



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Justice**
Corrective Services

Response to OICS Draft Report:

2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison

June 2023

Version 1.1

Response Overview

Introduction

On 9 May 2022, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison (Casuarina). The inspection was scheduled to occur between 5 and 16 September 2022.

To assist with the inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) facilitated the provision of a wide range of documentation, including policies, procedures, statistics, as well as access to systems, custodial facilities, staff and prisoners upon request from OICS for the purpose of the inspection.

On 16 May 2023, the Department received the draft inspection report for review and comment.

The Department has reviewed the draft report and provides further context, comments, and responses to the 15 recommendations made following the inspection.

Appendix A contains comments linked to sections in the draft report for the Inspector's consideration when finalising the report.

Department Comments

Casuarina currently operates as the state's largest maximum-security facility, placing the highest priority on community and staff safety, while also providing a safe, secure, responsive, just, and humane environment for prisoners.

Casuarina provides a wide range of services to sentenced and remand prisoners, ensuring prisoners are engaged in constructive activities. This includes structured recreation programs, educational, vocational training and employment opportunities, and treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the individual needs of the prisoner population.

The prison's operations are also designed to control, evaluate and facilitate the transfer of prisoners to medium and minimum-security prison facilities throughout the state via Assessment and Sentence Management (ASM) processes.

Unique in its position, Casuarina houses and manages a variety of specialist units to which prisoners from around the state are sent, each cohort requiring specialist services and specific methods of management to ensure the security of the facility, and safety to themselves, staff, and other prisoners. These cohorts include high-risk prisoners within the Special Handling Unit (SHU), prisoners requiring protection from other prisoners within the Protection Unit, elderly prisoners and prisoners with serious medical conditions or impairments within the infirmary, and prisoners seeking to address alcohol and other drug addictions who participate in a modified therapeutic community within the Mallee Unit.

As expansion construction works at Casuarina progress, additional specialised units will be established. These include a High Security Unit to manage prisoners with high-risk behaviour who do not meet the requirements for placement in the SHU, a dedicated Mental Health Unit for treating critically mentally unwell prisoners, and a dedicated unit for the placement and management of prisoners who are unfit to stand trial due to mental impairment; or have been acquitted on the basis that they were of unsound mind at the time of the offence.

Originally intended to accommodate sentenced prisoners of all security ratings, Casuarina's remand population has grown to support Hakea Prison as the Department's main maximum-security remand facility for male prisoners. To effectively manage and service the increase in remand prisoners, Casuarina has opened new official visits and video link facilities.

The new official visits centre provides 18 interview spaces for prisoners to engage with official visitors, including lawyers and community service providers, plus two additional interview rooms with recording equipment for the purposes of police investigations. Of the new interview rooms, 10 were equipped with information and communication technology enabling greater online communications with official visitors using Microsoft Teams and Skype. The new video link facilities have increased Casuarina's capacity for court appearances, with 10 rooms equipped with audio-visual technology.

In addition to this new infrastructure, in January 2022 self-care eligibility was expanded to include long-term remand prisoners who have been held at Casuarina for six months or more, allowing more prisoners to participate in self-care activities to improve their independence and life skills.

A further infrastructure improvement at Casuarina includes a planned complete upgrade of the master control room under the second stage of the expansion project. The upgrade will see the installation of high-quality security systems to match the standard in quality of systems installed in new areas of the facility and will also address the infrastructure and security shortfalls identified within the master control room in previous draft reports.

Casuarina's current expansion project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2024. It is expected to further increase the prison's bed capacity and specialist statewide functions within the male custodial estate. Once the expansion has been completed, Casuarina will be the largest prison in Western Australia.

The scope of the expansion project is being extended to incorporate Operational Readiness Planning comprising the development of an Operating Model that will consolidate Casuarina's role and functions in the future. This will include the principles and objectives for meeting the specialised needs of the diverse cohorts accommodated at Casuarina. A review of the resources required to operationalise the additional beds within the specialist units and to support service delivery across the facility will also be undertaken.

It was pleasing to note the good management and effort of staff at Casuarina in controlling the outbreak of COVID-19 that occurred at the facility in April-May 2022. This is a further testament of Casuarina's ability to effectively manage operations, particularly in unique and challenging circumstances when considering quarantine and isolation requirements of managing prisoners with COVID-19, and staffing pressures brought on by the unavailability of 55 officers who also tested positive or were a close contact. Casuarina's efforts in controlling the outbreak and reducing the number of COVID-positive prisoners dramatically from 250 in mid-May 2022 to zero by the end of the same month are commended.

Casuarina benefits from having a substantive and highly experienced Superintendent whose skills, experience and leadership continues to ensure the facility operates efficiently and effectively against the backdrop of custodial staffing challenges as well as the growing size and complexities of the prison population.

The OICS report validates this through acknowledgement of Casuarina's effective management of its specialist units including the SHU, the infirmary, protection

prisoners and the good governance processes and treatment of prisoners on confinement and management regimes.

The report noted that Aboriginal staff provided good support to Aboriginal prisoners and the Mallee Unit alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation program was working well. Mallee graduates had a return-to-prison rate of about 10 per cent.

Peer support prisoners at Casuarina were also found to be dedicated and committed to their role, with some completing mental health and disability training courses.

The Department notes the findings in the 2022 Inspection of Casuarina and has supported 14 of the 15 recommendations, two of which are supported, six are supported in principle due to potential practical impediments, six are part of current practice and/or projects currently underway and one is not supported.

Response to Recommendations

1 Develop a clear vision and strategic direction for Casuarina within the wider prison system.

Level of Acceptance:	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division:	Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate:	Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Casuarina has been undergoing several extensive expansions over the years increasing its specialist statewide functions and bed capacity, with further expansions currently underway as part of stage 2 of the Expansion Project. Stage 2 is scheduled to deliver additional new and refurbished infrastructure to accommodate high-risk and high-need cohorts. This will further increase Casuarina's bed capacity and specialist statewide functions within the male custodial estate.

The scope of the current expansion project is being extended to incorporate Operational Readiness Planning comprising the development of an Operating Model that will consolidate Casuarina's role, functions, and strategic direction in the future. This will include the principles and objectives for meeting the specialised needs of the diverse cohorts accommodated at Casuarina. A review of the resources required to operationalise the additional beds and to support service delivery will also be carried out.

2 Identify and address the reasons for high levels of personal leave and workers' compensation leave at Casuarina.

Level of Acceptance:	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division:	Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate:	Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Corrective Services is a high-risk environment in which staff are exposed to volatile and stressful situations daily, including the risk of assaults resulting in personal leave and the potential for workers' compensation. These issues are prevalent statewide and not restricted to Casuarina.

Casuarina continues to manage personal leave and workers' compensation matters in accordance with the Prison Officers' Industrial Agreement. The implementation of the new Workforce Management System (WFS) in June 2023 has improved processes surrounding personal leave and staff wellbeing through greater monitoring and oversight.

The Department also continues to work collaboratively with RiskCover to manage workers' compensation claims, including improving investigation processes to verify claims, and work closely with staff to assist them in their recovery and returning to work as soon as practicable.

3 Implement a more comprehensive orientation process.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department considers the current orientation process at Casuarina to be robust and comprehensive.

However, redeployment due to staffing challenges has impacted the delivery of orientation to prisoners. This is being addressed through monitoring the redeployment across the custodial estate to ensure critical functions, such as orientation, continue to be delivered with minimal impact.

4 Improve legal resources and increase access for prisoners, particularly those held on remand.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department is currently investigating options for the expansion of prisoner access to legal resources not just at Casuarina, but also statewide. This includes assessing the feasibility of accessing subscription-based case law databases while also considering the security risks associated with prisoner use of computers that have network capability.

5 Provide appropriate resources for timely local use of force reviews.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Casuarina is reinvigorating its local use of force committee to ensure the timely review of use of force incidents.

In addition, the Operational Compliance Team will undertake compliance monitoring of the completion of use of force reviews at Casuarina.

6 Ensure regular rotation of staff in the master control room.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The requirement for the regular rotation of staff in the master control room is part of the duty statement for custodial staff rostered to this location.

The Superintendent will issue a notice reminding staff of the requirements of the duty statement to ensure regular staff rotations occur within the master control room.

7 Increase prisoner access to structured recreation.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department acknowledges access to structured recreation within the gymnasium has been impacted due to the redeployment of recreation officers.

Redeployment across the custodial estate is being monitored to ensure critical functions, including access to recreation, continue to be delivered with minimal impact.

However, prisoners continue to have access to unit-based recreation yards providing them with additional opportunities to recreate.

8 Provide additional resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Kaartdijin Mia is currently resourced based on an agreed service level agreement.

In addition, two Aboriginal Mental Health Workers, five Prison Support Officers and four Aboriginal Visitors work collaboratively with the Coordinator Aboriginal Services to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia.

The Department will continue to assess the allocation of resources to support the operation of Kaartdijin Mia as the expansion of Casuarina progresses.

9 Implement a more effective and efficient medical appointment system.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

Clinical staff have commenced the process of reviewing ECHO notes for prisoners scheduled for inter-prison transfers to identify those who have existing medical appointments booked, and ensure those appointments are re-booked at the receiving facility. This prevents the duplication of medical appointments for prisoners transferring as original appointments will be cancelled once rescheduled at receiving facilities.

It is anticipated this process will improve the efficiency of the medical appointment system statewide and will continue to be monitored to measure its success.

10 Increase Psychological Health Services resources at Casuarina to accommodate the continuing expansion of the prison.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The shortage of trained counsellors is a nationwide issue and not just restricted to the Department and its facilities.

PHS has continued to operate rolling recruitment processes since May 2022 and as a result, there is currently only one vacant PHS position at Casuarina as at 31 May 2023.

11 Establish an on-site disability coordination role.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The Department established the Disability Services Unit Project in January 2023 which is currently developing a business case to fund additional systems, staff and the capability to address this recommendation.

12 Provide ongoing training for peer support prisoners.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

Three units from the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work are currently available for enrolment by peer support prisoners at Casuarina. Although this course is targeted towards peer support prisoners, it is available for participation by all prisoners at Casuarina.

As of June 2023, a number of prisoners from Casuarina have completed the course units and the Department continues to encourage further participation.

13 Fill the vacant AVS positions.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The Department continues to undertake rolling recruitment processes to fill Aboriginal Visitor vacancies. The current classification and remuneration of Aboriginal Visitor positions continues to create challenges in the successful recruitment and retention to the positions.

The Department is in the process of reclassifying all Aboriginal Visitor positions to an appropriate level based on the service provision of the role, which will then be advertised for recruitment.

14 Provide trauma-informed training for new staff working in the Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Operational Support

Response:

The initial staff employed in the Mallee Unit at Casuarina received 2 weeks induction training at the Corrective Services Training Academy. The trauma-informed content, totalling approximately 8 hours, was embedded throughout the 2 weeks of training and delivered by the WA Mental Health Commission, Palmerston Association and other NGOs.

To replicate this training for new Mallee staff in isolation would not be feasible.

The Academy and Casuarina will work collaboratively to identify and determine an efficient option for the new Mallee staff to complete identified trauma-informed practice training prior to commencing duties within the Mallee Unit. The objective will be for Casuarina to establish the capability to manage this training internally (face to face or online) or through an external provider.

15 Increase prisoner access to education with additional resources and infrastructure.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The Department continues to explore ways to increase prisoner access to education at Casuarina. An additional 30 toughened laptops were purchased to support flexible access to education for prisoners, including access in cells and other areas of the prison. The laptops are configured for educational use and mirror the standard build for student computers at all prison sites.

Numeracy and literacy assessment tools are installed on the laptop to allow students to be assessed on their current level of literacy and numeracy. In addition, to support their assessment and rehabilitation and reintegration requirements, services can be facilitated via the laptops which have preloaded educational programs and courses.

As the expansion project progresses, consideration will be given to further resources and infrastructure to expand educational services to prisoners at Casuarina.