



2025 INSPECTION OF BROOME REGIONAL PRISON

166

DECEMBER 2025

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



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

The Inspector of Custodial Services and staff acknowledge 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.

Artwork Acknowledgement

Marcia McGuire – Kolbang ‘Going Forward’ (2025)

Format: Digital illustration (cover uses elements)

The artwork *Kolbang* – meaning ‘going forward’ – depicts the positive impacts the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has on the custodial estate in Western Australia.

The artwork embodies traditional knowledge passed on from Marcia McGuire’s families of the Whadjuk, Ballardong, Yued Noongar and Badimia Yamatji Aboriginal People.



2025 Inspection of Broome Regional Prison

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Inspector's Overview

Broome Regional Prison is unfit for purpose

On any day the population of Broome Regional Prison (Broome) consists primarily of men and a very small number of women. Approximately 95% of which are First Nations people from the Kimberley region.

Men held on remand are accommodated in the Maximum-Security Section, which is overcrowded, degraded and unhygienic, with cockroach infestations, broken fittings, and men sleeping on mattresses on the floor, all of which contributed to the poor living conditions. Conditions for women were marginally better, but at the time of our inspection they had to share their unit with men because of population demands. This does not meet any of the minimum standards universally expected for prisons and set out in various international and national instruments (ONODC, 2015) (Corrective Services Administrators' Council, 2018)

Conditions in the minimum-security unit for men were slightly better, with more space and freedom of movement, but the unit was still untidy and there was a very limited daily regime for most of the prisoners held there.

Most services for prisoners were inadequate, including health and mental health. But our report also details some exceptions to this, for example: the improved section 95 community work program; some voluntary vocational courses; weekly visits by community elders; and the development of stronger community engagement and relationships.

Overall, the problem is that Broome is entirely unsuitable and unfit for purpose. But this is nothing new, in fact this Office has been saying so since our first inspection of the prison back in 2001 (OICS, 2002) and in every report on the prison since then.

Over the intervening 25 years there have been many government announcements about the future of the prison, including one in 2012 that the prison would be closed, a decision that was subsequently reversed in 2015. More recently in November 2017 the then Minister for Corrective Services was quoted in the ABC News - following the release of our 2017 inspection report (OICS, 2017) - as saying that in the long-term Broome needed to be replaced. Around the same time, funding was announced for a \$2.7M upgrade, referred to by the then Minister as a 'stop-gap' solution.

In the May 2019 budget, the government announced it had allocated \$1.4M to begin planning for a new facility to replace Broome, which would be built outside of town at a site yet to be determined.

Now over 5 years later, a site has not been confirmed, no construction work has commenced, and the uncertainty surrounding the prison remains. In the meantime, there have been hundreds of men and women pass through the prison enduring sub-standard conditions and limited rehabilitation opportunities.

At this stage, the only certainty for Broome seems to be that this intolerable situation will remain for the foreseeable future. The people who will suffer the most will be the men and women sent there,

and the staff who work there. But ultimately the local community will be worse off because men and women will be released from the prison no better than when they were first sent there.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have one Independent Prison Visitor for Broome . She is a community volunteer appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services, who attends the prison on a regular basis observing the operations of the prison and providing an opportunity for the men and women placed there to raise issues and complaints that informs the work of our office. I acknowledge the importance of the work undertaken and thank her for her contribution to our ongoing monitoring of Broome.

I acknowledge the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from the Superintendent and staff at Broome and from key personnel in the Department.

The men and women living in Broome who took the time to speak with us and share their perspectives also deserve our acknowledgement and thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the inspection team for their expertise and hard work throughout the inspection. I would also particularly acknowledge and thank Liz George and Ben Shaw, for their work in planning this inspection and Ben as principal drafter of this report.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

2 December 2025

Summary of Findings

Broome's role was unclear, and its replacement had stalled

Broome's vision was undermined by high receivals, longer stays in the Maximum-Security Section (MSS), and poor infrastructure. Plans to replace Broome had not progressed despite longstanding recognition that the site was unfit for purpose. Interim investment will be essential while a modern, fit-for-purpose facility is planned and delivered. (Recommendations 1–3)

Daily life and wellbeing were compromised by poor living conditions

The MSS was overcrowded, degraded and unhygienic, with cockroach infestations, broken fittings and men sleeping on mattresses on cell floors which contributed to the poor living conditions. Minimum-security accommodation was basic and poorly maintained. In the female unit, women were accommodated alongside men due to pressure on beds, with overcrowded cells and very limited access to active recreation. (Recommendation 4)

Meaningful activity was limited, especially for those in the MSS and female unit

Access to recreation and purposeful activity was minimal in the MSS and female unit. Few prisoners in the MSS could use the basketball court, and women had no access. A covered area and equitable access to the court are needed to support wellbeing. (Recommendation 5)

Contact with family was available but underused

Fewer than a third of prisoners received a social visit in the six months to May 2025, and e-visits were rarely used and not well understood. About one third of approved funeral attendances did not proceed due to contractor cancellations and staffing shortages, with limited alternative cultural grief supports.

Rehabilitation was ineffective with significant gaps

The number of prisoner employment positions had increased but many roles lacked structure and oversight. No criminogenic programs were delivered at Broome which restricted the ability for prisoners to be released to parole at their earliest eligibility. Education access was inconsistent and at risk due to various staffing issues. Re-entry services were irregular and thin on the ground. A permanent Transitional Manager is needed to coordinate and address gaps in release planning. (Recommendations 6–7)

Health services struggle to meet complex need

Primary health care access was restricted by nursing vacancies and only four GP hours per week. External escorts cancelled by the transport contractor disrupted clinics, requiring custodial staff to escort prisoners, which in turn led to more lockdowns. Mental health provision relied on limited telehealth without on-site MHAOD clinicians. Crisis care was inadequate for acutely unwell people. Substance dependence support beyond withdrawal management was minimal. Information-sharing with the Department of Health was inefficient, with no direct access to key public health systems. (Recommendations 8–10)

Culture, community, and disability supports were improving

A partnership with the local Adult Community Corrections Office, had seen the Aboriginal Services

Committee help the prison reconnect with the community through the restart of a Section 95 employment program, and the commencement of an Elders program, all of which were positive initiatives. The absence of a Prison Support Officer and Aboriginal Visitors Scheme worker left gaps in cultural and welfare support. While the remote peer support model was well-intentioned it was severely impacted by logistics. Disability support was driven by committed individuals rather than systematised processes. ([Recommendations 11–12](#))

Security upgrades were welcome, but oversight was under-resourced

Broome had installed and upgraded additional CCTV cameras, and a pulse-energised fence around the female unit. However, there was no dedicated control room and staff struggled to monitor the security systems while managing other duties. Security oversight was inadequate, as the facility relied on a single Security Manager to cover all security responsibilities. The location and staffing profile left the site vulnerable to contraband. Staff confidence in current measures was low. ([Recommendation 13](#))

Conclusion

Broome remains well below standard. A replacement facility is overdue and until then, Broome requires a clearer purpose, targeted investment, and increased staffing and service coordination to improve the wellbeing, dignity, and rehabilitation prospects of people in custody, and to support staff to deliver safe, efficient, and humane services.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
Recommendation 1 The Department should clearly define Broome's role within the custodial estate and ensure the prison is properly supported to fulfil its intended purpose safely and effectively.	2	Supported
Recommendation 2 The Government should prioritise the replacement of Broome with a fit-for-purpose, appropriately resourced facility capable of meeting current and future demand.	4	Noted
Recommendation 3 The Department should significantly increase investment in infrastructure and resources at Broome to improve conditions and services for people in custody, until such time that a modern, purpose-built replacement facility is approved and constructed.	4	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 4 Prioritise urgent infrastructure repairs, cleaning, and pest control in the Maximum-Security Section.	9	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 5 Restore access to the basketball court for maximum-security and female prisoners by installing a covered area to allow safe and consistent use throughout the year.	12	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 6 Review the re-entry service contract at Broome to ensure value, effectiveness, and alignment with contract obligations.	18	Supported
Recommendation 7 Establish a Transitional Manager position to coordinate reintegration and release planning.	18	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 8 Substantively fill all nursing vacancies and increase GP resourcing to meet demand.	20	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 9 Resource on-site mental health services and in-reach clinical support to meet growing demand.	22	Not Supported
Recommendation 10 Establish a formal information-sharing policy with the Department of Health, including secure access to systems such as Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System (PSOLIS) for prison-based health staff.	24	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 11 Expand the Aboriginal Services Committee to include a broader range of community stakeholders.	26	Supported – Current Practice / Project

Recommendation 12 Reinstate and properly fund Prison Support Officers and Aboriginal Visitors Scheme staff to strengthen prisoner support services.	27	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 13 Increase security staffing levels.	31	Supported in Principle

Background

In 2012, the state government announced plans to close the prison following the opening of West Kimberley Regional Prison (WKRP) in Derby. Staffing and services at Broome were reduced, and management was transferred to WKRP. However, in 2015, this decision was reversed, and Broome resumed local management in 2016.

In 2019, the current government allocated \$1.4 million to plan a new prison. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between the Shire of Broome, Yawuru (Traditional Land Owners), and the Department of Justice committing to a collaborative site selection process, conducted in good faith, and inclusive of Yawuru and wider Kimberley community input. However, at the time of this inspection, there had been no progress in identifying a site for the new prison.

Since the first inspection in 2001, all eight previous inspections have consistently found Broome to be below standard. The need to replace Broome with a modern, fit-for-purpose facility remains critical to this day.



BROOME REGIONAL PRISON FACT PAGE

ROLE OF FACILITY

Broome manages remand and sentenced prisoners of all security ratings. The prison population is predominantly Aboriginal men from across the Kimberley region, but a small unit is usually set aside for female prisoners. Broome also manages the Wyndham Work Camp.

HISTORY

Broome Regional Prison is the oldest operational prison in Western Australia. Originally commissioned in 1945, the prison includes three accommodation blocks and administrative buildings centred around the 'Bull Pen,' a secure shed built in 1895.

Broome operates as a minimum-security prison for both men and women, but also accommodates remand and sentenced prisoners across all security classifications. The population is predominantly First Nations men from the Kimberley region. A small unit is designated for female prisoners, though it is frequently repurposed, particularly during periods of overcrowding.

OFFICIAL CAPACITY

66

**PRISONERS AT TIME OF
INSPECTION**

76

as at 18 May 2025

**PRISONERS SLEEPING
ON THE FLOOR**

12



Broome Regional Prison (Broome) is located on Yawuru land in the centre of Broome Township, 2,174 kilometres north of Perth.



INSPECTION DATE

18 May to 23 May 2025



The Inspection Process

This inspection was guided by the Office's *Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Services* (the Standards) (OICS, 2025), which draws on expectations and rights established in relevant international treaties and guidelines. The Standards provide a framework for assessing the performance of custodial facilities.

The scope of this inspection was refined to focus on 18 of the 33 adult standards, across six of the eight core themes. The scoping was based on the assessment of available evidence such as liaison visit reports, data on key indicators, a self-assessment completed by the Superintendent, and themes arising from Independent Visitor reports.

Before the on-site inspection, surveys were conducted with prisoners and staff, and interviews were held with departmental staff, key prison personnel, and service providers. Additional documents from the Department and demographic data also informed the inspection's lines of inquiry.

The on-site inspection took place over five days in May 2025. It involved engagement with management, staff, and prisoners; observation of key processes; and review of relevant documentation. At the end of the inspection week, a debrief was held with senior management to present preliminary findings.

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on evidence gathered throughout the inspection process. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has been used to summarise inspection notes to prepare an early draft. This draft was then subject to human oversight, cross referencing, contextualisation, proofing and editing to ensure accuracy, clarity, and readability. The Department was provided with an opportunity to respond to recommendations in this report.



1 Despite good local intentions, systemic issues contributed to Broome's continued decline

We found Broome's vision was undermined by overcrowding, high prisoner intake, and an unclear long-term direction. Despite committed staff and leadership, daily operations were strained, and frequent transfers to nearby West Kimberley Regional Prison (WKRP) offered only short-term relief. Without urgent investment and a clearly defined role within the Department's broader strategy, Broome cannot meet the needs of the Kimberley's growing prisoner population.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 1 – Operational planning

A strategic vision informs a comprehensive plan of the custodial facility's priorities, principles, values, and actions.

1.1 Broome's vision was undermined by population pressures and resourcing challenges

Broome had an up-to-date strategic plan with a clear and future-focused vision, aimed at supporting prisoners in the Kimberley with re-entry into the community through health, education, and rehabilitation services. However, this vision was undermined by serious operational challenges, including overcrowding, limited resources, and deteriorating infrastructure. This meant Broome's dual-purpose role as the primary receival facility for the Kimberley and a minimum-security prison, appeared conflicted.

In the months prior to the inspection, Broome had faced significant population pressures. It had experienced some of the highest receival rates in the state, receiving nearly four times its operational capacity between January and April 2025. Medium and maximum-security prisoners were also staying longer than before. This meant men were staying in the highly restrictive Maximum-Security Section (MSS) far longer than the unit's intended purpose as a short-term placement prior to transfer. The prison's limited infrastructure meant there were few alternative placement options, other than confinement in multi-purpose cells or placement in the women's unit, which was detrimental to women in custody. This situation was increasingly untenable.

The prison's staffing was also not equipped to safely manage a diverse and complex population. Staff reported feeling stressed, under-resourced and overwhelmed. Staff also reported challenges in maintaining secure environments while balancing rehabilitation and welfare.

We also observed security gaps that could compromise safety in any standard maximum-security setting. These included gates being left open, minimal checks on people using the intercom to enter the facility, and doors being propped open. Recreational items like darts – which could be used as a weapon – were available in maximum security areas, and prisoners had ready access to boiling water – which could lead to scalding injuries – to make themselves hot beverages in reception.

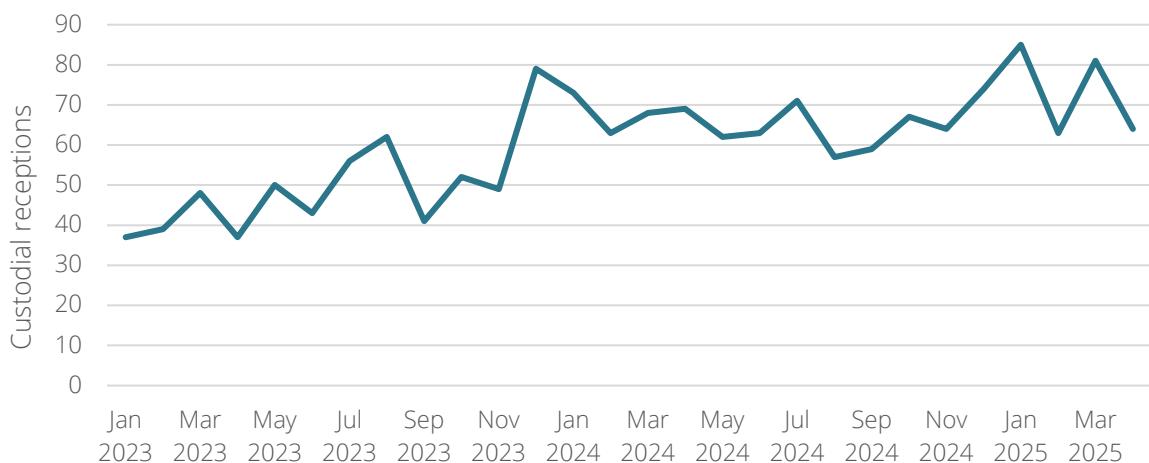


Figure 1: Receptions at Broome Regional Prison had increased significantly since over the past few years.

These issues all highlight the disconnect between the prison's formal minimum-security classification and its operational reality. The Department needs to clearly define Broome's long-term purpose within the custodial estate to ensure the prison can meet current and future demands.

Recommendation 1

The Department should clearly define Broome's role within the custodial estate and ensure the prison is properly supported to fulfil its intended purpose safely and effectively.

Staff were committed but overwhelmed by the increase in prisoner arrivals

Broome had a committed leadership team and dedicated staff who worked hard to improve prisoner services. Most senior roles were substantively filled by experienced personnel, including a Superintendent with 35 years of service across various facilities and business areas.

Many staff members, both custodial and non-custodial, had been at Broome for several years and showed genuine care for the wellbeing of prisoners. We observed several examples of staff going above and beyond, supporting distressed prisoners, helping with family contact, and communicating clearly with new arrivals. During a town hall meeting, staff voiced strong concerns about overcrowding and poor conditions, especially for female prisoners.

The high rate of prisoner receptions had also left many staff feeling overwhelmed. Managers reported struggling to keep up with their workloads, with every member of the leadership team reporting they frequently worked after hours to stay on top of tasks. Unit staff were also dealing with complex paperwork and managing multiple regimes often in a single unit.

The Department must recognise the strain on Broome's staff and consider how to better support them. Staff commitment and compassion was evident, but without increased support, sustaining this level of dedication will be challenging.

Prisoner transfers only provided short-term relief

Frequent prisoner transfers helped ease overcrowding at Broome, with movements occurring by road to WKRP and by air to metropolitan facilities. However, this relief was short-lived due to high intake rates from local courts and regional areas, and the ongoing need to accommodate new arrivals.

The process was also complex and time consuming. Broome staff were required to forecast incoming prisoner numbers, assess travel fitness, and coordinate with other facilities, a process that was dependent on strong inter-prison cooperation at a time when most prisons across the state were at, or near, capacity. Despite the challenges, we were pleased to see Broome was maintaining a productive relationship with WKRP to manage transfers efficiently.

Before the inspection, it was noted the absence of a centralised population management system placed the burden of coordination on local staff. This sometimes led to risky situations, such as late-day arrivals with little time to settle before lockdown, or cultural disconnection for First Nations prisoners who preferred to remain on-Country.

To address these issues, the Department established the Adult Prisoner Population Coordination Working Group (APPCWG) in April 2025. This group provides strategic oversight of prisoner movements and growth. The Superintendent Administration can escalate transfer-related concerns to the APPCWG. Although still in its early stages, the initiative is expected to reduce pressure on regional prisons and improve coordination, with greater sensitivity to cultural and wellbeing needs.

1.2 Plans to replace Broome had stalled, despite a longstanding recognition it was unfit for purpose

Every inspection of Broome, including the first in 2001, has found Broome to be below standard. In 2005, the then Inspector of Custodial Services, Professor Richard Harding, said Broome should not operate beyond that decade (OICS, 2005).

In 2019, funding was allocated to plan a new prison, and by 2022 a site was proposed at Broome Road Industrial Park. However, for various reasons the proposal has not progressed.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also drawn up to guide consultation between the Department, the Shire of Broome, and Nyamba Buru Yawuru (Traditional Land Owners), but we were told there had been no contact between parties since mid to late 2024. We understand both groups are open to resuming discussions with the government, but progress remains stalled.

We also acknowledge that, with the recent surge in the prisoner population across the state, there are competing needs and priorities for new custodial infrastructure. This leaves Broome's future uncertain.

Notwithstanding this, we reiterate the need to replace Broome is urgent and must be addressed with investment that is culturally responsive and capable of meeting the growing needs of the Kimberley prisoner population. Without action, Broome will continue to operate below acceptable standards, impacting both staff and prisoners.

Recommendation 2

The Government should prioritise the replacement of Broome with a fit-for-purpose, appropriately resourced facility capable of meeting current and future demand.

Existing infrastructure requires significant works and maintenance

In lieu of a new prison, there is an ongoing need to invest in the maintenance and upgrade of existing infrastructure. Internal assessment reports identify a need for comprehensive upgrades to essential services, immediate repairs to prisoner accommodation, and a sustained program of regular maintenance to address structural and safety risks, and to ensure the ongoing viability and safe operation of the prison (MPA, 2025).



If Broome is to continue serving as both a minimum-security prison and the main intake facility for the region, it requires significant additional investment to ensure it is fit for purpose. Current conditions at Broome are not acceptable and, without meaningful investment, will continue to fall short of what is deemed acceptable for custodial conditions.

Photo 1: The heritage-listed 'bull pen' was closed, with its crumbling walls reflecting the impact of age and need for regular upkeep.

Recommendation 3

The Department should significantly increase investment in infrastructure and resources at Broome to improve conditions and services for people in custody, until such time that a modern, purpose-built replacement facility is approved and constructed.

2 Prisoners' daily life and wellbeing was compromised by poor living conditions

Broome continues to face challenges with overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to recreation and family contact—particularly in the MSS and female units. Many prisoners still lack meaningful activities, engagement, and support, which negatively impacts their wellbeing.

The conditions in the MSS remained the most concerning. Basic hygiene in cells and communal areas was poor, and maintenance had fallen well below acceptable standards. These conditions were not only degrading but also created health and safety risks for prisoners and staff. While some men tolerated conditions that would not be tolerated at other facilities, their acceptance does not make these conditions acceptable. It does not change our finding that the environment was inhumane and requires urgent action.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 11 – Living conditions

The built environment is clean, functional, and culturally appropriate.

Standard 12 – Hygiene, clothing, and bedding

People in custody are encouraged to keep themselves, their cells, and communal areas clean.

Standard 15 – Purposeful activities

Individuals in custody have access to a range of purposeful activities during the day and at least two hours of recreation in the open air.

Standard 16 – Chaplaincy and faith services

The religious and spiritual preferences of people in custody are respected and there is access to non-faith-based chaplaincy services.

2.1 Maximum Security Section was overcrowded, degraded, and had pest infestations

The MSS presented as overcrowded with poor living conditions and hygiene concerns. Cells and common areas were dark, stale-smelling, and visibly dirty, with graffiti on ceilings and food scraps left uncleaned. Despite recent repainting, vandalism had already reoccurred. Toilets and basins in cells were old and in poor condition, with broken fixtures and signs of rust. The unit had a capacity of 28 but held between 30 and 39 men during the inspection, with several men having to sleep on mattresses on cell floors. Cockroach infestations were reported, and rubbish was left uncollected.

The day room offered minimal furnishings, two exercise bikes, and a TV, but lacked cleanliness and adequate lighting. There was an open drain next to the small yard with a rotting smell. Staff in the unit office appeared overwhelmed, and engagement with visitors was limited due to workload. Overall, the MSS environment was unhygienic, poorly maintained, and lacking in oversight.

Over the long-term these poor conditions undermine the health and wellbeing of both prisoners and staff. Despite refurbishment to the unit's ablutions, the overall environment remained unhygienic, unsafe, and unfit for its intended purpose.



Photos 2 & 3: Cockroaches and other pests were present in communal areas and overcrowded cells.

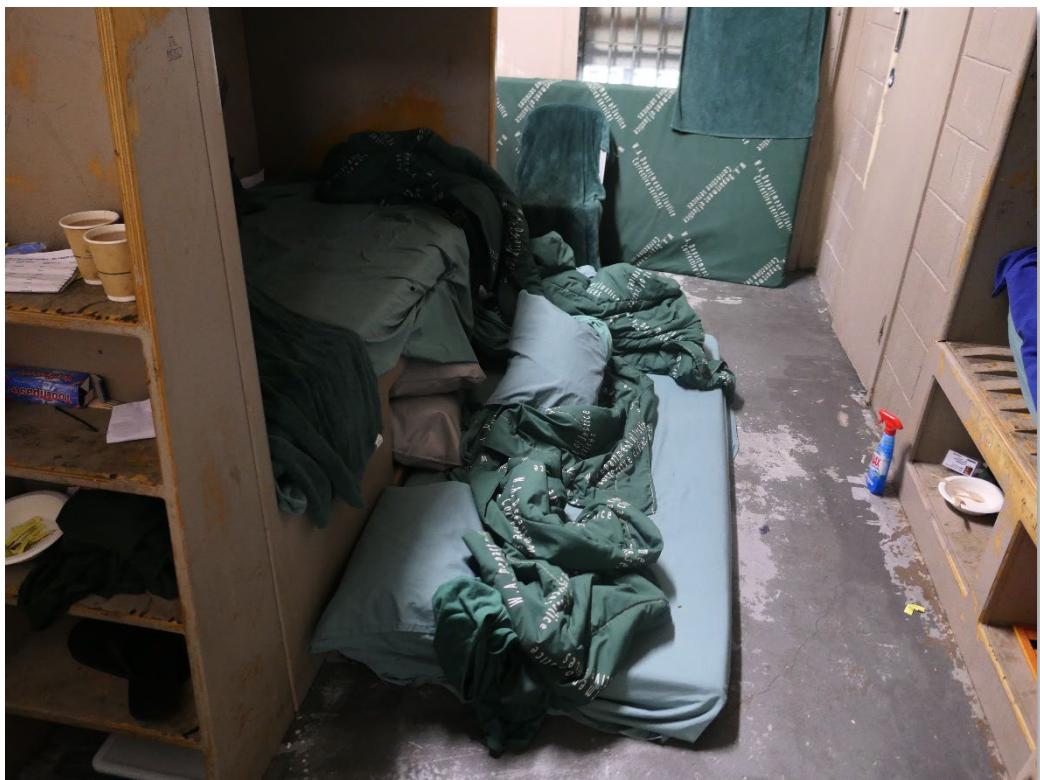


Photo 4: Cells in the MSS were overcrowded and unclean.

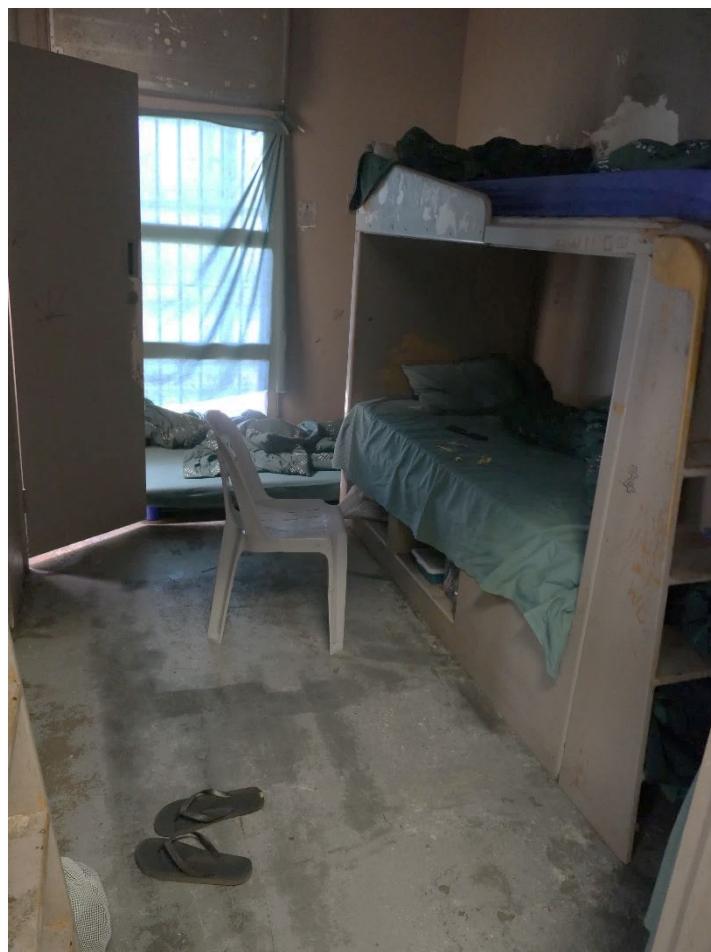


Photo 5 & 6: Infrastructure in MSS cells were degraded, and cells were dark, crowded, and untidy.

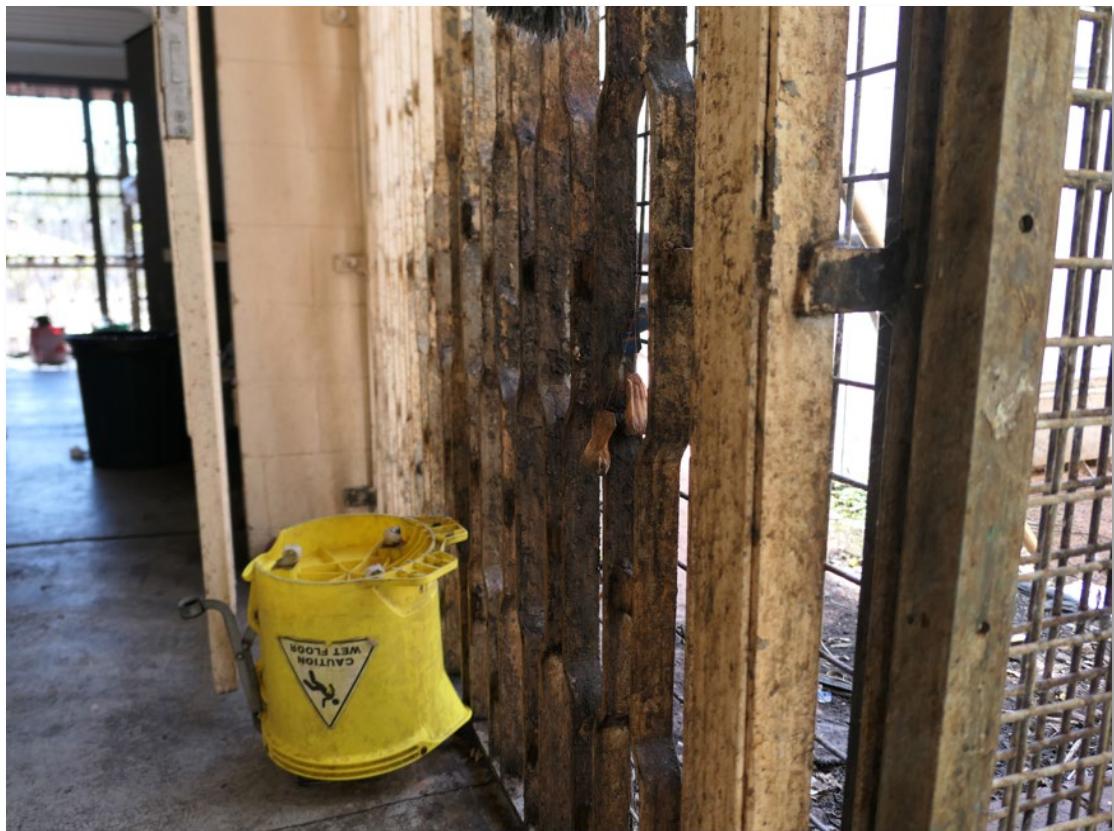


Photo 7: Grilles coated in grime and littered with used teabags.

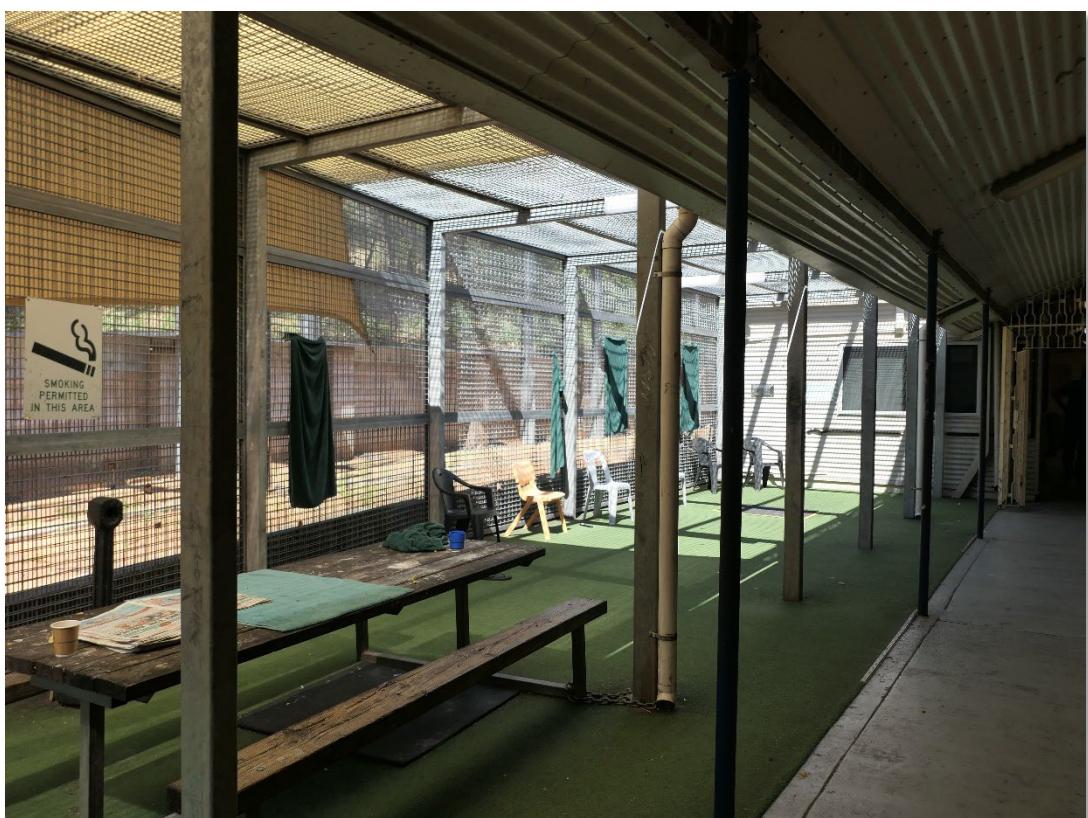


Photo 8: MSS infrastructure was basic, and the yard was small and enclosed.

The deteriorating physical conditions, combined with limited access to recreational and rehabilitative programs, were contributing to heightened stress, frustration, and burnout among prisoners and staff. These factors negatively affect psychosocial wellbeing and reduce the prison's capacity to support rehabilitation and maintain a safe and respectful custodial environment.

A WorkSafe inspection of the prison in March 2025 resulted in several Performance Improvement Notices (PINs), including findings of non-compliance related to pest control and psychosocial hazards. Inspectors noted that rubbish and food scraps had accumulated and were attracting cockroaches and creating hygiene risks. In May 2025, at the time of our inspection, there was no evident change to these observations.

To address these issues, immediate improvements including an improved cleaning regime, targeted maintenance, and better support for vulnerable groups should be prioritised. However, resolving the root causes, particularly overcrowding and infrastructure failures, will require significant investment and long-term strategic planning.

Recommendation 4

Prioritise urgent infrastructure repairs, cleaning, and pest control in the Maximum-Security Section.

2.2 Accommodation in the minimum section was basic

In contrast to the MSS, the minimum-security unit presented as an open and softer environment. However, it too was sparse and poorly maintained. The recreation area offered little more than a few chess boards and a rarely used table tennis table. The space was untidy, with leaves and debris scattered across the ground. There was no evidence of regular cleaning or upkeep.

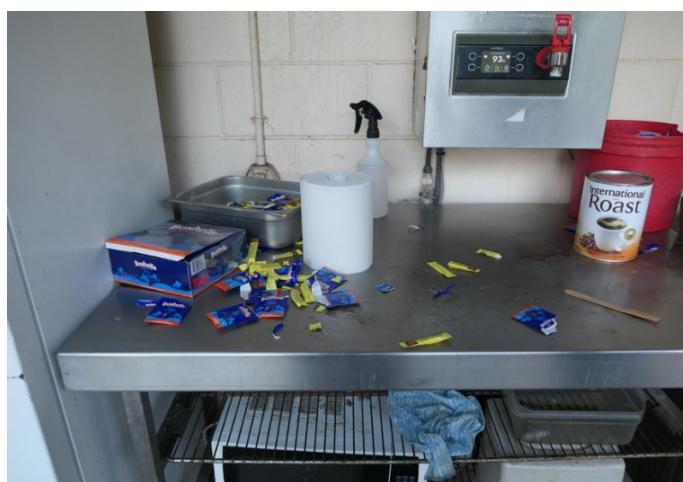


Photo 9: The kitchenette was littered with rubbish.

The kitchen and communal areas were also unhygienic, with sugar sachets littering the benches and signs of pest droppings. The grounds were basic and unkempt in places, with piles of leaves left unattended. Prisoners expressed a need for a proper clotheslines and flyscreens on doors. Towels and clothing were draped over railings to dry, many of which had fallen to the ground and remained there.

The ablutions facilities, renovated only a year earlier, were generally clean but already showed signs of deterioration. Soap scum had built up on tiles, several soap dispensers were broken, and red dirt and scale were evident on floors and walls. Cells in the unit were more spacious than those in the



Photo 10: Towels and leaves detracted from an otherwise pleasant environment.

MSS, with open grills and windows overlooking garden areas which provided more light. However, they were not air-conditioned, and many were accommodating more prisoners than their intended capacity.

We were pleased to see officers actively helping prisoners, including updating their phone contacts, which contributed to a positive atmosphere in the unit. Staff had acted upon our suggestion to provide a smoke-free cell.

The Earned Privileges Unit offered a higher standard of accommodation. Two dongas flanked an open-air kitchenette and day room, which were generally clean. Cells were smaller than those in minimum but had air conditioning and private ensuites. Prisoners were mostly satisfied with the living conditions of the unit.



Photo 11: The minimum unit's atmosphere was relaxed, but there were shortfalls.

2.3 The female unit accommodated both male and female prisoners

The women's unit at Broome is a small, self-contained four-cell precinct that presented a range of operational and welfare concerns. Originally intended to accommodate female prisoners across three cells, one was regularly occupied by male prisoners due to overcrowding, and a mother and baby room had been re-purposed into a secure multi-purpose cell. At the time we inspected, all four women were placed into a single overcrowded cell, with another four male prisoners in the neighbouring cell. This led to unsafe sleeping arrangements, with elderly women on beds and others on mattresses on the floor, increasing the risk of tripping and injury, particularly at night.



Photo 12: Four women were sharing a cell intended for two due to an increase in male prisoners.

accommodated in facilities intended for women. The lack of separation undermines the dignity and security of female prisoners and highlights the urgent need for reform at Broome.

2.4 Limited access to recreation and other meaningful activities

Access to recreation and other meaningful activities at Broome were limited. Opportunities for structured programs and outdoor exercise were minimal, especially in the MSS and female unit, where movement was heavily restricted. While Catholic chaplains provided regular and inclusive pastoral care, many prisoners had little to occupy their time beyond basic routines. This lack of engagement left many prisoners without constructive outlets.

Despite the presence of a recreation yard adjoining the unit, women had no access to active recreation and faced limited work opportunities. The precinct includes a day room with a small kitchenette, clothing storage, and a lounge area with a TV, but lacked meaningful engagement options, prompting requests for activities like basketball and arts and crafts.

The Department previously rejected our recommendation that male and female prisoners should not be accommodated in the same unit at Broome (OICS, 2020). This practice poses serious risks to the safety and wellbeing of female prisoners and breaches international human rights standards, particularly the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) (ONODC, 2015). These rules emphasise the need for gender-specific accommodation and protection from harm, which is compromised when male prisoners are

Recreation opportunities across the prison were minimal

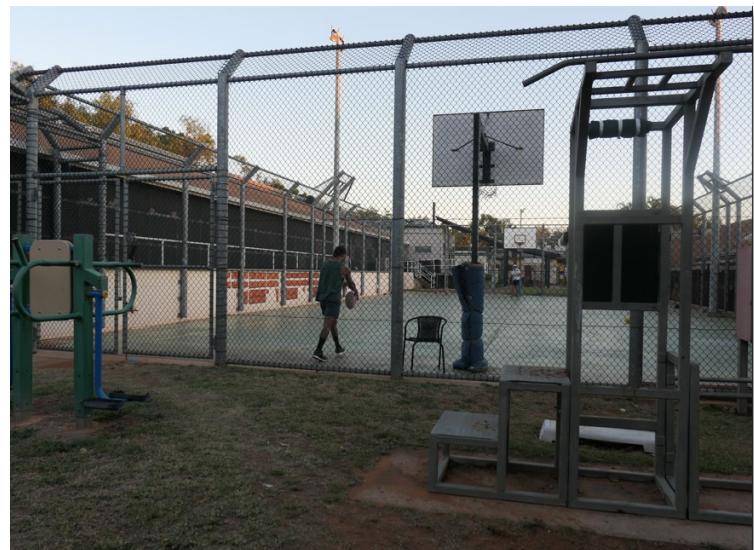
Prisoners in the MSS and female unit had extremely limited access to meaningful activities, with only basic items like darts, cards, and a television available. Following an earlier incident where a maximum-security prisoner ascended onto the roof via the basketball court, only medium-security prisoners from the MSS could access the court for recreation. Maximum-security prisoners and women had no access. This restriction, along with the absence of structured programs, had left these units with minimal opportunities for physical activity or engagement beyond basic unit-based equipment such as exercise bikes.

In contrast, minimum-security prisoners had access to a broader range of recreational options, including the basketball court, shaded garden areas, exercise equipment, musical instruments, and a small library. However, these resources were limited and in need of refurbishment. The disparity in access between units further undermined the conditions of daily life. The lack of shade over outdoor spaces further limited usability, especially during hotter months.

Improved access to recreation across all units, particularly the MSS and female unit is required. This includes regular access to the basketball court with appropriate security measures and considering the appointment of a dedicated recreation officer. These changes would support prisoner wellbeing and mental health and reduce idleness.

Recommendation 5

Restore access to the basketball court for maximum-security and female prisoners by installing a covered area to allow safe and consistent use throughout the year.



Photos 13 & 14: MSS (left) and minimum recreation options varied.

Catholic chaplains visited regularly, offering broad religious and pastoral care

Chaplains play an important role in the prison environment, offering support and a space for reflection during what can be a difficult and uncertain time for people in custody. Catholic chaplains continued to visit Broome regularly, offering religious services and pastoral care. Their approach had become more inclusive and less focused on a single denomination, in response to earlier concerns raised in past inspection reports and in discussions with the SMT. They provided services to all units, with particular attention to individuals on the At Risk Management System (ARMS) and Support and Monitoring System (SAMS).

However, many still reported barriers to practising their faith, mostly related to limited access to religious texts and resources. This was reflected in our pre-inspection prisoner survey, which showed only 18% felt they were able to practise their religion. While this is low in comparison to the state average (30%), it is an improvement on the 7% recorded at the previous inspection.

2.5 Contact with family was available

While prisoners at Broome were generally able to maintain some contact with family and friends, there were significant barriers to meaningful connection. The uptake of visits was low and very few accessed e-visits, despite their potential to support those with remote families. Challenges included lack of staff to provide a security presence, limited awareness amongst prisoners of available services, and logistical difficulties, all of which restricted opportunities for social contact and emotional support.

Less than a third of prisoners received visits, and very few accessed e-visits

Social visits at Broome generally operated well when staffing levels permitted, but access remained limited. In the six months leading up to May 2025, fewer than one-third of prisoners received any form of visit, whether in-person or electronic. While staff showed flexibility in booking and accommodating visitors, particularly those travelling from remote areas, visit cancellations due to short staffing were not uncommon. A vacant clerical position and the complexity of booking e-visits further contributed to the underuse of available services.

Maintaining social contact is essential for prisoner wellbeing, rehabilitation, and reintegration. However, many prisoners at Broome do not receive visits due to the geographic isolation, strained family relationships, or personal preference. Although phone contact is commonly used, it does not offer the same quality of interaction as in-person visits or family days. E-visits, which could help bridge this gap, were significantly underutilised, with only 14 recorded as successful in the same six-month period. Many prisoners were unaware the service was available, and some families lacked guidance on how to access it.

Our recent follow up review into contact with families found Broome had a strong ratio of video link kiosks per prisoner (20:1), and that, more broadly, the number of e-visits per prisoner increased in regional prisons between 2021 and 2024 (OICS, 2025a). To improve social connection, Broome should improve awareness and accessibility of e-visits, ensure consistent staffing is in place to reduce cancellations, and reconsider the feasibility of family days despite infrastructure and logistical challenges.

We also acknowledge that Broome recently introduced locked mobile phones in units to support e-visits and reduce congestion for court and other video link requirements. This was a positive step, but further efforts are needed to ensure all prisoners have equitable opportunities to maintain meaningful contact with family and community.

About a third of approved funeral attendances did not proceed

About one-third of approved funeral attendances at Broome did not proceed, primarily due to frequent contractor cancellations, that could not be covered by custodial staff due to internal staffing shortages. This was a significant concern for prisoners given the cultural importance of funerals for First Nations prisoners. While most prisoners understood that funeral attendance was not guaranteed, the inability to attend even when approved undermines the value of the approval process and can deepen feelings of disconnection and distress.

Funerals serve not only as cultural obligations but also as vital opportunities for emotional support and healing. In other Western Australian prisons, chaplains, and Prison Support Officers (PSOs) often facilitate alternative forms of grief support, such as livestreamed funerals or group sorry-time. However, Broome lacked these services, and there was little evidence of structured support for prisoners who were grieving but unable to attend funerals. This absence left a gap in the prison's duty of care and contributes to a lack of culturally responsive support.

Although livestreaming by funeral directors was rare in the Kimberley, staff at Broome made efforts to help prisoners by encouraging informal streaming through personal contacts. Prisoners could access these streams using the dedicated e-visit phones. But more consistent and culturally appropriate support mechanisms are needed to ensure that prisoners can grieve in meaningful ways, particularly when in person attendance at funerals is not possible.

3 Rehabilitation was ineffective with significant gaps in services

Broome's rehabilitation efforts were impacted by limited access to structured employment, education, and reintegration support. While some prisoners engaged in meaningful community work through Section 95, most roles lacked oversight and substance, and education programs were inconsistent due to staffing and infrastructure issues. The absence of a permanent Transitional Manager (TM) and limited contracted re-entry services further weakened support for prisoners preparing for release, reducing opportunities for successful reintegration.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 22 – Programs and education

All people in custody are assessed to identify their risks and needs, and receive evidence-based programs, education and life skills training tailored to their requirements.

Standard 23 - Employment

All people in custody can participate in meaningful work that is fair and non-exploitative and boosts their employability upon release.

Standard 24 – Preparations for release

All people in custody are well-prepared for release and provided essential support for their departure and successful reintegration into the community.

3.1 Prisoner employment increased, but many roles lacked substance and oversight

Prior to the inspection, Broome had increased the number of prisoner employment roles available. However, many of these positions lacked meaningful structure, clear responsibilities, and effective oversight. Most positions were limited to basic cleaning or rubbish collection, with little evidence of consistent engagement or supervision.

In the MSS, employment was unstable with the frequent turnover of prisoners. We found no indication of a structured cleaning regime for communal areas or cells, despite there being assigned cleaning roles. Prisoners reported not receiving cleaning supplies, and living areas were unhygienic and poorly maintained where years of neglect had left surfaces with a heavy build-up of grime and dirt. Staff struggled to motivate prisoners due to competing priorities, and cleaning efforts were often limited to surface-level tidying without thorough deep cleaning.

Across the site many prisoners had little to do, and only a few participated in structured activities like Section 95 work or education programs, highlighting the need for more purposeful employment opportunities.

Section 95 prisoners participated in meaningful community work, though numbers were low

The current Superintendent reviewed the Section 95 program in August 2024, after a long suspension which began in early 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the program had briefly resumed, it was suspended again in 2022, leaving only limited work opportunities just outside the prison fence.

In 2025, prisoners at Broome were once again actively engaged in meaningful community-based work, which supported their rehabilitation and reintegration. Activities included assisting local organisations such as Yawardani Jan-ga, where prisoners contributed to maintaining safe environments for equine therapy programs, and other initiatives like housing maintenance, wildlife rescue, and bushfire support. These roles helped prisoners build confidence, develop practical skills, and reconnect with the community.

Although participation was limited to four prisoners at a time due to transport constraints and eligibility requirements, recent changes allowing senior staff to approve prisoner external activities helped maintain consistent engagement. We met with several stakeholders who valued the contributions of the team, and said the work provided a positive outlet for prisoners, particularly those transitioning from long custodial sentences. These activities demonstrated the rehabilitative potential of well-managed external work programs.

3.2 Program and education access was minimal and inconsistent

No criminogenic treatment programs were delivered at Broome, and many sentenced prisoners had either not been assessed or had the chance to complete the required rehabilitation programs. This limited their prospects of release to parole at the earliest opportunity, which is a systemic issue impacting the prison population across the state. Education and vocational training were also constrained by staffing shortages and infrastructure issues, leaving maximum-security prisoners with no access.

Not all sentenced prisoners had been treatment assessed, and few completed their required programs

Some sentenced prisoners at Broome had not undergone treatment assessment, and only about half were likely to complete the rehabilitation programs required under their Individual Management Plans (IMPs). Completion of these programs is often a key factor in parole decisions, and failure to meet these requirements can result in prisoners being denied parole and returning to custody, contributing to overcrowding.

At the time of inspection, nine of the 48 sentenced prisoners still required treatment assessments, some of which were overdue by several months. Of those who had been assessed, there were 33 identified program needs, but fewer than half had been completed. In small prisons like Broome,

prisoners are often required to transfer to other facilities to access their required programs, but many resist or refuse resulting in prisoners with unmet treatment needs. This gap in rehabilitation access undermines parole outcomes and limits opportunities for reintegration.

Voluntary programs beyond education and training were limited

Broome had made a commendable effort to offer TAFE certificate training, employment skills, and basic education, but its capacity to deliver these services was severely limited. The education centre had been closed for several years due to staffing losses and infrastructure issues, and although it briefly reopened during the inspection, no permanent education position was funded. Although the temporary Prison Education Coordinator vacated the role shortly after the inspection, a replacement was sourced within weeks of leaving. However, the position is unfunded, and leaves the future of basic education delivery uncertain.

TAFE and vocational training programs, including horticulture, cookery, and the federally funded Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) work-ready program, were available to minimum-security prisoners, but delivery was restricted by staffing, space, and competing priorities. Recently, TAFE had delivered the construction induction White Card course but had since been limited in delivering other programs due to the SEE program utilising available space and staff. The SEE program had commenced in 2025 and was expected to continue on a rolling basis. While efforts to restore programs were underway, sustainable resourcing and coordination are needed to ensure there is consistent access to education and training that supports rehabilitation and reintegration.

Other than these vocational programs, Broome was not offering voluntary programs to assist with basic life skills. The 'Mad Bastards' program run by Men's Outreach was no longer available due to licencing issues, and a 'Health in Prison' program run by Kimberley Population Health in 2024 had not resumed due to staffing shortages. There were no programs available to address substance use or family violence.

3.3 Reintegration support was not well managed

Broome lacked consistent re-entry support, with Centacare Kimberley providing only limited services due to staffing shortages. We found staff presence on site was infrequent and did not match up to what we were told were contractual obligations. Many prisoners reported little engagement, and custodial staff noted that assumptions about Broome's rumoured closure had shifted the focus to provide services to WKRP. Reinstating a permanent Transitional Manager would improve prisoner outcomes and ease pressure on staff by providing consistent pre-release planning and support.

Prisoners had limited support from re-entry services

Broome lacked consistent and effective services to support prisoners preparing for release. Centacare Kimberley, the contracted re-entry provider since 2018, was offering limited support due to its own internal staffing shortages and operational challenges. Although their contract had recently been extended to September 2027, Centacare staff were rarely seen on-site, and many prisoners reported little or no engagement. Fortnightly, scheduled information sessions for remanded prisoners were infrequent and poorly attended, with no follow-up support provided.

Corporate visitor logs confirmed irregular attendance by Centacare staff, and brief prisoner visits, raising concerns about the adequacy and accessibility of reintegration services. Staff and service providers noted that many still assumed Broome would close and had instead focussed on delivering services to WKRP. Female prisoners were unsupported by Centacare, and minimum-security prisoners said the assistance came too close to release to be useful. These gaps in service delivery undermine rehabilitation efforts and increase the risk of poor reintegration outcomes.

Recommendation 6

Review the re-entry service contract at Broome to ensure value, effectiveness, and alignment with contract obligations.

Broome would benefit from a permanent Transitional Manager

The Transitional Manager (TM) role at Broome was substantively filled in 2019 but removed in 2022 after ongoing difficulty attracting applicants to the 0.5 FTE position. Since then, Broome has relied on ad hoc coverage from the TM based at WKRP. While this arrangement was well-intentioned, it has not met the needs of a prison with a high intake, a predominantly remand population, and rapid prisoner turnover.

Broome's population has grown sharply since the last inspection, peaking at 94 in December 2024 (up from 51 in 2022). Most prisoners stay only a short time, often less than a month, creating a constant demand for identification, licensing, and pre-release coordination. These are core TM functions, and without a dedicated presence, many prisoners miss out on timely support. The current WKRP TM visits Broome monthly, and prioritised urgent tasks such as ID and bank account issues to prevent frustration and instability within the units.

In the TM's absence, the Assistant Superintendent Offender Services (ASOS) had absorbed multiple TM responsibilities alongside other duties. This placed unsustainable pressure on the role and on custodial staff, who told us they often cannot fully explain important documents or decisions to prisoners.

There is a clear need for a permanent, on-site TM at Broome to deliver timely pre-release planning, particularly for remand prisoners, and to coordinate better engagement with the contracted service provider. A dedicated TM would also reduce duplication, strengthen continuity of care, and relieve pressure on the ASOS and custodial staff, ensuring prisoners have equitable access to the support they need to transition successfully back into the community.

Recommendation 7

Establish a Transitional Manager position to coordinate reintegration and release planning.

4 Health services struggled to meet complex needs

Access to health care at Broome was limited by staffing shortages, inadequate mental health care, minimal support for people with substance dependence, and poor integration between justice and health systems. Remote services were insufficient, transport cancellations disrupted medical appointments, and prisoners with complex needs lacked consistent care. Improvements in staffing, service delivery, and information sharing are needed to ensure timely, appropriate health support.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 17 – Physical health care

People in custody are treated with respect and have equal access to all health services, including prompt care, clear information, and culturally sensitive practices, supported by a multi-disciplinary approach and strong partnerships.

Standard 18 – Mental health care

People in custody receive thorough mental health care and support.

Standard 19 – Substance use treatment

The facility has a comprehensive drug and alcohol strategy and provides personalised and culturally appropriate supports.

Standard 33 - Transport

Transport arrangements are respectful and ensure the safety and security of people in custody, escort staff and community.

4.1 Access to primary health care was limited by a lack of staff and access to clinicians

Access to primary health care was significantly restricted by staffing shortages and limited clinical availability. Although hard working health staff were committed to improving outcomes for their patients, the absence of a stable and fully resourced health team impacted service delivery. The Acting Clinical Nurse Manager had been in the role for over a year while also managing a clinical caseload but had no backfill during extended leave. Agency nurses, often unfamiliar with custodial settings, required additional support and orientation, further straining resources.

The prison population, comprising approximately 95% First Nations people, presented with complex and co-occurring health needs, including chronic illnesses, substance use, and cognitive impairments such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and acquired brain injuries. Despite this, Broome's contracted GP service was limited to just four hours per week, with other appointments reliant on

metropolitan telehealth. Access to GP services was frequently delayed, and some prisoners were transferred before receiving full health assessments or treatment, resulting in outstanding health tasks being passed on to the next facility.

Custodial staffing shortages further impacted health care access. The health centre was often closed due to the lack of available officers to provide security, and some prisoners missed full health screenings upon arrival. Remote mental health consultations were cancelled, and inconsistent practices around clinic access for maximum-security prisoners restricted patient flow. However, medication dispensing was consistently prioritised and dispensed with assistance of custodial staff.

Our pre-inspection prisoner survey also indicated a decline in the physical health service, with only 29% of respondents rating the service as good, compared to 52% in 2022. Despite this a range of allied health services was available, including physiotherapy, podiatry, optometry, and dental care, although wait times remained a concern.

A newly appointed nurse with previous experience working in a custodial environment commenced shortly after the inspection, and the acting Clinical Nurse Manager returned to her substantive position, which may help stabilise the health team and expand service delivery.

Recommendation 8

Substantively fill all nursing vacancies and increase GP resourcing to meet demand.

While transport arrangements were generally well managed, cancellations disrupted a range of services

Cancellations of prisoner transport for external medical appointments at Broome had a direct and disruptive impact on prison operations. In the 12 months prior to the inspection, 40 scheduled medical appointments were unsuccessful, with 13 of these (32%) cancelled by Ventia, the contracted transport provider. When these cancellations occurred, custodial staff were required to step in and facilitate the escort, diverting them from their core duties.

This diversion placed significant strain on the prison's limited staffing resources, often resulting in lockdowns and the closure of the medical centre. These outcomes negatively affected both prisoners, by delaying access to essential health care, and staff, who had to manage the operational consequences. While Ventia and Broome management maintained a positive working relationship, the cancellations highlighted the need for more reliable transport arrangements to ensure consistent access to external medical services.

4.2 Remote mental health services were inadequate

Broome had limited on-site resources to support prisoners with increasingly complex mental health needs. Although departmental documentation initially assessed Broome as not requiring a dedicated mental health resource, inspection findings and staff feedback indicated otherwise. Custodial staff and clinicians consistently reported rising levels of mental illness, trauma, and

co-occurring substance-related issues among the prisoner population. Data showed a significant increase in prisoners placed on ARMS and SAMS, as well as a rise in self-harm incidents, highlighting the need for increased mental health resourcing.

Mental health care at Broome was largely reliant on remote services, with no on-site Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug (MHAOD) clinicians. A previously funded mental health nurse position had been removed, and psychiatric services had not been available for some time due to sector-wide shortages. The ad hoc telehealth service provided by a single WKRP Clinical Nurse Specialist was insufficient for ongoing care, particularly for acutely unwell individuals. Telehealth appointments were often disrupted by lockdowns and staffing shortages, and in some cases, prisoners could not be assessed remotely due to safety concerns arising from their behavioural presentation. While efforts were made to deliver in-person clinics, the current service model was unsustainable without proper resourcing.

Psychological Health Services (PHS) at Broome consisted of a single long-standing counsellor, whose role had shifted from general wellbeing support to crisis management. The counsellor managed a high caseload and provided brief interventions aimed at stabilising prisoners. However, longer-term therapeutic support was only available after transfer to other facilities.



Photo 15: Multi-purpose cells were sparsely furnished, offering little for prisoners in crisis.

Custodial staff also reported feeling underprepared to manage prisoners with mental health issues, with many noting that their roles had expanded to fill gaps left by the absence of clinical support. Only 12% of surveyed staff believed mental health services were effective, and prisoners rated mental health care as the least favourable health service, with only 5% of respondents rating the service as good. There were also no dedicated crisis care cells at the facility, with prisoners being placed in multi-purpose cells instead that were stark and unsuitable for therapeutic care.

Broome's population should have access to equivalent mental health services as those available in the community, including assessment, treatment, and ongoing support. Addressing these gaps is essential to safeguarding prisoner wellbeing and ensuring appropriate care.

Recommendation 9

Resource on-site mental health services and in-reach clinical support to meet growing demand.

Case Study: Broome is unfit to manage prisoners with acute mental health needs

Paul was received by Broome Prison on 1 January 2025 with no medication or medical paperwork. He was placed on ARMS because of concerns about his mental health and possible psychiatric needs.

He was relocated from the MSS to a Multi-Purpose Cell (MPC) the same day where he spent 21 days with limited time out of cell, effectively in solitary confinement.

On two occasions while in the MPC, Paul was seen via telehealth by an Authorised Mental Health Practitioner who subsequently referred him for further medical assessment by a psychiatrist using Form 1A of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. At times Paul was too unsafe to unlock or refused to be seen so was it was not possible to do a further assessment.

Paul was discussed in Broome's Prisoner Risk Assessment Group (PRAG) from 2 January 2025 onwards. PRAG minutes noted he required transfer to Perth for further assessment and care, was experiencing ongoing auditory and visual hallucinations, and was deemed a risk to others given his paranoid ideations and hostile intent. He was intermittently compliant with an oral dose of anti-psychotic medication.

Broome District Hospital were unable to provide an in-reach service into the prison, nor could they accept him as an inpatient as the unit was at capacity.

On 22 January 2025, Paul was escorted by the Special Operations Group (SOG) to Casuarina Prison where he was placed in the Crisis Care Unit (CCU).

Paul's fitness to plead was raised by the court on 10 February 2025 and he is now subject to the provisions of the *Criminal Law (Mental Impairment) Act 2023*.

He was eventually admitted to the Frankland Centre, a secure forensic inpatient facility, on 27 February 2025.

4.3 Support for substance dependence was minimal

Broome provided basic medical support for prisoners experiencing substance withdrawal but lacked ongoing services to address alcohol and drug dependence. Clinicians identified alcohol use and methamphetamine as key health concerns, consistent with previous inspections. While prisoners at risk of harm during withdrawal were assessed and medicated appropriately, there were no structured interventions or programs to support long-term recovery or address underlying dependence.

Despite the Department's previous advice that alcohol and other drug (AOD) services were available remotely, the inspection found no evidence of such supports in practice. Staff and prisoners alike noted the absence of counselling or treatment options, and many felt there was nothing in place to interrupt the cycle of substance use and imprisonment. Custodial staff reported feeling ill-equipped to manage prisoners with substance issues, and prisoner satisfaction with dependence support had declined, with lack of counselling cited as the main concern.

Prison officers are not counsellors, health workers, mental health experts, drug experts etc, to put these complex roles on prison officers is unfair and a detriment to prisoners.

Quote from staff on training.

The absence of AOD expertise is particularly concerning given the high rates of alcohol-related harm in the Kimberley region, including the highest reported prevalence of FASD in Australia (WA Primary Health Alliance, 2024). Broome's role as a receipt and transient prison does limit its capacity to run programs, but the need for targeted support remains critical. Without appropriate interventions, prisoners are left to manage addiction on their own, missing opportunities for rehabilitation and improved health outcomes.

4.4 The separation between Departments of Justice and Health created inefficiencies and care gaps

Broome faced challenges in delivering timely and effective health care due to the separation between Department of Justice and Department of Health information systems. Although clinicians may have worked across both jurisdictions and have prior knowledge of patients, they are unable to consistently access health records from other departments. This lack of integration led to delays in diagnosis and treatment, as clinicians relied on prisoner self-disclosure during intake assessments rather than verified medical histories.

The absence of access to key systems such as the Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System (PSOLIS) further limited the ability of health staff to provide appropriate mental health care. This lack of access led to staff resorting to time-consuming alternatives such as contacting emergency mental health lines or submitting Freedom of Information requests to obtain necessary information.

These limitations have real consequences for patient care. For example, one prisoner reported receiving a higher dosage of diabetic medication in custody than prescribed in the community, due to the lack of shared records between his GP and prison health staff. Such discrepancies can lead to discomfort and deterioration in health. Improving information sharing between departments would enhance clinicians' ability to make informed decisions and improve health outcomes for prisoners.

Recommendation 10

Establish a formal information-sharing policy with the Department of Health, including secure access to systems such as Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System (PSOLIS) for prison-based health staff.

5 Cultural, community and individual links had improved

Broome had made progress in reconnecting with the community and improving cultural and disability support, but gaps remained in orientation, peer support, and consistent service delivery. Remote and new programs were proactive but faced operational challenges, limiting their effectiveness. Strengthening stakeholder engagement, reinstating key roles, and improving access to tailored support is essential to sustaining rehabilitation outcomes.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 3 – Community relations

The custodial facility engages appropriately with the local community.

Standard 6 – Support for people on remand

Custodial facilities minimise the stress for people entering custody on remand, offer a regime that reflects their unconvicted status, and assists them to meet their bail conditions and be promptly released from custody.

Standard 20 - Support

All people in custody can access a culturally sensitive support system, including a Prison Support Officer, peer support groups, and Aboriginal Prison Visitors.

5.1 Relationships with the community improved but could be extended

Broome made strong progress reconnecting with the local community, particularly through the creation of the Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) in partnership with the nearby Adult Community Corrections centre – the first of its kind within the custodial estate. This committee brought together key stakeholders and helped reintroduce valuable programs such as Section 95 work, and new initiatives including the Elders Program, and the SEE employment program. These efforts provided prisoners with meaningful opportunities to engage with the community and access rehabilitative services.

Despite these positive developments, we found the ASC had lost some momentum. Meeting attendance had dropped, prisoner representation was inconsistent, and staff shortages across participating agencies affected the delivery of services. The departure of a key project officer also stalled several pending initiatives, including linking Section 95 activities with formal qualifications and expanding potential community work opportunities.

To maintain and build on the progress made, Broome should focus on strengthening relationships with existing stakeholders and broadening the ASC's representation. Engaging more community organisations, including the Shire of Broome, and restoring leadership and coordination will help

ensure that prisoners continue to benefit from structured, community-based rehabilitation programs.

Recommendation 11

Expand the Aboriginal Services Committee to include a broader range of community stakeholders.

5.2 Orientation for remanded prisoners lacked peer or cultural support

New remand prisoners at Broome often faced delays in receiving support and orientation from trained peer support workers, leaving them without essential information during a critical adjustment period. Many were unaware of available welfare, legal, educational, and recreational services, and first-time or vulnerable individuals were particularly affected by this lack of guidance.

Cultural and welfare support was further limited due to the absence of PSOs and Aboriginal Visitor Scheme (AVS) attendance, which is especially concerning for Aboriginal prisoners. Access to peer support was irregular and dependent on staffing availability to unlock the unit and prisoners, meaning new arrivals frequently felt isolated and unsupported during their early days in custody.

These gaps in initial support can negatively impact prisoner wellbeing and rehabilitation prospects. While resource and staffing challenges may limit immediate improvements, prioritising orientation, and support, especially for vulnerable groups can be achieved gradually by focusing on key areas like reception and early days in custody.

5.3 The remote peer support model was challenging in practice

Broome introduced a remote peer support model to fill the gap left by the transfer of its PSO, but the initiative faced several operational challenges. Perth-based Senior PSOs provided online support and training to Peer Support Prisoners (PSPs), yet inconsistent availability, competing priorities, and technological issues limited its effectiveness. PSPs struggled to access prisoners in the MSS during lockdowns, missed timely referrals for high-risk individuals, and lacked the authority to move freely within the facility.

These limitations meant that vulnerable prisoners, such as those on ARMS or first-time offenders, often missed out on critical support. The remote model also lacked culturally appropriate resources and debriefing opportunities for PSPs, increasing the risk of burnout and reducing the overall impact of the program. While the initiative was proactive and well-intentioned, its success was restricted by logistical constraints and the absence of dedicated on-site support.

5.4 Elders provided weekly cultural visits through a commendable initiative

Broome made commendable efforts to improve cultural support for First Nations prisoners, through the introduction of the Aarnja Elders Program through an approved funding grant. These initiatives helped reconnect prisoners with community and culture, offering guidance and emotional support. While the program had considerable potential and has initially been well received, it was too early to assess its effectiveness. We understand the program was in review, however, the absence of an on-site PSO and AVS worker continues to limit access to consistent, face-to-face cultural and welfare support. Prisoners expressed a strong interest in having a dedicated cultural space and more reliable support systems. While the Elders Program is a promising initiative, it is still evolving and not a substitute for formal AVS or PSO roles. To strengthen cultural rehabilitation, Broome would benefit from reinstating on-site positions and expanding community connections to ensure First Nations prisoners receive the support they need during incarceration and beyond.

Recommendation 12

Reinstate and properly fund Prison Support Officers and Aboriginal Visitors Scheme staff to strengthen prisoner support services.

5.5 Support for prisoners with disabilities was reliant on individuals, not systems

Broome took proactive steps to identify and support prisoners living with disability, using screening tools and health records to ensure early recognition and appropriate care.

Driven by the Assistant Superintendent Operations (ASO), PHS Counsellor, and primary health team, regular contact was maintained with the Department's Disability Coordination Team, and identified prisoners were closely monitored and supported through risk assessments. Some accessed additional assistance through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), with the ASO and PHS Counsellor working to hold NDIS-appointed service providers accountable for delivering appropriate care.

Despite these positive actions, Broome faced challenges in providing consistent support for prisoners without a NDIS plan. The prison lacked dedicated resources to help gather the evidence needed for NDIS access, and its transient population meant that support efforts often stalled due to transfers or release. Infrastructure and staffing gaps also limited the availability of services that could otherwise assist with assessments and ongoing care.

Case Study: Multi-agency collaborative work can improve outcomes for prisoners with complex needs

Phillip, a long-term prisoner, lives with a major mental illness and intellectual disability and has a plenary guardian and administrator to manage his lifestyle and financial decisions.

As an NDIS participant, Phillip now receives support from local NDIS service providers and stakeholders who deliver behaviour support therapy. These agencies, working alongside prison staff, have delivered life skills training and community transition assistance, including supervised outings to shops, family visits, and fishing trips.

Support workers, prison staff, and Phillip have reported noticeable improvements since services began earlier this year, with Phillip stating he “felt happy” after engaging with his support team.

While Broome’s commitment to disability support is commendable, sustaining these efforts long-term will require additional resources and coordination. Strengthening links with community providers, improving access to assessments, and ensuring continuity of care post-release are key steps to improving rehabilitation outcomes for prisoners with disability.

6 Security concerns remain despite infrastructure improvements

Broome upgraded its security infrastructure, including CCTV expansion and a pulse-energised fence, but blind spots and staffing shortages persist. Monitoring was ineffective due to lack of a dedicated control room and overwhelmed gatehouse staff. Security oversight was critically under-resourced, and contraband risks remain high. Staff confidence in current measures was low, highlighting urgent needs for more personnel and improved procedures.

This chapter assesses the performance of Broome against the following standards:

Standard 28 - Infrastructure

The prison infrastructure provides a safe and secure environment.

Standard 29 – Procedural security

The wellbeing of people in custody is safeguarded by effective security systems that are not unduly restrictive to daily life.

6.1 Several key security infrastructure upgrades were completed

Prior to the inspection, Broome had completed several upgrades, including renovations to key areas and improved security systems, but staff raised concerns about their effectiveness and placement.

Since 2022, Broome had doubled its CCTV camera coverage, inclusive of newer high-definition multi-angle cameras that provided better visibility across key areas, including the visits section and entrances. Early issues, such as lag, and timestamp errors had been addressed through upgrades to servers. Internal and external cameras were also repositioned to better suit the layout of the prison, and new photoelectric beams were added at the rear of the MSS to improve motion detection. The gatehouse control room had also received a significant upgrade, with new monitors and a refreshed layout.

Despite these improvements, some gaps remained. The minimum-security section continued to have several blind spots where camera coverage was limited. The rear perimeter also remained vulnerable, as it lacked a physical barrier making unauthorised access possible.

Following several high-profile escapes from the female unit, a pulse energised fence was installed to strengthen perimeter security. This non-lethal barrier delivers a graduated electric shock if touched, and its design makes it difficult to climb. The pulse energised fence replaced most of the razor wire on the roof envelope, although some razor wire was retained and repositioned further up the roofline as an added deterrent.

The upgrades were in direct response to identified risks following consultation with staff and although significantly improving the physical security of the female unit, are visually harsh in appearance.



Photo 16: Dozens of new CCTV cameras were installed throughout the facility to improve coverage.



Photo 17: The pulse energised fence improved security in the female unit but was imposing.

Staff struggled to monitor upgraded security systems effectively

Despite improvements to security systems, Broome still lacked a secure, and dedicated control room. Monitoring responsibilities, including the perimeter and multi-purpose cells, remained with gatehouse staff, who were often overwhelmed by competing priorities and short staffing.

In our pre-inspection staff survey only 24% of respondents felt security measures including maintaining perimeter security, gates, grilles, and cameras were effective. This represented a decline from 30% in 2022 and was half the state average of 47%. Staff reported the volume of cameras and lack of focused oversight led to missed monitoring of incidents and compromised safety. Addressing these concerns will require not just infrastructure investment, but also adequate staffing and procedural changes to ensure systems are managed effectively.

The number of cameras are overwhelming to be placed in a gatehouse and monitored effectively.

CCTV cameras in the gatehouse are not continually monitored and things are missed.

Staff survey comments regarding security.

6.2 Security oversight was critically under-resourced

For many years we have raised concerns regarding the adequacy of resourcing at Broome. In 2025, security remained significantly under-resourced, with the Security Manager solely responsible for overseeing all security operations. This was despite Broome's high intake and receival rates, the complexity of the prisoner population living in overcrowded units, and the prison long identified as being unfit for purpose. The lack of dedicated roles, such as a prosecutor or local intelligence contact also placed additional strain on the Security Manager.

More security staff to assist with Sec [sic] manager reviewing footage and intelligence.

No assistance in security to provide good intel, just one personal [sic] doing all the work is not enough.

Staff survey comments regarding security.

Staff expressed concern about the lack of support and structure around security roles and noted that other minimum-security facilities have more robust staffing allocations without a maximum-security section. Without additional resources, Broome's ability to maintain safe and effective security operations is compromised. An increase in staffing is recommended to ensure the prison can meet its operational demands and maintain safety for both staff and prisoners.

Recommendation 13

Increase security staffing levels.

6.3 Broome remained vulnerable to contraband trafficking

Broome's location makes it difficult to keep contraband out. The prison sits in the town centre, close to a police station, courthouse, and bank, which increases exposure to public activity. Much of the perimeter runs alongside public access ways, making it easy for items to be thrown over the fence. Certain areas are repeatedly targeted and remain hard to monitor. Ongoing staffing shortages further reduced the ability to carry out proactive searches or compliance checks, leaving gaps in day-to-day prevention and responses.

We were told only 5% of prisoner phone calls were monitored for intelligence purposes. Detecting plans for contraband drops by members of the public was made even more difficult when conversations took place in First Nations languages.

In our pre-inspection staff survey 0% of respondents rated the prevention of contraband entering the prison as effective. This is despite the security upgrades completed before the inspection. This raises significant concerns and highlights the urgent need for further investment in both Broome's security infrastructure and staffing levels.



Photo 18: The prison's entrance was immediately accessible from the public footpath.

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Appendix B Acronyms

Term	Expansion of Abbreviation
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drug
APPCWG	Adult Prisoner Population Coordination Working Group
ARMS	At-Risk Management System
ASC	Aboriginal Services Committee
ASO	Assistant Superintendent Operations
ASOS	Assistant Superintendent Offender Services
AVS	Aboriginal Visitors Scheme
DOJ	Department of Justice
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MHAOD	Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSS	Maximum Security Section
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PHS	Psychological Health Services
PSO	Prison Support Officer
PSOLIS	Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System
PSP	Peer Support Prisoner
SAMS	Support and Monitoring System
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment program
SOG	Special Operations Group
TM	Transitional Manager
WKRP	West Kimberley Regional Prison

Appendix C Inspection Details

Previous inspection		
15 May - 2 June 2022		
Activity since previous inspection		
Liaison visits to Broome Regional Prison	8 visits	
Independent Visitor visits	20 visits	
Surveys		
Prisoner survey	4 April 2025	38 responses (45%)
Staff survey (online)	26 March – 16 April 2025	34 responses (53%)
Inspection team		
Inspector	Eamon Ryan	
Deputy Inspector	Jane Higgins	
Director Operations	Ryan Quinn	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Liz George	
Inspections and Research Officer	Ben Shaw	
Inspections and Research Officer	Cliff Holdom	
Student Intern	Nihal Jung	

Key dates	
Inspection announced	24 March 2025
Start of on-site inspection	18 May 2025
Completion of on-site inspection	23 May 2025
Presentation of preliminary findings	23 May 2025
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	19 September 2025
Draft response received from Department of Justice	7 November 2025
Declaration of prepared report	2 December 2025



Response to the Announced Inspection: 2025 Inspection of Broome Regional Prison

October 2025

Response Overview

On 24 March 2025, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the Inspection Broome Regional Prison (Broome), which took place from 18 to 23 May 2025.

To assist with the Inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) provided a range of documentation as well as access to systems, custodial facilities, staff, and prisoners.

On 19 September 2025, the Department received the draft report which raised 13 recommendations for review and comment.

Of the 13 recommendations:

- Two are supported
- Five are supported in principle
- Four are supported and considered current practice / project
- One is noted, being not for the Department's decision
- One is not supported.

Detailed responses to the recommendations can be found below.

Response to Recommendations

- 1 The Department should clearly define Broome's role within the custodial estate and ensure the prison is properly supported to fulfil its intended purpose safely and effectively.**

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

Response:

In September 2025, the Department released the Corrective Services 2025-2030 Strategic Plan which sets out the key priorities and focus areas to achieve a *safer, smarter and healthier Corrections*. The Strategic Plan ensures there is a consistent framework against which all facilities can align their operational plans.

Planning is also underway to update the Department's Prison Network Design (PND) Model which, having originally been established in 2021, provides a 10-year forecast for the needs of the custodial estate in terms of service demand for the various cohorts and their associated infrastructure requirements.

Once updated, the PND Model will provide further clarity surrounding Broome's future role and purpose within the custodial estate.

In parallel, the Department is working on a range of strategies that aim to assist Broome in fulfilling its dual-purpose role as the primary receival facility for the Kimberley and a minimum-security prison. Strategies include but are not limited to:

- Increasing staffing through additional Entry Level Training Programs (ELTPs) and accelerated training courses, which has resulted in 195 new graduates, with a further four courses planned before the end of 2025;
- Expansion works to key facilities across the estate including Casuarina Prison; and
- Weekly population management meetings to identify opportunities and share the population responsibility across the estate.

- 2 The Government should prioritise the replacement of Broome with a fit-for-purpose, appropriately resourced facility capable of meeting current and future demand.**

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

Response:

Whilst the Department acknowledges the importance of ensuring custodial infrastructure in regional Western Australia is fit-for-purpose and capable of meeting both current and future demand, the construction of a new prison to replace Broome is ultimately a matter for Government.

The Department remains committed to maintaining safe and effective operations at Broome Regional Prison. A condition and capital expenditure forecast report

completed in May 2025 outlines the critical infrastructure requirements over the next decade. The Department will continue to support essential works, ensuring the facility remains operationally viable and responsive to the needs of the region.

3 The Department should significantly increase investment in infrastructure and resources at Broome to improve conditions and services for people in custody, until such time that a modern, purpose-built replacement facility is approved and constructed.

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

Response:

The condition and capital expenditure forecast report outlines the short, medium and long-term infrastructure needs of the current Broome facility over the next 10-years. The Department will continue to update government on infrastructure needs.

4 Prioritise urgent infrastructure repairs, cleaning, and pest control in the Maximum Security Section.

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

Response:

Since the inspection, weekly cleaning parties supervised by the Maintenance Vocational Support Officer (VSO) attend the Maximum-Security Section (MSS) to undertake cleaning and repairs to infrastructure where possible. Where infrastructure repairs cannot be undertaken locally, these are logged with the Infrastructure and Environment Directorate for appropriate action.

In addition, a local pest control contractor has been engaged to address pests within the MSS and will continue to attend the site.

5 Restore access to the basketball court for maximum-security and female prisoners by installing a covered area to allow safe and consistent use throughout the year.

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

Response:

The Superintendent has confirmed that both medium and maximum-security prisoners are risk assessed by the Security Manager and where appropriate, are permitted access to the basketball court.

Whilst women prisoners can access the basketball court, feedback from the women indicate that due to the close proximity to the minimum-security male unit, they opt not to utilise the basketball courts.

The Department is however in the process of assessing the feasibility and cost associated to construct an additional cover for the basketball court which if implemented, may promote the use of the basketball court by female prisoners and provide additional segregation from the minimum-security units and courts.

6 Review the re-entry service contract at Broome to ensure value, effectiveness, and alignment with contract obligations.

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

Response:

The Department's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch will undertake a desktop review of the *Kimberley Region – Re-entry and Accommodation and Parenting Advice and Support Services Service Agreement* (the Service Agreement).

The review will examine the current delivery of reintegration services under the Service Agreement and identify how gaps in service provision can be improved, such as the limited availability of services to remand prisoners, and how services can be more meaningfully delivered to those close to release.

The findings of this review will inform the commissioning process for the next Service Agreement.

7 Establish a Transitional Manager position to coordinate reintegration and release planning.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges there is a need for transitional services at Broome and is considering options for how these could be delivered based on the cohort needs and demand at Broome.

Should additional resourcing be necessary, this would ultimately be subject to funding approval.

8 Substantively fill all nursing vacancies and increase GP resourcing to meet demand.

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

Response:

Commencing January 2026, General Practitioner (GP) services delivered by the Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (BRAMS) will double from a single four-hourly session per week to two four-hourly sessions, to adequately service the average daily population (ADP) at Broome¹.

The Department's Justice Health and Wellbeing Services (JHWS) branch is also in the process of advocating for additional clinical staff FTE at Broome, including:

- 2x Clinical Nurses
- 1x Prison Support Officer
- 1x Aboriginal Health Worker

The establishment of additional FTE will be dependent on funding.

In relation to nursing, as at October 2025, all nursing positions at Broome were substantively filled.

9 Resource on-site mental health services and in-reach clinical support to meet growing demand.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

Mental health supports are provided at Broome through the existing Prison Councillor position, with the Department also seeking to establish a Prison Support Officer (PSO) position, as per the response to recommendation eight.

In addition, a Mental Health Nurse position is shared with West Kimberley attending Broome once a fortnight and as required.

Based on Broome's lower prisoner population and its primary role as a holding facility for short-term and remand prisoners, there is not enough demand for a full time on-site dedicated Mental Health Nurse.

10 Establish a formal information-sharing policy with the Department of Health, including secure access to systems such as Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System (PSOLIS) for prison-based health staff.

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

Response:

All psychiatrists and mental health clinicians employed by the Department currently have read-only access to the Psychiatric Services On-Line Information System (PSOLIS).

Further discussions ongoing with the Department of Health to extend this access to all medical officers who provide primary health to people in custody.

The Department is advocating for all clinicians to be provided with writable access to improve communications between health care providers and ensure continuity of care.

11 Expand the Aboriginal Services Committee to include a broader range of community stakeholders.

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

Response:

The Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) at Broome continues to engage with a range of community groups to improve opportunities for First Nations prisoners, including the commencement of the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program, which provides literacy, numeracy and computer skills courses and aims to link offenders with community-based organisation, Jobs Pathways, to assist in identifying employment and vocational opportunities post-release.

Other First Nations organisations engaged to provide support to First Nations prisoners include Aarnja, Nirrumbuk, Community Elders, BRAMS and Gullarri Radio.

While it is noted that the Broome ASC has not engaged with the Shire of Broome, the intention and purpose of ASCs is to enter into partnerships with First Nations organisations and community groups to improve First Nations prisoner access to pre- and post-release employment opportunities and accommodation services. While partnerships with local shires may be beneficial, they do not fall within the core focus group for ASC activities.

12 Reinstate and properly fund Prison Support Officers (PSOs) and Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) staff to strengthen prisoner support services.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges the critical role of appropriate support services to people in custody and remains committed to strengthening these services.

The Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS) continues to operate a 24/7 call centre, providing free, confidential support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody and their loved ones. AVS Officers offer cultural support and triage issues through referrals within custodial facilities and to external support networks. This service is accessible via the Prisoner Telephone System (PTS) and to community members at any time.

Recruitment to regional facilities remains a challenge due to workforce availability, however the AVS continues to prioritise recruitment efforts across all custodial locations, including Broome Regional Prison.

As per the response to recommendation eight, the Department is supportive of re-establishing the PSO position Broome. In the interim, telehealth PSO appointments are facilitated at Broome.

13 Increase security staffing levels.

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

Response:

Through the *Safer Custody Staffing Review*, the Department analysed staffing requirements against current and projected prisoner population rates and prisoner needs, identifying that additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) were required to maintain security operations.

The Department is in the process of advocating for additional FTE through the SLA process.



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

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