

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 Yampurru, 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