

Inspector's Overview

KARNET PERFORMS STRONGLY, BUT IS UNDER PRESSURE IN SEVERAL AREAS

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

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

Eamon Ryan
Inspector

16 January 2020