



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

# **Response to OICS Draft Report:**

**2023 Inspection of Bunbury Regional  
Prison**

**February 2024**

Version 1.0

## Response Overview

### Introduction

On 15 March 2023, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2023 Inspection of the Bunbury Regional Prison (Bunbury), to occur between 23 and 28 July 2023.

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

On 31 January 2024, 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 seven 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

As acknowledged by OICS, Bunbury is one of the Department's high achieving prisons in Western Australia's prison network. For much of its operational life, Bunbury is an adult male custodial facility accommodating minimum and medium-security prisoners, with capacity to accommodate maximum-security remand prisoners.

Through multiple expansions, Bunbury has become the largest regional prison in WA and the needs of the people in its care have grown in complexity. The prison offers a number of rehabilitative and reintegration opportunities including criminogenic programs, vocational education and training, employment through section 95 work and resocialisation via the pre-release unit (PRU).

In addition to its existing functions and service delivery, Bunbury became the first regional prison to launch a second Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) therapeutic program for sentenced males within the prison estate after the Mallee Unit at Casuarina Prison.

The service supports the State's Methamphetamine Action Plan, specifically recommendation 40 that the Department expands AOD through-care services to sentenced prisoners in regional prisons.

On 28 August 2023, Bunbury commenced the *Djarraly AOD Reintegration Service* to help men address their substance abuse or addiction using a 'staged approach'. It incentivises participants to progress through the hierarchy of prison security ratings for potential placement into an accommodation unit where they can access self-management recovery programs and in-reach and out-reach family counselling services. They can also transition to section 95 activities, which involve community and charitable work that enables them to gain employment skills in support of their reconnection and reintegration into their community.

The Department acknowledges Bunbury is an aging facility. Through the establishment of the *Djarraly AOD Reintegration Service*, a number of security and safety enhancements have been made, including to Bunbury's physical security infrastructure, upgrades to the Incident Control Facility (ICF), the installation of additional CCTV, improvements to the front gate and other upgrades in the canteen,

main visits and e-visits areas. The water supply and infrastructure issues raised in the OICS report are being investigated and remedial works undertaken as appropriate.

Staffing and resourcing constraints have impacted prison operations across the custodial estate, with Bunbury no exception. Despite this, it is pleasing to note positive comments by OICS about the prison's experienced senior management team as they worked through challenges, particularly during the prison expansions and the interruptions to operations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department has commenced a staffing review through the Prison Services Evaluation (PSE) project to develop a new staffing model that aims to be operationally flexible, fit for purpose and deliver optimal services to people in custody.

The competing demands on skilled resources Statewide, including the ability to compete with private or mining salaries, poses a constant challenge for the Department in recruiting skilled Vocational Support Officers (VSOs). Several strategies are underway to improve this situation including the recruitment of displaced Alcoa employees following the shutting down of its Kwinana plant; offering people who can demonstrate industry experience but do not have the required Cert III qualification an opportunity to RPL their qualifications; bulk recruitment; and advertising through various channels including social and local media.

A lack of mental health resources that OICS identified is not isolated to Bunbury or indeed Corrections. The Department has launched a Statewide recruitment and retention strategy in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders across the Department. As part of the strategy, the Clinical Workforce Committee (CWC) has been established to examine the issues affecting the recruitment and retention of clinical staff and identify and implement sustainable solutions to address them.

Despite the challenges, the Department recognises the efforts of senior management and staff at Bunbury in maintaining a high standard of operations and is heartened to note that prisoners have indicated they would rather be at Bunbury than any other prison.

The Department acknowledges the findings in the draft report and will work with Bunbury to improve all aspects of its operations to provide the best possible care for the people at the facility.

## Response to Recommendations

### **1 The Department should develop a strategic plan that identifies priorities for all prisons, their role within the system and how prisons achieve that vision.**

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

#### **Response:**

Corrective Services has commenced the development of a strategic plan that will set the direction and priorities for the division and identify the role and purpose of each prison across the custodial estate.

### **2 The Department should review the adequacy of Bunbury's management and leadership positions.**

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

#### **Response:**

The Department will take into consideration the findings relating to Bunbury's management structure and commits to undertake a review to assess the adequacy of the management and leadership positions.

### **3 The Department should audit Bunbury's infrastructure and capacity to meet the needs of its population.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corporate Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracted Services

#### **Response:**

The water supply and infrastructure issues raised in the inspection report have been flagged with the Department's Infrastructure branch and will be investigated. Remedial works will be undertaken, subject to funding and prioritisation against other maintenance and capital works.

**4 The Department should develop a statewide recruitment and retention strategy for health and mental health services.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Offender Services

**Response:**

The Department has launched a Statewide recruitment and retention strategy for clinical staff, including the establishment of the Clinical Workforce Committee (CWC), chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Offender Services and includes senior staff from relevant business areas.

The CWC will examine all aspects of the Department's clinical staffing to identify solutions to address the critical skills shortages and issues affecting staff retention.

**5 The Department should develop a statewide policy that establishes basic principles for management of specific cohorts of prisoners, for example older, long-term and foreign national prisoners.**

**Level of Acceptance:** Not Supported  
**Responsible Division:** Corrective Services  
**Responsible Directorate:** Operational Support

**Response:**

The Department is not supportive of implementing a strategy for the management of long-term prisoners, who continue to be managed in accordance with existing operational policies and procedures, and whose needs are assessed on the risk and safety to themselves, and the good order and security of the facility.

In relation to older prisoners, the Department implemented Health Services Procedure PM42 – Management of Older Prisoners in August 2023 which provides guiding principles on the management of prisoners aged 50 years or over. In addition, all new infrastructure builds, including the Bindi Bindi Unit at Bandyup Women's Prison and the planned aged-care unit at Casuarina Prison, incorporate designs to maximise accessibility while also allowing for safety requirements such as ligature minimisation.

Permitting foreign national prisoners to participate in external activities poses a risk for the Department and the community as this cohort is generally considered to be a flight risk, as noted in the report findings.

## **6 Increase reintegration opportunities in both pre-release environments.**

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

### **Response:**

An additional Transitional Manager (TM) position has been established at Bunbury as part of the AOD expansion project. The new TM will co-ordinate the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP) and other employment planning services to AOD participants housed within the pre-release unit (PRU).

The existing TM will continue to provide reintegration services to other prisoners housed within the PRU and other designated pre-release living quarters.

## **7 The Department should streamline the process for eligible prisoners to undertake reintegration activities.**

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

### **Response:**

The backlog of PEP assessments at the time of the inspection has since been resolved following improvements made to both the intelligence assessment process and PEP procedures.

As at February 2024, all PEP applications awaiting head office assessment were up to date.