

MEDIA RELEASE

2022 INSPECTION OF BROOME REGIONAL PRISON

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2PM, 8 AUGUST 2023

The future of the new Broome Prison is still in doubt

A report released today by Acting Inspector of Custodial Services Natalie Gibson found that Broome Regional Prison had made limited progress since the last inspection in 2019. At that time, plans for the new Broome Prison were used to explain the limited investment at the facility and the lack of useful opportunities for the people placed there. However, three years later Ms Gibson reports that the findings are very similar.

In 2019 we were optimistic about the prospects a new prison offered. However, there has been minimal movement in that space, and many of the same issues persist at the current facility. Broome is not offering any meaningful rehabilitation - there are very few employment and training opportunities, no criminogenic programs, no education, no structured recreation and limited opportunities for community work. It is an idle prison for the men and women who spend their time staying in their cells.

This is compounded by Broome's aged and degrading infrastructure. The report found that Broome was 'dilapidated, poorly maintained and posed significant risks to the health and safety of the prison community.' Ms Gibson said:

The Department of Justice is committed to keeping the existing prison open until the new facility is operational. So, we understand why it has not invested heavily in upgrades. But after a decade of uncertainty, the future of the new Broome Prison is still in doubt. A preferred site has been identified but all the necessary zoning and approvals are still required. This means construction, and then operation, are years away.

For the majority Aboriginal people placed at Broome, the report also found that the prison was not a culturally-appropriate environment. As the oldest operating prison in Western Australia, its design does not reflect a consideration of cultural diversity, nor does it provide a range of spaces or give Aboriginal prisoners the opportunity to follow traditional rules governing interaction. It is hoped the new prison shares similar architectural design elements to the West Kimberley Regional Prison, keeping cultural considerations firmly front in mind. This includes community-style share households, climate and environmental factors, and a balance of cultural relevance, safety, security and purposeful activity. Similarly, lessons learned should also be taken from that project to further build and improve on building custodial facilities in remote and regional Western Australia.

For further information:

The Acting Inspector, Ms Gibson, is available for comment from 2pm Tuesday 8 August 2023 on 0409 294 926.

The full report will be available on the Inspector's website (www.oics.wa.gov.au).