



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2019 INSPECTION OF  
CASUARINA PRISON

129

MARCH 2020

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that contributes to a more  
accountable public sector*

## 2019 Inspection of Casuarina Prison

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# Inspector's Overview

## CASUARINA IS FACING SOME SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN THE COMING YEARS

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Casuarina Prison is a large and complex facility housing almost 1,000 sentenced and remand maximum-security prisoners. Over the years we have been inspecting the prison it has been faced with many challenges and in the main handled them reasonably well.

This report identifies several medium and long term challenges and risks facing the prison which will require solid leadership, resourcing and planning. Fortunately, our inspection found that the senior leadership team was cohesive and effective, despite some instability arising from several individuals only acting in their roles.

The current expansion of Casuarina is due to be completed in mid-2020. This will increase the prison's capacity by 512 beds, bringing the total capacity to just under 1,500 prisoners. A further expansion project is planned for an additional 344 beds mostly in specialist units with completion expected sometime in 2023. This will place significant pressure on the prison and impact its capacity to provide a meaningful and constructive daily regime for a very large and complex cohort of prisoners.

Strong planning and preparedness will be critical as Casuarina expands. Although it was somewhat disappointing that the Department did not accept our recommendation that Casuarina develop a strategic plan, it was reassuring that they have plans for the development of an operating philosophy and model that will be consistent with the consolidated plan for the whole prison estate.

During this inspection, we heard from many staff and prisoners who raised concerns about the impact of staff shortages leading to staff being redeployed away from support services such as assessments, education, industries and recreation. This problem is not unique to Casuarina, but the impact is that many prisoners are missing key support services essential for their wellbeing and/or rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation programs continue to be impacted by the backlog in assessments, and although the Department has implemented strategies to deal with the backlog, it will take some time to flow on to the delivery of programs to prisoners who need them. A further complication is the availability of dedicated program rooms within the prison.

Education and training in Casuarina continues to be a highlight with prisoners benefiting from a good range of education and training opportunities. Many prisoners were undertaking certificate level training which is essential for their rehabilitation and preparation for eventual release. Space and resources are the most pressing limitations on the expansion of education delivery at Casuarina.

Casuarina provides good employment options for those prisoners who have a job but there are high levels of unemployment and under-employment.

These observations arose from our current inspection where we were considering the present situation at the prison and the services it provides for the current population of just under 1,000 prisoners.

## CASUARINA IS FACING SOME SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN THE COMING YEARS

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When the prison expands in mid-2020 and again with the further planned expansion there will be additional pressure on these essential services. Perhaps the single most important challenge for Casuarina into the future will be its ability to provide a meaningful and constructive daily regime for the large and complex population it will be expected to manage.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

**Eamon Ryan**  
**Inspector**

30 March 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This was the seventh announced inspection of Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. The inspection took place in September 2019.

At the start of our 2019 inspection, there were 937 prisoners at Casuarina. Although this was well below the published capacity of 1,032, the prison was extremely overcrowded, with almost every available cell double-bunked. About 35 per cent of prisoners were Aboriginal, and 40 per cent were on remand.

A major prison expansion project was under way, with 512 new beds scheduled for completion by mid-2020. There were also plans for a further expansion of 344 beds that would see ongoing building works at Casuarina until at least 2023. When complete, Casuarina's capacity will be close to 1,900 prisoners, making it one of the largest prisons in Australia.

The senior management team at Casuarina was cohesive and effective. However, only four of the 12 senior management positions were filled by permanent occupants. Casuarina is going through a period of significant change, and stable leadership will be important. Feedback during the inspection indicated that custodial staff wanted more opportunities to communicate with senior management.

Although Casuarina was generally well-managed, there was no strategic plan or business plan specific to the prison. The number of imminent changes and challenges highlighted the need for a long-term strategic plan, which would aid continuity in the event of leadership change.

Casuarina had a staffing deployment agreement that outlined how the prison would redeploy staff and alter service delivery in response to staff shortages. Unfortunately, staff shortages were severe and regular, affecting prison operations and services almost every day.

We were concerned that prison officer transfers into Casuarina, and transfers and appointments to different areas and positions within the prison itself, were not based on merit or business need. Staff were concerned that they did not have equitable access to opportunities, and this was a source of discontent. Casuarina would benefit from better representation of both Aboriginal staff, and women, particularly at higher levels.

Most staff at Casuarina acknowledged that they had good relationships with some of their colleagues, and less positive relationships with others. We heard some particular concerns, including disturbing examples of behaviour that would amount to sexual harassment. Any form of harassment in the workplace is completely unacceptable. There were enough general concerns raised with us during the inspection to justify proactive steps by senior management.

Prison infrastructure was stretched. Casuarina was originally designed for less than 400 prisoners, and now holds more than 900. The condition of the older units was deteriorating, accelerated by the fact that the number of prisoners in each unit had

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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doubled. Cockroach infestation was an ongoing problem, which failed to meet a reasonable standard of decent living conditions.

The campus-style layout and open spaces of the prison contributed to a calm atmosphere. Unit recreation yards ensure that prisoners have opportunities to exercise and spend time outdoors. This is a crucial feature of the prison that helps to relieve tension.

The ongoing construction work had affected the operation of the control room by frequently setting off alarms. This meant that one of the officers in the control room was constantly resetting alarms. Control room officers were not routinely relieved, creating a risk that they could become complacent or inattentive.

The security team was one of the areas consistently affected by redeployment. It meant the security team was mainly reactive rather than proactive. Security officers had very limited capacity to spend time inside the prison, interacting with staff and prisoners.

When the construction project at Casuarina began in February 2019, there were several problems relating to lack of preparedness. Casuarina was exposed to serious risks during this period, but managed to avoid major incidents. By the time of our inspection in September 2019, building site security was vastly improved, and the project was very well managed.

The Department of Justice (the Department) had introduced a 'disruptive prisoners' order, aimed at prisoners who display violent behaviour, or negatively influence other prisoners. We were concerned that this order appears to circumvent the legislative framework of the *Prisons Act 1981*. This creates a risk of prisoner mistreatment, and exposes the Department to a potential court challenge.

Casuarina's 24-bed infirmary serves as a sub-acute medical and post-acute surgery ward. The infirmary was increasingly housing long-term patients – elderly or infirm prisoners, and several in palliative care. The infrastructure of the infirmary is inadequate to run a full sub-acute service, and the facilities are quite dated. It is not equivalent to a hospital. Facilities, resources, and equipment are much more limited.

Outpatient services were very busy, and capacity was insufficient for the current prisoner population. The expansion project included extension and refurbishment of the outpatient area. Prisoners complained about waiting for months to see a doctor or specialist, and were especially critical of dental services. There was a large pile of medical appointment request forms that had not been reviewed, but health staff did not know how many were in the pile. This was concerning and the risk from a clinical governance perspective was high. A patient with an urgent condition could be missed in the backlog.

There was no Aboriginal health care worker, and an absence of culturally safe primary health care. The Department needs to actively recruit Aboriginal health staff, but also explore opportunities for cooperation between prison health services and Aboriginal medical services in the community. It also needs to develop and implement culturally

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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appropriate clinical assessment tools, and provide training in the delivery of culturally sensitive health care.

The mental health team worked to a high standard, and were integrated well with primary health, and with custodial operations in the prison. The mental health team had implemented a 'traffic light' system – red, amber, green – indicating the level of acuity of prisoners with mental health issues. This system was highly effective, and an excellent initiative. Casuarina had robust processes for identifying and monitoring prisoners at risk of self-harm. However, prison counselling services still lacked resources and support.

Aboriginal staff in key positions, such as the Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services, the Prison Support Officers, and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) visitors, worked well together to support Aboriginal prisoners. Kaartdijin Mia, the cultural and learning centre, was a very positive space within the prison, highly valued by staff and prisoners. However, Aboriginal prisoners were still fundamentally disadvantaged at Casuarina. A high proportion were unemployed, and those with jobs were more likely to be earning lower gratuity levels. Aboriginal staff and prisoners still perceived a lack of cultural awareness among non-Aboriginal staff, and the Department as a whole.

High numbers and overcrowded conditions made it difficult to maintain decency. The vast majority of cells had been double-bunked, meaning most accommodation units were housing twice as many prisoners as intended. This created hygiene and cleanliness issues, and it also made the units busy, noisy, and often overwhelming.

Catering for large numbers was challenging in a kitchen that was fundamentally too small, with catering equipment that was old and failing. Positively, a new kitchen was being built as part of the expansion project. The canteen was running well, but tobacco was becoming unaffordable for many prisoners, which created management problems. Laundry operations were efficient and effective, but all clothing was shared. The failure to provide personal clothing, particularly underwear, fell below the standard of decency that we expect.

Although there was a full and varied recreation program, scheduled sessions were regularly cancelled because of staff shortages in the units, and redeployment of recreation officers. As a result, prisoner access to recreation classes had dropped dramatically.

Prisoners were generally satisfied with their access to telephones, and ability to contact family and friends. However, they were frustrated that e-visits are available at other prisons, but not at Casuarina. This should be addressed by the expansion project.

The sentence planning team at Casuarina was highly competent and experienced, but had been heavily impacted by redeployment. This made it more difficult to manage the workload. A system backlog in assessments meant that there were more than 200 prisoners at Casuarina with overdue Individual Management Plans. These prisoners were unable to start addressing rehabilitation needs.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Education and training services were positive and productive. The number of prisoners involved had increased, and Aboriginal-focused education and training had improved. However, capacity was fundamentally too low, and only a small proportion of the prisoner population could access education. This was limited by space, resources, and rising costs. Casuarina education staff were not strongly represented either at the prison senior management level or the Department executive level. They felt isolated from decision-making processes, and felt they had limited input into planning for the prison expansion.

There were too few meaningful employment positions for prisoners. Unemployment and under-employment was very high. This is entirely unacceptable, both because it fails to prepare prisoners for employment after release, and because unoccupied prisoners create security risks. The ongoing expansion project did not include any significant addition to industries or employment positions.

Offender treatment programs were frequently postponed or cancelled. It had also been difficult to identify suitable program candidates because of the statewide backlog of assessments. Our concern is that prisoners are missing out on programs that they need, including hundreds who have not even had their programs needs assessed. We were also concerned that programs and programs' staff appeared to be increasingly marginalised at Casuarina.

Re-entry support services could not reach enough prisoners. The Transitional Manager and Employment Coordinator were now supported by a Reintegration Project Officer, but resources were still fundamentally too low for a prison of this size. A wider range of voluntary programs was available, but most of the offerings were information sessions, rather than personal development programs. Overall, the options for prisoners to address their offending behaviours, and particularly drug and alcohol addictions, were quite limited.

The growing size of Casuarina brings challenges and risks. One of the biggest will be providing meaningful and constructive activities for such a large population. The ultimate success of the Casuarina expansion will be judged by the prison's ability to deliver a full regime of meaningful activities, and the ongoing effectiveness of efforts to rehabilitate prisoners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop a strategic plan for Casuarina Prison.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Take steps to ensure that transfer and appointment processes for prison officers at Casuarina Prison are merit-based.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Respond to concerns about inappropriate staff behaviour by setting clear behaviour expectations and providing relevant training.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Eliminate cockroach infestation in the units.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

Review staffing and relief arrangements for the master control room.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

Improve waiting list management processes to address the backlog of medical appointment requests.

### RECOMMENDATION 7

Develop and implement an Aboriginal health care strategy.

### RECOMMENDATION 8

Increase Prison Counselling Service resources and improve clinical supervision arrangements.

### RECOMMENDATION 9

Implement processes for prisoners to maintain personal sets of clothing such as underwear and socks.

### RECOMMENDATION 10

Increase prisoner access to structured sport and recreation.

### RECOMMENDATION 11

Increase employment levels for Aboriginal prisoners.

### RECOMMENDATION 12

Ensure that Casuarina provides a full regime of meaningful activities for prisoners as it continues to expand.

## FACT PAGE

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### NAME OF FACILITY

Casuarina Prison

### ROLE

Casuarina Prison is a maximum-security prison for male prisoners. Originally intended primarily for sentenced prisoners, it now also holds a significant number of remand prisoners. It also provides specialist statewide services in the Special Handling Unit, Special Protection Unit, Infirmary, and Crisis Care Unit.

### LOCATION

Casuarina is located on Noongar land, 35 kilometres south of Perth.

### HISTORY

Casuarina Prison opened in 1991, replacing the colonial era Fremantle Prison. Its original design capacity was for 397 prisoners, but numbers soon grew beyond that. Double-bunking of cells became increasingly widespread. By 1998, the prison population had increased to around 530. A major riot occurred on Christmas Day in 1998, which led to a \$1.8 million program to strengthen security and staff safety.

The prison population continued to rise, reaching 690 in 2010. In response to the rising population, the Department built two new accommodation units, providing 128 new cells (256 beds). The first of these opened in late 2012. The next major expansion of Casuarina started in 2019, with work commencing on four new units with a total of 256 cells (512 beds).

### CAPACITY

Standard accommodation	887
Special purpose accommodation	145
<b>Total</b>	<b>1032</b>

### NUMBERS OF PRISONERS HELD AT COMMENCEMENT OF INSPECTION

Standard accommodation	867
Special purpose accommodation	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>937</b>

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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This was the seventh announced inspection of Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office). The Office has also undertaken one unannounced inspection and one follow-up inspection of special management units at Casuarina (OICS, 2001; OICS, 2002).

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Casuarina opened in 1991, replacing the colonial era Fremantle Prison as the state's main maximum-security facility for male prisoners. The prison runs several specialist units to which prisoners from around the state can be sent as necessary:

- Special Handling Unit – for prisoners who present a heightened security risk, threat to staff or other prisoners, or escape risk.
- Special Protection Unit – for prisoners who are at special risk from the mainstream prisoner population (often former police officers or prison officers).
- Crisis Care Unit – for prisoners at risk of self-harm.
- Infirmary – for prisoners who require periods of pre-hospital preparation, or post-hospital recuperation, and for those where medical needs fall short of hospitalisation. There is also a separate wing for prisoners with impaired mobility who are physically unable to live in a regular unit.

The original design capacity of the prison was 397, but over the years double-bunking has become increasingly widespread. It is now the norm, rather than the exception. Two new accommodation units were opened in 2012–2013, adding 128 new cells (and 256 beds). In 2019, the capacity of the prison was listed at 1,032. However, Casuarina usually held 950 prisoners or less, and was overcrowded even at that level [see 1.3].

### 1.2 PREVIOUS INSPECTION

Our previous inspection of Casuarina took place in 2016. We concluded that Casuarina was meeting reasonable expectations in relation to security, and the safety of staff and prisoners. However, it was an increasingly crowded, complex, and transient prison. Prisoner numbers increased by 20 per cent in 2015–2016 to around 950, and remand prisoners made up more than 40 per cent of the population. The prison was overstretched at almost every point, and was not meeting expectations in relation to prisoner health and support, purposeful activity, rehabilitation or resettlement.

Prison infrastructure and resourcing were insufficient for existing and future need. In particular, Casuarina did not have the resources to service the increasing number of remand prisoners. The overcrowding of the prison and the increased turnover associated with a higher remand population meant that Casuarina had become focused on population management, rather than prisoner management.

Many facilities were simply too small for the increased population, with expansions and upgrades needed in the health centre and infirmary, education centre, and kitchen. Services and activities for prisoners were similarly inadequate for the increased

## INTRODUCTION

population. High numbers of prisoners were unemployed or under-employed. And while the recreation program had improved, it needed to be expanded because too many prisoners were still missing out.

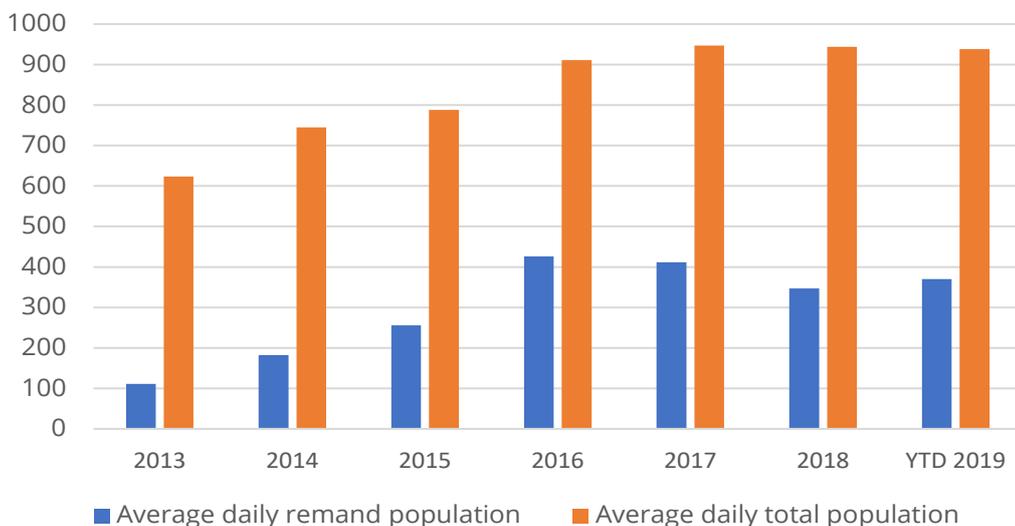
Staffing groups worked well to manage prisoners identified as at risk of self-harm, but the Prison Counselling Service was poorly resourced and not meeting need. Other services, such as chaplains and Prison Support Officers, were experiencing increased demand as it became harder to access counselling.

Casuarina's budget and staffing levels were insufficient, and the prison was faced with either exceeding its budget or reducing functions and limiting operations. The management team was strong and relatively stable, and staff were under pressure but unified. Representation of women in senior levels, and Aboriginal staff generally, was too low (OICS, 2017).

### 1.3 CASUARINA IN 2019

#### Casuarina managed high numbers and a challenging mix of prisoners

By the time of our previous inspection in 2016, Casuarina was housing close to 950 prisoners. The prison population has remained around that level ever since. At the start of our 2019 inspection, there were 937 prisoners at Casuarina. Although this was well below the published capacity of 1,032, Casuarina was extremely overcrowded. The prison actually had only 462 standard cells, and 107 special purpose cells. The published capacity could only be reached by double-bunking almost every available cell. In reality, Casuarina should never reach this capacity because the special purpose cells will not always be full. There will also always be prisoners who cannot be housed in a shared cell, whether for medical reasons, security reasons, or otherwise.

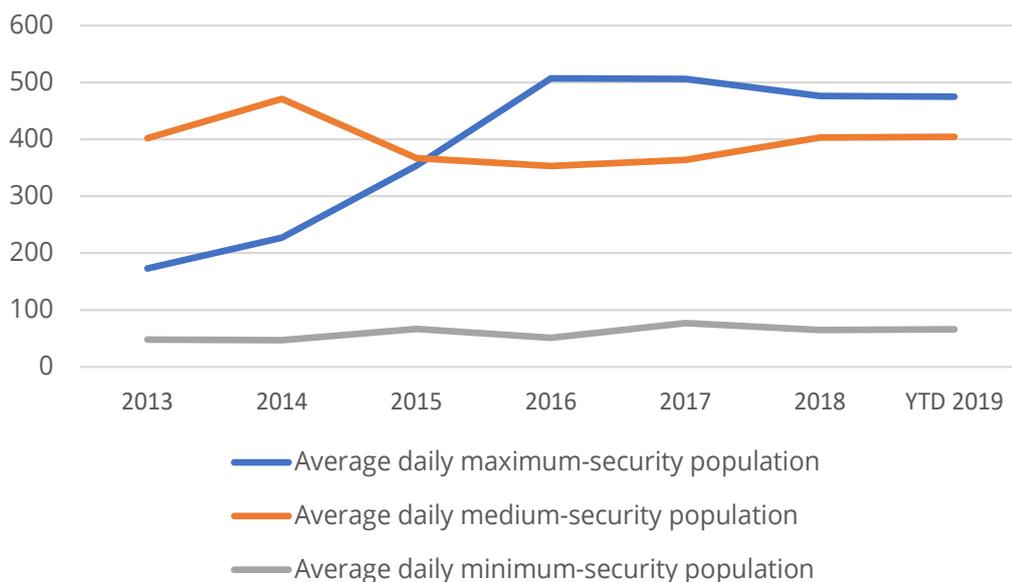


**Figure 1-1: Average daily remand population and total population at Casuarina Prison, 2013–2019.**

## INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal people remained heavily over-represented, making up 35 per cent of the prison population. Casuarina was originally intended to house mainly long-term sentenced prisoners, but much of the overall population growth in the last six years has been driven by an increase in remand numbers. Casuarina now holds a significant number of prisoners on remand – typically about 40 per cent of the prison population.

The proportion of maximum-security prisoners at Casuarina has increased significantly over the past six years. In 2013, the prison held an average of 173 maximum-security prisoners, which was 28 per cent of the total population. The number and proportion of maximum-security prisoners rose rapidly between 2013 and 2016. Since then, there have been around 500 maximum-security prisoners at Casuarina, representing about 50 per cent of the total population.



**Figure 1-2: Average daily population at Casuarina Prison by security rating, 2013–2019.**

The increase in maximum-security numbers was linked with the higher remand population. It also reflected an increase in risk and volatility within the prison population at Casuarina and across the system. However, the numbers were inflated by the statewide backlog of assessments [see 6.1]. There were hundreds of prisoners at Casuarina who had not been assessed for security classification, and were therefore rated as maximum-security by default.

It is Casuarina's role to manage many of the state's most difficult-to-manage prisoners. In the various special units that operate within the prison, there were prisoners suffering from serious physical or mental illness, prisoners who present a risk to themselves, prisoners who present a risk to others, and prisoners who are at risk from others. Drug use and associated mental health problems are serious issues in the prison, as they are in the community.

## INTRODUCTION

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In early 2019, there was ongoing violent conflict between members of two outlaw motorcycle gangs in custody at Hakea Prison. In March 2019, the Department decided to move all members of one gang to Casuarina, and this was a particular security risk that the prison managed.

All of these factors have ramifications for the operation of the prison and the management of prisoners. The complexity of the prison population is challenging in itself. But the high prisoner numbers and overcrowded conditions tend to exacerbate issues, while also reducing the prison's management options.

### **New units were under construction, and further expansion was planned**

In December 2017, the state government responded to the prison overcrowding crisis by announcing funding for a major prison expansion project. This included \$23.7 million for 160 new beds at Bunbury Regional Prison, and \$96.3 million for 512 new beds at Casuarina (Logan & Wyatt, 2017).

Work commenced at Casuarina in February 2019, and during our inspection a large-scale construction site was running inside the secure perimeter of the prison. The expansion project will deliver four new accommodation units, each containing 64 cells (and 128 beds). These units include support buildings with program rooms, and video link facilities. A new kitchen was being built, and both the visits centre and health centre were being



*Photo 1: A major building project was under way during our 2020 inspection.*

## INTRODUCTION

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expanded. The first two units were scheduled for completion by the end of 2019, and the next two units by mid-2020.

One of the units will serve as an alcohol and other drug treatment facility, fulfilling one of the government's election promises (Logan, 2019a). Within the Department, there were plans for another unit (or part of a unit) to act as a mental health step up/step down facility. However, there was not yet an operating model for either of these purposes.

In April 2019, the government announced plans for a further expansion of 344 beds at Casuarina (Logan, 2019b). These plans would see building taking place at Casuarina continuously through to at least 2023. When complete, Casuarina's capacity will be close to 1,900 prisoners, making it one of the largest prisons in Australia.

Our 2019 inspection remained primarily focused on the prison as we found it at that time. However, we necessarily considered the impact of future expansion on all operational areas and services. We could not ignore the fact that, by the time this report is published, Casuarina will be a very different prison.

### 1.4 INSPECTION PROCESS

The on-site inspection was conducted over seven days in September 2019, 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 Casuarina. The survey results assisted in determining the focus of the inspection and provided a source of primary evidence during the inspection. We also sought comment from 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 Inspector presented preliminary findings to staff and management at the conclusion of the inspection. A member of the inspection team also delivered a presentation to a representative group of prisoners. Further details about the inspection team, and our process leading up to and during the inspection can be found in Appendix 4.

# Chapter 2

## MANAGEMENT, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING

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### 2.1 SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

#### **The senior management team was strong, but lacked stability**

The senior management team at Casuarina was cohesive and effective. Members of the team (including those who were acting in positions) reported good support from fellow senior managers, and valued the strong sense of teamwork. However, several of Casuarina's senior managers were acting in higher positions at other prisons, or undertaking projects relating to the expansion. During our inspection, only four of the 12 senior management positions were filled by permanent occupants.

The senior management team continued to function at a high level, and the acting opportunities provided valuable development for staff. But Casuarina is going through a period of significant change, and stable leadership will be important. While temporary vacancies may be difficult to avoid, some of the substantive senior managers had been absent from Casuarina for several years. This created long-term uncertainty about those positions in the prison.

#### **Staff wanted more opportunities to communicate with senior management**

Feedback from custodial staff during the inspection indicated that communication with senior management could be improved. Many felt there were limited opportunities to raise issues and concerns, and be heard by their line manager or senior management. There were various staff meetings, including unit meetings, senior officer briefings, principal officer briefings, and senior management briefings. However, most of these meetings focused on providing information to staff, and did not allow for input from staff. Staff in different operational areas of the prison were particularly keen to meet with the senior manager responsible for that area.

It is likely that the desire for more communication with management was heightened by the amount of change occurring at Casuarina. It is also possible that the high number of acting senior managers meant that there had been some loss of focus on communicating with staff.

The Superintendent was receptive to our feedback on this issue during the inspection, and acknowledged the importance of effective communication and engagement with staff, particularly in the context of the ongoing expansion.

### 2.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

#### **There was no strategic plan or business plan in place**

Although Casuarina was generally well-managed, there was no strategic plan or business plan specific to the prison. Casuarina had aligned its operations with the Department's corporate strategic plan, and local managers were awaiting the outcome of the Network Design project established by head office. The objectives of this project are to:

## MANAGEMENT, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING

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- establish an operating philosophy and purpose for each of the State's operated prisons
- optimise operations and use of resources across the prison system
- deliver prison services in a coordinated way that provides the best management for prisoners, facilitates their rehabilitation, and prepares them for release.

This is a worthwhile project that should provide clarity of purpose, and a basis for long-term strategic planning. The identification of strategic infrastructure and resourcing requirements is particularly important. However, the project has been repeatedly deferred because of organisational restructuring, and shifting of priorities with the growing prisoner population. The project was ongoing at the time of our inspection, but outcomes were far from certain.

Casuarina was operating within a very complex environment. The prison was overcrowded, and staff were managing a challenging and varied cohort of prisoners. The ongoing expansion project created additional workload and risks, with a construction site inside the secure perimeter, and the prospect of ongoing works until 2023. The expansion project will also fundamentally change the prison, making it significantly larger, and introducing new operating models. The number of imminent changes and challenges highlighted the need for a long-term strategic plan.

Casuarina was running well because of clear direction from the Superintendent and senior management team. However, we were concerned that the prison was reliant on the knowledge and experience of individuals in senior management positions. Changes in personnel could expose the prison to risk. In the absence of any outcomes from the Network Design project, Casuarina should develop a strategic plan to articulate future goals and plans for the prison. This would aid continuity in the event of leadership change.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Develop a strategic plan for Casuarina Prison.**

## 2.3 HUMAN RESOURCES AND STAFF DEPLOYMENT

### **Human resources processes worked well, but were inefficient**

Human resources processes generally worked well at Casuarina, although the human resources team was very busy. As a result of the expansion project, an additional two staff had been allocated to the human resources team, which had reduced workload pressure. The Manager Human Resources was deliberately moving staff through different roles so that they gained experience in the various tasks. This ensured the team was able to cover any staff absences, and also provided variety and stimulation for staff. This was good practice.

However, human resources processes were still highly transactional. Public servants in the Department use an online human resources system. But the system for prison officers remained paper-based, which was labour-intensive and inefficient. Human

## MANAGEMENT, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING

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resources staff spent hours processing forms, including leave applications, shift swaps, and overtime. Rostering was done manually, and sign-on sheets needed to be physically collected from the gatehouse.

The Department had commenced a project to procure and implement an electronic rostering system, and it was hoped that this would automate most processes. But systems rarely deliver all of the solutions. It is likely that changes to processes will also be required to achieve the required efficiencies. This will mean staff doing things in a different way, which can be difficult if there are industrial ramifications. We encourage the Department to proactively identify the changes that need to occur, commence negotiations with the Western Australian Prison Officers' Union (WAPOU) where necessary, and plan for training to embed the changes.

### **Staff shortages resulted in regular redeployments, and affected services**

In 2017–2018, in response to chronic short staffing throughout the prison system, the Department required each prison to develop a staffing deployment agreement in consultation with the local branch of WAPOU. These agreements included an adaptive routine, which outlined how the prison would redeploy staff and alter service delivery in response to staff shortages.

Casuarina's staffing deployment agreement was finalised in March 2018. It provided for staff in non-essential areas to be redeployed to cover shortages in essential areas, mainly the accommodation units. Non-essential staff included recreation officers, industries officers, sentence planning staff, security team staff, and duty officers in the education centre. It also included the duty officers at Kaartdijin Mia, the Aboriginal cultural and learning centre. When staff were redeployed from these areas, services were reduced, or stopped entirely.

When the adaptive routine was negotiated, it was envisaged as something that would apply infrequently when staff shortages were at exceptional levels. However, staff shortages at Casuarina were reaching those levels consistently. There were no vacancies in custodial ranks, but unplanned leave levels were high. On average, there were 46 uniformed staff (11%) on workers' compensation leave and 27 (6%) on personal leave each day. Combined with planned leave (annual leave, long service leave, and purchased leave), this led to significant daily staff shortages.

The end result was that the adaptive routine was in place almost every day. Regrettably, many of the services that have a positive impact on prisoner wellbeing and rehabilitation were most affected. The impact on each area is discussed throughout this report.

### **The prison had secured additional staff positions to support the expansion project**

Casuarina had been proactive in seeking additional staff to support operations and service delivery as the prison expands. They had undertaken a comprehensive exercise to identify additional positions needed in administration. The Department had approved 17

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out of 19 requested public service positions. The remaining two positions were the subject of ongoing discussion between the prison and the Department.

Operationally, Casuarina had approval to employ an additional 105 prison officers in advance of the finalisation of the new Staffing Level Agreement (SLA). Each prison has an SLA that has been negotiated with WAPOU. The SLA determines the number of prison officers the facility needs based on an estimated number of prisoners in the prison. At the time of our inspection, Casuarina had an SLA for 978 prisoners. Discussions for an SLA for 1,490 prisoners were well advanced.

### **Staff transfer processes were not based on merit or business need**

Casuarina planned to source the additional 105 prison officers through a combination of new recruits from the Corrective Services Academy, and transfers of prison officers from other prisons. This was a sensible approach, which would provide a mix of experienced officers and new officers, although the ratio had not yet been determined. The difficulty is that senior management at Casuarina appear to have limited influence on who is posted to the prison.

The Department's process for transferring prison officers between prisons is not based on merit. The transfer arrangements for prison officers are contained in the industrial agreement (DOJ, 2019). Transfers can occur on a voluntary basis, through management initiative, or as part of a disciplinary process. But the vast majority of transfers are voluntary. To access a voluntary transfer, a prison officer places his or her name on a transfer list, nominating where they want to go. When vacancies arise, the list is considered by the Prison Officer Transfer Allocation Committee (POTAC), which is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Adult Male Prisons, and includes representatives from the Department and WAPOU. POTAC will consult the transfer list and, provided there is no barrier to an officer transferring, will offer the person at the top of the list the opportunity to transfer. There is no representative on POTAC from the receiving prison.

This process does not allow senior management in a prison to select the best person for a position through an open competitive process. It seems a somewhat outdated way of filling a vacancy, and lacks the level of agility required to manage a modern workforce. It also does not give all staff the opportunity to compete on an equal footing for opportunities that arise. It may not satisfy the Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management that require employment decisions to be based on merit (PSC, 2011).

Casuarina had introduced a similar internal transfer process to fill vacancies in different areas of the prison. Prison officers who wanted to transfer into a different unit or into an area such as the security team simply put their name on a list. When they reached the top of the list, they could fill the next vacancy. This replaced the previous expression of interest (EOI) process that required staff to apply for a position and be selected on merit from a competitive field. In contrast, the new transfer process was not based on merit. The process for appointing prison officers to the pool of acting senior officers was also

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problematic. Appointments were made based primarily on comments submitted by existing senior officers. This created risks (perceived and real) of bias, nepotism, and patronage, and lacked transparency. Staff were concerned that they did not have equitable access to opportunities, and this was a source of discontent. These processes fundamentally fail to meet Public Sector Standards, and need to be reviewed.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Take steps to ensure that transfer and appointment processes for prison officers at Casuarina Prison are merit-based.**

#### **The staffing group lacked diversity, particularly at higher levels**

Only 22 per cent of custodial officers at Casuarina were women, and women were under-represented in higher ranks. There were eight women in senior officer positions (14%), and none at Principal Officer level. In contrast, women filled 60 per cent of public servant positions at Casuarina. However, 75 per cent of these were at Levels 1 and 2, the first two levels in the public service classification bands. Only two of 12 senior management positions were occupied by women. We have always maintained that, in the traditionally male-dominated environment of a prison, female staff make a valuable contribution both to operations and workforce culture. Casuarina would benefit from better representation of women at higher levels, both custodial and non-custodial.

Similarly, the proportion of Aboriginal staff was low. It is not mandatory for staff to declare whether they come from a diverse background, and 42 per cent of Casuarina staff had not. But of those who had, only three per cent identified as Aboriginal. This included key positions such as the Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services, Prison Support Officers, and Aboriginal Visitors Scheme. There were six Aboriginal people working as prison officers, including two senior officers. This small group of Aboriginal staff were under pressure because they bore most of the burden of cultural support for 35 per cent of the prison population – about 330 Aboriginal men. Aboriginal prisoners seek out Aboriginal staff for assistance and support because of their shared cultural understanding. The presence of Aboriginal staff encourages stronger relationships between prisoners and staff. The Department should be aiming for higher numbers of Aboriginal staff at Casuarina.

#### **There were reports of inappropriate behaviour between staff**

Most staff at Casuarina acknowledged that they had good relationships with some of their colleagues, and less positive relationships with others. In our pre-inspection staff survey, 55 per cent of respondents reported that staff from across the prison 'generally work well together'. Another 31 per cent said this was 'mixed'.

We heard some particular concerns, including disturbing examples of behaviour that would amount to sexual harassment. In the pre-inspection staff survey, we asked respondents about poor behaviour that sometimes occurs between staff, and they reported varying levels of sexual (26%), racist (32%), and other verbal abuse (54%). Fifty-three per cent said bullying sometimes occurs; 23 per cent said it often occurs.

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Any form of harassment in the workplace is completely unacceptable. There are significant risks for both the employer and employee if instances of inappropriate behaviour are not addressed. We strongly encourage staff to come forward and raise any concerns. To address such behaviours, the employer needs to know that they are occurring. Staff we spoke to at Casuarina expressed some reluctance to report inappropriate behaviour because of concerns about how they would be treated in the workplace and how it may affect their career prospects. Our view is that staff who are subject to, or witness, inappropriate behaviour must stand up for what is and what is not acceptable in the prison and report that behaviour. The Superintendent was clear that anybody lodging a complaint would receive his full support.

There were enough general concerns raised with us during the inspection to justify proactive steps by senior management. This should include setting clear expectations, providing relevant training, and taking strong action in response to allegations of unacceptable behaviour that may be raised. The Superintendent was very responsive when we raised these issues during the inspection.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Respond to concerns about inappropriate staff behaviour by setting clear behaviour expectations and providing relevant training.**

## 2.4 INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE

### **Prison infrastructure was stretched, and older units were in poor condition**

Casuarina was originally designed for less than 400 prisoners, and now holds more than 900. Two units were added in 2012, but most of the other infrastructure remained unchanged. Throughout the prison, cells designed for one now housed two prisoners. The capacity of supporting infrastructure including the health centre, education centre, gymnasium, and industries workshops had not increased. The prison was stretched at almost every point. Some infrastructure needs, such as the kitchen, health centre, and visits centre, will be addressed by the expansion project. Other areas will remain unchanged, and shortfalls are likely to be exacerbated by the increase in prisoner numbers. Overcrowding in the existing units will continue.

The condition of the older units was deteriorating, accelerated by the fact that the number of prisoners in each unit had doubled. We saw corroded water pipes and cracked tiles in utility ducts. Carpets in unit day rooms needed to be replaced – cleaning efforts were no longer effective against ingrained dirt and grime. Maintaining hygiene standards was challenging because many prisoners ate meals in their cell. The day rooms were simply not big enough to accommodate all prisoners at meal times.

Cockroach infestation was an ongoing problem in the units, and one of the most common complaints raised by prisoners. We found evidence of active cockroach infestation in

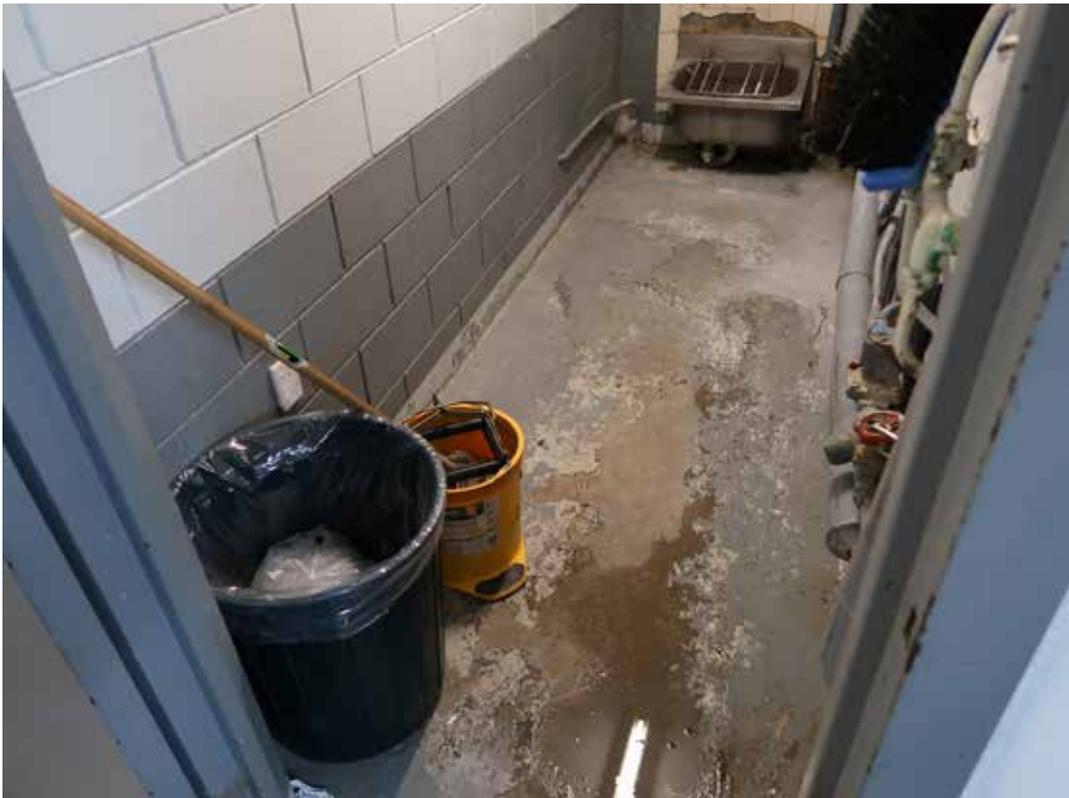
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most units, and observed cockroaches in cells, particularly nesting in electrical appliances. Prisoners had used toothpaste to fill cracks between walls and ceilings in an attempt to prevent cockroaches from entering. We were told that cockroaches were very active after dark, crawling on prisoners in their beds. This had been a persistent problem, despite a regular and sustained fumigation program. The potential detrimental health and hygiene impacts of this are obvious. In our view, it does not meet a reasonable standard of decent living conditions. Past efforts to resolve the issue had been ineffective, and different options needed to be explored.

### **Recommendation 4**

Eliminate cockroach infestation in the units.



*Photo 2: The physical condition of the prison was deteriorating, particularly in the older units.*

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*Photo 3: Cockroaches were active inside prisoners' cells.*

# Chapter 3

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

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### 3.1 SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

#### The physical layout of the prison helped to reduce tension

We have previously observed that the campus-style layout of Casuarina contributes to a calm atmosphere (OICS, 2017, p. 49). The interior of the prison is characterised by open spaces, with trees, lawns and gardens. The positive effect of this environment should not be underestimated.

The accommodation units are closed in and crowded, and secure infrastructure, such as bars and grilles, is prominent. However, each unit has a fenced recreation yard of good size, including basketball court, tennis court, and isometric exercise equipment. This means that even when the prison is short-staffed and prisoners are confined to their units, there is still an opportunity to exercise and spend time outdoors. This is a crucial feature of the prison that helps to relieve tension. It was particularly important because there were generally not enough activities to keep prisoners occupied during the day.



***Photo 4: Open space and gardens inside Casuarina have a positive effect on the prison atmosphere.***

#### Construction work affected operation of the master control room

There are two prison officers stationed at the control desk in the master control room, operating electronic doors and gates, and monitoring cameras and alarms throughout the prison. The ongoing construction work had affected the operation of the control room.

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The construction site traffic crossed several security detection zones, which set off alarms in the control room. Some of the heavier construction vehicles also created vibrations that set off other alarms. This meant that one of the officers in the control room was constantly resetting alarms. Monitor screens automatically showed vision from cameras in the vicinity of the triggered alarm, and would not change until the alarm was reset. In these circumstances, there was a risk that it would take longer for control room officers to respond to alarms sounding elsewhere in the prison.

Control room officers were not routinely relieved, and usually spent their entire 12-hour shift in the control room. We have previously suggested that, in order to maintain a high level of vigilance, staff should spend no longer than two to three hours at a time in the control room (OICS, 2014a, pp. 43–44). The risk that officers would become complacent or inattentive was heightened by the frequent triggering and resetting of alarms. This situation was set to continue with building projects planned for Casuarina through to 2023.

### **Recommendation 5**

**Review staffing and relief arrangements for the master control room.**

#### **Compatibility of old and new security systems was uncertain**

During our 2016 inspection, we noted that security systems at Casuarina were aged and prone to false alarms. There were too few cameras and limited recording ability. We suggested an upgrade to digital technology would improve safety and security throughout the prison (OICS, 2017, p. 49). In 2019, there had been no change and the security systems were increasingly outdated.

The expansion project would provide all new security systems for the new buildings. However, it would be necessary to connect the new technology with the old security systems. Staff were uncertain about how effective this would be, although the contractor supplying the new technology was confident. Given the scope of the expansion project, and how large Casuarina will be when it is completed, it may be a missed opportunity that the Department did not upgrade security systems throughout the prison.

#### **Security team resources were stretched**

The security team had eight staff, but it was one of the areas consistently affected by redeployment. They commonly lost at least two staff each day, redeployed to cover shortages in the units. This was problematic because the security workload continued to build up. It meant the security team was mainly reactive rather than proactive. Security officers had very limited capacity to spend time inside the prison, interacting with staff and prisoners. As a result, prison officers in the units were less engaged with the work of the security team, and felt that they did not receive feedback from the security team when they submitted intelligence or security reports.

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Despite this, the security team reported that prison officers were passing on a good amount of quality intelligence. But they would like more opportunities to promote security awareness and intelligence gathering among staff.

Workload pressure on the security team will increase significantly when the prisoner population increases. Expansion planning had taken account of this, and additional resources had been allocated to the security team.

### 3.2 SECURITY PROCEDURES

#### **Prison procedures generally worked well, with amendments pending the expansion**

Procedures for entering the prison ran smoothly and efficiently. Prison officers working in the gatehouse were professional, courteous, and respectful towards staff, visitors, and contractors. Searching of people entering the prison was thorough and appropriate. Importantly, this included prison staff. During previous Casuarina inspections, and at some other prisons, we have observed lax or cursory searching of staff (OICS, 2017, p. 50; OICS, 2016, p. 70). In 2019, staff searching at Casuarina was routine and effective.

Throughout the prison, appropriate procedures were in place, and working well. However, the impending changes to prison infrastructure and prisoner numbers required procedures in many areas to be reviewed and amended. This work was underway, with Casuarina adjusting procedures as the expansion project progressed. The Department was undertaking a wider review of the policy and procedural framework for the entire prison system, and Casuarina was awaiting the outcome of this before finalising their own updates. However, the work already completed leaves the prison well placed to be ready for the opening of the new units.

### 3.3 BUILDING SITE SECURITY

#### **Building site security was very well managed, despite early problems**

When the construction project at Casuarina began in February 2019, there were several problems relating to lack of preparedness. Groundworks commenced before a proper secure fence had been erected around the site. The site security team was in place later than planned. And there were confrontations between prison staff and building contractors because of a lack of shared understanding between the two workforces. Casuarina was exposed to serious risks during this period, but managed to avoid major incidents. Importantly, there had been many lessons learned from this experience.

By the time of our inspection in September 2019, building site security was vastly improved. The project manager led a site security team of 30 officers. A secure fence topped with razor wire surrounded the site. A comprehensive induction process had been introduced for all contractors, who were briefed on security requirements by the prison, and site requirements by the building contractor. A range of robust security and safety measures had been implemented. There was a good process for checking the identification of contractors, and keeping track of their location while on site. Vehicle

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checks and tool checks were meticulous, and controls around vehicle and tool security were strong. The project management team carried out daily site inspections with the contractor to identify and address security risks. The building site and contractors had been included in two emergency management exercises during the year to test emergency response capability in that area.

The Casuarina gatehouse has two sally ports – one had been assigned all construction vehicle movements, and the other continued to manage all prison vehicle movements. Construction vehicle movements were overseen by the project management team, and other movements were controlled as usual by gatehouse officers. This meant Casuarina was able to manage a high number of construction vehicle and contractor movements without major disruptions to the operation of the prison.

At the busiest point of the build, there were up to 190 contractors on site each day. Over the course of one particular day, more than 100 oversized vehicles entered the prison, requiring both sally port doors to open at the same time. Additional security measures were in place to mitigate this risk. It was a credit to the project manager and his team that the challenging task of operating a building site inside a maximum-security prison had been managed without incident.

### 3.4 SPECIAL UNITS AND REGIMES

#### **High risk and high need prisoners were managed carefully and competently**

Casuarina runs several special units that cater for prisoners with particular management needs. This includes the Infirmary and Crisis Care Unit (CCU) [see 4.2], the Special Handling Unit (SHU), the Special Protection Unit (SPU), and the Multi-Purpose Unit (MPU). Prisoners are often sent to Casuarina from other facilities (including regional facilities) that do not have the appropriate specialised infrastructure or resources. As a result, Casuarina houses many of the system's most challenging prisoners. This was a role that Casuarina embraced, and in which they had developed considerable expertise. Staff were proud of the fact that they could manage prisoners who had proved unmanageable in other prisons. Casuarina was home to highly dangerous and volatile prisoners, high profile prisoners, prisoners at acute risk of self-harm, prisoners at special risk from the mainstream prisoner population, and prisoners with serious mental illness.

The most complex cases were overseen by multi-disciplinary teams, consisting of operational managers, health staff, custodial staff, and others where relevant. This collaborative approach was good practice, and we saw evidence of very positive outcomes for prisoners.

Practices and procedures were sound in most areas, although we found that cell occurrence books in the SHU were not up to date. The SHU is the highest security unit in the state, and houses prisoners who present a heightened security risk, threat to staff or other prisoners, or escape risk. As such, it imposes the greatest restrictions on prisoners' freedom, and should be subject to strict governance. Record-keeping is a detail that

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cannot be overlooked, for the protection of both prisoners and staff. Senior management echoed our concerns when we raised this during our inspection, and undertook to address the issue.

### Limited punishment cells and staff shortages affected disciplinary processes

Sections 69 and 70 of the *Prisons Act 1981* set out a range of minor and aggravated prison offences with which prisoners can be charged. Charges are prepared by the prison prosecutor, and heard by either the Superintendent or a justice of the peace (known as a visiting justice), depending on the severity of the charge and the punishment sought. For example, the Superintendent can only confine a prisoner to sleeping quarters for up to three days, whereas a visiting justice can sentence a prisoner to separate confinement in a punishment cell for up to seven days.

The charge process was breaking down at Casuarina for two main reasons. Firstly, the prosecutor was frequently redeployed to cover staff shortages elsewhere in the prison. This greatly reduced his capacity to prepare and present charges. Secondly, the MPU was regularly at full capacity, meaning there were no punishment cells available. The prosecutor could not present charges to a visiting justice if there were no punishment cells available.

This created a significant backlog, with some charges up to 12 months old. The prosecutor was forced to sort through the list of charges and withdraw many that had been waiting over six months because they had not been dealt with in a timely manner. At the time of our inspection, there were around 400 outstanding charges, and about 40 per cent of these were likely to be withdrawn.

The shortage of punishment cells will be exacerbated when the prisoner population increases because there was no extension of the MPU included in the expansion project. However, Casuarina had plans to increase capacity by converting part of Unit 1 into punishment cells. This was less than ideal, but it was the best option available.

### The Department's disruptive prisoner order was a source of concern

In July 2019, the Department responded to growing concerns about violence and the influence of outlaw motorcycle gang members in prisons by introducing a Prisons Order for 'disruptive prisoners'. This was aimed specifically at prisoners who display violent behaviour, or who have an ability to negatively influence other prisoners. The order prescribes three levels of management regimes. Level 1 is an alert only and does not affect prisoner management. Level 2 places the prisoner on a separate confinement regime. Level 3 is the most drastic – the prisoner is on separate confinement, and also transfers to a different prison every 28 days. This is purposefully designed to prevent the prisoner from settling into any prison, and curb their influence over other prisoners. During our inspection, Casuarina was housing 84 prisoners on Level 1, five on Level 2, and one on Level 3. There were also two other prisoners on Level 3 at different prisons.

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There are various governance arrangements set out in the order, including an executive level committee that must endorse all placements on Level 3. However, the order fundamentally appears to circumvent the legislative framework. The power to place a prisoner in separate confinement (without charge) is provided by Section 43 of the *Prisons Act 1981*. Under Section 43, the separate confinement order cannot exceed 30 days, and must be reported to the Minister. In contrast, a Level 3 disruptive prisoner regime is reviewed only after 60 days. There is no mention of reporting to the Minister.

Several staff at Casuarina commented that the disruptive prisoners order is more flexible than Section 43. But this is a problem. The provisions of Section 43 are restrictive because separate confinement is a serious regime to impose on a prisoner. It is not appropriate (and arguably not lawful) for the Department to create a regime equivalent to separate confinement that does not comply with the legislation. Ignoring legislative requirements creates a risk of prisoner mistreatment, and exposes the Department to a potential legal challenge.

These risks had been recognised internally at the Department. The order had been revised at least twice since it was first released, and a further review was under way at the time of writing.

# Chapter 4

## PRISONER SERVICES

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### 4.1 RECEPTION

#### **Reception was busy, exacerbated by infrastructure limitations**

The reception centre at Casuarina was extremely busy with 11,490 movements logged for 2018–19. This amounted on average to 220 movements per week or more than 30 per day. Movements included all prisoners transferring in or out of Casuarina, and temporary absences such as medical appointments and court appearances. The reception centre was also a thoroughfare to the adjacent video link facilities, which added to confusion and risk.

The reception centre had only two holding cells, which was insufficient to safely manage the large number of movements. Prisoners often need to be kept separate from others, whether because of medical condition, protection status, disability, self-harm risk, or security risk. Prisoners with protection status were often held in a corner or a toilet room.

The sally port was too small to accommodate most prisoner transport vehicles so prisoners were escorted to and from vehicles without any physical barrier between them and the front gate of the prison. This is a significant risk and extra staff were required to manage these escorts.

Prisoner property storage areas were disjointed and dispersed because space was inadequate for the current prisoner population. Property was stacked in all available space inside the reception centre, in the sally port, and in three sea containers outside. This created considerable inefficiencies. More storage would be needed for the approaching population increase. Extension of the reception centre was not included in the current expansion project, but was planned to take place prior to the next 344 bed expansion.

### 4.2 ORIENTATION

#### **Orientation was sound, but sometimes rushed because of population pressures**

Most new prisoners at Casuarina were housed in Unit 5. One of the rostered prison officer positions in that unit completed individual orientation checklists, either on the afternoon of arrival or the next day. This basic orientation appeared sound. An orientation handbook was available, and there were members of the peer support team in Unit 5 to help look after new prisoners.

Pressure to receive new transfers meant that prisoners were often moved out of Unit 5 after only a day or two. This provided little time for them to settle into the prison, and some even missed out on their initial orientation. The orientation officer from Unit 5 visited Unit 6 as required to complete orientation checklists for new prisoners in the protection unit. However, there was no orientation provided to prisoners who arrive in the CCU, SPU, MPU, Infirmary, or SHU. There was no system for tracking these prisoners to provide a proper orientation if they were transferred to a standard unit.

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New prisoners attended a further orientation session within two working days of arrival, conducted by the Employment Coordinator, her prisoner workers, and a member of the peer support team. This included a guided look through the orientation handbook, and a limited prison tour if needed. The Employment Coordinator also took expressions of interest for employment and education, and there was an opportunity for prisoners to request assistance from the Transitional Manager. The vocational skills workshop in the industries area delivered separate sessions on occupational health and safety introduction, and safe food handling.

Orientation processes certainly seemed comprehensive, but prisoners were expected to take in a large amount of information at a stressful time when they have just arrived in the prison. We found that the effectiveness of orientation was mixed, with some prisoners struggling to retain the information provided. In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, we asked respondents if they received enough information about how the prison works when they first arrived – 47 per cent said yes; 40 per cent said no.

### 4.3 HEALTH SERVICES

#### **Infirmary infrastructure struggled to meet need and demand**

Casuarina's 24-bed infirmary is the main inpatient facility for male prisoners in the Western Australian prison system, serving as a sub-acute medical and post-acute surgery ward. There is also a 14-bed wing catering for older prisoners and those with restricted mobility.

The infirmary was increasingly housing long-term patients – elderly or infirm prisoners, and several in palliative care. This reduced capacity for its intended purpose of caring for prisoners recovering from surgery or hospitalisation, and prisoners with sub-acute medical needs that fell short of hospitalisation.

The infrastructure of the infirmary is inadequate to run a full sub-acute service, and the facilities are quite dated. For example, nursing staff had limited ability to assist with activities of daily living because of the design and layout, particularly the small doorways. There was only one wheelchair-accessible showering facility, which was poorly ventilated and not in good condition. The showering area was extremely humid and stuffy, particularly in summer, making it a difficult environment in which to work. This was the only wheelchair-accessible shower in the prison.

Prisoners in the infirmary were still locked in cell overnight, meaning that nursing staff had limited access to them. Medication could be dispensed through cell door hatches, provided it was administered orally, and prison officers were present. This limited overnight access needed to be considered when determining if it was appropriate for a prisoner to stay in the infirmary. The public hospital system did not always demonstrate a good understanding of the limitations of the infirmary. Prisoners were sometimes sent back to Casuarina from hospital with care plans that the infirmary was incapable of implementing. The infirmary is not equivalent to a hospital. Facilities, resources, and equipment are much more limited.

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The ageing profile of the statewide prisoner population means that demand for infirmary and long-term assisted living beds will likely increase. Extensions and upgrades to the infirmary were being considered in plans for the second stage 344-bed expansion of Casuarina.

### **Outpatient services were very busy, and under pressure in some areas**

Primary health services in the outpatient area had reasonable infrastructure for the doctor and consultation rooms. Patient throughput was high, but flowed well. Prison officers in this area were rarely redeployed because the prison recognised the importance of keeping health clinics running. Some parts of the outpatient facility were dilapidated, and its capacity was insufficient for the current prisoner population, let alone the impending expansion. The Department had recognised that capacity would need to increase to cater for the increased prisoner population. The expansion project included extension and refurbishment of the outpatient area.

Nursing staff were very busy, and worked very hard to meet patient needs. There had been significant delays in nursing recruitment, and it had been particularly difficult to engage short-term agency nurses to provide relief staffing. Departmental human resources processes and security clearances were obstacles to timely recruitment. This had resulted in shortages of nursing staff.

There were two full-time general practitioners, and a third dedicated to medication reviews and re-scripting. A podiatry clinic and a physiotherapy clinic ran once a week, and an optometrist attended the prison about once a month depending on demand.

Prisoner views on health services were quite negative. In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, only 28 per cent of respondents said general health services were good, and 62 per cent said they were poor. Similarly, only 27 per cent said medical specialist services were good, and 59 per cent said they were poor. We explored this during the inspection, and found that prisoners' concerns related mainly to access, rather than quality of services. They complained about waiting for months to see a doctor or specialist.

Dental services had recently been increased from three days per week to four and a half days per week to address a large backlog. This had reportedly allowed the dentist to carry out some preventative dental work, rather than dealing only with emergency dental issues. However, there was still a wait of over two years for dentures, which had led to increased numbers of extractions. Prisoner views on dental services were especially negative. Only 18 per cent of survey respondents said dental care was good, and 59 per cent said it was poor. We spoke with a number of prisoners suffering from dental pain, who had been waiting months to see a dentist. Prisoners also complained that when they finally saw a dentist, the only option was tooth extraction.

### **The primary health care wait list was not being managed appropriately**

Shortages of nursing staff had impacted on capacity to review requests for medical appointments from prisoners. Prisoners submitted an orange form in the units to request

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a medical appointment. In November 2018, there had been a backlog of approximately 300 orange forms.

To address this, health staff implemented a rapid triage assessment process, in which each prisoner was seen for a five to 10 minute review. The focus of this was to deal with acute issues, scripting medications, and comorbidities that had not been reviewed. The high priority patients were then sent to a general practitioner for review. Unfortunately, by the time of our inspection in September 2019, a significant backlog had re-emerged. There was a large pile of orange forms that had not been reviewed, but health staff did not know how many were in the pile.

This was concerning and the risk from a clinical governance perspective was high. A patient with an urgent condition could be missed in the backlog. Community health services with such a large turnover of patients would be using an electronic booking system or waiting list, with a health assessment and triage conducted by nursing staff to guide prioritisation. Casuarina health services had received approval for a nurse practitioner, but had not yet recruited to this position. Such a position would be valuable in managing the waiting list for primary care. Clearly, some action was needed to address the backlog with staffing levels, primary health clinic numbers, and waiting list management.

### **Recommendation 6**

**Improve waiting list management processes to address the backlog of medical appointment requests.**

#### **The lack of focus on Aboriginal health care was a major service gap**

Although 35 per cent of Casuarina prisoners were Aboriginal, there was no Aboriginal health care worker, and an absence of culturally safe primary health care. In the community, this service is provided by Aboriginal medical service organisations.

The Department needs to actively recruit Aboriginal health staff, but also explore opportunities for cooperation between prison health services and Aboriginal medical services in the community. It also needs to develop and implement culturally appropriate clinical assessment tools, and provide training in the delivery of culturally sensitive health care. This would better equip health staff to manage Aboriginal prisoners appropriately, rather than relying on the presence of Aboriginal staff from elsewhere in the prison, or other Aboriginal prisoners – none of whom are medically trained. This should all be part of an Aboriginal health care strategy for Casuarina.

### **Recommendation 7**

**Develop and implement an Aboriginal health care strategy.**

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### **Mental health services functioned very well, managing high demand**

The mental health team worked to a high standard, and had a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of prisoners with serious mental illness. Mental health services were integrated well with primary health, and with custodial operations in the prison. The role played by mental health services was respected and valued by senior managers and prison officers alike. This was a great strength of Casuarina.

The mental health team had implemented a ‘traffic light’ system – red, amber, green – indicating the level of acuity of prisoners with mental health issues. Green indicated the prisoner was stable; amber that they were destabilising and should be monitored; red required mental health intervention. The senior officer in each unit was provided a list of prisoners in their unit, colour-coded accordingly. This provided prison officers with a visual representation of mental health acuity for prisoners in their unit. The mental health team also communicated regularly with custodial staff about how to manage the behaviour of individual prisoners. The main focus for the units was on amber patients, with emphasis on contacting the mental health team as soon as any change in behaviour was observed. This facilitated early intervention, and meant that prisoners at Casuarina rarely needed to be sent to the Frankland Centre, the state’s secure forensic mental health inpatient unit. This system was highly effective, and an excellent initiative. The Department should consider replicating this in prisons throughout the state.

## **4.4 COUNSELLING AND MANAGEMENT OF AT-RISK PRISONERS**

### **There were robust processes for managing prisoners at risk of self-harm**

Casuarina had robust processes for identifying and monitoring prisoners at risk of self-harm, using the Department’s At-Risk Management System (ARMS). All prisoners on ARMS were assessed in daily Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG) meetings. PRAG was chaired by the Assistant Superintendent Safer Practice, and included a prison counsellor, Prison Support Officer, mental health nurse, and senior officer. A chaplain would attend if they had been seeing the prisoner in question. We attended a PRAG meeting during the inspection, and observed a strong multidisciplinary approach, with good input and interaction from all areas.

### **Prison counselling services lacked resources and support**

In our 2017 inspection report, we found that the Prison Counselling Service (PCS) was poorly resourced and not meeting need. We made a recommendation to improve prisoner access to counselling services (OICS, 2017, pp. 20–21). More recently, the coroner examined five deaths by suicide at Casuarina in 2014 and 2015, and similarly concluded that PCS was under-resourced (Jenkin, 2019).

Despite the external focus on PCS resourcing, this was still a problem at Casuarina. PCS staffing shortages continued to impact on services. PCS prioritised prisoners at risk of self-harm, and made a valuable contribution to the ARMS and PRAG process. But this left little capacity for anything beyond this acute crisis counselling. Ongoing counselling for

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prisoners suffering from trauma, for example, was not available. We spoke with one prisoner who was desperately seeking counselling for historical sexual abuse, but this could not be provided.

The coroner had also criticised the lack of information sharing between PCS and health services. Positively, PCS had now been given access to the Department's electronic medical records database, and there was improved cooperation and communication with the mental health team.

Managerial support and clinical supervision for PCS staff had been inconsistent, with several changes over the preceding 12 months. PCS staff had informal support and debriefing arrangements with their colleagues, but there was no formal debriefing process in place. Effective supervision and access to debriefing is crucial for counsellors in this environment as a protective factor against burnout and vicarious trauma.

### **Recommendation 8**

**Increase Prison Counselling Service resources and improve clinical supervision arrangements.**

## 4.5 PEER SUPPORT

### **The Prison Support Officers and peer support team provided a vital service**

Casuarina had two experienced Prison Support Officers (PSOs), who coordinated a peer support team of up to 30 prisoners. The PSOs and the peer support team were actively involved in identifying and supporting prisoners at risk of self-harm, and worked well in conjunction with PCS, mental health staff, and custodial staff. The PSOs were vital contributors to PRAG meetings, particularly in relation to Aboriginal prisoners.

Prisoners on the peer support team had completed 'Gatekeeper' suicide prevention training, and mental health first aid training. They had monthly meetings with the PSOs and the Assistant Superintendent Safer Practice, in which they could raise any concerns. These meetings were minuted, and any actions were followed up. Members of the peer support team helped in various other ways, including contributing to orientation of new prisoners, assisting with prisoner complaints, and helping with parole applications and funeral applications. The work of both the PSOs and the peer support team was highly valued by prisoners, staff, and senior management.

## 4.6 ABORIGINAL AND OTHER CULTURAL SERVICES

### **There was good support for Aboriginal prisoners, but disadvantage persisted**

Aboriginal men formed a significant cohort at Casuarina – 330 prisoners or 35 per cent of the total population. The majority came from Perth or the South-West (78%), with smaller numbers from the Mid-West and Pilbara (13%), Goldfields and Western Desert (6%), and the Kimberley (3%). This meant that 72 Aboriginal prisoners were 'out-of-country',

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displaced from their traditional cultural homelands by hundreds or even thousands of kilometres. Casuarina tried to house most out-of-country prisoners together in the same unit.

Aboriginal prisoners from all regions received good support from Aboriginal staff in key positions, such as the Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services, the PSOs, and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) visitors. These staff worked well together to support Aboriginal prisoners.

The Coordinator Aboriginal Prisoner Services position is unique to Casuarina, as is Kaartdijin Mia, the cultural and learning centre that she runs. Kaartdijin Mia provided cultural support, basic education and structured voluntary programs for Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) prisoners. Aboriginal prisoners were also able to attend Kaartdijin Mia for 'yarning' sessions, with family and countrymen from other units, who they might not otherwise see. It was a very positive space within the prison, highly valued by staff and prisoners.

Kaartdijin Mia had two prison officers allocated as duty officers to supervise the area, which allowed up to 40 prisoners to attend at any one time. In 2018, the staff deployment agreement had impacted enormously on this area because the duty officers were redeployed daily. Kaartdijin Mia was effectively shut for three months. This had improved by 2019. Kaartdijin Mia was still affected by staff shortages, but was usually allowed to run with reduced capacity, rather than closed down completely.

Kaartdijin Mia had been closed for six weeks in 2019 because the building site encroached on that area of the prison. When it re-opened, the outdoor space was reduced, which was regrettable because this had been a popular place for Aboriginal prisoners to sit in the sun and yarn. Repositioning of demountable buildings also meant there were two fewer rooms available for education and program delivery.

The two AVS visitors were on site four days a week, providing a valuable service to prisoners, and to the prison. They formed strong supportive relationships with prisoners, and had good awareness of those who needed extra support. The AVS visitors were more integrated with operations at Casuarina than at most other prisons. Their role was highly valued by senior management, and they had been used on several occasions to help de-escalate and resolve incidents based on their relationship with prisoners. This level of collaboration and trust was highly commendable.

Casuarina ran an Aboriginal Services Committee, which met quarterly with representatives from senior management, employment and transitional services, education, chaplaincy, and PSOs. The meetings tracked the demographics of Aboriginal prisoners, and discussed involvement and opportunities in the various areas of the prison. This was a good process, but Aboriginal prisoners were still fundamentally disadvantaged at Casuarina. A high proportion were unemployed, and those with jobs were more likely to be earning lower gratuity levels [see 6.3].

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Aboriginal staff and prisoners still perceived a lack of cultural awareness among non-Aboriginal staff, and the Department as a whole. Only 21 per cent of prisoner survey respondents felt that Casuarina staff understood their culture, and only 24 per cent felt that staff respected their culture. There was some recognition of this among staff themselves, with only 57 per cent of staff survey respondents saying they had received adequate cultural awareness training.

### **Services for other minority cultural groups were more limited**

By comparison, other cultural and linguistic groups were less numerous, and less well catered for. There were limited, if any, translation services available, and often another prisoner who spoke the same language would provide translation. Asian, West Asian, African, and non-Christian prisoners were less likely to be accommodated together in groups. There were no Asian prisoners on the peer support team, and the absence of rice as a food staple was a concern for Asian men who come from a predominately rice-based food culture.

During our inspection, there were at least 38 prisoners who self-identified as Muslim, but dietary requirements were generally met by removing meat from meals, rather than providing halal options. Muslim prisoners were not permitted to gather for communal Friday prayers, although Christian services were held every Sunday. Unlike non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal prisoners, Asian and West Asian men were not able to mark culturally important days, like Ramadan, Eid-ul Fitr, and Chinese New Year.

## 4.7 REMAND PRISONERS

### **Remand numbers remained high, and many services were still lacking**

The proportion of remand prisoners at Casuarina reached 40 per cent in 2016, and had remained around that level ever since. Remand prisoners typically require a higher level of service than sentenced prisoners. They need access to legal resources and frequent contact with lawyers, and often present with more intensive medical and welfare requirements. In our 2017 inspection report, we noted that Casuarina was still coming to terms with the increased remand numbers. It was effectively performing the role of a remand facility without the resources to do so (OICS, 2017, pp. 5–9). By 2019, the high remand numbers were accepted as normal at Casuarina. However, there had been no significant increase in services or resources for remandees.

As in all Western Australian prisons, remandees were not separated from sentenced prisoners at Casuarina. Every unit in the prison contained both sentenced and remand prisoners, and more than one-third of remand prisoners shared a cell with a sentenced prisoner. We have generally conceded that this is a reality of the prison system in this state, and in many cases, family or kinship relationships are more important to consider than legal status. But we note that it is contrary to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

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There was no formal welfare assistance available to remandees. No staff member at Casuarina had responsibility to help effect bail, or find accommodation placements to support bail or a community-based sentencing alternative. Remandees often have to navigate difficult relationships, attempt to maintain contact with children, deal with court matters, and manage their financial affairs. The Transitional Manager could only offer lists of emergency accommodation agencies and other external agencies that could be approached for assistance. Re-entry services were available for sentenced prisoners, but not remandees.

### **Legal resources were sufficient, but access was intermittent**

The library supervisor for the prison system is based at Casuarina, and the prison library had an adequate collection of legal resources. This included one computer dedicated to legal research, which ran TimeBase, a database of legislation. TimeBase is an online database, but internet access was not permitted in the prison library. Instead, TimeBase mailed compact discs to the library supervisor containing updates to be loaded onto the computer. This was clearly an outdated process, and there was a risk that TimeBase would stop providing this service.

In our 2017 inspection report, we stated that there were insufficient workspaces and computers in the legal library. In 2019, a second TimeBase computer had been delivered but not installed at the time of the inspection. There was also a TimeBase computer and a small number of legal textbooks in the protection unit. Two other computers in the library were available to prepare legal documents, parole plans, and other letters. Prisoner usage of the legal library appeared to be quite low, and we saw no evidence of use during the inspection. However, prisoner access to the library had been regularly interrupted by staffing shortages, sometimes for weeks at a time.

# Chapter 5

## LIVING CONDITIONS

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### 5.1 DECENCY

#### **High numbers and overcrowded conditions made it difficult to maintain decency**

We found no evidence that prisoners were deliberately subjected to degrading or indecent treatment. For the most part, staff treated prisoners with respect, and showed concern for their welfare. However, the sheer size of Casuarina, coupled with the age of some parts of the facility, made it increasingly difficult to maintain decent living conditions for prisoners.

The vast majority of cells had been double-bunked. This meant two prisoners were sharing a cell originally designed for one, living in a space of approximately 8.5 square metres, which included an unenclosed toilet. Prisoners were locked inside cells in these conditions for 12 hours every night. The double-bunking of cells meant that most accommodation units were housing twice as many prisoners as intended. We have already discussed how this makes it difficult to maintain standards of hygiene and cleanliness, and the resulting problems with vermin infestation [see 2.4]. It also made the units busy, noisy, and often overwhelming. The fact that most prisoners are sharing a cell deprives them of any privacy or respite. For the many prisoners with mental health issues, this can be particularly challenging. This is one of the risks associated with the state's increasingly large and overcrowded prisons.



*Photo 5: Living conditions were cramped, making it difficult to maintain decency and hygiene.*

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### 5.2 FOOD

#### **Catering for large numbers was challenging in a kitchen that was not fit for purpose**

In our 2017 inspection report, we were critical of the kitchen, which was not designed to cater for the increased prisoner numbers, and was fundamentally too small. We recommended a new kitchen be built (OICS, 2017, pp. 33–36). Positively, this was under way as part of the expansion project. The existing kitchen was not fit for purpose, and catering equipment was old and failing. Despite this, the kitchen was complying with industry-standard food hygiene practices, assessed twice a year by the Shire of Kwinana, and also by the Department's internal compliance assessments.

The three chef instructors managed a team of around 20 prisoners working in the kitchen. They deserved credit for maintaining high output from such an inadequate facility. Fifteen hundred lunches and dinners were produced each day. The kitchen over-catered prisoner dinners, cooking 90 trays of 15 serves each – 50 per cent over requirement. The over-catering was designed to prevent standover in the units, but did lead to considerable waste.

The prison menu had been specified many years before by dieticians, rather than by the chef instructors. The menu ran on a five-week cycle, using the same basic ingredients on each day of the week, varied by sauce and flavouring. Many prisoners complained about the lack of variation in the menu.

### 5.3 CANTEEN AND PRISONER PURCHASES

#### **Canteen operations had improved, but prisoners were concerned about prices**

In our 2017 inspection report, we identified that the canteen was under-resourced, and was not able to manage the workload associated with catering for 950 prisoners. The single canteen officer at that time was highly stressed. We made a recommendation to improve the operation of the canteen (OICS, 2017, pp. 28–29).

Positively, in 2019, we found that this recommendation had been addressed, and the canteen was running well. There were now two canteen officers, along with five prisoner workers. Prisoners filled in order forms, which were picked, bagged, and delivered back to units. The canteen officers varied stock ordering to account for fluctuations in demand. At high-demand times, such as Christmas, storage space was insufficient. This will be an ongoing issue as prisoner numbers increase.

For prisoners, the main concern relating to the canteen was rising prices, particularly for tobacco. The average weekly spend on tobacco at Casuarina was a staggering \$30,000. Although prisoners understood that the cost of tobacco products had been driven up by federal government tax increases, they still complained. At the time of our inspection in September 2019, a 25 gram pack of tobacco cost \$47.90, up from \$41.75 in mid-June. There had been no corresponding rise in gratuity payments. For any prisoner earning level 3 gratuities or lower – about 65 per cent of the Casuarina population – their weekly payment was not enough to buy one pack of tobacco.

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This led to increased risks of standover behaviour, or borrowing and debts between prisoners, all of which was against prison rules. It also made prisoners more likely to put pressure on their families to deposit money into their prison accounts. Many of these families are under financial stress, and can ill afford this.

The steady rise of tobacco prices makes this situation increasingly unsustainable. The Department has a number of options, including increasing gratuity payments to prisoners, or banning smoking in prisons altogether. Most other jurisdictions in Australia have now banned smoking in prisons, which is justifiable on both public health grounds, and occupational health and safety grounds. A further option might be to consider trialling demand reduction strategies, such as free nicotine patches.

### 5.4 CLOTHING AND LAUNDRY

#### **Laundry operations were efficient and effective, but all clothing was shared**

The laundry was considered an essential industry, and the two laundry VSOs were not subject to redeployment. They employed up to 25 prisoners, working five days a week, and washing 20–30 trolleys of clothing and bedding each day. The laundry operated efficiently, and complied with industry standards of infection control.

Clean clothing was delivered back to units in trolleys, and stored by size. Prisoners could exchange two items of dirty clothing for two items of clean clothing. However, there was no process for maintaining personal sets of clothing. All items, including socks and underwear, went into the general pool and were washed together. The failure to provide personal clothing, particularly underwear, fell below the standard of decency that we expect. Prisoners had no control over the quality of their own clothing, and had no choice but to accept whatever clothing they were offered.

Many prisoners complained that new clothing was put into circulation infrequently, and it was difficult to get replacements for damaged clothing. Some told us they would hoard good quality or new garments and hand-wash them, rather than send them to the laundry. This presented some risk of infection, as hand-washing did not guarantee sterilisation. It was also contrary to prison rules.

#### **Recommendation 9**

Implement processes for prisoners to maintain personal sets of clothing such as underwear and socks.

### 5.5 RECREATION

#### **A good recreation program was undermined by staff redeployment**

In our 2017 inspection report, we were very positive about the recreation program at Casuarina. The number of hours of structured recreation delivery had been increased substantially, and recreation officers had worked with health staff and education staff to

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improve the benefits of the recreation program. There were physical rehabilitation sessions for wheelchair users and others recovering from injury, and specific sessions for prisoners over 40 years old. Prisoners working in recreation were gaining qualifications, including Certificate III in Fitness, Certificate II in Sports Coaching, and Certificate I in Sport and Recreation (OICS, 2017, pp. 24–25). However, we noted that too many prisoners were still missing out on recreation, and there was a need to expand the program further.

Unfortunately, our 2019 inspection found that recreation had contracted rather than expanded. The recreation program remained full and varied, including circuit training, boxercise, spin classes, high intensity training, and yoga. Sessions for prisoners over 40 years old continued, and physical rehabilitation sessions had recently recommenced after there had been no physiotherapist at the prison for 12 months or more.

But all of these scheduled sessions that took place in the gymnasium were regularly cancelled because of staff shortages in the units, and redeployment of recreation officers. Under the staff deployment agreement, recreation officers were among the first to be redeployed to cover staff shortages elsewhere in the prison.

Prisoner access to recreation classes had dropped dramatically. When recreation was running at full capacity, there were 3,000 or more prisoner attendances per month. That halved immediately after the staff deployment agreement was implemented in March 2018, and then halved again after September 2018. Since then, less than 1,000 prisoners had attended recreation classes per month, and sometimes less than 500. There had been no organised sport on a weekend since September 2018. Use of the oval had been limited throughout 2019 because of proximity to the building site.



*Photo 6: A football match took place during our inspection, but organised sport had been infrequent.*

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Recreation officers were highly frustrated that they were effectively unable to do their job, and unable to deliver the recreation program as planned. They made a valid point that they were not employed as prison officers and just wanted to do the job they were employed to do. Prisoners were very dissatisfied with access to recreation – 84 per cent of survey respondents said the amount of organised sport was poor.

### **Access to physical recreation remained a vital feature of the prison**

Despite the decline of the recreation program, exercise and physical recreation continued to provide a crucial outlet for prisoners. As discussed previously, Casuarina has good outdoor recreation yards attached to each unit [see 3.1]. This meant that, even when restricted to their units, prisoners had opportunities to exercise, or even just spend time outside. The yards were very well utilised by prisoners throughout our inspection.

The recreation officers deserved credit for their sustained effort to get a football competition running despite the obstacles posed by short staffing and disruptions associated with the build. The competition only started the week before our inspection. Weekend matches had proved impossible to facilitate because of short staffing so matches were held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

There is more to prisoners having regular access to structured recreation than just the actual physical exercise. Recreation has potential rehabilitative value, and known mental health benefits. It builds motivation, encourages discipline, goal setting and achievement, and promotes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

We were concerned that access to structured recreation was likely to worsen with the expansion of the prison. There was no provision for additional recreation infrastructure or resources associated with the increase in prisoner numbers. Recreation is an important feature of the prison regime, and it is vital that good access is provided.

### **Recommendation 10**

**Increase prisoner access to structured sport and recreation.**

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*Photo 7: The unit recreation yards increased prisoners' opportunities to exercise, or just spend time outside.*

### 5.6 FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONTACT

#### **The family visitors centre provided a good service under new provider ReSet**

Since our previous inspection, the contract to operate the family visitors centre outside the prison gatehouse had transitioned from Outcare to ReSet. ReSet continued to provide a good service to visitors. ReSet staff were friendly and professional, checking visitors in for their visit, but also offering emotional support.

The family visitors centre itself was old, and catering for far more visitors than ever anticipated. The biggest issue was that there were only two toilets available for visitors to use. ReSet had made some minor changes to the layout to create more space, and a more extensive refurbishment was planned.

#### **Visits sessions continued to be affected by delayed arrival of prisoners**

In our 2017 inspection report, we observed that some prisoners were arriving late for visits sessions, effectively reducing their time with family and friends (OICS, 2017, p. 27). This had not changed in 2019. The fundamental problem is that there is no holding room attached to Casuarina's visits centre. This means the prison cannot have prisoners ready and waiting for the start of the visit session. Instead, prisoners stayed in their units.

Casuarina's process was to call a prisoner's unit when their visitor arrived at the gate for a visits session. For a variety of reasons, this often led to delays – the call from the gate may not always happen promptly, the message may take some time to reach the prisoner, the

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prisoner may not respond promptly, the prisoner may have to walk some distance to reach the visits centre. The end result was that some prisoners arrived 15–20 minutes late for the visit. This was significant in a one-hour session. This undermined prisoners' ability to maintain vital links with their support network of family and friends. It was also an unacceptable outcome for visitors, many of whom travelled long distances to be at the prison.

Positively, the visits centre was being extended as part of the expansion project, which should address this issue.

### **Access to telephones was satisfactory, but lack of e-visits was a concern**

During our last inspection, many prisoners complained about limited access to telephones, which reduced their ability to stay in contact with family and friends (OICS, 2017, pp. 27–28). Since then, installation of additional telephones had eased concerns. In fact, in our pre-inspection prisoner survey, 83 per cent of respondents said that it was easy to contact family by telephone. However, in reality, it was still not possible for all prisoners to make a telephone call every day. Prisoners clearly had lowered expectations about access to telephones.

Lack of access to e-visits was another problem, particularly for prisoners with family interstate or overseas. Prisoners were frustrated that e-visits are available at other prisons (including Hakea), but not at Casuarina. Casuarina had been unable to introduce e-visits because of a lack of bandwidth at the prison. Again, we were told this would be addressed by the expansion project.

# Chapter 6

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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### 6.1 ASSESSMENT AND SENTENCE PLANNING

#### A system backlog in assessments created challenges for Casuarina

Assessment and sentence planning process are crucial to facilitating the progress and movement of prisoners through the prison system. The Individual Management Plan (IMP) is the key sentence planning document that sets out a prisoner's security classification, prison placement, education and training needs, and program requirements. According to Department policy, the initial IMP should be completed within 28 days of a prisoner being sentenced (DCS, 2012). Remand prisoners and prisoners with sentences of less than six months receive a briefer assessment known as a Management and Placement checklist (MAP) instead of an IMP. The MAP should be completed within five days of remand or sentencing (DCS, 2012).

For male prisoners in the Perth metropolitan area, initial IMPs and MAPs should be completed at Hakea Prison (Hakea), which serves as the entry point and assessment centre for the prison system. This should happen before a prisoner is transferred to an appropriate prison elsewhere in the system.

However, in the past five years, Hakea has struggled to manage the steep rise in numbers entering the prison system, exacerbated by staff shortages and redeployments (OICS, 2018, pp. 10–12). This has resulted in a growing backlog of IMPs, and more prisoners moving to prisons such as Casuarina without a completed IMP.

In our 2017 inspection report, we noted that about 200 prisoners at Casuarina had overdue IMPs, and we recommended that the Department take steps to address this (OICS, 2017, p. 43). Unfortunately, the system backlog of initial IMPs has continued to grow, with over 1,000 across the state, and still over 200 at Casuarina during the 2019 inspection.

For Casuarina, this represented more than one-third of sentenced prisoners. There were also 300 remand prisoners without MAPs. In total, more than 60 per cent of the prison population were in limbo, either awaiting court outcomes or awaiting assessment. Most remand prisoners had not even been assessed for security classification, and were designated maximum-security by default. This created the false impression that more than half of the Casuarina population were maximum-security prisoners.

The consequences were significant, both for individual prisoners and for the system. Prisoners without an IMP are unable to start addressing rehabilitation needs. For many, this can lead to parole being delayed or denied. For the system, this means higher numbers in custody, and higher numbers in overcrowded maximum-security facilities. The community is also affected because if rehabilitation needs remain unaddressed, the risk of reoffending increases.

The sentence planning team at Casuarina was picking up some extra work that Hakea was unable to complete. For example, they were writing MAPs for some long-term remand prisoners. This was mainly so that those prisoners could be transferred on to another

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prison, and free up bed space at Casuarina. There were some prisoners who had completed treatment assessments, but did not have a completed IMP. Casuarina had started completing IMPs for some of these prisoners because there was a need to fill places on scheduled treatment programs.

### **Staff redeployment impacted on the sentence planning team**

The sentence planning team at Casuarina was highly competent and experienced. The team was led by the Assistant Superintendent Assessment and Case Management, and consisted of two senior officers, and four assessment writers. These positions were filled by prison officers via expression of interest.

Unfortunately, the sentence planning team had been heavily impacted by redeployment. Under the staff deployment agreement, sentence planning staff were among the first to be redeployed to cover staff shortages elsewhere in the prison, and this was happening almost every day. The redeployments were so regular that it was increasingly difficult to find officers willing to backfill sentence planning positions because they knew they would spend little of their time in that area. This meant assessment writers were not always replaced when they went on leave. In July 2019, the team lost 314 production hours to redeployment, and another 140 hours to leave. This was equivalent to losing two full-time positions.

The sentence planning team had worked hard to manage their workload in these circumstances, but had inevitably fallen behind in some areas. For example, there were about 40 outstanding IMP reviews at the time of our inspection.

Assessments and sentence planning have been undervalued by the Department, not just at Casuarina, but throughout the state. Staffing agreements have not given priority to resourcing this area. But without assessments and sentence planning, the prison system grinds to a halt. Prisoners miss out on opportunities to rehabilitate themselves, and cannot progress towards minimum-security and reintegration with the community. The Department is less able to transfer prisoners to different facilities because they have not been assessed for security risk and treatment needs, contributing to system gridlock.

### **The case management system had limited value at Casuarina**

Under the Department's case management policy, all prisoners with an IMP must be assigned a prison officer as their Case Officer (DCS, 2013). The Case Officer is responsible for meeting with the prisoner every three to six months (depending on sentence length remaining) and completing contact reports. At the time of the inspection, there were about 250 prisoners requiring case management at Casuarina. All had an assigned Case Officer, and all primary contact reports had been completed. Only two regular contact reports were outstanding.

However, the case management model continued to offer limited value. The majority of prisoners at Casuarina – around 73 per cent – were not case managed at all. For those prisoners who were case managed, the process was largely ineffective. The size of the prison, and the staff rostering and shift structure meant that case officers and prisoners

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rarely developed a meaningful relationship. Contact was too infrequent, and failed to make any real contribution to prisoner welfare or preparation for release. This has been our consistent criticism of the Department's case management system for many years now, and it remained true at Casuarina in 2019.

### 6.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **Education and training services were positive and productive**

There were two campus managers running education and training services at Casuarina, managing nine full-time education staff, plus a flexible team of sessional teaching staff and external trainers. Education staff were generally very positive, and felt safe and supported in the prison.

Education offered prisoners a range of accredited and non-accredited courses, traineeships, short courses, and university degrees, with a focus on adult basic education. One of the campus managers was responsible for coordinating adult basic education and other education services in the education centre. The second campus manager focused on vocational training in conjunction with the industries workshops and employment areas.

There were 32 prisoners being paid gratuities as full-time students, and 36 as part-time students. There were also other prisoners engaged in part-time education who were employed in other areas of the prison. On the busiest days, around 80 prisoners attended the education centre.

The number of prisoners engaged in traineeships had increased from 29 to 50 since our last inspection. This included three Aboriginal trainees. The scope of traineeships had also increased significantly. Three years ago, we found that traineeships were taking place in three areas only – bakery, vegetable preparation, and laundry. In 2019, there were an additional six industry areas delivering traineeships – kitchen, metal shop, cabinet making shop, print shop, warehousing, and cleaning. This was a very positive development.

#### **Aboriginal-focused education and training had improved**

There was one Aboriginal Education Worker at Casuarina, and a good focus on Aboriginal education. About 38 per cent of students were Aboriginal, which was proportionate to the prison population. Aboriginal students were well represented among the highest paid students at Casuarina – 64 per cent of full-time students earning Level 1 gratuities were Aboriginal.

There were four specific courses aimed at Aboriginal students, including a Noongar language course. These are aligned to nationally accredited courses such as the Certificate in General Education for Adults, and students receive a nationally recognised statement of attainment. Some of these courses are delivered in the classrooms at Kaartdijin Mia, which provides a level of cultural safety to Aboriginal students. This includes an art course, and a particularly popular and successful course in which students

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write and record hip-hop music, guided by a TAFE lecturer. Overall, Aboriginal prisoners had good opportunities, and were highly engaged in education.

### **Prisoner access to education was limited by space, resources, and rising costs**

Despite the good things happening in education, capacity was fundamentally too low, and only a small proportion of the prisoner population could access education. The education centre had not increased in size as prisoner numbers grew, with only nine classrooms available. There were another five classrooms at Kaartdijin Mia, but two of these had been lost because of the building works. A major infrastructure upgrade was overdue to cater for the current prisoner population, and this need would be heightened with another significant increase in prisoner numbers.

Education was often impacted by staff shortages and redeployment of the duty officers who supervise the education centre. If there are not enough prison officers to provide supervision, prisoners are not permitted to attend and classes cannot run. Positively, education was prioritised by the prison, and closures were kept to a minimum. Education staff estimated that about three full days of teaching had been lost over the previous two months. Staff shortages also affected traineeships in the industries workshops because these were regularly closed [see 6.3].

Across the prison system, education is aligned with the school calendar year – with three two-week term breaks, and a six-week break over summer – but provides traineeships and courses that reflect a TAFE training model. The teaching breaks are largely driven by the need to reduce spending, but this approach is not consistent with adult learning principles. Prisoners and staff at Casuarina told us that many prisoners lose interest and motivation during these breaks, and ultimately give up education.



***Photo 8: The limited capacity of the education centre was restricting prisoner access to education.***

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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There had been a decrease in student enrolments in higher level TAFE courses. This appeared to be related to a cost increase (from \$500 up to \$700 per course), which many prisoners found difficult to self-fund. Some prisons provide a pay assist system that allows the prisoner to repay the prison in instalments. This was not available at Casuarina, but was worth considering to encourage prisoners to engage in higher education. A higher level qualification may increase the scope of employment opportunities on release.

### **Casuarina education staff had limited representation in decision-making processes**

The campus managers were part of several committees within the prison, and had fortnightly meetings with the Deputy Superintendent Services. However, they were not considered part of Casuarina's senior management team, and were not included in senior management meetings.

Line management for education is off site, in the Educational and Vocational Training Unit (EVTU) in the Department's head office. EVTU held a meeting for campus managers from all prisons every two to three months. The Casuarina campus managers were also involved in some specific committee meetings. However, Casuarina education staff felt isolated from decision-making processes. This had not been helped by considerable staff turnover. There had been four different campus managers in the previous two years, and some staff appointments and movements had happened without campus managers being notified.

Because they were not strongly represented either at the prison level or the Department level, education staff felt they had limited input into planning for the prison expansion. There were many questions about how education would be delivered to an increased prisoner population that had not been resolved at the time of our inspection. EVTU had plans to appoint a senior campus manager to oversee the two existing campus managers. We suggest that education services may benefit more from employing additional tutors to increase delivery, than from adding another layer of management.

## 6.3 EMPLOYMENT

### **There were far too few meaningful employment positions for prisoners**

Over many years and several successive inspections, we have commented and made recommendations about the shortage of meaningful employment available to prisoners at Casuarina (OICS, 2017, pp. 40–42; OICS, 2014b, pp. 54–57; OICS, 2010, pp. 61–65). The Department has not expanded industries infrastructure as the prison population has grown. As a result, the number of available jobs has fallen further and further behind the number of prisoners. There has been a corresponding rise in under-employment. Many prisoners have jobs inside their unit (such as cleaning or pushing meal trolleys) that are unskilled and undemanding, and typically require no more than one to two hours of work per day. This cannot properly be seen as meaningful work.

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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In 2019, unemployment and under-employment was very high. When we commenced our inspection, there were more than 300 prisoners not working, and another 200 employed in unit jobs. This meant over 500 prisoners at Casuarina – about 55 per cent of the population – had very little to do all day. Even this figure is likely to underestimate the scale of the problem. We identified about 160 jobs in the industries area, and another 100 in other parts of the prison. There were also 20–30 prisoners employed as ‘reserve workers’, who only attended the workplace if another prisoner was unavailable through illness or a conflicting appointment. The conclusion is that there are less than 300 meaningful jobs available in a prison holding up to 950 prisoners. This is entirely unacceptable, both because it fails to prepare prisoners for employment after release, and because unoccupied prisoners create security risks.

Even more concerning was the fact that the ongoing expansion project did not include any significant addition to industries or employment positions. The kitchen will be larger and employ more prisoners, and some industries such as the laundry and the bakery will start operating seven days a week. But this will not be sufficient for an extra 512 prisoners. Some of these new prisoners will ultimately be engaged full-time in drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, but there will still be hundreds who need meaningful employment.

### **Staff shortages further reduced the amount of prisoner employment**

The industries area had been greatly affected by staff shortages. Under the staff deployment agreement, Vocational and Support Officers (VSOs) who run the industries workshops were regularly redeployed to cover prison officer shortages in the units. VSOs have completed abbreviated custodial training, which allows them to carry out limited tasks in the units. The impact of VSO redeployment on the industries area was significant. Without VSOs, the workshops did not open, and prisoners stayed in their units instead of coming to work. Essential work areas, such as the kitchen, bakery, and laundry, were always kept open. But non-essential workshops were frequently shut down, reducing prisoner access to employment.

The prison’s ability to keep workplaces open was also affected by a shortage of VSOs. There were only five vacant VSO positions from a total of 45, but personal leave and workers’ compensation leave levels were high. There had been as many as 16 VSOs absent in the week before our inspection. Morale was quite low among VSOs who were frustrated about being regularly redeployed away from their workplaces.

### **Aboriginal prisoners experienced higher levels of unemployment and lower pay**

Our previous reports have identified Aboriginal disadvantage at Casuarina, in terms of higher unemployment and lower gratuity payments. We have made several recommendations about this (OICS, 2017, p. 30; OICS, 2014b, p. 77). There had been little progress in 2019.

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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A high proportion of Aboriginal prisoners were not working (43%) – much higher than non-Aboriginal prisoners (27%). Another 27 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners were unit workers, meaning 70 per cent were unemployed or under-employed. They were also under-represented at higher gratuity levels. Only 22 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners were on Level 1 and 2 gratuities, compared with 43 per cent of non-Aboriginal prisoners.

We recognise that there are barriers to improving Aboriginal employment levels. Their low employment levels in prison often reflect low motivation, limited skills, and limited work experience in the community. However, these are the very disadvantage factors that the prison system should be seeking to address. Casuarina should have proactive strategies to encourage Aboriginal prisoners to work, broaden their work skills, and improve their employability and earning capacity.

### **Recommendation 11**

Increase employment levels for Aboriginal prisoners.



*Photo 9: The print shop.*



*Photo 10: The metal shop.*

### 6.4 OFFENDER TREATMENT PROGRAMS

#### **Offender treatment programs were frequently postponed or cancelled**

Offender treatment programs are a key element of the prison system's efforts to rehabilitate prisoners and reduce reoffending. The assessment and sentence planning process determines each sentenced prisoner's program requirements. Prisoners can refuse to participate in programs, but this affects security ratings and parole recommendations. The suite of programs delivered at Casuarina includes:

- Think First – a cognitive skills program
- Pathways – a drug and alcohol related offending program
- Stopping Family Violence – a family violence program
- Not Our Way – an Aboriginal family violence program
- Medium Intensity Program – a medium intensity general offending program
- Violent Offender Treatment Program – a high intensity violent offending program

The prison had also provided a Cognitive Brief Intervention program, which is an abbreviated version of Think First, not recognised as a treatment program. In addition, there were a number of other non-treatment programs that prisoners could participate in voluntarily [see 6.5].

In 2018, there were 17 programs delivered at Casuarina, with a total of 167 prisoners participating. Two programs were cancelled, and four were postponed during the year.

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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In 2019, there had been three programs cancelled by the time of our inspection in September, plus three postponements. Cancellations and postponements were caused by lack of suitably trained facilitators, or lack of available program rooms. In one case, a Think First program had been terminated after running for two days because the prison needed the room for another purpose.

It had also been difficult to identify suitable program candidates because of the statewide backlog of assessments. The scale of program need across the system was unpredictable because more than 1,000 prisoners had not been assessed [see 6.1]. This contributed to program cancellations and postponements, and relocation of programs. For example, three Pathways programs scheduled to run at Karnet Prison Farm in the first half of 2019 were transferred to Casuarina because there was low demand at Karnet and high demand at Casuarina. However, it had been difficult to fill the family violence programs, or the medium intensity program at Casuarina, and demand for the Think First program had almost disappeared.

Our concern is that prisoners are missing out on programs that they need, including hundreds who have not even had their programs needs assessed. Low availability of programs prevents many prisoners from being released on parole, which contributes to the overcrowding of the prison system. It also arguably impacts on community safety because of the failure to reform criminal behaviour.

### **Programs and programs staff were increasingly marginalised**

Some years ago, program delivery was much more embedded in Casuarina operations. Programs staff were based in the Offender Development Programs (ODP) area inside the prison, which had two programs rooms. There were residential violent offender treatment programs and sex offender treatment programs, which were co-facilitated by custodial staff. Program participants lived together in the same unit, and feedback from unit interactions was part of the therapeutic process.

The Department no longer runs residential programs, custodial staff no longer co-facilitate, and Casuarina no longer provides sex offender treatment programs. Programs staff left their base in ODP several years ago, and moved into the staff amenities building outside the prison. This served as a hub for the south metropolitan region programs team, who delivered both prison and community-based programs.

In 2019, we found programs staff further distanced from the prison. They had largely vacated the staff amenities building, retaining only one office. Programs officers and managers were all now based in East Perth. Some programs had been outsourced to non-government organisations, who had very little contact with the Department's programs staff. A programs manager attended a monthly meeting with Casuarina senior management, but there was no longer a continuous presence to promote programs; liaise with custodial staff, PCS and others regarding individual clients; and to secure and safeguard room bookings.

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This was illustrated by Casuarina's decision to turn ODP into a reintegration hub, providing a base for the Transitional Manager and Employment Coordinator, and rooms for the various programs and workshops that they facilitated. This was a worthwhile initiative, but meant that offender treatment programs were largely excluded from using the programs rooms in ODP.

Offender treatment program delivery was restricted instead to programs rooms attached to some of the units, which was less than ideal. Because they were inside the wings, the rooms lacked privacy, and were susceptible to disruption. Prisoners were required to move into that unit in order to participate in a program there, and some refused.

New multipurpose programs rooms will be provided as part of the new builds, and these will be in freestanding support buildings between the units, rather than inside the wings. However, it is not yet clear if these rooms will be available for delivery of offender treatment programs. They may be fully utilised for the alcohol and other drug rehabilitation program, or mental health step up/step down program.

### 6.5 PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

#### **Re-entry support services could not reach enough prisoners**

The resources and services available at Casuarina to support prisoners re-entering the community were insufficient for the number of prisoners, and particularly for the high remand population. The key positions involved in preparing prisoners for release were the Transitional Manager and the Employment Coordinator. There was also a Reintegration Project Officer providing administrative support to these two positions.

In our 2017 inspection report, we expressed concern that the Transitional Manager was under-resourced, office bound, and unable to promote transitional services, or find time to develop relations with new community providers. We recommended an increase in transitional management resources (OICS, 2017, p. 46). Since then, the addition of administrative support had helped, but resources were still fundamentally too low for a prison of this size. As part of the expansion project, a second administrative support position will be introduced, but this is far from sufficient to cope with 512 extra prisoners.

The Transitional Manager provides prisoners assistance with obtaining identification, fine conversions, accommodation enquiries, and referrals to outside agencies. The Employment Coordinator also helps prisoners planning for their release by hosting various career information sessions and workshops, both with job finding agencies and with employers willing to take on ex-prisoners. She helps individuals with resumes, facilitates online job searches, and assists with any referrals.

Many of the prisoners at Casuarina will transfer to another lower-security prison before being released. Casuarina was still releasing significant numbers – more than 650 in 2018–2019 – but many were remandees released from court. Re-entry support services were only available to sentenced prisoners released to freedom, parole, or other

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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community supervision orders. These equated to only 54 per cent of all releases from Casuarina.

The Transitional Manager had sound processes in place to make contact with all sentenced prisoners six months before release, and again two months before release. This contact included an offer to be referred to a re-entry support service. Since our last inspection, contracts for re-entry service providers had been retendered throughout the state. The new provider in the metropolitan area was ReSet, commencing in April 2018. Cyrenian House and Holyoake jointly held a separate contract for throughcare drug and alcohol counselling (called ADAPT), and Outcare provided an Aboriginal throughcare service funded separately through a federal government grant.

In developing the new re-entry contract, the Department intended that all prisoners with a medium or high risk of reoffending would be referred to ReSet. However, the risk of reoffending assessment had not been completed for many prisoners, and the referral form is detailed and time consuming. Like most metropolitan prisons, Casuarina had therefore opted only to refer prisoners who requested to see ReSet when offered.

While we found that some prisoners approaching release had engaged well and had good support from ReSet, many had declined a referral, or declined assistance when seen by their ReSet case worker. The Transitional Manager and her clerks persisted in encouraging prisoners to accept a referral to ReSet, especially those without clear accommodation and support arrangements. ReSet has had considerable staff turnover and very limited feedback is provided to the Transitional Manager so it is not clear how that service is performing.

### **A wider range of voluntary programs was still too limited for the prison size**

Most prisons (including Casuarina) offer a range of voluntary programs to supplement offender treatment programs. The content in voluntary programs can be very valuable, particularly for the many prisoners who are unable to access an offender treatment program. At worst, they represent a constructive way to spend time in prison.

In our 2017 inspection report, we found that the voluntary programs offered at Casuarina were disappointingly limited, and recommended an increase in range, scope and availability (OICS, 2017, pp. 46–47). At that time, there was only an Outcare life skills program, PAST (a psycho-educational drug and alcohol program delivered by health services), and Alcoholics Anonymous.

In 2019, there had been an increase in the number of voluntary programs, but they still fell short of need. The PAST drug and alcohol program continued, and there were now several Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous groups running, including some that were led by prisoners. ReSet delivered information sessions, and the Inside Out Dads parenting program. ReSet and the Wirrpanda Foundation delivered monthly career information sessions, and the Employment Coordinator facilitated monthly small business workshops. The Employment Coordinator had also arranged presentations from several

## REHABILITATION, REPARATION, AND RE-ENTRY

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motivational speakers, along with more specific employment focused presentations, expos and workshops. However, life skills programs had disappeared because the new re-entry contract does not require ReSet to provide these. Most of the offerings were information sessions, rather than personal development programs.

Overall, the options for prisoners to address their offending behaviours, and particularly drug and alcohol addictions, were quite limited. Offender treatment programs reached only a small proportion, reduced further by the ongoing delays in assessment. ADAPT throughcare drug and alcohol counselling is only available to sentenced prisoners in the months before release. And PCS has no capacity to offer counselling to address offending behaviours.

An increasing number of prisoners throughout the prison system (not just at Casuarina) resorted to self-funding private therapy and counselling. This highlighted the general lack of counselling available in the prison system, and raised questions of equity given that self-funding was only an option for those who could afford it. The Department had grappled with this dilemma, briefly banning private therapy before reinstating it again. Ultimately, this may well prove to be a symptom of a system that is becoming less and less effective at providing rehabilitative opportunities to prisoners.

# Chapter 7

## THE FUTURE OF CASUARINA

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### The growing size of Casuarina brings challenges and risks

By mid-2020, when the current expansion project ends, Casuarina will have a capacity of more than 1,500 prisoners. The next planned expansion will take capacity to nearly 1,900 by 2023. Casuarina will be the largest prison that has ever operated in Western Australia, and one of the largest in the country. Economies of scale make large prisons attractive to government, and building inside the perimeter of an existing prison is undoubtedly cheaper than constructing a whole new prison. However, prisons of this size bring challenges and risks of their own.

Maintaining custodial staffing levels has been difficult at Casuarina, and shortages have impacted on most areas of the prison. Staffing pressures will certainly not be reduced as the prison grows in size, and a significant increase in custodial staff will be required before the prison can operate.

Security considerations are magnified by housing so many prisoners in one facility. It is more difficult for staff to build relationships with and maintain knowledge of the prisoner group. Security measures are more likely to be tested, and the potential consequences of a loss of control are greater. In simple physical terms, as the footprint of the prison is filled, new buildings encroach closer to the perimeter into areas that were previously sterile.

Throughout this report, we have expressed concern about areas or services in the prison that are affected by limited infrastructure and resources. This includes multi-purpose cells, reception, infirmary and health services, kitchen, canteen, gymnasium, visits centre, education, industries, and offender treatment programs. Some infrastructure and service shortfalls will be addressed by the expansion, but others will be exacerbated.

One of the biggest challenges for Casuarina will be providing meaningful and constructive activities for such a large population. The prison already struggles in this area, with too few prisoner employment positions, and reduced access to organised recreation. The risk is that Casuarina will become a place where prisoners are merely warehoused, and rehabilitation is diminished. Even now, rehabilitation is compromised by the assessments backlog, and the under-resourcing of offender treatment programs, counselling services, and re-entry services. Ineffective rehabilitation does a disservice to the community, and costs the state more in the long-term.

The ultimate success of the Casuarina expansion will be judged by the prison's ability to deliver a full regime of meaningful activities – employment, education, recreation, programs, re-entry services – and the ongoing effectiveness of efforts to rehabilitate prisoners.

### **Recommendation 12**

Ensure that Casuarina provides a full regime of meaningful activities for prisoners as it continues to expand.

# Appendix 1

## ABBREVIATIONS

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AVS	Aboriginal Visitors Scheme
CCU	Crisis Care Unit
DCS	Department of Corrective Services
DOJ	Department of Justice
MPU	Multi-Purpose Unit
ODP	Offender Development Programs
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PCS	Prison Counselling Services
PSC	Public Sector Commission
PSO	Prison Support Officer
SHU	Special Handling Unit
SPU	Special Protection Unit
VSO	Vocational and Support Officer
WAPOU	Western Australian Prison Officers' Union

## Appendix 2

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# Appendix 3

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Justice**  
Corrective **Services**

## **Response to the Announced Inspection: Casuarina Prison 2019**

**February 2020**

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
**Casuarina Prison 2019**

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The Department of Justice welcomes the draft report of the inspection of Casuarina Prison.

The Department has reviewed the report and noted a level of acceptance against the 12 recommendations.

Appendix A contains comments for your attention and consideration.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Casuarina Prison 2019

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### Response to Recommendations

#### 1 Develop a strategic plan for Casuarina Prison.

<b>Level of Acceptance:</b>	Not Supported
<b>Responsible Division:</b>	Corrective Services
<b>Responsible Business Area:</b>	Adult Male Prisons
<b>Proposed Completion Date:</b>	N/A

##### Response:

The Department does not support the concept of a facility level strategic plan for Casuarina as the operations of each prison is based on an operating philosophy and operating model that delivers on the strategic plan for Corrective Services and the Department as a whole.

Casuarina is also undergoing significant transformation through multiple expansions as part of the Department's long term cohort management plan. The current Casuarina Prison 512 Expansion Project will provide specialised services to prisoners with a drug addiction (AOD) and additional capacity for general purpose. A further 344 bed expansion - Inside the Wire (ITW) Project has been approved by Government. This will include further additional capacity for targeted cohort management, including a high security unit (super max); a specialised mental health unit; extensions to the crisis care unit; the infirmary; age care; gate house; reception area; and an upgrade of prison industries for protection prisoners.

The expansions are subject to a number of variables and dependencies and as decisions are made and the final configuration of Casuarina is known, an operating philosophy and operating model will be developed to support and compliment the Department's consolidated plan for the management of cohorts across the custodial estate.

#### 2 Take steps to ensure that transfer and appointment processes for prison officers at Casuarina Prison are merit-based.

<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>	31 December 2020

##### Response:

Transfers and appointment of prison officers are made in accordance with the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* and the Prison officers' Industrial Agreement 2018. Prison officers can apply for voluntary transfers across facilities. These transfers are considered by the Prison Officer Transfer Allocation Committee (POTAC).

The process for appointing prison officers to the pool of acting senior officers is based on the Department's *Process for Filling Vacant Senior Officer Positions*. This process is currently under review to ensure these transfers and appointments are merit based.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Casuarina Prison 2019

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### **3 Respond to concerns about inappropriate staff behaviour by setting clear behaviour expectations and providing relevant training.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 September 2020

**Response:**

Casuarina maintains a zero tolerance policy of inappropriate staff behaviour. A broadcast will be issued by the Superintendent reinforcing behaviour expectations of staff under Local Order 3 - Staff Anti-Bullying, Local Order 27 - Staff Management, and the Code of Conduct.

### **4 Eliminate cockroach infestation in the units.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2020

**Response:**

Casuarina has in place a pest management plan in response to the cockroach infestations within units. An external pest management contractor has been commissioned who will oversee:

- Monthly installation of baits within units and workshops;
- Quarterly internal pest spraying; and
- Bi-annual external pest spraying.

Ongoing monitoring of pest infestations will occur through the monthly attendance of the pest contractor. The pest management plan will be reviewed on opening of the new units under the Casuarina Expansion Project.

### **5 Review staffing and relief arrangements for the master control room.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 September 2020

**Response:**

Casuarina has a local instruction on Master Control Room Procedures which includes the rotation of staff.

Staff can be regularly relieved and this process is controlled by the Gate Senior Officer.

The Superintendent will re-inforce the requirements of this local order with relevant staff.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RESPONSE

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Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Casuarina Prison 2019

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### **6 Improve waiting list management processes to address the backlog of medical appointment requests.**

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

#### **Response:**

Wait list management has improved through the implementation of 'Structured Administration and Supply Arrangements' (SASAs) approved by the CEO Department of Health, which authorises nursing staff to administer specific medications without a doctor's prescription for specific clinical conditions.

This enables a greater scope of practice and therefore treatment options for Departmental Registered Nurses to implement such as administration of vaccinations and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, thereby reducing the demand for writing prescriptions for these patients and consultation by a Prison Medical Officer for treatment.

Waitlist management will also be improved at Casuarina through the following actions:

- An additional doctor will be allocated to Casuarina following the completion of recent Doctor recruitment across the Department.
- A new Nurse Practitioner position has been established. Recruitment will commence in February 2020 and is expected to take three months.

### **7 Develop and implement an Aboriginal health care strategy.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported in Principle  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Community Corrections, Health and Offender Management  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2020

#### **Response:**

The Department supports, in principle, the development and implementation of an Aboriginal health care strategy. Commitment to the development of this strategy is subject to funding, resources, and other Health Services priorities. The Department, however, will consider all opportunities for the improvement of Aboriginal health care within prisons.

Health services to Aboriginal prisoners is guided by the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030 that identifies key guiding principles; strategic directions and priority areas for the next 15 years, to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Access to Indigenous specific support in prisons is also facilitated through aboriginal healthcare workers and aboriginal mental healthcare workers with the assistance of prison support services and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme.

Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Casuarina Prison 2019

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**8 Increase Prison Counselling Service resources and improve clinical supervision arrangements.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Community Corrections, Health and Offender Management  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2020

**Response:**

Clinical supervision has improved with the commencement of an additional Clinical Supervisor in October 2019. The Clinical Supervisor assists with the clinical supervision of the Casuarina team, in addition to providing support to other prisons as required.

Prison Counselling Service resources at Casuarina has been increased with the commencement of two additional Prison Counsellors in December 2019, and a further two counsellors expected to commence February 2020 as part of the 512 bed expansion, providing a total of four additional Prison Counsellors at Casuarina.

**9 Implement processes for prisoners to maintain personal sets of clothing such as underwear and socks.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** N/A

**Response:**

Existing processes are in place under Local Order 1 - Prisoner Management, where prisoners can request personal laundry bags for underwear and socks through their unit managers.

Implementation of new COPP 6.5 - Prisoner Hygiene and Laundry will further improve laundry processes at Casuarina.

**10 Increase prisoner access to structured sport and recreation.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 31 December 2020

**Response:**

Adult Male Prisons is currently reviewing the impact adaptive regimes is having on prison operations, including prisoners access to sport and recreation. It should be noted the situation at Casuarina is complicated by the level of remand prisoners being accommodated. Discussions are soon to commence with Superintendents regarding current re-deployment practices of Recreation Officers.

Response to the Announced Inspection:  
Casuarina Prison 2019

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**11 Increase employment levels for Aboriginal prisoners.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 September 2020

**Response:**

Casuarina Prison is currently recruiting a Prisoner Employment Coordinator whose primary focus will be to encourage Aboriginal prisoners to work, broaden their work skills and improve their employability and earning capacity in prison and upon release.

**12 Ensure that Casuarina provides a full regime of meaningful activities for prisoners as it continues to expand.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Business Area:** Adult Male Prisons  
**Proposed Completion Date:** 30 June 2021

**Response:**

The Casuarina prison expansion has not impacted on Casuarina's ability to provide meaningful activities for current cohort of prisoners.

The Casuarina Expansion Project will continue to monitor the impact to the regime as a result of expansion works. A number of strategies have been identified, including:

- Reviewing the constructive activity program;
- Increasing operation of essential workshops to 7 days per week, creating further employment opportunities; and
- Investigating the possibility of introducing shift work within workshops, allowing two separate shifts of prisoners to work each day within a single workshop.

The Operational Working Group will monitor the implementation and outcome of these strategies, in addition to identifying new strategies as required to ensure meaningful employment and activities are maintained throughout the expansion of the prison.

# Appendix 4

## METHODOLOGY

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### PREVIOUS INSPECTION

26 October – 4 November 2016

### ACTIVITY SINCE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

Liaison visits to Casuarina Prison	10
Independent Visitor visits	25

### SURVEYS

Prisoner survey	3, 4 & 11 July 2019	277 responses
Staff survey (online)	8–22 July 2019	120 responses
Service provider survey (email)	9–26 August 2019	8 responses

### INSPECTION TEAM

Eamon Ryan	Inspector
Darian Ferguson	Deputy Inspector
Natalie Gibson	Director Operations
Kieran Artelaris	Acting Principal Inspections and Research Officer
Cliff Holdom	Inspections and Research Officer
Charles Staples	Inspections and Research Officer
Jim Bryden	Inspections and Research Officer
Joseph Wallam	Community Liaison Officer
Grazia Pagano	Education and Training Consultant
Craig Gear	Health Consultant
Amy Raats	Student Intern

### KEY DATES

Inspection announced	6 May 2019
Start of on-site inspection	8 September 2019
Completion of on-site inspection	16 September 2019
Presentation of preliminary findings	24 September 2019
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	20 December 2019
Declaration of prepared report	30 March 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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