**

In 2013 and 2016, we recommended the establishment of a representative forum for prisoners to engage with senior management on issues affecting the prison generally (OICS, 2016; OICS, 2013). The Department did not support either recommendation given the existence of other forums like the fortnightly unit management meetings. We maintain that providing selected prisoners the opportunity to engage directly with senior management would foster responsibility within the prison population, and further improve communication across all groups in the prison.

We were therefore pleased to find that Karnet had introduced a prison council the month before our inspection in March/April 2019. Council membership consisted of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent Operations, Assistant Superintendent Offender Services, Principal Officer and two voluntary prisoner representatives from each unit. The council will meet monthly to discuss any issues and concerns that may have an impact on the daily operations of the prison. Minutes will be taken for each meeting and made available to staff and prisoners.

The prison council has replaced the less structured fortnightly unit management meetings, which were not that popular among prisoners. The terms of reference for the

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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council ensure fair representation across all units and work areas. We regard this as a positive development, with the potential to bring about good outcomes for prisoners and the prison.

### 2.2 SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL PRISONERS

#### **Aboriginal prisoners were under-represented at Karnet**

We have reported on the low number of Aboriginal men accommodated at Karnet since 2007 (OICS, 2007; OICS, 2010; OICS, 2013; OICS, 2016). At the time of the 2016 inspection, the proportion of Aboriginal prisoners at Karnet was 12 per cent. There had been little change since then. At the time of the 2019 inspection, there were 39 Aboriginal prisoners at Karnet, equating to 11 per cent of the prison population.

In 2016, we found evidence of structural disadvantage within the prison. Aboriginal prisoners were not represented proportionally at all gratuity levels, across a range of employment sites. Only three per cent of Aboriginal prisoners were earning a Level 1 gratuity, compared to 20 per cent across the total prisoner population.

In 2019, this had increased to seven per cent. But this still meant only two Aboriginal prisoners were receiving a Level 1 gratuity – one who worked in the abattoir and one who worked in gardens production. In comparison, 13 per cent of non-Aboriginal prisoners received a Level 1 gratuity. Thirty-eight per cent of the Aboriginal prisoners received a Level 3 gratuity. This was in line with non-Aboriginal prisoners at 39 per cent.

#### **Some services for Aboriginal prisoners were less than effective**

The presence of the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) at Karnet had fallen away in 2016, but they were said to be on call to assist on an as-needs basis. Leading up to the 2019 inspection, we were advised that AVS have not had a regular, physical presence at Karnet since July 2018, but prisoners could request a visit in person from AVS using the 1800 telephone number. In 2018, a total of 10 AVS visits were conducted and recorded at Karnet. During the same period, prisoners at Karnet called the AVS line eight times, but none of these were so-called welfare calls. All were of a 'non-welfare' nature, identified as wrong numbers or hang ups. Based on these figures the usefulness of the 1800 telephone line is questionable for those at Karnet, and more broadly for anyone held in custody. The contact line should be supplementary; it is not an adequate replacement for the absence of a regular face-to-face service.

Karnet has an Aboriginal Services Committee comprising internal stakeholders from across the service areas of the prison. The minutes reflected a good level of dialogue about issues affecting Karnet's Aboriginal prisoners. However, the committee was not meeting regularly – we received copies of minutes for only two meetings in 2018. In 2019, this increased to quarterly meetings. We would also encourage the prison to incorporate external stakeholders into the committee, particularly given Karnet's role in preparing prisoners for release.

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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### There was a need for greater cultural awareness

During the inspection, some Aboriginal prisoners told us they felt unfairly targeted if they were seen hanging around in groups. They said officers told them that they were 'up to no good' when they did this. This was deterring Aboriginal prisoners from gathering together, even in the cultural meeting place, 'Gnoonies'.



*Photos 1 and 2. The cultural meeting place.*



## CARE AND WELLBEING

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In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, one in five respondents said their culture was not respected (20%), and similar numbers did not think staff understood their culture (22%). While these numbers are relatively small, when broken down by Aboriginality, 11 out of the 18 Aboriginal prisoners who responded to these questions said staff did not understand or respect their culture. Our staff survey also revealed that 47 per cent of prison officer respondents did not feel they had received adequate training in cultural awareness (up from 26% in the previous inspection).

Information provided by the Department shows that only 35 per cent of uniformed staff have completed the Department's cultural diversity training, with this training being undertaken between 2007 and 2015. Boosting diversity training would improve participants' cultural awareness, which ought to improve communication between officers and prisoners, and lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Deliver tailored and compulsory cultural diversity training for all staff.**

## 2.3 CLOTHING, FOOD, AND PROPERTY

### **Clothing was adequate and the laundry system was effective**

Prisoners are issued with a clothing and bedding pack when they first arrive at Karnet. Additional items are available for purchase through the canteen. The results from the pre-inspection prisoner survey showed that 62 per cent of respondents thought the clothing issued by the prison was good. This had improved from 47 per cent at the previous inspection. Three-quarters of respondents thought the laundry service was good and 72 per cent thought the bedding supplied was also good (up from 57% three years ago). Importantly, we observed appropriate processes in place to keep clean and dirty items separate, with industrial clothing being washed separately to general prison issue clothes. The machine was also rinsed clean between washes.

### **The food was good**

Eighty per cent of respondents to the pre-inspection survey said the food quality was 'good', well above the state average of 45 per cent. Likewise, 91 per cent were satisfied with the amount of food they received. Our observation and experience during the inspection supported these results. Unlike in 2016, we did not find a difference in the quality and variety of food prepared for staff compared to prisoners (OICS, 2016).

Prisoners requiring special diets were catered for, as were those prisoners requiring different food for religious reasons. The kitchen was the second highest employer, (behind the abattoir), with 48 prisoners working there. These prisoners were adequately trained in the relevant food safety and hygiene procedures, and wore the appropriate protective clothing when dishing up the food.

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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*Photos 3 and 4. The food was good.*

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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*Photo 5. Prisoner meals were served in the dining hall.*

However, we found that food safety training for the self-care prisoners in Unit 3 was lacking. We have raised this as an issue before (OICS, 2016). We encourage the Department and Karnet to remain vigilant about making sure that prisoners tasked with preparing food, either for themselves or other prisoners, have received adequate food safety training.

### 2.4 SPIRITUALITY AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

#### **Chaplaincy support was strong and well-established**

The coordinating chaplain has been providing chaplaincy services at Karnet for 23 years. She attends the prison each Tuesday to provide spiritual care for all prisoners and staff, regardless of faith. Regular religious services are facilitated in conjunction with the Parish Priest and a Catholic chaplain.

Other pastoral visitors include Buddhist monks, Jehovah's Witnesses, and a Muslim visitor. Memorial services, when requested, are held following the passing of a prisoner, family member or staff member. In the evenings, the Worship Centre is used for Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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*Photo 6. A lovely environment for a chapel.*

### **There is no longer a restorative justice program available to prisoners**

At the last inspection, 'Reach for Life', a voluntary restorative justice program, was running at Karnet under the auspices of the chaplaincy. Reach for Life had replaced the 'Sycamore Tree Project', which has been successfully running in a number of countries for many years. Both programs bring unrelated offenders and victims of crime together to talk about the harm that crime causes. Restorative justice programs may have a profound impact on participants because of their focus on offenders accepting responsibility and seeking to make amends.

Unfortunately, at the time of our inspection, Reach for Life had been cancelled due to concerns raised by the Department about the efficacy of the program, particularly about the program's ability to reduce recidivism. While we acknowledge the need for proper program evaluation, Reach for Life was one of a limited number of voluntary programs available at Karnet for prisoners to reflect on their criminality. In speaking to prisoners and staff, the consistent message we heard was disappointment that Reach for Life had been cancelled.

## 2.5 VISITS

### **Prisoners maintained good connections through social visits**

Seventy-five per cent of respondents to our pre-inspection prisoner survey said that it was easy to maintain contact with family through visits at Karnet. This was good, particularly in comparison to the state average of 59 per cent.

Social visits sessions occur on the weekends with a two-hour session available in the morning and afternoon each day. Additional visit sessions are held on most public

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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holidays. And there is flexibility to allow visits outside of the standard visiting hours, for example if a prisoner has family visiting from interstate.

We spoke with visitors who confirmed that the visits process at Karnet operated efficiently. Visitors also said that staff treated them well. This view was supported by 77 per cent of the prisoners who responded to our pre-inspection survey.

At our last inspection, Outcare was providing family support and some activities for children during the afternoon sessions. However, Outcare had been replaced by ReSet, and the new contract did not include family support services (OICS, 2019). We also heard that there were not many toys available for children in the visits centre.

### **Visitor processing was efficient but some facilities were lacking**

The shared facilities centre at the front of the prison is used for visitor processing on the weekends. During the week, the centre is used for staff training and meetings, and a gym has been set up in one of the rooms for staff use.

The facility provides a sheltered space for visitors before being registered and processed for their visit. An officer acts as cashier on weekends to accept money from visitors and exchange prisoner property. A mail box is placed in the centre for visitors to drop off mail for prisoners. Prams and wheelchairs are also available for visitors to use during their visit. Visitors were processed quickly and respectfully.

The one disappointing aspect of the visits process was the lack of adequate toilet facilities for visitors while they waited for their visit to commence. The shared facilities centre has toilets inside, but visitors are not allowed to use these. Instead, a single portable toilet is available in the carpark. Visitors told us that they thought this toilet was dirty and they did not want to use it. We were told that the toilet is regularly serviced by a contractor, but we



*Photo 8. Portable toilet in the car park for visitors*



**Photo 8. Portable toilet in the car park for visitors**

found the wash tap broken at the time of our inspection. There was also no baby change facility either attached to the toilet or in the centre generally. Visitors were able to use toilets inside the prison once they had entered for their visit. We observed a large queue for the toilets as the visit session commenced.

### **There had been significant efforts to make Skype available**

In our last inspection report, we recommended making e-visits available as an alternative to social visits for those prisoners and visitors unable to visit in person (OICS, 2016, pp. 15, Recommendation 3). Karnet had put considerable work into information technology upgrades and testing of Skype functionality at the prison. At the time of our inspection, Skype was not yet available, but a trial had been conducted. By October 2019, Skype was functional at Karnet, and available as an alternative visiting option. This was a very positive development.

## **2.6 RECREATION**

### **Prisoners were satisfied with the diversity of recreation options**

The pre-inspection prisoner survey showed high satisfaction with the gym, with 89 per cent of respondents saying the gym was 'good'. Recreation offered a diverse and changing program of classes and physical activities, including AFL, softball, soccer, core classes, weight circuits, high intensity interval training, and boxercise.

The hub of recreation at Karnet was the gym. There was also an oval, tennis and basketball courts, a volleyball court, a library, and a music room. The gym was open from 5.30 am to 9.00 pm seven days a week. A timeslot from 3.00 pm – 4.00 pm is reserved for prisoners over 50 years old and those more vulnerable prisoners. About 100 prisoners attend the

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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gym each day with an average of 15 prisoners attending the reserved timeslot. The recreation officer conducts a count of prisoners at the centre at 3.45 pm to avoid prisoners having to return to their units for the afternoon count.

The gym at Karnet was one of the most well-equipped we have inspected across the state. Equipment included a pool table, three spin bikes, one rower, two treadmills and two cross trainers, as well as a variety of cable and free weights. Some of this equipment was leased which ensured that it was regularly maintained.



*Photo 9. A well-equipped gym.*

### **There were good opportunities to engage in various passive recreation activities**

Passive recreation activities were primarily facilitated through the library and the music room. Ninety-one per cent of respondents to our pre-inspection prisoner survey said access to the library was good.

The library was open from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm every day of the week. It held over 5,000 books (fiction and non-fiction), as well as 80 board games and puzzles, and nearly 2,500 DVDs and 350 Xbox games. Over 310 stock item movements occur each day which indicates how well-used the library was. There were also three computers in the library which prisoners could use for document preparation, such as parole plans, as well as a dedicated legal resource computer.

A well-equipped music room was co-located with the library. On average 130 prisoners used the music room each month. Activities included band practice, African drums, ukulele and guitar lessons. Recreation officers printed songs each week for prisoners to practice in the room. And didgeridoos had recently been purchased.

## CARE AND WELLBEING

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We did hear that the noise from the music room could be disruptive for those using the library because the two rooms are separated only by a narrow corridor. Soundproofing the music room would improve this situation.

### 2.7 EARNING AND SPENDING

#### **Insufficient gratuity incentives for prisoners to work outside the prison**

Karnet provides a wide range of meaningful employment opportunities. As a prison farm its gratuity profile reflects the extra responsibility and efforts of prisoners, with a greater proportion of positions at the higher gratuity levels. We found that 42 per cent of all prisoner employment positions at Karnet attracted a Level 3 gratuity or higher, Level 1 being the highest paid position. There were 43 Level 1 positions, and 112 Level 2 positions.

But the allocation of gratuities did not provide sufficient incentive for prisoners to aspire to working in jobs outside the prison.

When a prisoner transfers from a high paying job inside the prison to a position outside the prison (employed by the prison rather than community businesses), they revert to Level 3 gratuities, regardless of what they were earning previously. Prisoners must stay at Level 3 for a minimum of six weeks before progressing to a higher level if one is available. Working outside the prison increases prisoners' engagement with the external world and provides reintegration opportunities. As a pre-release facility, we feel more concerted effort should be made to incentivise prisoners to take up opportunities outside of the fence and in the community before release.

#### **Prisoners were satisfied with the canteen**

Seventy-six per cent of respondents to the prisoner survey were satisfied with the canteen, compared to the state average of 51 per cent. The list of items available for purchase was extensive, ranging from art supplies and stationery to toiletries, confectionery and foodstuffs. Healthier snack alternatives included rice crackers, plain nuts, dried fruit, and yoghurt. Prisoners also had input into what the canteen stocked, and the new prison council will also facilitate prisoner requests for different items to be stocked in the canteen.

Each unit was assigned a designated day to attend the canteen. The canteen officer also operated a weekly town spends system for prisoners to purchase items not kept in stock, such as electronics and pillows. The canteen employed six prisoners.

### 2.8 HEALTH SERVICES

#### **A high-functioning and busy health services team with limited resources**

The clinical health care staff at Karnet are a very experienced, dedicated, and motivated team. In the preceding 12 months, the nurses had provided much needed stability at a time when the capacity to deliver comprehensive health care was vulnerable to being eroded. Access to medical and ancillary support services had been reduced when the



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contracts for these services expired without any alternative arrangement in place. As a result, Karnet spent over a year without either physiotherapy or podiatry services. And although physiotherapy had just recommenced prior to our inspection, podiatry services continued to be unavailable. This placed additional onus on nursing staff.

Nursing staff operate seven days per week, working a 10-hour day shift from 7.00 am to 6.00 pm. They provide primary and mental health care, chronic disease management, annual health assessments, blood borne disease identification and management, emergency response, and dispense medications. They service a growing prisoner population with increasingly complex health care needs. About 10 per cent of Karnet's prisoner population were aged 65 years and older, and associated geriatric and chronic health issues increased workload for nursing staff.

Nursing staff were well supported by two medical receptionists who, among other duties, scheduled external appointments for prisoner health needs. However, access to General Practitioner (GP) services had reduced since the last inspection. In 2016, a GP visited Karnet three days per week (OICS, 2016, p. 19). In 2019, this had dropped to two days per week, even though the prison was housing 40 extra prisoners. As a result, prisoners were waiting 4–6 weeks to see the GP. This does not meet community standards. It was understandable that during the inspection we heard numerous complaints from prisoners about poor access to medical staff.

This was a significant concern during the inspection, and we had considered making a recommendation to increase health services resourcing at Karnet. However, since the inspection a GP has been employed at Karnet four days per week which has considerably improved the service provision for prisoners.

### **No focus on Aboriginal health care**

Aboriginal health workers and health professionals are an invaluable resource in the provision of culturally safe primary health care. Such a worker had not been in place during an inspection since 2013, and there was no evidence that there had been any progress towards employing an Aboriginal health worker since then. Nor had there been any progress in establishing an Aboriginal-centred health service or in-reach partnership with an external Aboriginal medical service. This is poor practice and could be easily rectified with little impost, particularly as the number of Aboriginal prisoners at Karnet is so low (they make up just 11% of the prison's population). Access to an Aboriginal health worker during health screening, when promoting health engagement and education, and when facilitating continuity of care as prisoners are released back into the community, would be invaluable.

Feedback from Aboriginal prisoners identified that the provision of information about their medical conditions was delivered primarily in written form. We were also told that there was little or no ongoing education about managing their chronic health issues like diet control for obesity and diabetes. Oral, group-based learning sessions were preferred, and these would have the greatest impact if delivered by or with Aboriginal health professionals.

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### Dental health services were not meeting need

Most of the complaints received about health services related to accessing dental care. There was no on-site access to a dentist at Karnet, and services that were being provided at Casuarina Prison at the time of the last inspection, had ceased. Services were now delivered through a nearby private clinic offering weekday appointments at 8.30 am only. However, access to the appointments was dependent on the availability of custodial staff to provide an escort to the clinic. Between January and November 2018, only 26 dental visits were facilitated.

At the time of this inspection, the replacement service had failed to have an impact on Karnet's waitlist for urgent dental care. The waitlist had in fact increased by 30 per cent since our 2016 inspection with an estimated 25–30 per cent of Karnet's population waiting for urgent care. We heard many prisoners had waited for 18 months or more, and one prisoner had reportedly waited for nearly three years. There was also no service for new dentures or denture repairs.

Since the inspection, there has been considerable progress with the dental waitlist. The private clinic has increased services to two prisoners per day, reducing the waitlist from more than 120 prisoners to 64.

### Mental health care had improved, but still has a way to come

In the last year, a full-time Mental Health Nurse (MHN) was substantively employed at Karnet, increasing mental health coverage substantially since our last inspection. The MHN works with prisoners who have major enduring mental illnesses, drug induced psychosis, depression, and situational and emotional crises. She manages mental health referrals to Karnet's GP and psychiatrist, and the methadone withdrawal program. She also provides psycho-educational sessions and resources for managing anxiety and emotional regulation.

Discharge planning and referrals to appropriate agencies for a prisoner's continuity of care are also managed by the MHN. This often occurs four months in advance and in liaison with the GP and psychiatrist.

The psychiatrist attends Karnet for six hours once per month. Three different psychiatrists had covered this position in the last year which was less than ideal for continuity of care. However, this had recently been addressed and a dedicated psychiatrist was now regularly attending. There remained some doubt as to whether the level of service met need. Prisoner feedback highlighted the lack of access to mental health and counselling services.

Since our last inspection, the Prison Counselling Service (PCS) model has changed from a site based to a centrally located service. Karnet averages about 10 PCS referrals at any one time, so PCS attends once a week to review at-risk prisoners and provide general counselling. In 2016, PCS were on-site three days per week (OICS, 2016).

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The reduced service was further affected by PCS vacancies throughout 2018. Recruitment was almost complete to fill these vacancies. However, a full complement of only 30 staff to cover the entire prison estate does not seem adequate to provide an effective service. PCS governance has been realigned under the Health Services Directorate, and a contemporary model of care is being developed (both positive moves). But Karnet has had limited access to PCS and for several months in 2018, there was no service at all.

### **Recommendation 2**

Increase counselling services to prisoners at Karnet.

# Chapter 3

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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### 3.1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **Good engagement in education from staff and prisoners**

The education centre was operating well and provided a comprehensive program of accredited and non-accredited courses and traineeships. The education and training program is well designed, with particular emphasis on adult literacy and numeracy as well as traineeships.

Around 40 per cent of the prisoner population was engaged in education at Karnet. This included 19 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners. There were 30 full-time students and 50 part-time students. This was a reasonable uptake for a place like Karnet, whose focus is more on employment given its crucial role in the Department's food supply chain.

It was also positive that there were 12–14 tertiary students engaged in a range of courses with different universities. Students did mention that they were heavily reliant on their tutors to access the content and lecture material on their behalf which was provided to them on a memory drive by the university. This was time consuming for the tutors, and often technical problems made this even more difficult.

All education staff and students interviewed were positive about education at Karnet. They said they felt safe, supported, and enjoyed good relations with custodial staff. One common criticism was the limited infrastructure of the education centre, which was described as "cramped", with no staff amenities, no staff room, and tutors sharing small office spaces.

An example of the proactive engagement with education on the part of staff was the introduction of the Summer Refresh Program. This program was designed to fill the void when education classes stopped for 11 weeks over summer each year. It kept prisoners engaged through a range of activities, including making musical instruments and the introduction of new passive activities like games and books. Most recently, prisoners involved in this program put on a play (Bindjareb Pinjarra) which explored a significant event in local Aboriginal history.

#### **But any expansion of education was limited by infrastructure**

With only one dedicated classroom, the education centre at Karnet was inadequate and with no room to grow. The facility consists of:

- one main classroom for between eight and 10 students
- one computer room for 12 students
- a room that is actually a thoroughfare but also used to deliver art classes for up to 14 students
- a study room that holds three self-paced learners.

At times education also delivers courses in some of the programs rooms when available, and the visits centre.

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We have commented on these infrastructure limitations in previous inspections. In 2010 we said it was too small to cope with prisoners' education needs (OICS, 2010, p. 33). In 2013 we made comment about increased access to computers and better education facilities (OICS, 2013, p. 38). And in 2016 we said that education would benefit from increased investment in both human and structural education resources (OICS, 2016, p. 31). This is not to say the education centre at Karnet was not doing a good job. But their capacity to do a better job was limited by a lack of suitable infrastructure.

### **Karnet offered a full program of traineeships and relevant short courses**

Currently traineeship numbers fluctuate between 50 and 70 prisoners. It was commendable that most of the prisoners working on the farm were enrolled in a traineeship providing them with a qualification that may assist with gaining employment post release. These included:

- abattoir – certificates in Meat Processing
- cleaning – certificates in Cleaning Operations
- laundry – certificate in Laundry Operations
- construction – certificates in Construction
- farm – certificates in Rural Operations
- gardens – certificates in Horticulture.

We found a reasonable range of relevant short courses on offer at Karnet:

- barista training
- bobcat/excavator training
- chemical handling
- dogging and rigging
- fitness/sport coaching
- forklift handling
- scaffolding
- road traffic management.

Short, specific skills-focused courses such as these are invaluable for prisoners, especially those nearing release. These courses provide a current and relevant accredited qualification which significantly improves these prisoners' employment prospects in the community.

We were disappointed that the Fairbridge Bindjareb Project for Aboriginal prisoners had ended. We have been most complimentary of this project at past inspections when we described it as "a fine example of Aboriginal specific training, supporting post-release employment pathways for Aboriginal minimum-security prisoners" (OICS, 2016, p. 31). Positively, after our inspection, the program was revived and recommenced in September 2019 under new service provider Carey Training, with the first cohort of Aboriginal prisoners graduating from the program in December 2019.

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### 3.2 EMPLOYMENT

#### **Most prisoners were meaningfully employed, but maintaining this was a challenge**

We found that most of the prison population at Karnet (330 out of 360) was employed. These prisoners worked across 26 work locations both within the prison and outside on the farm. These were the biggest employers in the prison:

- abattoirs – 54 prisoners employed
- kitchen – 49 prisoners employed
- cleaning – 28 prisoners employed
- education – 21 prisoners engaged
- laundry – 16 prisoners employed
- poultry – 12 prisoners employed
- dairy – 13 prisoners employed
- recreation – 14 prisoners employed.

However, we found that maintaining the high employment level was a constant challenge. Workshops and VSOs were under mounting pressure to keep production and employment up and running despite VSO shortages impacting all work areas. The shortages meant that relief VSOs were working in positions long-term which resulted in a lack of relief VSOs to cover short term vacancies.

Three workshops had been closed for significant periods of time – the construction workshop, manual trades workshop, and signage workshop. In each case, the closure was the result of VSOs being on various types of leave. There were 30 prisoners employed in these workshops unable to work. Short-term contracts and overtime had been used to address the VSO shortage, but this had been hampered by the Department's protracted processes for approving contracts.

#### **The number of prisoners working in the community was low**

Prisoners can be approved to leave a prison to undertake activities in the community under Section 95 of the *Prisons Act 1981 (WA)*. We expect a significant number of prisoners to be engaged in external activities at a minimum-security, pre-release facility like Karnet. However, our inspection found relatively few prisoners working in the community. A good proportion of the prisoner population was approved to participate in external activities (77 for supervised activities and 20 for unsupervised activities), but far fewer were actually participating.

Eight prisoners were working in the community at the Pinjarra Community Garden Centre. They were constructing two training rooms, a conference room, office, and a communal kitchen. They were all enrolled in a Certificate II in Construction. This was good practice, providing potential employment pathways for them on release. There were also prisoners participating in various recreational activities in the community [see 5.3].

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Some prisoners worked externally under the Prison Employment Program (PEP). This is a program prisoners can apply for within 12 months of release. It allows prisoners to engage in paid employment, leaving the prison to attend work and returning to the prison at the end of each day. The program also has provision for participants to engage in job seeking, during which they leave the prison to attend a job centre to look for work as well as partake in other development opportunities like resume writing and interview skills. At the time of the inspection there were 15 prisoners involved in PEP at Karnet, two of whom were in paid employment, and the others were job seeking.

### 3.3 INDIVIDUAL CASE MANAGEMENT

#### **Assessment and case management were doing well**

We found a committed and engaged sentence planning team at Karnet. The team was operating below staffing capacity because the Senior Officer Assessments had recently been seconded to Hakea Prison, and the position had not been backfilled. This left two uniformed officer report writers and the Case Management Coordinator (CMC) to manage the assessment and case management workload. Despite this, assessments were up to date.

Given the nature of Karnet as a minimum-security, pre-release facility, the sentence planning team manages a variety of complex assessment processes. These include parole review checklists, PEP applications, reintegration leave applications, and resocialisation programs, as well as security classification reviews and Individual Management Plan (IMP) Reviews.

The IMP sets out a prisoner's journey through their prison sentence. It identifies a prisoner's security rating, education and program requirements, and prison placement. The purpose of an IMP Review is to evaluate the prisoner's progress against the IMP, and identify any further requirements or changes that would best suit the prisoner.

In January 2019, the sentence planning team at Karnet was struggling with a three-month backlog of IMP Reviews. By the time of our inspection in April 2019, the backlog had been cleared, and all IMP Reviews were up to date.

Case management was also proactively managed at Karnet. Case Officers were assigned to prisoners by the CMC, ensuring an even distribution amongst staff. All eligible prisoners had an assigned Case Officer. The CMC tasks the Case Officers to complete contact reports with their allocated prisoners when they are due. In completing these contact reports, the Case Officers interview the prisoner, complete the report, submit this for quality control to the Senior Officer, and to the prisoner for signing, and forward the report to the CMC.

Once the Primary Contact report has been completed, the timeframe for the follow-up Regular Contact Report is set to fall mid-cycle of the prisoner's IMP Review, either six monthly or yearly, depending on the length of sentence remaining. The case management system at Karnet was functioning efficiently and effectively.

## REHABILITATION AND REPARATION

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### **There were too many prisoners at Karnet without an IMP**

The initial IMP should be completed within the first 28 days of a prisoner being sentenced (DCS, 2012). This usually occurs at the receiving prison, most likely Hakea Prison if in the metropolitan area. In normal circumstances, any prisoner arriving at Karnet should already have an IMP, and should have made substantial progress in addressing identified needs.

However, a significant backlog in the Department's assessment system meant that there was an unacceptable number of prisoners at Karnet who did not have an IMP. At the time of our inspection, there were 45 prisoners at Karnet without an IMP. This means prisoners are serving their time without their education and training needs, or offending program requirements being met, or even assessed. Many others will be assessed far too late to have their needs met.

Without an IMP, a prisoner is not eligible to participate in various activities designed to prepare them for reintegration into their communities. This includes any activities in the community (work, training, or recreation), paid employment in the community through PEP, and spending time at home with family on reintegration leave. Missing out on these opportunities has potential negative consequences for their successful reintegration prospects. Another significant risk posed by the assessments backlog is a potentially dwindling pool of prisoners eligible for placement at minimum-security facilities like Karnet.

Following the completion of the inspection, the Department has advised it has engaged additional resources to address the IMP backlog. Eight additional Treatment Course Planning Assessors have completed training and have been completing treatment assessments since the beginning of July 2019. The Department has further advised it has established an IMP Project Steering Committee to review the assessments process in its entirety. This will include further strategies to reduce the backlog and prevent them from occurring in the future. We welcome this development but will continue to monitor outstanding assessments across the prisons estates.

### **3.4 OFFENDER PROGRAMS**

#### **Program delivery had decreased because treatment needs were unknown**

The provision of offender treatment programs had dropped substantially since our previous inspection in 2016. Then, we found that programs were running well at Karnet, and the prisoners we encountered who had completed programs were positive about what it meant for them and their future (OICS, 2016, pp. 39–42).

In 2019, program delivery at Karnet (and throughout the system) had become more challenging because of the statewide IMP backlog. There was a low number of prisoners at minimum-security who had been assessed as requiring a program. Several of the programs scheduled for late 2018 were cancelled due to insufficient participants identified.



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In response, the Department changed processes for scheduling programs. Rather than booking prisoners into programs years in advance, scheduling was left until much later – sometimes only a few weeks before commencement. An analysis of outstanding program needs for prisoners who had been assessed was carried out, and programs were scheduled at prisons where there were sufficient numbers of prisoners assessed as requiring that program. The change in process was designed as a short-term and temporary strategy to maximise program delivery while there were limited numbers of prisoners assessed as needing a program.

At the time of our inspection, it was not possible to determine which programs would be available at Karnet in 2019, and how many would run. The IMP backlog meant that an accurate picture of program demand was not available, but it is highly likely that demand will increase significantly as more treatment assessments are completed, and an increase in program delivery will be required.

### 3.5 PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

#### **There was a small but proactive reintegration team**

The Transitional Manager (TM) was relatively new to Karnet, but not new to the role, having worked as TM at Casuarina Prison for five years. She had been well received by prisoners at Karnet and we heard positive feedback about her approach, attitude, and services.

The TM was assisted by a Reintegration Projects Officer and a Transitional Clerk, who was a prisoner worker. The Reintegration Projects Officer position was a newly created, temporary position, to further support the transitional services team. The provision of additional resources in this area, which is central to Karnet's role in preparing prisoners for release, was very positive.

The services provided by the TM assist prisoners to prepare for release by making sure their affairs are in order. For example, applications for basic identification documents, social service assistance like housing and Medicare cards, payment plans for outstanding fines, and so on. These are necessities without which navigating life outside prison can be very difficult.

The Transitional Clerk provides an essential service for the TM in contacting prisoners who were nearing release and could benefit from the TM's services. The TM has developed a checklist of services she can assist prisoners with. The clerk uses this when interviewing prisoners about what services they may need in the lead up to their release. This was a good system.

#### **There was a coordinated approach to reintegration**

A range of staff from various service areas of the prison worked hard to keep reintegration opportunities open to eligible prisoners. These included the sentence planning team, the TM, the Employment Coordinator, senior managers, the PSO and even the peer support prisoners.

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Prisoners who are within 12 months of being eligible for release can apply for Reintegration Leave (RIL). RIL allows prisoners to leave prison for periods of time under the supervision of a suitable sponsor, as part of their reintegration journey.

There were 11 prisoners on resocialisation programs (RSPs) at Karnet at the time of the inspection. These are prisoners who have served long sentences, and need particular reintegration support in lead up to their potential release. The RSPs involve the prisoner progressing through three stages, each of which incorporates increased access to various reintegration opportunities.

A coordinated, case-conference approach was adopted in managing prisoners on an RSP through the various stages. This included individual interviews with each prisoner to determine individual reintegration needs. The TM, Employment Coordinator and CMC facilitated these case conferences to ensure all the necessary services were available to the prisoner. This approach was good practice.

### **Resocialisation prisoners wanted more support**

While Karnet has a coordinated approach to reintegration, prisoners involved in RSPs spoke to us about what they perceived as obstacles to their resocialisation. For instance, to obtain paid employment through PEP, prisoners had to find their own employment. This could be difficult to achieve from prison. However, they were supported by the Employment Coordinator who helped job search, get contact details for potential and former employers, and draft letters for those seeking work. As part of PEP, they could also leave the prison to attend a job centre to look for work. If they did find a job, they had to provide their own vehicle. Karnet is not serviced by public transport so if you had a job but did not have a car you could not get to work.

Those prisoners who had been in prison for a long time (some more than 20 years), felt ill-prepared for the world of technology they would be entering. Some also felt under-skilled, and would benefit from updated training. And while this was available, they felt aggrieved that they had to pay for this themselves at this point in their sentence, even at a reduced cost.

### **ReSet were active in the prison and were highly regarded**

There had been a change in the contracted re-entry service provider since the last inspection in 2016. Then, Outcare was the agency delivering these services to prisoners six months prior to release and 12 months post-release. The new service provider, ReSet, is a consortium led by Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, and joined by Centrecare, St Bartholomew's House, and Wirrpanda Foundation.

The consortium approach meant a different model of service than that previously provided. Each of the agencies in the consortium offered a different service, which means a prisoner engaged with ReSet could have a few different caseworkers working with them depending on their particular re-entry needs.

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While this was a new model to get used to, we found that it was working well. We heard positive feedback about ReSet. They were active in the prison, and prisoners requiring their services could access them. There were six ReSet caseworkers allocated to Karnet, each with different areas of expertise.

We found all the services across the prison were aware of ReSet and their role in preparing prisoners for release. Referrals for prisoners to ReSet go through the TM who works with the prisoner to identify his specific requirements for pre- and post-release support.

# Chapter 4

## PRISON OPERATIONS

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### 4.1 GATEHOUSE PROCEDURES

#### Movement through the gatehouse can be difficult to control

People entering the gatehouse do so through a door that leads into a small waiting space. This has some seating, but is mainly a thoroughfare into the gatehouse. From this area, sliding doors lead into the gatehouse proper. These sliding doors are motion sensitive and open automatically when people stand close to them, whether inside the gatehouse or outside in the small waiting area.

When these sliding doors are open, the rear door of the gatehouse leading in to the main prison cannot open. Likewise, when the rear door is open, the sliding doors cannot open. This is a security measure which ensures that both the entry and exit points of the gatehouse cannot be open at the same time.

While a logical security measure, it caused bottlenecks of people either congregating in the gatehouse waiting to get out, or waiting outside to get in. The gatehouse is a small area with a large officers' desk in the middle, leaving limited room to move around or stand and wait. At times this space was crowded with external contractors, officers and public servants arriving for work, members of the public arriving to collect prisoners being released, VSOs moving through the area, and various other movements in and out of the prison. If any one of these individuals stood too close to the automatic sliding doors, they would open, which meant the exit door could not, so people became stuck in the gatehouse.

This also made it difficult for the Senior Officer in the gatehouse to monitor the control of movement in and out. We found evidence of this when we checked the staff searching register for one of the days we were on site. We found that two staff members who had been identified for a random search that day had entered and exited the gatehouse without being noticed and stopped to be searched.

Officers in the gatehouse should have more control over movements in and out of the prison. This would prevent the gatehouse becoming too crowded, and making it easier to monitor movements. This would also improve the controls around searching of staff, and other visitors.

The gatehouse has an illogical layout. The electronic key watch is in a narrow corridor which becomes crowded as soon as there are more than two officers trying to retrieve keys. There is another corridor on the other side of the officers' counter in the centre of the gatehouse which leads to offices, toilets and other rooms. This is also very narrow but regardless an incident control board has been erected on the wall of this corridor outside the Senior Officers' office. This office also houses the police gun unloading dock and firearms safe. Further, there is little room to conduct searches of any kind.

#### **Recommendation 3**

**Review the layout of the gatehouse to improve functionality.**

## PRISON OPERATIONS

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The signal for the personal duress alarms that all staff and visitors are required to wear when entering the prison does not extend beyond the prison fence into the farm space. So those officers and VSOs working outside the fenced area are not able to activate an alarm should something happen that puts them at risk. A strategy in place to mitigate this risk involves the control officer located in the gatehouse control room calling the farm officers every half an hour to check in on them. There are approximately six to eight of these officers scattered around the farm on any given day. This is time consuming, takes the control officer away from their essential duties, and only marginally reduces safety risks.

### 4.2 RECEPTION AND ORIENTATION

#### Good reception processes

The reception process is an important part of a prisoner's transition into what can be a new and unfamiliar environment. Although prisoners have usually spent time at one or more prisons before coming to Karnet, it provides an important introduction to a minimum-security environment.

The reception process at Karnet was thorough and well run. We observed respectful staff interactions with prisoners and noted prisoners were given clear instructions about what was happening. There were three prisoners working in reception completing administrative tasks, issuing prison clothing, and undertaking some laundry work. A member of the peer support team was involved in welcoming new prisoners.

#### The physical infrastructure inhibits a free-flowing reception process

While the infrastructure of reception is well maintained and modern, we observed it was not conducive to a free-flowing process. The Movements Officer is located at the rear of the reception area in what was a holding cell. This means that there is only one holding cell available for prisoners to wait in before being processed through reception. The holding cell is located at the opposite end of the reception area to the strip-searching room. This makes it difficult to search prisoners and then maintain a sterile environment.

Staff managed prisoners entering and leaving the prison on the escort vehicle, however, it was not done without several staff needing to be available to observe, and provide constant vigilance to make sure the prisoners were kept separated. The process could be a lot safer and quicker if the second holding cell was available. Also, there was no seating available for prisoners awaiting the reception process or for transfer out of Karnet.

#### Peer Support prisoners offer comprehensive orientation support

Immediately after the reception process, peer support is called upon to assist prisoners by taking them to their units and providing a brief tour on the way. The following day a full orientation occurs. The orientation comprises information sessions about various aspects of prison life, as well as a tour of the prison (except for areas outside the fence). Prisoners are additionally provided an orientation booklet (which was being revised at the time of inspection). The booklet is comprehensive and easy to understand.

## PRISON OPERATIONS

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Positive perceptions about orientation have remained the same since the last inspection survey. Sixty-six per cent of prisoner respondents to our survey said they were given enough information on arrival to understand how the prison works. The only negative issue we came across was that occasionally prisoner transfers might occur on a Friday resulting in the orientation process not occurring until the following Monday.

### 4.3 RELATIONAL SECURITY

#### Mixed perceptions about relationships between officers and prisoners

Positive, pro-social relations between staff and prisoners are integral for maintaining a safe and respectful environment in a custodial setting. We found that perceptions about how well this was happening at Karnet were mixed.

Both our staff and prisoner pre-inspection survey results indicated that these relationships were positive. In fact, the results from the staff survey were better than those we received three years ago. In 2019, 80 per cent of staff who responded to our survey said they got on 'generally well' with prisoners. In 2016, this was 65 per cent. Prisoners responded similarly. Seventy-seven per cent of those who responded said their relationships with officers were 'good'. This was in line with responses we received three years ago (75% said these were good in 2016).

Perceptions of personal safety are also a good indicator of positive relationships among staff and prisoners. It is unlikely that either staff or prisoners would feel safe if relations between them were tense and fractured. This was not the case at Karnet. Ninety-one per cent of prisoners said they 'mostly feel safe' and 89 per cent of staff either 'mostly' or 'almost always' feel safe at Karnet. This was positive.

However, some staff we spoke to said that they thought that their connections with prisoners were not as good as they used to be. They attributed this to the increase in the prisoner population, as well as the rise in their compliance reporting responsibilities. This kept them stuck inside the unit offices making sure all their paperwork was completed instead of out and about conversing with prisoners.

### 4.4 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

#### Prison offences dealt with quickly and fairly

We were pleased to find that the Prosecutor was up to date with processing all prison charges. He did mention that options to replace him with qualified personnel when he went on leave were limited. There was a shortage of prosecutors throughout the prison system. As a consequence, officers who are trained Prosecutors must fit this function in around their regular prison officer duties which is not sustainable.

Of the prisoners who responded to the pre-inspection survey, 68 per cent said they thought that officers applied the prison rules fairly. This was an increase from 59 per cent at the previous inspection and well above the state average of 42 per cent. Karnet were doing well in this regard.

## PRISON OPERATIONS

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### 4.5 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

#### Good emergency management procedures in place

Emergency Management is on track for all compulsory exercises for the year to be carried out. Two live exercises had been conducted by the time of the inspection – a fire exercise and a medical emergency exercise. Other desk top exercises had also been completed with more planned for the coming months. The exercises are usually run by the Senior Officer on duty on the day. The Security Manager oversees the exercise and carries out the debrief after the event conducting a 'lessons learned' approach with staff who participated.

Karnet works with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and the local shire in assessing fire risk. The Security Manager also attends the Local Emergency Management Committee Meeting with these and other agencies from the area (including police) on a regular basis. A total site evacuation plan is in place but in practice it is unlikely to be required. A range of prisoners and staff are trained and available to manage an ember attack, which represents the primary fire risk for the property. DFES has inspected the site as part of the prison's emergency management planning, and have determined the prison is well placed to ensure the safety of staff and prisoners in the event of a fire event.

# Chapter 5

## PRISON RESOURCES AND PLANNING

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### 5.1 STAFFING

#### Senior management instability was affecting staff morale and prisoner services

At the time of our inspection, uncertainty about senior management positions at Karnet had been ongoing for 24 months. There was only one member of the senior management team that was substantive in their position. This had fuelled perceptions, by staff and prisoners, that long-term decisions about Karnet were not being made due to short-term leadership.

There had been four Superintendents at Karnet in the last two years. The substantive Superintendent had been on long-term secondment since late 2017. The Acting Superintendent at the time of our inspection had been in the post since December 2018.

It was a credit to all involved that the prison continued to operate at a high level. But we heard from staff and prisoners that progress in some areas had been slowed because of the continuing instability in the senior management team. Positively, within a few months of our inspection, all members of the Karnet senior management team had returned to the prison. This should provide certainty and consistency for the prison moving forward.

### 5.2 FARM PRODUCTION

#### Farm output is struggling to meet demand from growing prisoner population

Karnet is the Department's primary producer of eggs, milk, and meat products, supplying these to the public prisons across Western Australia. The farm:

- milks about 180 cows twice daily producing approximately 1.7 million litres of milk per year
- has over 6,000 laying hens that produce approximately 1.5 million eggs per year
- produces over 260 tonnes of fruit and vegetables per year
- processes more than 2,400 head of cattle each year
- processes more than 6,000 sheep each year.

To ensure continuing self-sustainability in terms of meat, milk, and egg production, the infrastructure in these areas will need to be replaced and expanded soon.

This is not a new idea. In 2013, we recommended replacing the abattoir to meet Department of Health requirements, and the demands of the growing prisoner population which stood at roughly 5,000 prisoners (OICS, 2013). At our 2016 inspection, while the abattoir had not been replaced, we were pleased some remedial work had been completed (OICS, 2016). However, in 2019, the prisoner population was almost 7,000, and we again heard concerns from staff that the abattoir was an unsafe working environment and new facilities were required to meet demand.

Karnet was also exploring the changes needed for other industries to meet increasing demand. The prison wanted to expand the dairy from producing just milk to cheese, yoghurt, and other dairy products, and increase the variety of fruit and vegetable supplies. We acknowledge these moves will require significant investment with additional



## PRISON RESOURCES AND PLANNING

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*Photos 10–12. The farm was impressive but needed infrastructure improvements.*

infrastructure and staff. The Department needs to assess whether these costs will be outweighed by the savings of self-producing these goods. But expanding production at Karnet will allow the Department to maintain a level of self-sustainability, as well as ensure ongoing prisoner employment and training opportunities.

### **Recommendation 4**

Assess the costs and benefits of expanding prison industries at Karnet.

## PRISON RESOURCES AND PLANNING

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### 5.3 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

#### **Promoting opportunities for prisoners to meaningfully engage with the community**

Karnet has traditionally undertaken a wide range of work within the community. In its 'Our Vision' document, Karnet recognises that 'the maintenance of a positive pro social environment for all who live and work at Karnet is critical to our success.' At our last inspection, we described its Section 95 activities as the 'feather in the cap' for Karnet (OICS, 2016).

This inspection we found available Section 95 activities at Karnet included inter-prison sporting events, employment, bush walking, and work teams at Pinjarra Community Gardens. It is positive that there are 77 supervised prisoners and 20 unsupervised on the Section 95 approval list. However, in practice this does not translate to actual numbers on regular activities.

Unfortunately, because of both the VSO shortages and the incident that led to the Corruption and Crime Commission *Report into adequate supervision of prisoners whilst in the community* (CCC, 2018), there has been a reduction in unsupervised activities and Section 95 opportunities more generally.

Despite the reduction, there still appeared to be several initiatives bringing community organisations into Karnet. Examples included Karnet's Inside/Out Careers Expo and the Pinjarra Theatrical Play, both of which were attended by this Office. And Karnet has continued to chair quarterly community liaison meetings with various stakeholders from the surrounding shires and the Western Australia police. For the past decade, these meetings have promoted the good work of Section 95 prisoners in the community and have also identified other employment and training opportunities. It also appeared that several external community groups had regular or specific interactions within Karnet including choirs and tertiary students.

#### **Supervised external sporting events continue to be developed**

The last inspection found that prisoners were not permitted to take part in any supervised external sporting events (OICS, 2016). External recreation had been cancelled in the wake of a high-profile escape from another Perth minimum-security prison in 2014, and had not been reinstated.

Pleasingly, in accordance with our 2016 recommendation, external recreation had recommenced prior to this inspection (OICS, 2016). In 2018, Section 95 recreation activities included over 150 bushwalks (averaging five prisoners per walk), newspaper runs (a single prisoner each time), an AFL trip to Bunbury Regional Prison for NAIDOC Week (attended by 12 prisoners), and basketball matches with Bunbury Regional Prison and Wooroloo Prison Farm (attended by 9 different prisoners).

## PRISON RESOURCES AND PLANNING

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Planned sporting events for 2019 include basketball at Bunbury Regional Prison and Wooroloo Prison Farm, football at Bunbury Regional Prison and soccer at Wooroloo Prison Farm. The Big Issue is also attending Karnet for soccer matches. The Office supports all such initiatives, which are conducive to community reintegration.

# Appendix 1

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

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ASOS	Assistant Superintendent Offender Services
AVS	Aboriginal Visitors Scheme
CCC	Corruption and Crime Commission
CMC	Case Management Coordinator
CNM	Clinical Nurse Manager
DCS	Department of Corrective Services
DFES	Department of Fire and Emergency Services
GP	General Practitioner
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MHN	Mental Health Nurse
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PCS	Prison Counselling Service
PEP	Prisoner Employment Program
PSO	Prison Support Officer
RIL	Re-Integration Leave
RSP	Resocialisation Program
TM	Transitional Manager
TOMS	Total Offender Management Solution
VSO	Vocational and Support Officer

## Appendix 2

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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# Appendix 3

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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## **Response to the Announced Inspection: Karnet Prison Farm 2019**

**December 2019**

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## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
**Karnet Prison Farm 2019**

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The Department of Justice welcomes the draft report of the inspection of Karnet Prison Farm.

The Department has reviewed the report and noted a level of acceptance against the four recommendations.

Appendix A contains comments for your attention and consideration.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Karnet Prison Farm 2019

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### Response to Recommendations

#### 1 Deliver tailored and compulsory cultural diversity training for all staff.

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Operational Support  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 June 2020

**Response:**

Corrective Services already has multiple training options available that promote and reinforce the importance of recognising and embracing cultural diversity. These options are available through the Justice Education Management System and include:

- Sharing Culture – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People;
- Diverse WA Cultural Competency Training; and
- Share Our Pride – Reconciliation Australia.

Learning and Professional Development will ensure that Karnet has accessed the contemporary online training options available, and will assist Karnet in determining the most suitable program from the available options to meet the needs of the local staffing group.

#### 2 Increase counselling services to prisoners at Karnet.

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Community Corrections, Health and Offender Management  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 June 2020

**Response:**

The Prison Counselling Service model of care has changed with the introduction of a stepped care approach to service delivery. The needs of clients are assessed and recommendations made regarding the level of intervention required.

Health Services will ensure the stepped care approach to counselling services is being provided to prisoners at Karnet.

#### 3 Review the layout of the gatehouse to improve functionality.

**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corporate Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Infrastructure Services  
**Proposed Completion Date:** N/A

**Response:**

Adequacy of existing facilities and services in prisons including gatehouses are considered as part of the Department's long term custodial plan.



## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Karnet Prison Farm 2019

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The current Karnet gatehouse is suitable for the minimum security prison from an infrastructure perspective and considered adequate. Its design is almost identical to Wooroloo Prison Farm.

#### **4 Assess the costs and benefits of expanding prison industries at Karnet.**

<b>Level of Acceptance:</b>	Supported
<b>Responsible Division:</b>	Corrective Services
<b>Responsible Business Area:</b>	Adult Male Prisons
<b>Proposed Completion Date:</b>	30 June 2020

**Response:**

Adult Male Prisons, through Prison Industries is currently conducting an assessment of potential future projects and industries expansion at Karnet.

# Appendix 4

## METHODOLOGY

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### PREVIOUS INSPECTION

8–17 February 2016

### ACTIVITY SINCE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

Liaison visits to Karnet Prison Farm	9
Independent Visitor visits	36

### SURVEYS

<b>Prisoner survey</b> 30–31 January 2019	173 responses
<b>Staff survey (online)</b> 29 January 2019	65 responses

### INSPECTION TEAM

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### KEY DATES

Inspection announced	20 November 2018
Start of on-site inspection	18 March 2019
Completion of on-site inspection	4 April 2019
Presentation of preliminary findings	18 April 2019
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	28 October 2019
Declaration of prepared report	16 January 2020

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



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