



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR  
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

## 2023 INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY CENTRES

# 160

APRIL 2025

*Independent oversight  
that contributes to a more  
accountable public sector*

*The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of this country, and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community throughout Australia. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders, be they past or present.*

## 2023 Inspection of Court Custody Centres

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## Inspector's Overview

*People held in court custody centres are generally well looked after by court staff*

Our inspection of court custody centres is a challenging exercise with court facilities located across metropolitan Perth and throughout the regions as far north as Kununurra, east to Kalgoorlie, and south to Albany. Adding to the complexity is a diversity of infrastructure, ranging from relatively modern, large, and sophisticated facilities through to centres located in registered heritage listed buildings, each of which present maintenance and operating challenges. Overlaid on this, is a series of contracts with several private organisations for the management and operation of adult court custody facilities in Perth and throughout the regions.

Despite the varied arrangements for the operation of court custody centres, our inspection found that people held in custody were generally treated well, with staff demonstrating genuine concern for the care and welfare of the individuals in their custody. Similarly, court custody staff worked well with other key stakeholders such as police, court staff, and prison staff.

It was pleasing to see both Ventia and the Department working together to address a possible ambiguity between policy and expected practice on strip searching of young people in custody. Although we were told it was rare that young people would be received into the custody of Ventia staff, it was a good outcome to have the position clarified and the policy revised.

Once again, our inspection identified varying standards of infrastructure across court custody centres, and these are documented in this report together with a recommendation to undertake an audit to identify priority areas in need of improvement. The Department's response to this recommendation noted the challenges, stating that improvements to address safety and security can be reported and where possible prioritised. The response also noted a funding submission had been prepared to undertake building condition assessments for all court buildings, but any identified improvements would require further funding submissions. While I understand the practical realities of this situation, it seems that little is likely to change in the medium to longer term and the identified infrastructure challenges will persist.

If I am honest, I must admit this report has taken too long to be completed and I accept criticism for the length of time between our site inspections in late 2023 and publication in 2025. Although the inspection did suffer some unavoidable delays within our office, it has highlighted for us a need to critically look at how we undertake inspections of court custody centres and how we might improve inspection processes and the timeliness of the final inspection report. This work is planned for the latter part of this year as part of the ongoing revision of our operating methodology.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from key stakeholders, including contracted organisations, members of the judiciary, management and staff within the courts, and from key personnel in the Department. I also acknowledge the contribution of operational staff at various facilities who spoke with us to share their perspective and experience.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the inspection team for their contribution to the inspection.

Eamon Ryan  
**Inspector of Custodial Services**

8 April 2025

## Executive Summary

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (the Office) is required by Section 19 of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* (WA) to inspect each Western Australian court custody centre and prescribed lock-up at least once every three years.

Court custody centres fall into the category of court security and custodial services and are governed by the *Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999* (WA) (the CS&CS Act). The Act defines a court custody centre as:

A part of court premises, other than the dock in the court –

- a) That is set aside as a place where persons in custody are detained; and
- b) That is not accessible to the members of the public without permission of the person in charge of the place.

Sentenced prisoners, people remanded in custody, or those arrested and charged with a crime may be held in court custody centres before appearing in court. Depending on the outcome of the court appearance, they are released to freedom or bail, transferred to a prison, or transferred to a lock-up managed by the Western Australia Police.

Eleven metropolitan courts have a court custody centre that fall within the Office's inspection remit. Most regional courts do not have a custody centre and people are held in custody at the local police lock-up. They are then given into the custody of the court custodial services contractor for the duration of their court appearance.

Under Regulation 5 of the *Court Security and Custodial Services Regulations 1999* (WA) the Albany Justice Complex, Carnarvon Police and Justice Complex, and the Kalgoorlie Police Complex have been prescribed as lock-ups and are therefore subject to inspection.

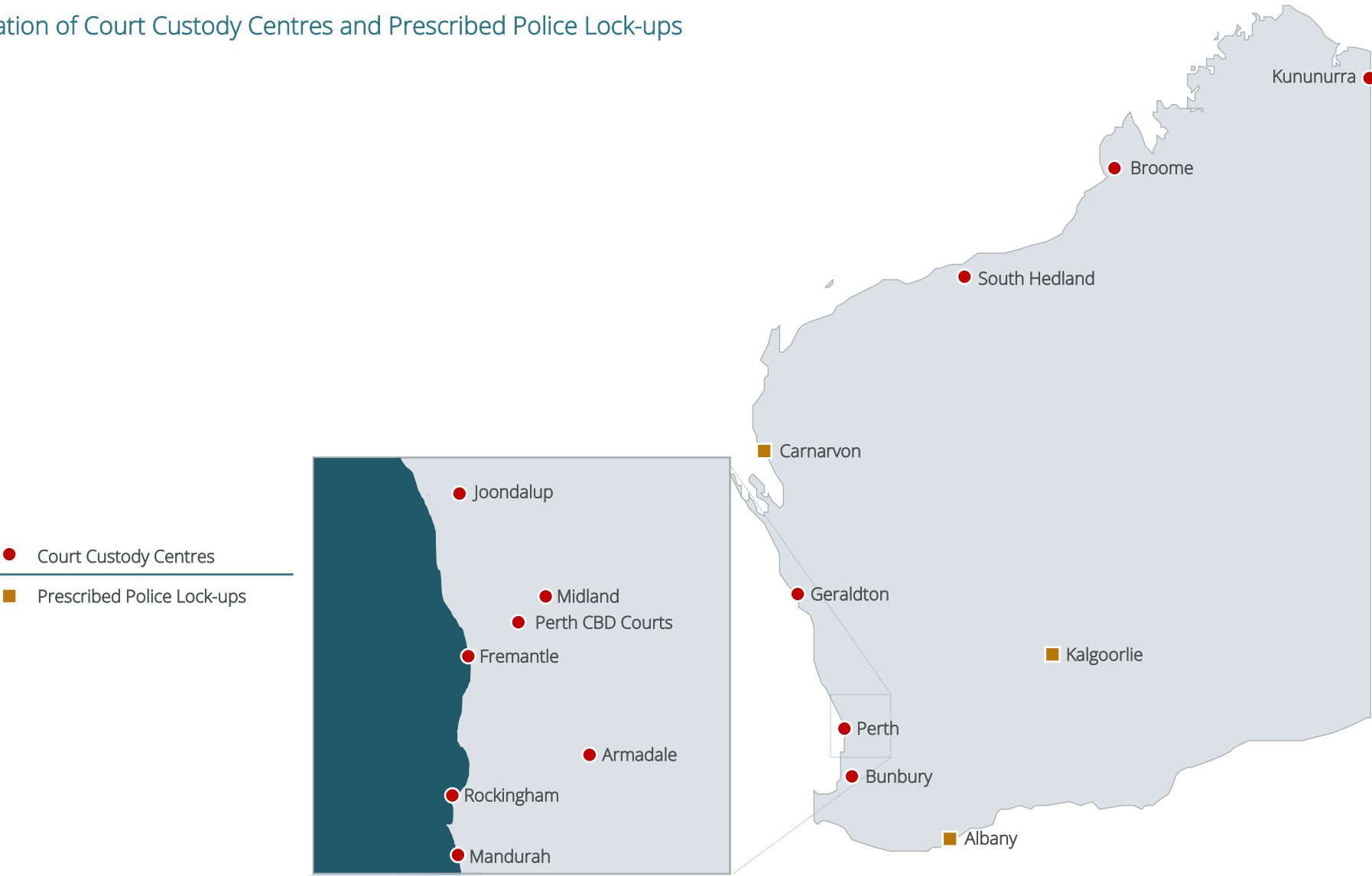
## Background

In Western Australia, most court custody centres are managed by private contractors under two main contracts. The first of these covers the court custody centres at the Central Law Courts (CLC) and the District Court Building (DCB), located in the Perth Central Business District (CBD). At the time of inspection, the CBD Courts Contract was managed by the Western Liberty Group Consortium (WLG) and a sub-contractor G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd (G4S).

The second of these contracts, the Court Security and Custodial Services (CS&CS) contract, was managed by Ventia Services Group (Ventia). It covers the remaining metropolitan and regional court custody centres and includes the three regional prescribed lock-ups. It also covers the Fiona Stanley Hospital Secure Facility – this is not by definition a court custody centre and therefore not included as part of this inspection.

Given the specialist requirements regarding the handling of young people in custody, the court custody centre at the Perth Children's Court is managed and operated by the Department of Justice (the Department). Ventia manage the general operation of the Perth Children's Court including building security, reception, and administration.

Location of Court Custody Centres and Prescribed Police Lock-ups



## Previous inspection

This Office last conducted an inspection of court custody centres and prescribed lock-ups in 2021. There were two recommendations arising from that inspection:

- Recommendation 1: When re-tendering the CS&CS contract, the Department must adhere to the detail of that process.
- Recommendation 2: The Department should undertake a review of infrastructure and security at all court custody facilities across the state to ensure a consistent high standard level of service.

The Department noted the first recommendation and supported the second as an existing project or practice. It noted that security risk management is conducted in accordance with the Courts Security Framework, which adopts a comprehensive, intelligence-led security risk management model. Updates to infrastructure are subject to funding and completed in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Western Australian Police. The Department listed the recommendation as completed in October 2022.

## Methodology

The inspection was formally announced to the Director General of the Department, the Commissioner for Corrective Services, contract management teams within the Department, and management at WLG, G4S and Ventia.

Between September 2023 and December 2023 members of the inspection team visited all 11 metropolitan courts, and the eight regional courts with custody centres or prescribed lock-ups.

At each site, we spoke with contractor staff, court staff, and people in custody. At most sites, we also spoke with police who had dealings with the court. We spoke with legal representatives, members of the public, and at several prisons, we interviewed prisoners who had recent experience of being held in custody at the court.

In Perth, members of the inspection team met with staff from key contracts and the Department's contract managers.

The Department, WLG, G4S, Ventia and the Chief Judicial Officers of each court were provided with an opportunity to comment on a draft version of this report.



## List of Recommendations

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
<b>Recommendation 1</b> Provide clean and hygienic blankets to all people held in court custody centres.	3	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 2</b> Invest in body scanning technology at court custody centres to minimise the use of strip searching.	4	Supported in Principle
<b>Recommendation 3</b> Revise Ventia and G4S policies on searching to minimise the harm of strip searches by incorporating safeguarding provisions within the Department of Justice's Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure (COPP) 11.2 – Searching.	4	Supported
<b>Recommendation 4</b> Ventia to ensure strip searching of young people is used in exceptional circumstances only, and policies and procedures are aligned with the Department of Justice's policy on searching, and the <i>Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999</i> .	5	Supported
<b>Recommendation 5</b> To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and people in custody, the Department should conduct an audit of court custody centre infrastructure across the state to identify priority improvements.	8	Supported in Principle

# 1 The welfare of people in custody was a key focus for staff

Throughout the inspection court custody staff demonstrated a clear focus on managing the welfare of people in their custody. We observed Ventia staff interact with people respectfully and with dignity. Attempts were made to build rapport with people and to settle those who were heightened, stressed, or anxious. During our inspection of Fremantle Courthouse, we observed one person in custody threatening to harm themselves. Ventia staff spoke at length with the individual to help calm them down before reporting the incident.

The Northbridge Watch House has two nurses providing 24/7 coverage to help manage the welfare of people entering custody. This coverage allows for everyone to be screened for any urgent health and welfare matters, before progressing from a holding cell to the custody hall. Just prior to our visit, a male in custody under the influence of an illicit substance was taken by ambulance to hospital after experiencing 'excited delirium' and self-harming.

At the Perth Children's Court, staff told us that counselling young people was their 'bread and butter', and they would regularly sit with young people in their cells playing cards to help settle them. They also have a range of DVDs available, which the young people can request.

Procedural systems were also in place at all court custody centres to manage welfare. For instance, Ventia conducts 15-minute welfare checks and records these on their offender database. Prisoners arriving with an active At-Risk Management System (ARMS) alert were also managed in accordance with departmental policy, including required observation checks. We also observed staff at many custody centres checking alerts on arriving individuals to ensure they did not associate with others that may place them at risk.

Some court custody centres also had padded cells to help minimise harm by those expressing or demonstrating self-harm behaviours.

## Cells were generally clean

While most holding cells were sparsely furnished, they were generally observed to be clean. The cells at the South Hedland Courthouse were the exception to this. Cells appeared dirty and in need of a deep clean. The walls also required repainting.

We also observed issues with graffiti at most regional court custody centres, in particular Broome Courthouse and Kununurra Courthouse. Perth Children's Court have installed blackboards on the walls to encourage young people to be creative, rather than marking the walls and doors with graffiti.

At Kalgoorlie Courthouse, there was an ongoing issue with people scraping off the soft wall plaster with their fingernails. This will continue to be a maintenance issue unless addressed.

Cells are generally sparsely furnished but most had operating televisions. We spoke with an individual in custody at Geraldton Courthouse – where there were no televisions in the cells – and he commented how beneficial it would be to have a television to occupy his mind prior to his court appearance.

Each cell had operating toilets that were screened from view for privacy. However, not all toilets were screened from CCTV cameras. Women were offered sanitary products on request.

All cells were temperature controlled and appeared to be adequately lit.



Photos 1-2: Cells at the South Hedland Courthouse were grimy and graffitied.

### Adequate meals were provided

Each court custody centre offered people in custody at least one meal during their stay. Ventia offered all people in custody a microwavable hot meal for lunch. There was a range of meal options available and generally people could request additional food should they require it. Breakfast was generally offered for early arrivals and a second meal provided to those staying late. At the new Armadale Justice Complex only vegetarian meals were being provided, which we heard was causing complaints. The police provide less nutritious pies and sausage rolls at some regional locations where they manage the custody centre.

G4S offered people at the DCB and CLC sandwiches for lunch, provided fresh daily from the on-site DCB café. Fresh fruit is also available throughout the day. The DCB does not offer breakfast for early arrivals and does not offer hot drinks. A choice of a hot meal is offered to those remaining in custody after 6.00pm.

The Department provides young people held at the Perth Children's Court sandwiches for lunch. These are prepared in advance at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and then toasted at the court.



Photos 3-4: Frozen meals provided by Ventia to people in custody.

## Blankets were regularly available but there were concerns about hygiene

Blankets were available upon request at all sites, except for the DCB and CLC. WLG advised they do not offer blankets as they can be used to self-harm and obscure visual observations.

Most custody centres had arrangements with nearby prisons to launder used blankets. This system appeared to work well, though some custody centres felt they were often in short supply. This meant blankets were often used multiple times prior to being laundered. Staff at one custody centre told us the blankets were unhygienic and they handled them using gloves. Concerningly, this did not stop them from offering the used blankets to people in custody.

### Recommendation 1

Provide clean and hygienic blankets to all people held in court custody centres.

Emergency clothing is also provided to people at the CLC who have arrived off the street. This helps ensure they have climate appropriate clothing and dressed suitably for their court appearance. We also heard Fremantle Courthouse staff regularly donate clothing to provide to people in custody.

## Body scanning technology could reduce harmful strip searches

Strip searches can be conducted on any person entering a court custody centre who is suspected of carrying an unauthorised item. The searches are intended to assist staff detect and seize items that may, for instance, be used to cause harm. The CS&CS Act provides the authority for contractors to conduct these searches.

While we recognise the importance of maintaining good order, strip searches have been found to be degrading, traumatising, and have minimal impact on safety and security (OICS, 2019). Accordingly,

and in accordance with *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (UNODC, 1957), strip searches should be intelligence-led and not performed as part of routine practice. This is particularly the case as less invasive technological options such as body scanners have become available.

The introduction of a full-body x-ray scanner at Melaleuca Women's Prison has helped create a more trauma-informed searching regime (OICS, 2024). Strip searches decreased from approximately 180 per month to about 40 per month following the introduction of the scanner. There was also a considerable decline in pat searches conducted. The scans are only completed by female staff, further enhancing the dignity of the new search regime.

Despite the benefits of such technology, we recognise a statewide roll-out across all court custody centres is likely to be cost prohibitive in the short-term. In the absence of a technological solution, contractors should seek to minimise the harm of strip searches by mirroring safeguarding provisions in the Department's searching policy, such as:

- Ensuring searching officers are always of the same gender as the person being searched, with a second person of the same gender witnessing the search.
- The individual circumstances of women should be considered prior to conducting a strip search, including their health, welfare, age, vulnerability, mental health, and trauma. Alternative search practices should be implemented where there is concern about the impact the search may have on their wellbeing.
- Conduct strip searches using the 'half and half' approach to avoid people being completely exposed.
- Not requiring any person to lift breasts, genitals, or skin folds unless there is reason to believe there is an item concealed in those areas.
- Women in custody should not be requested to squat under any circumstances during a strip search.
- Consider alterations to the searching procedure to accommodate trans, gender diverse and intersex people, people with disabilities or injuries, or people with religious cultural headwear (DOJ, 2024).

#### **Recommendation 2**

Invest in body scanning technology at court custody centres to minimise the use of strip searching.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Revise Ventia and G4S policies on searching to minimise the harm of strip searches by incorporating safeguarding provisions within the Department of Justice's *Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure (COPP) 11.2 – Searching*.

Notwithstanding the above, our inspection did not raise concern that strip searches were being used when unnecessary. Custody staff maintained that strip searches of adults were only conducted as

required under policy or legislation. Each centre also has a dedicated, private room to facilitate these searches. A few court custody centres noted they only conduct 'pat and wand' searches.

## Policy on strip searching young people not well understood

During the inspection we noted some confusion around the requirement to strip search young people entering court custody centres. Ventia management had indicated that their staff were required to strip search young people entering court custody centres from freedom. However, Ventia's policy states a strip search can only be authorised if there is a suspicion they are concealing contraband, and only a basic search is required when receiving a person into custody from freedom (Ventia, Undated).

Further, when we made enquiries about this issue with staff most claimed it was not their practice to strip search young people in any scenario. One centre advised they had been requested by management to strip search young people in the past, but staff had refused.

This demonstrates a disparity between Ventia's management, court custody centre staff, and policy, which increases the risk of searches being conducted inconsistently across sites. Subsequently, there is a risk that young people may be subjected to unnecessary invasive searches.

Staff at the Perth Children's Court – who are employed by the Department – noted they would only conduct a strip search if there was concern the young person was in possession of an unauthorised item. This aligns with the Department's policy on searching young people in detention centres (DOJ, 2021). The policy makes clear that strip searching is only intelligence-led and is not used routinely upon entry to the detention centre.

It is noted that Clause 4 of Schedule 1 of the CS&CS Act makes clear the circumstances in which a person 'apparently 10 or more years of age' may be subjected to a search that involves the removal of clothing when entering a court premise. Contractors should ensure their searching policies are compliant with the legislation and staff are adequately informed of searching requirements and procedures<sup>1</sup>.

### Recommendation 4

Ventia to ensure strip searching of young people is used in exceptional circumstances only, and policies and procedures are aligned with the Department of Justice's policy on searching, and the *Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999*.

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<sup>1</sup> In response to a draft of this report, WLG confirmed that G4S contractors do not come into contact with young people at either the DCB or the CLC. Therefore, we accept that Recommendation 4 is not applicable to G4S and we have removed reference to them in the final recommendation.

## 2 Staffing shortages were an ongoing issue at Ventia sites

At most Ventia sites we observed staffing shortages placing pressure on the operations of court custody centres. Staff told us they experienced absences on most days, exacerbating the impact of existing vacancies. This was particularly a challenge in regional areas. Secondees from other sites were often rotated through to hard-to-recruit locations to help support regional operations. Despite these shortages, we found team leaders managed their teams effectively to ensure the courts continued to operate without disruption and the welfare of people in custody was not compromised.

To address the issue Ventia was undertaking a large recruitment drive. At the time of inspection, Ventia had successfully recruited an additional 141 staff members to fulfil their contractual obligations across court security and custodial services. Additional recruits were expected to be finalised soon, helping Ventia fill the 100 staff resignations received throughout 2023. Training courses had also been increased to accommodate the influx of new employees. Regional staffing shortages remained an issue, with vacancies unfilled in Kalgoorlie and in the Kimberley.

Similarly, the Northbridge Watch House faced some staffing challenges. Police Auxiliary Officers (PAOs) assigned to the facility had been increased from 20 to 23. Though when we visited there were three absent from the roster of 19, which was creating some logistical difficulties and concern for staff safety. Some staff felt the facility needed at least an additional eight PAOs to operate safely during the week. We were told that a PAO resigned every ten days, but that recruitment drives were underway to address this.

In contrast, G4S was experiencing fewer staffing shortages at the DCB and CLC. We were told this was due to G4S offering a higher salary than Ventia, which helped to recruit and then retain employees. At the time of the inspection, we observed both the DCB and CLC to be staffed well.

The Perth Children's Court was also generally staffed well. The custody holding rooms had nine departmental staff members, including the officer in charge. A request had been made to increase this to ten staff members. However, we were advised that all staff were overdue in their mandatory training due to the court operating extended hours.

It is worth noting that at all sites we inspected we found custody staff had developed positive and collaborative working relationships with court staff, local police, and local prison authorities.



### 3 Infrastructure remained a challenge at some locations

This inspection continued to highlight challenges associated with ageing and poorly designed court infrastructure. Many of the issues identified were noted in our last inspection report, which detailed a range of infrastructure challenges across the state's ageing court custody centres (OICS, 2021). The Department supported our recommendation to undertake a review of infrastructure, but subsequently closed it as completed, noting that:

The retrofitting of complexes against contemporary standards is both complex and expensive. Treatment plans are implemented subject to funding and in collaboration with critical stakeholders such as WA Police and specialist units of Corrective Services (OICS, 2021, p. 36).

We take this opportunity to again bring to the Department's attention several issues common to the older courthouses.

For example, many older courthouses were designed with stairwells connecting the custody area to the courts. Stairs increase the risk of falls for both staff and people in custody and can be inaccessible for people with physical disabilities. At the Midland Courthouse there is no elevator connecting the custody centre to the courtrooms. People in custody requiring a wheelchair are handcuffed and escorted through the public areas before being brought around the building to enter the courtroom. This is undignified and may cause unnecessary distress to the individual.

Similarly, there is no secure passageway connecting holding cells to Court 1 at the Broome Regional Courthouse. People held in custody are required to be escorted in handcuffs through the public gardens to access the court. We previously noted Magistrates' security concerns about this practice (OICS, 2019). More recently, this issue reportedly led to a trial being 'vacated' after members of the jury observed the accused person being escorted in handcuffs through the gardens, potentially influencing their view of the accused (Kordic, 2024). The decision to move the trial was made to ensure there was a fair trial free of bias following what jury members observed.

Two of the three courtrooms in Albany are also located up a flight of stairs. As there are no court adjacent holding cells for these courtrooms, staff are required to escort people in custody up the stairs at the time of their court appearance. Staff felt this created an unreasonable safety risk. Court 2 is located on the same level as the custody centre and similar in layout to the other courts. We suggested the Clerk of Court discuss with the Magistrate the possibility of using Court 2 more frequently to mitigate this risk.



Photo 5: Rising damp evident inside custody cells at the Supreme Court.



Our inspection of the Supreme Court confirmed there remain ongoing issues with rising damp and mould due to the building's proximity to the water table. Regular repairs and maintenance were conducted throughout the building. The risk of respiratory issues for staff and people in custody remains a concern.

The doors to custody holding cells in Albany did not have secure hatches. This meant two staff are required to be present to open the door to provide people in custody with meals or drinks. This also makes it difficult to communicate with people. Rather than opening the door, staff attempt to communicate in a loud voice which diminishes privacy. The same issue is present for some of the cells at the Geraldton court custody centre.

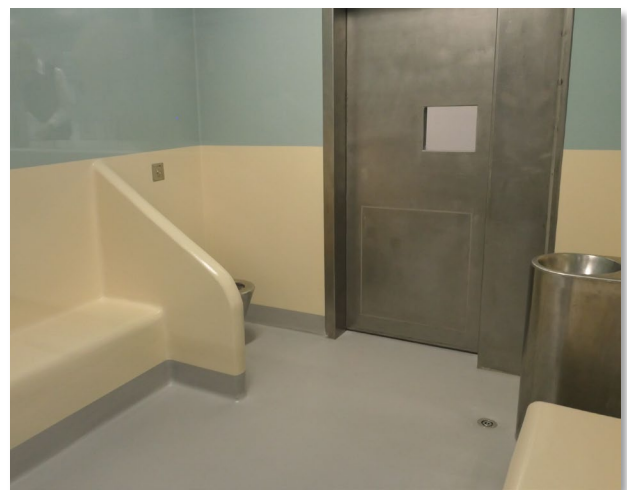
Sally ports at Mandurah, Bunbury, and Broome remained too small for some transport vehicles. This meant people were required to exit vehicles in an unsecure area, increasing the risk of escape. At the time of inspection, the sally port door at Carnarvon had also been broken for about six weeks.

Despite the Department closing our previous recommendation regarding court infrastructure, we remain firmly of the view that there are numerous ongoing issues that require addressing to ensure court custody centres are operating safely and securely for staff, people in custody, and the community.

#### **Recommendation 5**

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and people in custody, the Department should conduct an audit of court custody centre infrastructure across the state to identify priority improvements.

Positively, the new Armadale Justice Complex had opened since our last inspection. While we were informed of some relatively minor teething issues with the new facility, it was a marked improvement from the old Armadale Courthouse that we had previously described as being 'cramped, crowded, and generally in poor condition' (OICS, 2021, p. 20).



Photos 6-7: Court custody cells at the new Armadale Justice Complex.

## Appendix A Site Inspections – Metropolitan Courts

### The District Court Building

The District Court Building (DCB) is a large facility in the Perth CBD with 26 holding cells and 24 courtrooms over seven levels. The cells vary in size and capacity, with some capable of holding up to five people at once. High profile people in custody and young people are housed in a dedicated cell that is isolated from the others. All cells have televisions and are monitored by CCTV cameras.

The facility has four general interview rooms and two interview rooms used by departmental staff. There are six non-contact rooms. Secure courtyards originally used for smoking are no longer accessible as smoking is prohibited.

People in custody are provided sandwiches for lunch which are sourced fresh daily from a local café. If a person in custody is required to stay after 6.00pm they are provided with a hot meal. Apples are also provided on request. Water is available through drink fountains in each cell, but no hot drinks are provided due to an earlier incident where an officer had a drink thrown at them. The DCB also does not provide blankets, which is inconsistent with every other court custody centre in Western Australia.

Female sanitary items are provided on request. They are provided discretely and disposed of in an appropriate way.

If a person comes into custody from prison on ARMS they are automatically placed on C-ARMS which requires 15-minute monitoring. These monitoring checks are inputted onto the touch screens located outside each cell. People requiring monitoring are also placed into cells directly in front of the control room for additional observation. Staff are also experienced at identifying people who come into custody that may be at-risk – for example, those entering custody for the first time.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	24
Holding cells	26
Interview rooms	12
G4S staff (across DCB and CLC)	132

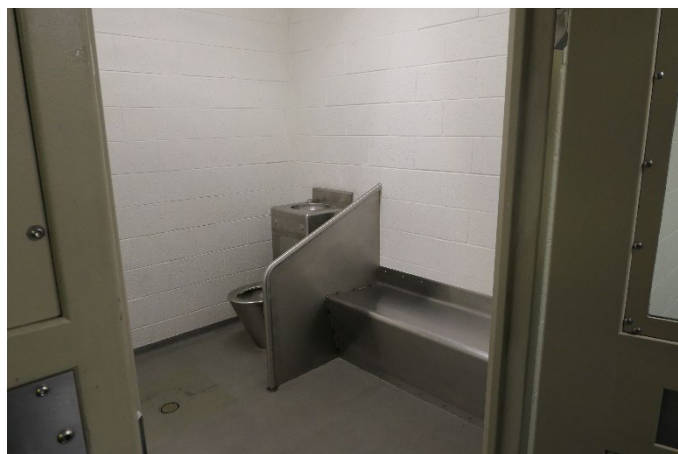


Photo 8: A holding cell at the District Court Building.

## Central Law Courts

The CLC is a busy courthouse located in the Perth central business district. G4S are contracted to provide court security and court custody services.

The custody area of the CLC is laid out in a horseshoe shape with some cells out of line-of-sight observation from the control room. As a result, there is greater reliance on CCTV cameras for observation. The design also makes it difficult to prevent one cell from seeing into another, reducing privacy.

We also found the infrastructure was less advanced than the DCB due to the building's age. For example, in the CLC we observed that certain internal doors in the same area could be opened together whereas this was prevented in the DCB for security reasons. Though all doors leading to freedom were interlocked and controlled by the CLC custody control and master control.

There is also no elevator for conducting movements between the cells and the courts. Wheelchair users are therefore required to be escorted through the public areas of the courthouse in restraints. Staff advised us they try to disguise the handcuffs from public view.

People being held in custody arrive throughout the day and are regularly under the influence of drugs or alcohol. To account for this, and to ensure there is appropriate monitoring of health and wellbeing, there are more custodial staff than the DCB. This allows for staff to conduct more regular welfare checks.

The CLC provides the same lunch meals as the DCB, but also offers an additional meal if people are held in custody after 6.00pm. We were advised that Ventia are now collecting people from the court throughout the day, which has reduced the number being held into the evening.

Like the DCB, blankets are not provided. However, they have a supply of clothing for those that come in off the street and do not have appropriate clothing either for the court or for the climate on the day.

The CLC also receive property with some people held in custody as there is a possibility they may be released or bailed. Staff check the property for anything that may present a risk.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	31
Holding cells	9
Interview rooms	11
G4S staff (across DCB and CLC)	132

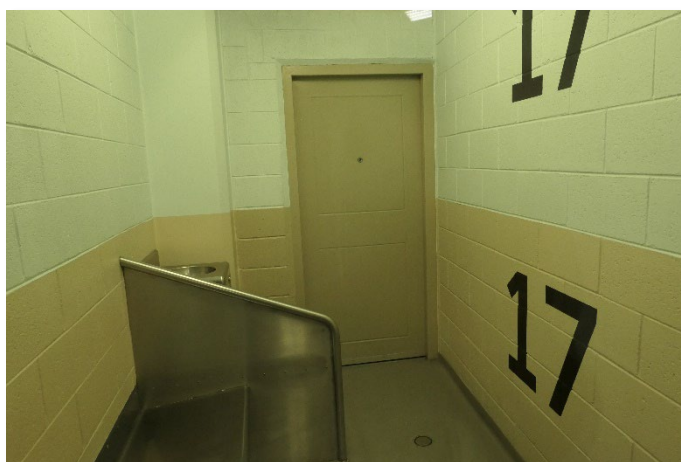


Photo 9: A holding cell at the Central Law Courts.

## The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has four holding cells of varying sizes, including one large cell, one medium-sized cell, and two smaller cells. We were advised that women were placed in Cell 4 as the toilet was out of view of staff. However, all cell toilets were within view of CCTV cameras, which diminished privacy. At the time of inspection, all cells were observed to be clean, free of graffiti and with operating televisions.

Normally there are eight Ventia staff. On the day of the inspection, Ventia were two staff short, but these had been covered by drawing on resources from elsewhere. Court staff expressed positive views of Ventia staff and acknowledged Ventia's efforts to maintain staffing levels where there were absences or vacant positions.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	11
Holding cells	4
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	8

CCTV cameras had recently been upgraded and additional cameras were installed to cover blind spots identified by Ventia staff. The set-up of the control room allowed for the effective monitoring of people being held in cells. Welfare checks are conducted and recorded by Ventia staff every 15 minutes with use of the CCTV and physical checks.

As noted in previous inspections, there remain issues with rising damp and mould due to the lower parts of the building being located close to the water level. As a result, this issue will persist and requires ongoing maintenance.

At the time of the inspection there were no people being held in custody. We were advised that pre-packaged microwave meals are provided upon arrival into custody. More than one meal is available and additional food can be requested at any time along with tea and coffee. Blankets are available on request and are laundered by Hakea Prison.



Photo 10: A holding cell at the Supreme Court.

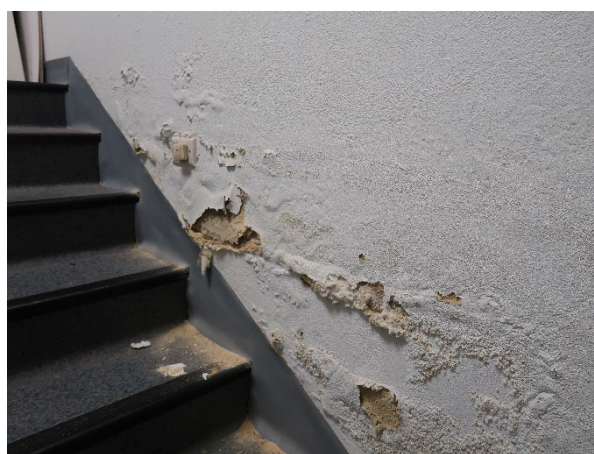


Photo 11: Rising damp requires ongoing maintenance.

## Armadale Justice Complex

The Armadale Justice Complex was commissioned in November 2023, replacing the Armadale Courthouse. The facility brought together the Armadale Court, Community Corrections, and the Armadale Police Station into one multi-purpose facility.

The court custody and the police lock-up were a combined facility, comprised of 16 holding cells. Ventia had use of six cells and the police utilised the remaining nine cells and an additional padded cell. The cells were grouped around two central control rooms – one operated by Ventia and the other by the police. Each cell had CCTV and audio monitoring, a television, toilet, drinking fountain and intercom.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	5
Holding cells	6
Interview rooms	5
Ventia staff	23

The secure control room was fitted out appropriately to manage the holding cells, including CCTV controls and fire and duress alarm monitoring, and controlled the sallyport door. However, we were advised of ongoing teething problems with technology. Sensor lights in two of the holding cells were not working and some CCTV cameras and doors were malfunctioning. Ventia staff were also using mobile phones due to ongoing issues with landline telephones.

Meals were provided to all people being held. However, all meals were vegetarian, which had led to some complaints.

Ventia have 23 staff rostered to the facility, but on the day of our inspection there were only 19 present. Relationships between Ventia staff, police and court staff appeared positive and constructive.

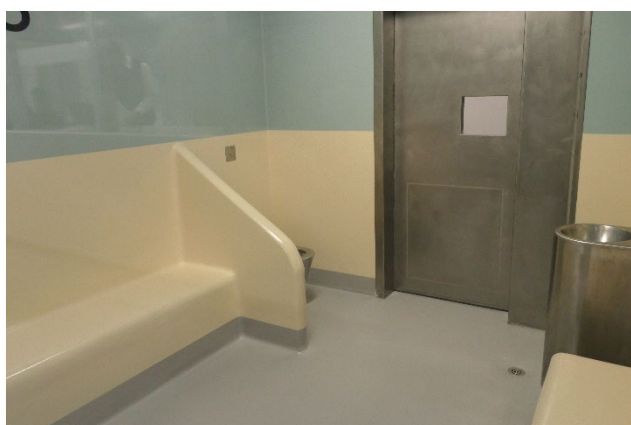


Photo 12: A custody holding cell at Armadale Justice Complex.



Photo 13: The custody control room at Armadale Justice Complex.



## Fremantle Courthouse

Ventia operate the Fremantle Courthouse with 12 staff. However, we were advised that daily staffing shortages were common and at the time of the inspection they were four staff members short. Despite the pressure this placed on staff, we found they engaged with people in custody in a respectful and polite manner. We observed staff engage effectively with one person in custody who was threatening to harm themselves.

As new arrivals were placed in cells staff offered them hot drinks and food. We were advised by staff that they often donate clothing for emergencies.

The five holding cells each contained an intercom to speak with staff, a television, a toilet screened from view, and a drink fountain. The configuration of the holding cells allows for women to be securely segregated from men. No cell has visual sightlines of another cell, increasing privacy. The secure custody control room maintained visual oversight over the holding cells and custody circulation zone with CCTV cameras that were recently upgraded.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	5
Holding cells	5
Interview rooms	4
Ventia staff	12



Photo 14: A secure vehicle in the sally port at Fremantle Courthouse.



Photo 15: A custody holding cell at Fremantle Courthouse.

## Joondalup Courthouse

The Joondalup Courthouse is linked to the adjacent police station by a secure custody link. In addition to providing court security, Ventia manage the four holding cells within the court custody centre.

The facility has a secure sally port to receive incoming people in custody. The inspection team observed the arrival of an escort vehicle and found Ventia staff were respectful and completed their duties professionally. People arriving from the Northbridge Watch House were searched in a private room with CCTV cameras blacked out.

The four custody holding cells each have their own toilet screened from line of sight and CCTV coverage, a drink fountain, television, and intercom. There were two non-contact interview rooms within the public area, but just a single pre-trial conference room.

Some staff expressed concern that access improvements and CCTV upgrades had not occurred following a murder at the court in 2016. We were informed by staff that the current CCTV system was unreliable at times, however the system was due for an upgrade.

Joondalup Courthouse is managed by an experienced Ventia team that were well regarded by registry staff. Like other court facilities, Joondalup Court were often short-staffed, but management were able to re-task staff to minimise disruptions.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	4
Holding cells	4
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	13



Photo 16: A non-contact meeting room at the Joondalup Courthouse.



Photo 17: An escort vehicle unloading in the Joondalup sally port.

## Mandurah Courthouse

The Ventia team at the Mandurah Courthouse was led by an experienced manager, who was well regarded by the Clerk of Courts. Staffing shortages and absences were a persistent challenge and at the time of the inspection they were five staff short. Anecdotally we heard how these consistent shortages made some staff feel unsafe.

People in custody are provided a lunchtime meal, and an early morning meal if they arrive before 7.30am or an evening meal if they stay after 5.30pm. Tea and coffee are provided on request.

Blankets are provided to people in cells on request. Used blankets are laundered by Hakea Prison. However, as there are only 12 blankets, staff advised they are regularly used more than once before being sent for cleaning. Staff handle blankets using gloves due to their concerns around hygiene, but concerningly still offer them to people in custody.

Duty lawyers are available on Tuesdays and Fridays. Outside of these times they are available by phone. To facilitate the call, staff place the phone on the hatch door outside of the cell and set it to loudspeaker. The lack of confidentiality is cause for concern.

There are only four custody holding cells and they were all clean at the time of inspection. Ventia's concerns around the quality of the cleaning contractors were being addressed by the Clerk of Courts.

The sally port was too short for regular escort vehicles. This meant two points of restraints were required on all people exiting the vehicle to mitigate the risk of escape. The sally port was also being used to store archive boxes and other materials creating a fire risk. These materials also present as a safety hazard should a person being held in custody become aggressive.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	4
Interview rooms	1
Ventia staff	12

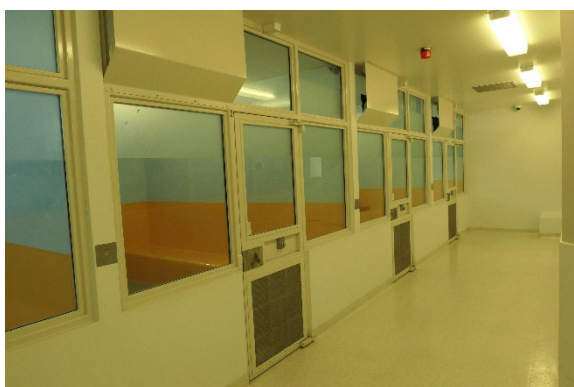


Photo 18: The court custody holding area at Mandurah Courthouse.



Photo 19: Inside a holding cell at Mandurah Courthouse.



## Midland Courthouse

The custody centre at Midland has four holding cells in a line, situated opposite the custody control room. At the time of inspection, the cells were clean. Upstairs there are two additional court holding cells, two interview rooms, and three courts.

There is no elevator so people in custody requiring a wheelchair are handcuffed and escorted through the public areas before being brought around the back of the building. The Magistrate had recommended a video-link facility be installed in the holding cells to accommodate people unable (or unwilling) to attend the court upstairs.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	4
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	8

We observed the arrival of an escort vehicle from the Perth Watch House and found Ventia staff were diligent in following arrival processes and were pleasant to people in custody. Staff we spoke with were relatively inexperienced but were positive about their experience and training thus far. Court staff also spoke positively of Ventia staff and, in particular, the manager who had only recently been appointed to Midland but had brought some needed stability to the team. Like other court custody centres, Midland experienced daily staffing shortages with limited backfill from head office. This made some staff feel unsafe.

All persons in custody are offered tea, coffee, water, and a blanket on arrival. Meals are also offered on arrival and again for lunch. Staff conduct 15-minute welfare checks, which are recorded on Ventia's offender management system. We were advised that they are regularly monitoring and managing people who threaten self-harm or are aggressive towards staff.

The Children's Court also sits fortnightly at Midland Court but we were informed that there had been no young people in their custody for some time.

## Northbridge Watch House

The Northbridge Watch House (NWH) is operated by the Western Australian Police Force. There are 23 Police Auxiliary Officers (PAOs) assigned to the facility. On the day of the inspection there were 19 PAOs rostered but three were absent. Additional sworn officers can be seconded as required.

People in custody are brought to the NWH sally port on arrival where they are photographed, searched, and their health and welfare assessed. People are then placed in holding cells in the reception area where vetting processes are undertaken, for instance to determine care requirements for children. The intake process was found to be established and efficient.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	1
Holding cells	Multiple
Interview rooms	Nil
PAOs	23

Two nurses are in attendance 24 hours a day providing medical assistance to people in custody. Nurses have system access to view an individual's medical history, including prescribed medication. The nurse can refuse to accept a person into custody on medical grounds.

The custody centre was overseen by a central control desk operated by PAOs. It had clear view of eight holding cells and five observation cells, opening both onto the reception hall and a corridor behind. A further six single-door standard cells and two single-door padded cells were at the southern end of the reception hall.

To the east of the reception hall, the custody centre proper was divided into four blocks, overseen by a secondary control desk, also operated by PAOs. Each of the four blocks had six multiple-occupancy cells. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided to all people in custody and there are water fountains in each cell. Blankets are provided on request. Tea and coffee are also provided on request, subject to approval from the duty nurse.

The relationship between PAOs and Ventia staff (who provide court security and transport services) was described by a senior officer as positive.

## Perth Children's Court

The Perth Children's Court (PCC) has six holding cells of different sizes and for different purposes. Cell 1 is the largest and has recently been reinforced following an incident in March 2023 where two young people caused significant damage. Cell 6 is set aside for girls held in custody, and Cell 5 is for adults. Cell 4 is no larger than a toilet.

There are three interview rooms, including one that has been reinforced. Staff do integrity checks, clean up and remove graffiti every afternoon. A cleaner comes each morning.

The control room has also recently been remodelled. It features an expansive bank of monitors with clear vision internally and externally. The Ventia team leader also had complete monitoring access, including to views within the holding room.

The PCC holding rooms are staffed by a team of nine Department of Justice employees, including an officer in charge. Staff appeared focussed on building positive relations with young people and maintaining safety. However, following the March 2023 incident, some staff expressed concern around the Department's response time should another incident occur.

Ventia provide court security services. Staff appeared to have a good working relationship with them, and with the registry and judiciary. This was reflected in our conversations with Ventia's team leader, the Clerk of Courts, and the President of the Children's Court.

Banksia Hill Detention Centre provides ham and cheese sandwiches for lunch each day. We were advised that fuller lunches were too often thrown around in cells. We spoke with one young person prior to their appearance in court and they appeared relaxed.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	6
Holding cells	6
Interview rooms	3
DOJ staff	9



Photos 20-21: Inside two of the holding cells at the Perth Children's Court.

## Rockingham Courthouse

The Rockingham Courthouse has five holding cells that are managed by Ventia staff. People in custody are generally kept in separate cells unless they request to go in a cell together. At the time of our inspection two cousins had arrived together and their request to be placed in the same cell was facilitated. Prior to the placement, Ventia staff confirmed there were no alerts or segregation requirements.

There is a dedicated cell for women held in custody. It is located away from the other cells with no line of sight. There is also a dedicated cell for young people, though we were informed they rarely hold young people.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	3
Holding cells	5
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	12

The cells inspected were clean, recently repainted, and with minimal graffiti. There were drinking water fountains in the cells, and these were separate from the toilet. There were television screens behind perspex in each cell and these were working. A cleaning contractor attends daily to clean the cells and the custody centre.

The custody centre has a good array of CCTV cameras and the monitor display in the control room shows good coverage of the court complex including external areas, the courtroom waiting areas, the holding cells, and the courts. We were advised that while the operating system was relatively new, not all the cameras were. For instance, they often experienced glitches and on the day of the inspection the cameras in Court 1 were not showing any image.

There are two interview rooms used by lawyers and prosecutors, but these do not have CCTV coverage. Consequently, an officer was required to be present outside the rooms when a person in custody was meeting with their lawyer.

There are 12 Ventia staff assigned to Rockingham Court, but staff told us on average they have between 9 and 10 due to staffing shortages. Staff expressed there was a good working relationship amongst the team, and with court staff and local police.

## Appendix B Site Inspections – Regional Courts

### Albany Courthouse

The Albany Courthouse has six custody holding cells and three non-contact interview rooms. At the time of our inspection, we were made aware of several infrastructure challenges.

As there are no court adjacent holding cells, Ventia staff are required to escort people up a flight of stairs to access two of the three courtrooms. Staff felt this created an unreasonable safety risk.

There were also no hatches on any of the cell doors. This meant two staff were required to be present to open doors to pass through food and drinks to people in custody.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	3
Holding cells	6
Interview rooms	3
Ventia staff	12

There was also evidence of water damage to the ceiling in the custody centre, including damaged and missing ceiling tiles. Staff advised there had been ongoing issues with water leaks that remained unresolved.

People in custody are offered toast and cereal for breakfast and the standard frozen meals provided by Ventia for lunch. Blankets are provided upon request and are laundered by Albany Regional Prison. Only two of the six holding cells have televisions, but they are aged and have poor visibility in the cells.

There are 12 Ventia staff assigned to the Albany Courthouse. On the day we visited there were 10 staff on shift. We were advised that six months ago it was common to have as little as five staff members on any given day. Recent recruitment efforts had increased staffing numbers to a more sustainable level. Ventia staff expressed a good working relationship with court registry staff, community justice services staff, police, and local prison staff.

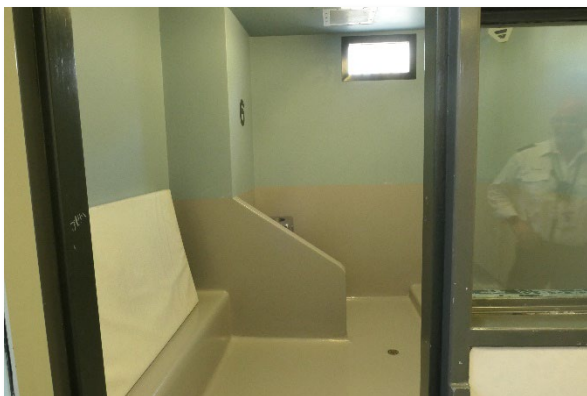


Photo 22: A custody holding cell at Albany Courthouse.

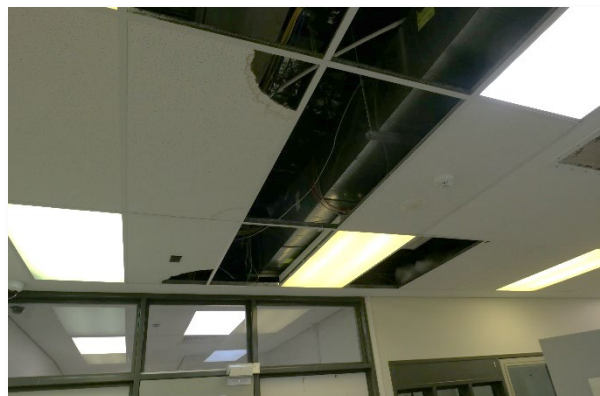


Photo 23: Damage to ceiling areas at the Albany Courthouse.

## Broome Courthouse

The Broome Courthouse is operated by a team of nine Ventia staff. This included team members who also conduct escorts under Ventia's custodial transport contract. They regularly experience staffing shortages and at the time of inspection were without a substantive team leader. Medical appointments for prisoners held at Broome Regional Prison were often cancelled due to insufficient staff. Despite these challenges, Ventia staff maintained positive working relationships with local stakeholders.

The Broome Court custody area is comprised of two holding cells from the original build and a further three cells, an interview room, and a control room as part of the new build. These three cells were generally used for young people held in custody and those attending the district court. The old control centre was now used for legal phone calls.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	5
Interview rooms	1
Ventia staff	9

At the time of the inspection, we observed two duty lawyers taking instructions from their clients on the veranda of the court due to a lack of interview rooms in the court building. This arrangement lacked confidentiality and was not secure. Similarly, as the main courtroom is in a building separate to the holding cells, people in custody are required to be moved through the external (and publicly accessible) court precinct, with two escorting officers, and in two points of restraints, to reach Courtroom 1. This movement through an unsecured area increases the risk of escape.

Staff felt the provision of CCTV throughout the building was adequate, and repairs and maintenance of cameras and duress systems was conducted efficiently. Staff had less confidence in the radio system, claiming the radios were outdated and the range was poor.

Each holding cell is supplied with a toilet and drink fountain. Cell doors were observed to be graffitied and we were advised of an ongoing mould issue in the new court custody cells. Blankets are provided upon request and are laundered by Broome Regional Prison.



Photo 24: Graffiti on the cell doors at Broome Courthouse.

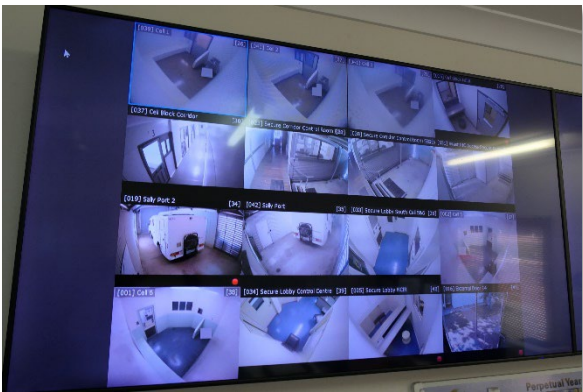


Photo 25: CCTV monitoring in the Broome Courthouse control room.

## Bunbury Courthouse

The Bunbury Courthouse is a standalone building with a north and south wing. The north wing has three levels with four courtrooms. The south wing has five levels for a range of justice-related services.

There are four holding cells within the custody centre and a further three courtroom holding cells. There are five general interview rooms within the public area and two non-contact interview rooms within the custody centre.

The custody control room had recently been upgraded and new CCTV cameras had been installed. Staff were complimentary of the upgrades but had found that when an alarm is set off the cameras were not automatically panning to the location, hindering a timely response.

The sally port is too small for some vehicles. This means some vehicles need to be parked external to the sally port and people in custody escorted by two officers one at a time in two points of restraints. This increases the risk of escape.

Each holding cell is fitted with a toilet and drink fountain. All cells have a television that is controlled by the custody control room. The televisions in two cells were not working. Concerningly, the same two televisions were found not to be working three years ago during our last inspection.

A lockable hatch in the cell doors allow for meals and drinks to be provided without opening the cell. Although the cells had not been upgraded for some time, there was little damage, and they were observed to be in good condition. Blankets are provided on request and are laundered by Bunbury Regional Prison every two weeks. Sanitary items were available on request and access to a private bathroom was available.

We observed the intake of people in custody and found staff to be relaxed and professional in their approach. Upon arrival people were offered food and tea or coffee. There was a variety of frozen meals available for use. Bottled water was available on request.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	4
Holding cells	7
Interview rooms	7
Ventia staff	16

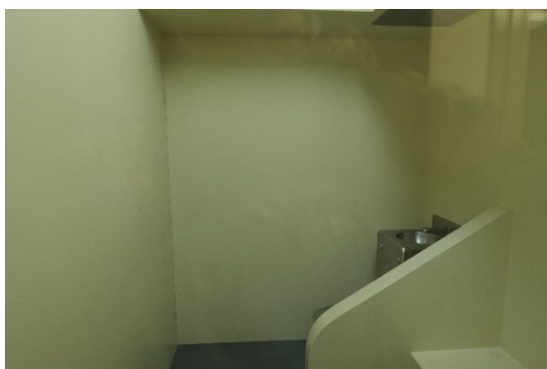


Photo 26: A holding cell at Bunbury Courthouse.

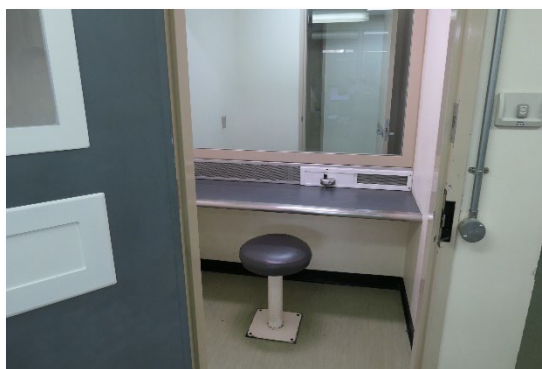


Photo 27: A non-contact meeting room.



## Carnarvon Courthouse

The Carnarvon Courthouse is part of a joint justice complex connected to the police lock-up by a secure internal custody corridor. The police are responsible for managing custody of people within the lock-up. At the time they are required in court, Ventia take custody and manage three holding cells within the courthouse. They also provide court security and custodial transport services.

The three holding cells were observed to be clean, but with some graffiti scratched into surfaces. The Ventia team leader also spoke positively about the cleaning contractors. Each cell had a toilet and a separate drink fountain. There were no televisions in any of the cells. When asked about food or blankets, staff advised that people were not generally held long enough for these to be provided.

As at most sites, staffing levels were the biggest challenge at the Carnarvon Court. There were only four permanent Ventia staff (including one part-time). A serious breach in security in October saw a member of the public bring a machete and a knife into the courthouse. Since then, Ventia has ensured that Carnarvon consistently has three secondees on site to supplement the permanent staff.

There were enough radios, but some staff felt they were getting old or needed an upgrade. Reception was also reportedly poor when staff were in the custody area. The court has CCTV coverage throughout and the custody control room is set up efficiently.

The sally port is part of the Carnarvon Police Station situated next to the Carnarvon Court. At the time of the inspection, the sally port door had been broken for about six weeks. Repairing it had proven problematic because the original style of door has now been flagged as unsafe. A replacement roller door was proposed, but this would take up additional space which would mean Ventia vehicles would no longer fit. In the interim, it had been requested that the door be propped open to allow vehicles to enter the space again, even if it was no longer secure.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	3
Interview rooms	3
Ventia staff	4

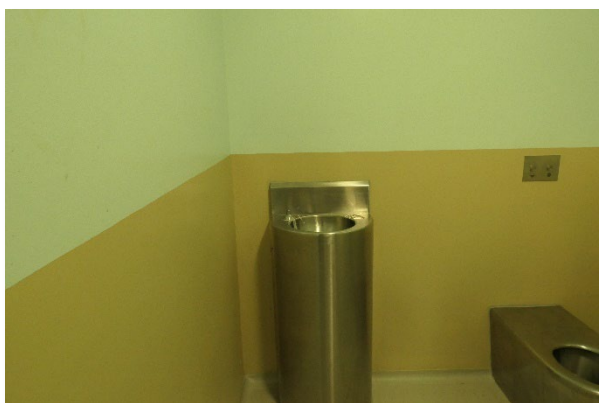


Photo 28: Inside a custody holding cell.

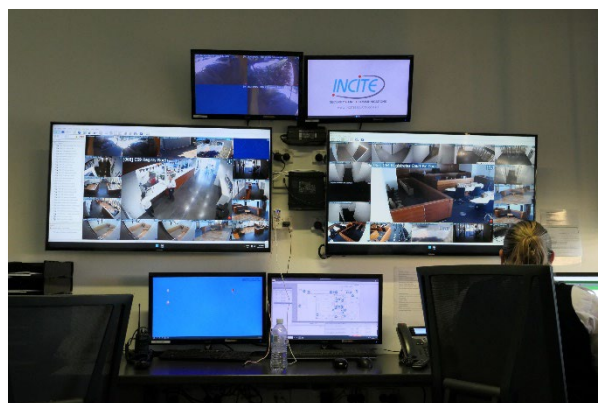


Photo 29: CCTV monitoring in the Carnarvon Courthouse.



## Geraldton Courthouse

The Geraldton Courthouse sits within a larger justice complex that includes the Geraldton Police Station. Police Auxiliary Officers manage the court custody centre, and Ventia provides court security and custodial transport services.

At the time of inspection, cells looked clean and free from graffiti. There were three 'H' cells, three 'C' cells and one padded cell. None of the cells had a television to pre-occupy people waiting for court. 'H' cells did not have hatches on doors, so staff had to speak to people in custody through the perspex screen in a loud voice. This was not satisfactory or private. The padded cell was expected to be refurbished in coming year due to people picking at and damaging the padded walls.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	3
Holding cells	7
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	16

There is an exercise yard that is usually used for young people or people who are more agitated as it offers more space and fresh air, although the roof is covered. We were told that young people are always held separately from adults. However, adult women were not held out of sight of adult males.

Details of each person held in custody was maintained on a whiteboard outside each cell. However, one cell had been vacated and Ventia staff were not aware where the person had gone as there were no details on the whiteboard. A Police Auxiliary Officer told us an intoxicated woman stayed in the cell overnight to sober up and had been released in the morning. It was concerning that this information had not been conveyed appropriately to all staff.

Breakfast was provided and included toast with jam, vegemite, or honey. Greenough Regional Prison provides lunch for prisoners. This includes a sandwich and fruit. The police provide pies and sausage rolls for everyone else. Hot drinks and blankets were available on request.

The control room was small with no natural light. Two monitors of multiple screens were placed above the computer and the room had been reconfigured to maximise screen visibility. But the room also doubled up as their lunchroom as there was no running water in the designated kitchen, and it was only big enough for four people.

## Kalgoorlie Courthouse

The Kalgoorlie Courthouse has a combined court custody centre and police lock-up with six standard cells and one padded cell for people at-risk of self-harm. Ventia manage people held in custody for court purposes, in addition to court security and local custodial transport services. The relationship between local police and Ventia staff was positive and collaborative.

At the time of inspection, Ventia had nine staff based at the Kalgoorlie Courthouse. An additional two staff members were due to start shortly. The team appeared to be supported well by their line manager.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	4
Holding cells	7
Interview rooms	2
Ventia staff	12

When inspecting the cells, we identified various damage to walls and ceilings. Staff explained that mining blasts were responsible for cracks throughout the building, including within cells. We were informed that a recent building inspection found no structural issues, but cracks were being monitored.

We also observed damage to walls caused by people scraping off plaster with their fingernails. We were told that the render used on the walls was soft making it easy for people to chip away at it. Similar damage was observed on the walls of the two non-contact interview rooms. There were plans to paint cells in an anti-graffiti coating, but staff noted this was unlikely to stop graffiti by scraping plaster with fingernails.

All people held in custody were offered the standard variety of hot meals provided by Ventia in addition to hot drinks upon request. The Ventia team leader explained how readily available meals and hot drinks were important for settling people and reducing the potential for incidents to occur. Blankets are available on request and laundered by Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison.

## Kununurra Courthouse

The Kununurra Courthouse is part of a larger complex that also includes the police lock-up. People arriving at the court are initially received by the police, who are responsible for conducting initial searches. Prior to attending court, Ventia staff use a secure tunnel to escort people in custody to holding cells. Access to lawyers is available using one of the four non-contact interview rooms. These were clean but heavily marked with graffiti. Ventia was also responsible for court security and local custodial transport services.

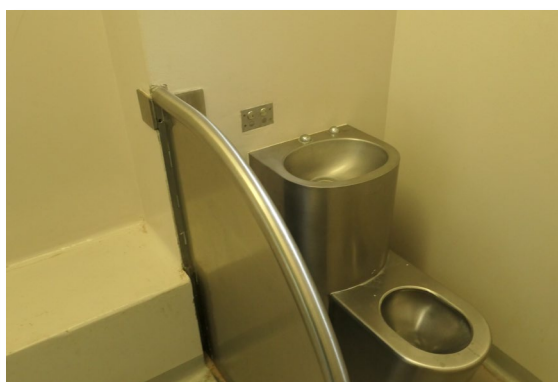
There are five holding cells at the facility. Each cell has a television, toilet, drink fountain and a secure hatch door for receiving meals provided by police. There is one padded cell for people at-risk of self-harm, which we were told was used regularly. There are dedicated cells for young people. We were told they can be kept in the holding cells for up to three days before being flown to Perth via Broome.

There were five out of eight Ventia staff on duty on the day of our inspection. Only one was a local, with the remainder flying in from other areas. There was a female officer covering for the week, but the following week would see the centre without a female staff member, which was not ideal. One Ventia officer told us he had worked 25 days in a row because he was the only person licenced to drive the transport vehicle.

We were informed by staff that only 35 of the available 163 cameras were working. Staff told us there was an upgrade to the server planned. In 2019 we found around 30 cameras were not working, suggesting this has been an ongoing issue for some time.

Despite staffing and technology challenges, Ventia appeared to have a good working relationship with court staff and the police, which assisted in the daily running of the various court processes.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	5
Interview rooms	4
Ventia staff	8



Photos 30-31: Inside the custody holding cells at the Kununurra Courthouse.

## South Hedland Courthouse

There are two holding cells and a single non-contact interview room within the South Hedland Courthouse. The facility is connected to South Hedland Police Station, who are responsible for managing the custody of people prior to their court appearance. Ventia staff escort people in custody from the police holding cells into the court holding cells, where they are held for a short time before being seen by the Magistrate. Ventia also provide court security.

At the time of inspection, the condition of the court holding cells were considered below standard. We observed ingrained dirt and grime, and graffiti scratched into surfaces throughout. The cells were clearly in need of deep cleaning and repainting.

Meals are not provided by Ventia because people are not held in the court holding cells for very long. However, on occasion when a District Court trial is running all day, Ventia will request food from the police custody centre. Hot drinks are available on request.

There are five permanent Ventia staff based at South Hedland. This is sufficient to run one court. But we heard that if a second court is running, or if somebody is off sick, relief coverage by way of secondees is unreliable. There are another two positions at the Roebourne transport base (both currently filled by secondees). If necessary, South Hedland can utilise these staff, otherwise they just make do.

There were three monitors in the control room, split into multiple screens each showing footage from different cameras. Each of the three monitors covered a different area – courtroom, public waiting area, custody area. Staff felt the coverage of CCTV cameras was generally good. They also felt that there were plenty of working radios, swipe cards, and key sets. A recent installation of a new router in the control room had also improved connectivity across the site.

Stakeholder relationships between Ventia, the court, and South Hedland Police appeared to be positive. Ventia staff also advised they had a good working relationship with Roebourne Regional Prison.

Infrastructure and staffing	
Courts	2
Holding cells	2
Interview rooms	1
Ventia staff	5



Photos 32-33: Cells were in poor condition at South Hedland Courthouse.

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## Appendix D Acronyms

Term	Expansion of Abbreviation
ARMS	At-risk Management System
CBD	Central Business District
CCTV	Closed-circuit Television
CLC	Central Law Courts
COPP	Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedures
CS&CS	Court Security and Custodial Services
DCB	District Court Building
DOJ	Department of Justice
G4S	G4S Custodial Services Pty Ltd
NWH	Northbridge Watch House
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PAO	Police Auxiliary Officers
PCC	Perth Children's Court
WLG	Western Liberty Group



# **Response to OICS Draft Report:**

## **Inspection of Court Custody Centres**

**March 2025**

Version 1.0

## Response Overview

### Introduction

On 31 August 2023, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the commencement of the inspection of court custody centres (the inspection).

To assist with the inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) provided a range of documentation as well as access to systems, custody centres, staff and people in custody.

On 29 January 2025, the Department received the draft report on the inspection which contained five recommendations.

For the Inspector's consideration when finalising the report, a list of inaccuracies and clarifying comments against the report findings as raised by the Department can be found in **Appendix A**.

A similar list of inaccuracies and clarifying comments as raised by Western Liberty Group can be found in **Appendix B**.

### Department Comments

The operation of court custody centres Statewide is a highly complex system involving various internal and external stakeholders working in collaboration to maintain a high standard of service delivery, security, and safety for people in custody who attend these centres, staff and the community.

The management of court custody centres is facilitated through two contracts:

- 1) The CBD Courts Contract, through contractor Western Liberty Group (WLG) and sub-contractor G4S, for the management of the District Court Building (DCB) and Central Law Courts (CLC).
- 2) The Court Security and Custodial Services (CS&CS) Contract, through contractor Ventia, for the management of all other court custody centres Statewide, in addition to the provision of custodial transport services.

A number of internal stakeholders are also involved covering various aspects of court custody centre operations, including:

- The CS&CS Contract Management Team (Operational Support Directorate), and Youth Custodial Services (Young People Directorate), *Corrective Services Division*.
- The Courts Contract Team, and the Court Risk Assessment Directorate (CRAD), *Court and Tribunal Services Division*.
- The Infrastructure and Environment Directorate, *Corporate Services Division*.

To demonstrate the complexities and inter-dependencies of managing and maintaining the various court custody centres, the table below highlights the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders by court location.



Court Custody Centre	Infrastructure Ownership	Maintenance Responsibility	Managing Personnel	Governance and Oversight
District Court Building (including connecting infrastructure to Central Law Courts)	Western Liberty Group	Western Liberty Group	G4S	CBD Courts Contract Team
Central Law Courts	The State	Infrastructure and Environment Directorate	G4S	CBD Courts Contract Team
Perth Children's Court	The State	Infrastructure and Environment Directorate	Ventia (non-custodial areas and general security)  Youth Custodial Services (custodial areas and supervision of young people)	CS&CS Contract Management Team  Young People Directorate
All other court custody centres Statewide	The State	Infrastructure and Environment Directorate	Ventia	CS&CS Contract Management Team

The Department conducts frequent reviews of contractor policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people held in custody. This is critically important with respect to Ventia policies and procedures given its role in the provision of custodial transportation services Statewide. All Ventia Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) are currently under review to ensure alignment with relevant Commissioner's Operating Policies and Procedures (COPPs).

The findings from the inspection in relation to searching improvements are noted with Ventia having completed its review of *Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) Chapter 5 – Screening and Searches Courthouse Users*. Ventia have submitted the SOP to the Department for endorsement who will consider the findings in order to propose any additional amendments to SOP Chapter 5 as necessary.

While the Department is concerned that strip searching procedures of young people by contractors may not be conducted in accordance with policy, it was pleasing to note that the Department's Youth Custodial Services staff within the Perth Children's Court were found to be compliant with the best-practice policy provisions for the searching of young people as set out in COPP 11.2 – Searching (Youth).

While recommendation 4 pertaining to the strip searching of young people has been directed to both G4S and Ventia, it should be noted that young people are not held in custody in either the DCB or CLC, and therefore this recommendation is not applicable to G4S. Action being undertaken in relation to Ventia SOPs is detailed in the response to recommendation 4.

The provision of blankets in court custody centres is a complicated matter. Although reported within the inspection findings that blankets are provided within the CLC, but not the DCB, WLG have clarified that blankets are not provided in either location by its sub-contractor, G4S, due to self-harm and security risks.

This is in contrast to Ventia who do allow the provision of blankets within court custody centres and are making efforts to improve processes in this respect. Actions undertaken include auditing of blanket stock at all Ventia court locations, ordering of additional stock where required, and establishing improved drycleaning processes through the engagement of contractors to collect used blankets daily and being washed over weekends, with clean blankets returned to court locations at the commencement of each week.

While the Department acknowledges Ventia's practice to provide blankets to people in custody is different to that of G4S, Ventia have safeguards in place to ensure blankets are provided and used in a safe manner.

Maintaining the infrastructure of court custody centres Statewide is an ongoing priority and routine maintenance and infrastructure replacement plans are established at all court custody centres owned by the State to ensure court infrastructure is maintained to a safe and secure standard. The Department's Court Risk Assessment Directorate also conducts regular security assessments of court locations to identify where improvements in relation to security and safety can be made.

Many court locations are located in registered heritage buildings, requiring engagement with the Heritage Council of WA, including comprehensive assessments and approvals to determine what structural works, if any, can be facilitated to improve the safety and security of court locations while also remaining compliant with heritage building legislation and regulations.

Noting the above, identified infrastructure improvements at each court location are investigated and remedied where possible. All court custody centres managed by the State can report infrastructure issues directly with the Infrastructure and Environment Directorate who, subject to prioritisation, will undertake investigative works on the reported issues.

In respect to the DCB, this infrastructure is owned by WLG who are responsible for the ongoing maintenance and any improvements to the infrastructure of the building.

The Department is satisfied with the overall management of court custody centres, which provide crucial services to the WA community. The Department will continue to work in collaboration with WLG and Ventia in an effort to improve the services provided at court locations Statewide.

## Response to Recommendations

### 1 Provide clean and hygienic blankets to all people held in court custody centres.

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

#### Response:

The provision of clean and hygienic blankets is supported by Ventia who have undertaken a number of actions to ensure this occurs, including the completion of a stocktake of blankets Statewide to ensure each location has adequate stock, and the engagement of drycleaning services at each location to ensure frequent washing of used blankets.

The CS&CS Contract Management Team will monitor Ventia's compliance with the ongoing provision of clean blankets to ensure this recommendation is addressed.

The Department has liaised with WLG regarding the provision of blankets within the DCB and CLC and the provision of blankets within both centres is not supported by WLG due to the risks associated with blankets which may be used by persons in custody to:

- shield themselves from observation by in-cell CCTV cameras during self-harm attempts;
- obstruct visual welfare checks undertaken by G4S officers; and
- be used as a tool during self-harm attempts.

### 2 Invest in body scanning technology at court custody centres to minimise the use of strip searching.

Level of Acceptance:	Supported in Principle
Responsible Division:	Court and Tribunal Services
Responsible Directorate:	Strategic Business Development

#### Response:

While the Department supports the principle of this recommendation, there are potential practical impediments to the installation and use of such systems across the court custody centres Statewide.

Research would be required to be undertaken in regard to potential radiation exposure levels along with potential facility issues surrounding the required space to install and safely operate such a unit. In addition, the system would be operated by a security contractor and as such training would be required and potential turnover of staff may become an issue.

Although body scanning is already utilised at certain custodial facilities including Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina, further research and discussion would need to be undertaken with these facilities in regard to the benefits of such a system. Additional consideration would be the number of times a person in custody would be exposed to such a system and potential radiation exposure of frequent use.

The Department will therefore form a policy position for consideration by the Director General and Government on this matter.

**3 Ventia and G4S to revise policies on searching to incorporate strip search safeguarding provisions contained within the Department of Justice's Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure (COPP) 11.2 – Searching.**

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

**Response:**

Best-practice strip search safeguarding provisions are already incorporated in G4S policies, procedures and training materials.

Ventia SOP Chapter 5 has recently been updated to align with *COPP 11.2 – Searching (Adult)* and is currently under review by the Department for final approval.

**4 Ventia and G4S to ensure strip searching of young people is used in exceptional circumstances only, and policies and procedures are aligned with the Department of Justice's policy on searching, and the Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999.**

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

**Response:**

Noting the rarity that Ventia Officers will have custody of and be required to strip search young people, as part of its review and endorsement of SOP Chapter 5, the Department will ensure a provision is included stipulating that Ventia Officers must refer to and follow all procedures outlined in *COPP 9.6 – Searching (Youth)* if ever required to strip search a young person.

This recommendation is not applicable to G4S as young people are not held in either the DCB or CLC custody centres.

**5 To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and people in custody, the Department should conduct an audit of court custody centre infrastructure across the state to identify priority improvements.**

Level of Acceptance:	Supported in Principle
Responsible Division:	Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate:	Infrastructure and Environment Directorate

**Response:**

A funding submission to undertake building condition assessments (BCAs) of all court buildings maintained by the State has been included as part of the 2025-26 budget process.



If successful, the data from the BCAs will inform maintenance planning for all court locations, noting any major infrastructure improvements identified will require additional capital expenditure.

All court custody centres continue to be maintained in accordance with their respective infrastructure and maintenance plans that outline their ongoing maintenance requirements and infrastructure replacement schedules, noting critical infrastructure shortfalls that may impact the safety and wellbeing of staff and people in custody will continue to be investigated and remedied where possible.

In respect of the DCB, this infrastructure is owned by WLG who are responsible for the ongoing building maintenance and upgrades in accordance with the CBD Courts Contract.

## Appendix F Ventia's Response



Court Security and Custodial Services  
25 Baile Road  
CANNINGVALE WA 6155

26 February 2025

Eamon Ryan  
Inspector of Custodial Services  
Level 5 Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
Perth, Western Australia 6000

Dear Eamon

### **DRAFT 2023 INSPECTION REPORT – COURT CUSTODY CENTRES – VENTIA RESPONSE**

We refer to your letter dated 29 January 2025 enclosing a copy of the draft report of the 2023 Inspection of Court Custody Centres (Report).

Ventia responds as follows to each of the Report's recommendations:

**1. Recommendation 1: Provide clean and hygienic blankets to all people held in court custody centres**

Ventia supports the recommendation. Ventia notes the Report's findings that most custody centres had their own arrangements for laundering blankets, which at times led to a shortage of clean and hygienic blankets at some sites.

Ventia has recently commenced a new process to improve the coordination and supply of blankets to persons in custody across its court sites. All dirty blankets will be collected from court sites in the afternoon by a drycleaning contractor, which will be washed over the weekend and returned on Monday morning. An audit was carried out on the number of blankets at each court site, and where they had a shortage, orders were placed to provide them with an adequate number of blankets.

**2. Recommendation 2: Invest in body scanning technology at court custody centres to minimise the use of strip searching**

Whilst the decision to implement body scanning technology at court custody centres does not fall within Ventia's Court Security & Custodial Services scope, Ventia supports the recommendation and a move in this direction by the Department of Justice.

**3. Recommendation 3: Ventia and G4S to revise policies on searching to incorporate strip search safeguarding provisions contained within the Department of Justice's *Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure (COPP) 11.2 – Searching***

Ventia supports the recommendation. Ventia will update its Standard Operating Procedure on Screening and Searching to reflect COPP 11.2.

4. **Recommendation 4: Ventia and G4S to ensure strip searching of young people is used in exceptional circumstances only, and policies and procedures are aligned with the Department of Justice's policy on searching, and the Court Security and Custodial Services Act 1999**

Ventia supports the recommendation. Ventia will not conduct strip searching of juveniles except in exceptional circumstances and will ensure that its Standard Operating Procedure on Screening and Searching is updated to align with the Department's policy on searching and the Court Security and Custodial Services Act. Ventia management will communicate this standard to court custody staff, to ensure consistent application and eliminate any confusion.

5. **Recommendation 5: To ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and people in custody, the Department should conduct an audit of court custody centre infrastructure across the state to identify priority improvements.**

Whilst the condition of court custody centre infrastructure does not fall within Ventia's Court Security & Custodial Services scope, Ventia supports the recommendation including an audit and subsequent upgrade plan by the Department of Justice. Ventia notes the Report highlights several concerns and challenges posed by the ageing, deteriorating and poorly designed court infrastructure, and the increased safety risk this imposes on Ventia's staff, persons in custody and the community. Previous infrastructure upgrades have provided significant improvements to the safety and comfort of all court users, and continuing or accelerating this type of program especially in the more challenging court locations will offer substantial benefits to the state.

#### **Additional Comments**

The Report highlights staff shortage observations placing pressure on court custody centres. Ventia acknowledges this and has an extensive recruitment and retention program underway. This program includes bringing on a new indigenous staffing subcontractor Yampuru, revamping Ventia's own recruitment program, carrying out a significant number of assessment centres for new candidates, building up the number of initial training programs that occur each year, restructuring the operational leadership team with improved capability especially in regional locations and taking a new approach to this round of enterprise agreement negotiations. Ventia is also keen to continue to work with the Department of Justice on the overall environmental factors that are impacting staffing levels across the whole sector and attempt to solve this challenge at a strategic level.

If you have any queries, please contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Gavin Campbell  
Contract Director | Court Security & Custodial Services



## Appendix G Inspection Details

Previous inspection	
31 August – 19 December 2023	
Inspection team	
Inspector	Eamon Ryan
Deputy Inspector	Jane Higgins
A/Director Operations	Christine Wyatt
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Liz George
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Lauren Netto
Inspections and Research Officer	Jim Bryden
Inspections and Research Officer	Kieran Artelaris
Inspections and Research Officer	Cliff Holdom
Inspections and Research Officer	Ben Shaw
Inspections and Research Officer	Charles Staples

Key dates	
Inspection announced	31 August 2023
Start of on-site inspection	31 August 2023
Completion of on-site inspection	19 December 2023
Presentation of preliminary findings	N/A
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	29 January 2025
Draft response received from Department of Justice	2 April 2025
Declaration of prepared report	8 April 2025

*Inspection of prisons, court custody centres, prescribed lock-ups,  
youth detention centres, and review of custodial services in Western Australia*



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