

Inspector's overview

Noticeable improvements seen in governance and management of contracts for court custody and court security services

Our inspection of court custody centres is a complex exercise involving examination of court custody facilities located across the state, the majority of which are managed under two contracts with different private providers.

The first of these contracts covers the court custody centres located in the Central Law Courts and the District Court Building. This contract is managed by the Western Liberty Group Consortium and a sub-contractor G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd.

The second contract covers the remaining metropolitan and regional court custody centres and includes certain prescribed lockups. This contract is managed by Ventia Services Group and a sub-contractor Wilson Security Pty Ltd.

The exception to these is the court custody centre at the Perth Children's Court which is operated by staff from the Department of Justice, Corrective Services.

For the purpose of our inspection mandate, court custody centres are those parts of court premises that are inaccessible to members of the public and where persons in custody are detained. The inspection also included a small number of prescribed lockups, usually facilities that double as a police lockup when the court is not sitting.

We saw improvements in the governance and management of both contracts, including several initiatives that have been implemented following recommendations from our previous inspections. This included better contract monitoring and oversight, and improvements in the integration of updated technology.

We heard that most courts had experienced additional workload pressure due to increased case complexity, including multi-accused trials and the impacts of COVID-19 on court operations. Many staff across the various sites told us that they were under a lot of workload pressure and these views were evident in some negative responses to questions in our staff surveys compared to last inspection. This will be an area that both contract operators should actively monitor, particularly in the current tight employment market.

Despite these concerns, we saw and heard that court custody staff interactions with people in custody and court staff were respectful and professional. This maintains the high standards we have seen in past inspections and is a credit to the staff working in each of these facilities.

Our report also noted the lack of consistency in custodial infrastructure and security mechanisms across the state. We highlighted the need for consistency to maintain security and quality of service delivery. It was pleasing to see that the Department supported our second recommendation about undertaking a review of infrastructure and security at all court custodially facilities across the state to ensure a consistent high standard and level of service.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from executive leadership in the contracted organisations, management and staff within the courts, and from key personnel in the Department. I also acknowledge the contribution of operational staff at various facilities who spoke with us to share their perspective and experience.

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 Charlie Staples 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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