

# Inspector's Overview

## *Wandoo offers a life changing intervention for many women*

Wandoo was repurposed as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation prison for women in July 2018. It operates through a partnership between Cyrenian House as the service provider and the Department of Justice. It is quite unique in Australia because it runs most of the elements of a therapeutic community within a medium security prison, hence it is referred to as a modified therapeutic community (MTC).

Cooperative working relationships are key to the success of the program offered at Wandoo. We saw some negative impacts arising from instability and change in leadership and management in both the prison and in the service provider. But these had been acknowledged and recent appointments had improved the situation considerably. A culture review by the Department had commenced prior to our inspection to address staff concerns and we understand that changes have been implemented following that review. Notwithstanding these challenges, it was pleasing to hear a high level of commitment from all staff to the objectives of the modified therapeutic community.

There is no doubt that operating a prison like Wandoo is expensive and, as such, there will always be pressure to maintain the population at or close to optimum numbers. This is entirely understandable. We heard of efforts to broaden the criteria for acceptance into the program and also an initiative to start running the Choice, Change and Consequences (CCC) program at Wandoo. The intention was to integrate CCC residents into the MTC program. There had been problems identified with offering the first pilot of the CCC at Wandoo, but the Department advised us that they were working through these and would evaluate the second pilot that was due to commence after our inspection. This was a good example of the challenges facing Wandoo in maintaining the viability of the facility and retaining the integrity of the MTC. Success will be largely dependent on compromise and collaboration but that will require a delicate balance to ensure the clinical integrity of both programs is maintained and the outcomes for residents is not diminished.

When reading this report, the challenges and difficulties of running a prison along the lines of a therapeutic community ought not be overlooked. It was unsurprising that we found areas in need of improvement, but the focus should always remain on the outcomes being achieved for the residents who participate in the program and the life changing impacts it has for the majority of them and their families.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We have three Independent Prison Visitors who are community volunteers appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. They attend Wandoo on a regular basis providing an opportunity for the women 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 Wandoo.

I acknowledge also the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from the acting Superintendent and staff at Wandoo, management and staff at Cyrenian House and from key personnel in the Department.

The women living in Wandoo who took the time to speak with us and share their perspective also deserve our acknowledgement and thanks. I want to particularly acknowledge and thank them for their willingness to allow us to observe many group and community sessions which gave us an invaluable insight into the changes being achieved.

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 Liz George for her hard work in planning this inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

**Eamon Ryan**

Inspector of Custodial Services

20 April 2023