

## MEDIA RELEASE

### REPORT NO 137 – 2021 INSPECTION OF WOOROLOO PRISON FARM

#### EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00PM ON TUESDAY 11 JANUARY 2022

During the most recent inspection of Wooroloo Prison Farm the Inspector of Custodial Services said he was pleased to find an overall positive environment for prisoners working towards release back to their communities.

The report released today by Inspector Eamon Ryan reflected that this included a good response and management to Covid-19 challenges, a strong and stable leadership team, good quality meals, and a great education service.

‘These achievements have been managed even as Wooroloo has had to overcome many challenges since our last inspection. These included industrial action, a major disturbance, COVID-19 and a near miss from a large bushfire,’ Mr Ryan said.

And of note, in contrast to most other prisons we inspect, Mr Ryan said health services at Wooroloo deserved a special mention.

‘We are often critical of the health services we see in prisons. Despite not having a substantive Clinical Nurse Manager, at this inspection we saw a functional and positive health team. The health service generally provided a complete suite of services covering mental health and allied health services, including a regular dental service,’ Mr Ryan said.

‘This is proof of what is possible in a prison setting.’

Mr Ryan said a major concern uncovered during the inspection was evidence of poor workplace behaviour, mainly by a few male officers particularly directed at some of their female colleagues.

‘Some examples provided to us were extremely offensive and not acceptable in any workplace. Attitudes accompanying this behaviour potentially threatened the safety and security of those staff,’ Mr Ryan said.

The Inspection received assurances from both onsite management and higher levels at the Department this would be addressed. Unfortunately, staff told stories of past assurances to fix such behaviour had not met expectations and they were dubious change would follow. Mr Ryan noted given the social and political environment surrounding discrimination and sexism, the Department cannot afford to be left behind in its action to stamp out this type of behaviour.

The March 2021 inspection report also identified opportunities for improvement. One such area was in the delivery of therapeutic and voluntary programs made available to prisoners.

Addressing the rehabilitation needs of prisoners requires a combination of education, training and employment opportunities, that are supported by a range of programs aimed at reducing the drivers of offending behaviour. At the time of the inspection many prisoners were missing out on these activities.

Unmet treatment needs also remained a concern for prisoners nearing release. In December 2020, there were 27 instances where prisoners had been assessed as needing a program which was unavailable due to excess demand or the program not being offered at Wooroloo. Parole denial can be a consequence of unmet treatment needs.

Eamon Ryan  
**Inspector**

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 12:00pm on Tuesday 11 January 2022 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.