

MEDIA RELEASE

REPORT NO 140 – INSPECTION OF HAKEA PRISON

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2:00PM ON TUESDAY 10 MAY 2022

The Inspector of Custodial Services has found Hakea Prison remained a facility under pressure due to increasingly aged infrastructure and resource challenges, despite a fall in population and increased stability in management.

Inspector Eamon Ryan said inspecting Hakea, the State's main metropolitan remand prison, created a sense of déjà vu, and that challenges identified in past inspections continued to create risks for security and prisoner wellbeing.

As an ageing prison built in the 1980s, Mr Ryan said ongoing infrastructure concerns continued in many areas, including:

- Poor basic accommodation cell amenity and decency
- Poor CCTV coverage creating safety and security risks
- Inadequate spaces for prisoner employment, education and training
- Health and safety risks in the kitchen
- Inadequate office space for support services to be delivered

This was exacerbated by continued overcrowding, despite Hakea holding fewer prisoners than in previous inspections. In 2018 it was accommodating 1,146 during our inspection, but in November 2021 only 939. Hakea had to make adjustments to cater for an increased protection population and to accommodate anticipated COVID-19 presentations and isolation requirements.

However, it was health services that dominated the key findings of this inspection. The provision of primary health, mental health, addiction management, and self-harm prevention, all were a source of risk and concern. Infrastructure, staffing, policy and processes all contributed to our findings. It resulted in 12 of 21 recommendations falling within the health/mental health service area.

'We found that at an individual level many services operated effectively, and staff worked very hard. But we identified governance issues, lack of cohesion and integration, fragmentation of services, and poor communication and information exchange between the various health service teams at Hakea,' Mr Ryan said.

This was having a negative impact on the quality of integrated health care and mental health support provided to prisoners in need.

The Inspector engaged an experienced forensic psychiatrist to assess the services at Hakea, with the resulting appraisal being that the overall system of care was not therapeutic, did not meet modern community standards of care and was leaving mentally

unwell people not accessing appropriate treatment. The absence of enough secure forensic mental health beds in the hospital system put enormous pressure on Hakea's ability to cope with prisoners in acute mental health crisis.

Positively, Mr Ryan said that as the main metropolitan remand prison, Hakea's reception and services to facilitate court appearances functioned well. It was commendable given Hakea recorded a total of almost 12,000 receptions and discharges in 2020-2021.

Also, relationships between staff and management at Hakea were more settled and positive than we had seen in previous years. And although the senior management team were not all substantive, they were cohesive, had a clear direction and were building better relationships and communication with staff and their unions. This generally resulted in a more positive staffing group at the time of our inspection.

Mr Ryan noted that many of the challenges in delivering services came from the absence of staff on the ground each day, resulting in redeployment from their own roles to cover basic security functions. This had the effect of restricting the daily regime with prisoners spending time in their unit with limited access to employment, education, programs or recreation.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 2:00pm on Tuesday 10 May 2022 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.