

Inspector's Overview

A stable Banksia Hill must grasp the opportunity for sustained improvement.

Banksia Hill Detention Centre has been the subject of considerable focus for this office over the past 10 years. We have published seven reports about the centre since 2012, but in recent years some stability has returned. The three years prior to this inspection have probably been one of the most settled periods in its history.

At the time of this inspection we noted several factors that should allow Banksia Hill to progress and build on recent stability. Many areas of the centre were already taking advantage of these opportunities and I commend them for doing so.

Probably the most critical factor was Banksia Hill's very low population. At the time of our inspection it held 77 detainees, but this has increased this year and currently sits around 110. The centre has a capacity of 215. We were told that the staffing numbers had not been reduced and in some non-custodial areas had increased. For the first time in recent years, Banksia Hill had a stable substantively appointed leadership team, supported by an experienced substantively appointed Deputy Commissioner for Women and Young People.

It was somewhat surprising then to hear of a level of conflict and disagreement between a small but significant group of custodial officers and the senior management. Unsurprisingly, both groups told us they wanted to achieve the same outcomes, that is that the centre maximise the opportunities to provide rehabilitation services for the young people sent there.

We saw many areas where there had been noticeable improvements in services for detainees and these are outlined in this report. These included improvements in health, education, welfare, recreation, case planning and re-entry services. There are also many areas we identified that require improvement and our recommendations are focused on them.

Given what we found at the time of the inspection, there can be no better time than now to maximise the centre's potential. We made two key recommendations which aim to address issues around its role and direction. Recommendation 1 relates to the development of an operating philosophy for Banksia Hill. Recommendation 8 relates to development of a strategic management plan to guide the delivery of services for female detainees. The Department in their response to our draft report supported both recommendations and advised us that the Superintendent was in the process of developing strategic management plans which will address these recommendations. The Department also acknowledged the importance of each recommendation and the need for engagement with all stakeholders. As part of our liaison work with Banksia Hill since our inspection, we have been informed of some encouraging progress towards these recommendations.

Like any change process, sustainable improvement and success will be dependent on the engagement and involvement of all staff groups to ensure buy-in to the new strategic direction and

philosophy. This will be one of our focus areas in our ongoing liaison and monitoring work with the centre.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Banksia Hill had, until a recent retirement, two very experienced Independent Detention Centre Visitors who are community volunteers appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. They attend the centre on a regular basis providing an opportunity for the detainees to raise issues and feedback that information to our office. I acknowledge the importance of their work and thank them for the contribution they have made to our ongoing monitoring of Banksia Hill. I would like to make special mention of our recently retired Independent Visitor who has made a significant contribution at Banksia Hill and other facilities over many years. The Minister has recently appointed a new Independent Visitor for Banksia Hill and I would like to welcome them to this important role.

It is important to also acknowledge the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from the Superintendent and staff at Banksia Hill and from key personnel in the Department. The young people who took the time to speak with us and share their perspective also deserve our acknowledgment and thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the inspection team for their expertise and hard work throughout the inspection. I would particularly acknowledge and thank Kieran Artelaris for his hard work in planning this inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

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