

Inspector's Overview

SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT WERE EVIDENT IN ROEBOURNE

Our overall observation following this inspection was that Roebourne Regional Prison (Roebourne) was showing noticeable signs of improvement in many aspects of its operations. Much of the credit for this improvement seems to rest with having a stable management team who engage positively with staff and prisoners. That said, credit must also go to the staff who appeared to have a positive attitude and a willingness to embrace change and opportunities for improvement.

The prison appeared to be settled and the prisoners mostly said they were happy at Roebourne.

We saw a number of improvements in the infrastructure with significant refurbishment work completed in the accommodation units for men, the conversion of the dining hall into an indoor recreation facility and other areas throughout the prison.

There have been several security improvements which have contributed to a greater sense of safety for the staff and prisoners. We observed better dynamic security and engagement between staff and prisoners.

The Town Workcamp is operating close to full capacity and this offers considerable rehabilitation benefits for the men who are placed there and incentive to those aspiring to get there. Our report highlights some of the impressive community projects undertaken by the work camp prisoners. During the inspection, we heard considerable support from the local community for this work to continue and even expand. Perhaps one day Roebourne could be the first work camp to offer placements to female prisoners.

Our report identifies several aspects of the prison's operations and infrastructure that could be improved and the Department has responded positively to the majority of our findings and recommendations. For example, we identified a lack of hygienic facilities for the men to eat their meals in their units. The Department advised that since our inspection work had commenced to address this issue with day rooms having been refurbished and other work commenced to create under cover seating areas. We were encouraged by this and will monitor this work as it progresses.

One disappointing response was to our recommendation around providing effective heat mitigation for the accommodation in the men's units. It is an identified health and welfare risk that arises once the prisoners are locked down that we feel ought to be effectively mitigated. We have made this recommendation in various reports over many years and while we recognise that there are infrastructure constraints, a solution is needed.

Employment and education are two essential elements of an effective prison operation. We identified opportunities for improvement in employment for both men and women in Roebourne. The Department's response identified several initiatives being undertaken to create more employment opportunities within the prison. We were also advised that there is a review currently underway into prison education, employment and transition services with a view to better meeting the needs of prisoners and improving employability

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with links to industry. These steps are welcomed and we will monitor the impact of these initiatives for the prisoners in Roebourne and in other facilities.

Our inspection identified several areas where there was potential for improvement and to build on past success. Many of these areas fall within the remit of an Assistant Superintendent Offender Services, so it was disappointing that our recommendation to create such a position was not currently supported.

It was quite remarkable in many respects that both staff and prisoners appeared happy and stable in Roebourne. Limitations we found in the ageing infrastructure appear to have been tolerated because of a positive culture and good engagement between the leadership and staff and between staff and prisoners.

Roebourne is making strong progress and we are hopeful that the gains achieved and identified in this report can be maintained and improved on over the coming years.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

I would also like to thank each of the members of our inspection team and our independent expert for their significant contribution to this inspection. I would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of Cliff Holdom for his hard work in planning the inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector

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