

MEDIA RELEASE

REPORT NO 134 – 2020 INSPECTION OF BUNBURY REGIONAL PRISON

EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00PM ON THURSDAY 29 APRIL 2021

The Inspector of Custodial Services found that a significantly expanded Bunbury Regional Prison was performing well in his latest inspection of the prison.

Inspector Eamon Ryan gave credit to the management and staff at the regional prison for managing the 160-bed expansion within the operating prison environment without incident or significant disruption to services for prisoners.

'The challenge of managing a major building project within a secure prison environment is significant. The constant movement of people, vehicles and materials in and out of the prison has to be carefully managed for security, while still letting prisoners access their normal daily routine and the services they need to live and rehabilitate,' Mr Ryan said.

'Having an experienced leadership team in place undoubtedly benefited the success of the project, who had appropriate input and control over managing the build.'

Overall, the inspection found that prisoners rated their quality of life at Bunbury highly, and the relationships with staff were appropriately respectful.

Mr Ryan said that the one of the main areas requiring attention at the prison related to, or impacted on, services for Aboriginal prisoners.

'The high incarceration rates of Aboriginal people effectively means that Aboriginal prisoners are impacted by most, if not all, of the recommendations we make. However, we found specifically that conditions and services for Aboriginal prisoners could be better at Bunbury,' Mr Ryan said.

Aboriginal prisoners were not proportionately represented in the most desirable employment positions, accommodation, gratuity levels and privileged regimes. Many of the recommendations from the inspection are designed to improve Aboriginal engagement and access. But recommendation 2 has the greatest potential for improving the services available for Aboriginal men at Bunbury.

'Bunbury is well positioned, with stable strong leadership and staff, to work on understanding the drivers behind Aboriginal substantive inequality that we find at many prisons,' Mr Ryan said.

One notable disappointment was the decrease in the number of treatment programs being delivered at Bunbury. This is compounded by a system wide backlog of treatment assessments which is having an impact on prisoners at Bunbury.

We found that several planned programs had not been delivered in 2020. Many prisoners told us they had missed out on parole because they had not undertaken a required program, and some said they had not even had their treatment needs assessed.

There must be a focus on completing overdue treatment assessments and delivery of programs so that suitable prisoners are eligible to be considered for parole,' Mr Ryan said.

Other areas of focus for the prison moving forward were better services for foreign national and long-term prisoners; and an increase of resources for the reintegration services team, that provide an essential and important role in resettling prisoners on release from the stand-alone minimum-security release unit.

The release unit was specifically designed and built to provide high quality support to prisoners, but as the population in the unit has increased, resources have not improved at the same rate. If we want prisoners to succeed on release, the system must support them,' Mr Ryan said.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 4:00pm on Thursday 29 April 2021 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.