



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

Response to OICS Draft Report:

**2023 Inspection of Eastern Goldfields
Regional Prison**

January 2024

Version 1.0

Response Overview

Introduction

On 28 November 2022, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2023 Inspection of the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (Eastern Goldfields). The inspection took place between 2 – 6 April 2023.

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 1 December 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 13 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

Eastern Goldfields is a minimum-medium-security facility for male and female prisoners commissioned in 2016. It mainly accommodates prisoners from the Goldfields region in proximity to their families and communities.

The Department acknowledges the draft inspection report's findings and recommendations and supports all 13 recommendations.

Since receipt of the report, the Department has implemented positive changes to address issues identified by OICS. These measures include the installation of additional closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in key areas of reception to enhance overall safety within the facility, a return to pre-COVID orientation procedures and concerted efforts to provide more employment opportunities for prisoners, ensuring industries such as the woodshop operate at full capacity.

Noteworthy advancements include Eastern Goldfields' enhanced mental health services following the successful recruitment to key roles. The prison now has a full-time substantive mental health nurse, and all vacant prison Health Service positions have been filled. This recruitment has been essential in supporting the mental health care needs of prisoners. It has also enabled the delivery of therapeutic interventions, as validated by OICS in the inspection report.

Eastern Goldfields has also made significant improvements in prisoners' rehabilitation, with the inauguration of the Palya Walkaly-Walkalypa art gallery in November 2022, the first art gallery within a WA prison. The art gallery showcases artwork created by prisoners through education and vocational training and fosters a connection between prisoners and the community.

Members of the public can purchase the artwork and money from sales is made available to the artists upon their release, further supporting prisoners' reintegration.

The art gallery is a testament to Eastern Goldfields' commitment to providing prisoners with a purposeful prison regime. It complements existing employment opportunities in the kitchen, laundry and gardens. More than a space for artistic expression, the art

gallery also serves as a conduit to traditional education by helping break down barriers to the classroom.

Acknowledging the ongoing staffing challenges in the Goldfields region as emphasised by OICS, the Department is continuing efforts to recruit and retain staff.

The Department has no influence over the Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) regulations and requirements and who qualifies for subsidised housing. Furthermore, there is a housing shortage in many regional areas, which impacts on the Department's ability to provide eligible employees with accommodation. The Department has been engaging with the Department of Communities to explore options of houses available under the GROH program.

The Department has developed an incentive package for specified positions, including nursing jobs. This incentive is available to new and existing employees, and is payable after 12 months of service, in addition to existing employment entitlements. It is hoped the new incentive will further assist Eastern Goldfields to attract and retain eligible nurses.

There is no distinction within the Award in relation to eligibility for a regional incentive allowance. All employees, local and non-local, are entitled to access this allowance.

The Department appreciates staff redeployment has inevitable impacts on service delivery including the ability to provide structured recreation, however, it is deemed necessary to safeguard critical services and maintain the safety of both staff and prisoners.

In recognition of the impacts, Eastern Goldfields has developed a redeployment matrix to guide the decision making and equitable redeployment of staff. This is designed to minimise the disruption to industries, education and recreation, while not compromising the continued safety, security and good order of the prison.

Despite staffing issues, the Department is pleased to note most staff working at Eastern Goldfields indicated they felt safe and had positive staff-to-prisoner relationships.

OICS has further acknowledged that despite vacancies and movements in the prison's senior management team, those acting in the leadership positions were experienced and the leadership team worked well together with clear direction and operating philosophies.

The Department will continue to work with Eastern Goldfields to improve all aspects of its operations to provide the best possible care for the people at the facility.

Response to Recommendations

1 Review the EGRP incentives package to provide parity between local and non-local recruits.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Workforce Services

Response:

The Department notes that prison officers, whether local or non-locally recruited, receive the same pay and incentives as set out in the relevant industrial agreement.

Housing is provided via the GROH scheme as managed by the Department of Communities which the Department notes differentiates between local and non-local recruits and therefore is in support of a review of the EGRP incentives package.

2 Empower Aboriginal staff to provide input into the design and delivery of cultural events and activities.

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

Response:

Cultural events at Eastern Goldfields are planned and co-ordinated by the Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) and a local working group. Membership of the ASC consists of seven Aboriginal staff. In addition, staff are invited to participate in a sub-committee to organise the cultural events.

To encourage maximum staff participation in cultural events such as NAIDOC, Eastern Goldfields ceases other non-essential activities to ensure staff and prisoners are provided the opportunity to participate in cultural events should they wish to.

Eastern Goldfields will continue to promote and empower Aboriginal staff to provide input and engage in the design and delivery of cultural events through the ASC.

3 Develop a process for grievance officers to record informal grievances appropriately.

Level of Acceptance: Supported - Current Practice/Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Human Resources

Response:

Appendix 1 of the *Grievance Officer Handbook* contains a sample interview template for Grievance Officers (GOs) to record informal grievances raised by a complainant. GOs use these templates to provide broad-based (confidential) quarterly reporting to Workforce Development.

The recording of informal grievances is however not mandatory and is being considered as part of a review of the Conflict and Grievance Resolution Policy that is currently underway.

4 Install additional CCTV cameras within the reception area.

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

Response:

Since the inspection in April 2023, six new cameras have been installed within the reception area as follows:

- Three additional cameras within the holding cells;
- Two additional cameras at the entry/exit point to the property room; and
- One additional camera inside the valuable property room.

The Department anticipates the installation of additional CCTV cameras in these critical areas will alleviate pressure on staff and enhance the safety of staff and prisoners working in reception.

5 Re-establish an effective and thorough orientation process.

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

Response:

The orientation process at Eastern Goldfields was curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the impact of the virus on the facility and people within the Department's care.

Since the inspection in April 2023, and following the removal of COVID-19 isolation procedures, Eastern Goldfields has reverted to normal orientation procedures and Unit three is no longer being used as an isolation unit. Peer support prisoners have recommenced undertaking orientation tours of the prison and providing support to new arrivals.

In addition, the orientation manual has been updated to reflect current practice and a direction issued to staff to advise them of the orientation process.

6 Subject to the appropriate risk assessment, allow eligible women the opportunity for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children.

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

Response:

The Department has not received any applications in the past 12 months from women prisoners for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children within Unit four, the dedicated mother and child cottage at Eastern Goldfields.

Notwithstanding, the Superintendent will issue a notice to all female prisoners, advising that should they wish to access this arrangement, they should discuss with their Unit Manager. Any applications received will be risk assessed and accommodated if determined safe to do so.

7 Enhance the incentives and privileges available to men at EGRP.

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

Response:

Eastern Goldfields provides a hierarchical privilege system in accordance with COPP 10.1 - *Prisoner Behaviour Management*, whereby male prisoners can achieve Earned Supervision status through good behaviour and gain access to additional privileges such as extra visits and phone calls.

The Department's ability to enhance privileges and incentives available to people in custody at Eastern Goldfields such as independent living is limited due to staffing impediments and the limited availability of beds within Unit 2.

Despite the limitations surrounding independent living, the Department continues to promote the privilege system noting that since April 2023, there has been an increase in people in custody within Eastern Goldfields who have achieved Earned Supervision, from 20 in April 2023 to 56 in November 2023.

8 Explore options to identify technical issues and improve video conferencing communications for staff and prisoners at EGRP.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges that at the time of the inspection, Eastern Goldfields was experiencing technical issues with the communications and information technology systems.

Since then, improvements have been made to servers and bandwidth. Additional works to extend fibre-optic cable to the street is scheduled to be completed in early 2024. It is anticipated this will further improve stability and reliability of communication systems at Eastern Goldfields.

9 Minimise the redeployment of recreation officers to allow more regular access to structured recreation activities.

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

Response:

The Department recognises the importance of structured recreation, affording people in custody at Eastern Goldfields with consistent access to recreation activities, and does not support the redeployment of recreation officers as a long-term strategy to managing the prison population. Redeployment of staff is, at times, unavoidable to help meet the operational needs of the prison.

To minimise the impact, Eastern Goldfields has developed a redeployment matrix to guide the decision making and equitable redeployment of staff across activities such as industries, education and recreation whilst maintaining a focus on the ongoing safety, security and good order of the prison.

10 Schedule regular maintenance and service of all kitchen equipment and maintain adequate records to ensure the schedule is followed.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice/Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement Infrastructure & Contracts

Response:

Eastern Goldfields operates under a Public Private Partnership facilities management arrangement. Honeywell is the service provider contracted to undertake regular maintenance and repairs of equipment within the facility. The Department's Contract Manager continues to liaise with Honeywell to ensure compliance with maintenance schedules and repairs are undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

It should be noted that kitchen-related repairs and maintenance can be affected by availability of required parts, over which the Department has no influence.

11 Fill the vacant PHS position to support mental health service provision at EGRP.

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

Response:

The Psychological Health Service (PHS) position at Eastern Goldfields was substantively filled on 3 December 2023.

12 Increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs for prisoners at EGRP by ensuring the timely completion of all outstanding treatment assessments.

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

Response:

The Department is committed to the timely completion of treatment assessments and to increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs.

Steps taken by the Department to address identified issues include:

- Establishment of an Individual Management Plan (IMP) Taskforce comprising subject matter experts across disciplines including sentence management, treatment assessments, clinical governance, program delivery and custodial representatives. The Taskforce meets fortnightly to track performance,

consider current barriers and develop solutions for immediate and sustained improvements to manage overdue Treatment Assessments and IMPs.

- Implementation of weekly statical reporting requirements to identify resource and operational issues.
- Implementation of a triage process to screen out those offenders who do not require more comprehensive assessments, enabling faster completion of the treatment assessment process for those who are low risk.
- Engagement of Regional Senior Programs Officers (SPOs), supported by clinical staff, to complete assessments on a regular basis.
- Actively recruiting Treatment Assessors to improve staffing levels and productivity, with telehealth as an option to manage assessments at Eastern Goldfields and other regional sites. The current recruitment process is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

13 Investigate the viability of opportunities to expand industries and increase meaningful employment.

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

Response:

Significant efforts are being made by Eastern Goldfields to expand industries and increase meaningful prisoner employment. In January 2023, the Assistant Superintendent Offender Services position was filled, and the incumbent has focused on strengthening training and employment opportunities for prisoners.

The following improvements are noted:

- an increase in external contracts for catering with 33 males now employed for morning catering sessions and seven females employed for the afternoon catering sessions;
- the laundry process has been enhanced to allow for prisoners to be engaged in external contracts for laundry services;
- gardening crews now include male and female prisoners;
- the woodshop is now operating at full capacity;
- a prison catalogue has been established resulting in more meaningful work in industries whilst generating revenue, which in turn has led to additional employment and training opportunities;
- implementation of a new traineeship scheme resulting in four graduates; and
- increased rehabilitation and education through implementation of skid steer and forklift training.

The Assistant Superintendent Offender Services position will continue to explore ways to expand industries as a business-as-usual activity.

The Department acknowledges the development of a market garden on the old prison site at Eastern Goldfields, as OICS suggests, would provide employment and training opportunities for prisoners. However, the cost to operate it is prohibitive.