

SHOW CAUSE NOTICE -
HAKEA PRISON,
CASUARINA PRISON AND
MELALEUCA WOMEN'S PRISON

APRIL 2026

*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.



Show Cause Notice - Hakea Prison, Casuarina Prison and Melaleuca Women's Prison

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Inspector's Overview

The adult prison system in Western Australia is facing enormous and unsustainable pressure.

The word crisis is often overused. It is defined as a '*decisive moment*' or '*a time of danger or great difficulty*' (Oxford University Press, 2017). Describing the conditions we are currently seeing across most Western Australian prisons as a crisis is an apt use of the word.

We have not arrived at this position unexpectedly; it has been building for several years and is something we have consistently raised in our published reports.

Critically, the population has been rising at an unsustainable rate over the last three to four years, with a 37% increase in the average daily population between January 2023 and February 2026. Despite some additional accommodation within the system, the pace of population growth has far outstripped capacity expansion. Throughout 2026 the adult prison system had been operating at over 100% of its general-purpose bed capacity, with up to 200 prisoners held under 'alternative sleeping arrangements for population management purposes'. In other words, they are sleeping on a mattress on the floor, despite a program of triple-bunking over 250 cells.

The impact of population growth is compounded by chronic staffing shortfalls across the system in both custodial and non-custodial staffing groups. We see daily shortfalls of custodial staff in almost every prison we visit and inspect, despite active recruitment and training of new officers. Staff attrition often leads to the replacement of experienced staff with inexperienced staff, limiting the capacity for essential on the job mentoring and support of new staff. Where increases in non-custodial staffing have been approved, prisons have struggled to recruit appropriately skilled staff. Our 2025 review into Non-Custodial Staffing Shortages identified vacancy rates of 20% in health and wellbeing roles and 25% in rehabilitation and reintegration roles (OICS, 2025b).

The population growth has also stretched prison infrastructure beyond capacity. This is much more than bed capacity and impacts support infrastructure such as kitchens, health centres, workshops, and staff amenities. Significant impacts are also seen in welfare and rehabilitation support infrastructure, for example, inadequate program and education rooms, recreation spaces, visits capacity, and crisis care facilities.

In this environment, we increased our system-wide monitoring activities beyond our mandated cycle of inspections and announced reviews of custodial services. This led us to focus on three facilities where the pressures are most acutely felt: Melaleuca Women's Prison (Melaleuca), Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) and Hakea Prison (Hakea).

Again, this was not unexpected.

In May 2024 we identified that conditions in Hakea had deteriorated to the point where we suspected that prisoners were being held in conditions that were cruel, inhuman or degrading. At that time, I took the extraordinary step of issuing the Director General of the Department of Justice with a Show Cause Notice under the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* (the ICS Act). Following

consideration of the Director General's response, the Show Cause Notice was referred to the Minister for Corrective Services in June 2024.

We subsequently published two inspection reports detailing the conditions in Hakea. The first report was published in April 2025 (Report 158) and the second follow-up report was published in July 2025 (Report 162). Both reports highlighted significant concerns about the unacceptable conditions in Hakea (OICS, 2025; OICS, 2025a)

These reports contained recommendations aimed at achieving strategic reforms, including a cross-government taskforce to address the systemic justice system failures driving the poor conditions (Report 158), and a recommendation for the Government to establish a formal inquiry into the operation of Hakea (Report 162). Neither recommendation has been implemented to the size or scale necessary to achieve the systemic reforms required.

Almost two years after the Show Cause Notice was issued in respect of Hakea, conditions have not materially improved and, in fact, similar conditions are now evident in both Melaleuca and Casuarina.

On 11 March 2026 I formed a suspicion that there was a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care and welfare of prisoners in Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina; and that prisoners were being subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Accordingly, I issued a Show Cause Notice under section 33A(2) of the ICS Act to the Director General, together with a draft of this report, requiring them to show cause why I should not refer these concerns to the Minister for Corrective Services. The background, analysis, and justification for issuing the Show Cause Notice are set out in this report, which includes a copy of the original Show Cause Notice, the Director General's response, and the referral letter to the Minister.

Our draft report included just one recommendation:

Recommendation 1

The Government must formally commit to and fund the system-level reforms required to address the concerns identified at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina prisons, and across the adult custodial system more broadly.

Within six months of the tabling of this report, the Department must develop, approve, and publicly release a comprehensive, costed reform implementation plan, endorsed by Government.

This plan must:

- finalise and clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term reform initiatives, including operational, workforce, infrastructure and governance reforms;
- identify which initiatives have been approved by Government and fully resourced, including recurrent and capital funding allocations;
- specify a clear and time-bound implementation schedule for each reform, including commencement and completion dates; and
- assign accountable senior officers for delivery of each reform initiative.

The implementation plan must be tabled in Parliament and provide public progress reports at six-monthly intervals until all reforms are completed, including explanations for any delays, funding variations, or departures from the approved plan.

The Department's response did not specifically address this recommendation, noting that the recommendation was directed to Government for consideration.

Following consideration of the Director General's response, the Show Cause Notice was referred to the Minister for Corrective Services on 8 April 2026.

At the time of lodging this report with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council (who are required by sections 34 and 35 of the ICS Act to hold the report for 30 days prior to tabling it in each House of Parliament), I also delivered a copy to the Minister for Corrective Services who may prepare a response to the report as outlined in sub-section 34(1)(b) of the ICS Act.

The response to our recommendation is now for the Minister and Government.

As noted at the outset, this is a decisive moment and a time of danger and great difficulty. The problems we are seeing in the Western Australian prison system are such that system level reform can no longer be delayed or deferred and must be urgently addressed with clear and measurable reforms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the cooperation received throughout the review from key personnel at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina and in the Department of Justice. I saw genuine commitment from the Director General and Commissioner to address the issues raised in the Show Cause Notice and accompanying report.

I acknowledge the contribution and hard work of the team in our office who were involved in undertaking this review. I would particularly acknowledge and thank Ryan Quinn and Kelly Jackson for their work in leading this review and as principal analysts and drafters of this report.

Eamon Ryan

Inspector of Custodial Services

14 April 2026

Summary of Findings

Systemic deterioration as grounds for statutory intervention

Nearly two years after a Show Cause Notice was first issued in respect of Hakea Prison, conditions have not materially improved and, critically, the same risk factors are now evident at Casuarina Prison and Melaleuca Women's Prison. What began as a facility-specific failure has escalated into a system-wide breakdown affecting multiple prisons simultaneously.

The cumulative evidence from inspections, monitoring visits, data analysis and staff and prisoner accounts establishes reasonable grounds to suspect that:

- there is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care and welfare of prisoners; and
- prisoners are, on a regular basis, being subjected to conditions that may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Enduring population pressure and workforce instability has normalised restricted regimes and unsafe environments

The adult custodial system is operating in a sustained state of unsafe failure, driven by unprecedented population growth and chronic workforce instability that have far outpaced the system's capacity to respond. Widespread overcrowding, including triple-bunking and prisoners sleeping on mattresses on the floor, has eroded infrastructure resilience to the point that the system is unable to safely absorb or respond to major incidents. At the same time, persistent staffing shortfalls across custodial, health and rehabilitative roles have normalised unsafe staff-to-prisoner ratios and routine reliance on lockdowns as a means of maintaining control. These pressures have resulted in prolonged restrictive regimes, significantly reduced time out of cell, cancelled family contact and limited access to basic services, leading to the routine denial of fundamental entitlements. Taken together, these conditions reflect an enduring lack of safety for both prisoners and staff, with daily operations characterised by heightened risk, psychological harm and an increasing likelihood of serious incidents rather than stability or rehabilitation.

Escalating harm and risk parallels with prior serious custodial incidents

Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca account for a disproportionately high share of use of force incidents, assaults and non-critical incidents, self-harm events, and deaths by suicide. These indicators align with worsening conditions, prolonged confinement and reduced access to care. The environments in each of these prisons materially increase the risk of serious harm and death in custody. There are strong parallels with warning signs present prior to the 2018 Greenough Regional Prison riot, including sustained lockdowns, chronic understaffing, erosion of prisoner-staff relationships, rising frustration and violence, and a failure of systems to escalate and address risk early. These similarities reinforce that current conditions are neither novel nor unpredictable, and that failure to act carries a high likelihood of serious custodial incidents.

A whole-of-government reform response is required

Incremental, facility-level or short-term measures are insufficient. Restoring safe, lawful and humane custodial conditions requires a funded, whole-of-government response that addresses justice system demand and remand growth, sustainable workforce recruitment, retention and injury reduction, infrastructure and capacity planning, health and mental health service delivery, and system led governance and accountability.

The central requirement arising from this Show Cause Notice is a publicly released, costed reform implementation plan, endorsed by Government, setting out:

- coordinated short-, medium- and long-term reforms;
- confirmed funding and resourcing decisions;
- clear timeframes for delivery; and
- senior accountability for implementation and reporting.

Without such reform, the risks identified are expected to persist and escalate, with unacceptable consequences for prisoners and staff.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Government must formally commit to and fund the system-level reforms required to address the concerns identified at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina prisons, and across the adult custodial system more broadly.</p> <p>Within six months of the tabling of this report, the Department must develop, approve, and publicly release a comprehensive, costed reform implementation plan, endorsed by Government.</p> <p>This plan must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finalise and clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term reform initiatives, including operational, workforce, infrastructure and governance reforms; • identify which initiatives have been approved by Government and fully resourced, including recurrent and capital funding allocations; • specify a clear and time-bound implementation schedule for each reform, including commencement and completion dates; and • assign accountable senior officers for delivery of each reform initiative. <p>The implementation plan must be tabled in Parliament and provide public progress reports at six-monthly intervals until all reforms are completed, including explanations for any delays, funding variations, or departures from the approved plan.</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>Noted, as the recommendation is directed to Government for consideration.</p>

Independent Oversight Mandate

The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) was established under the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* (the ICS Act) as an independent statutory agency to provide oversight of custodial facilities and services in Western Australia.

The Inspector has two main functions under the ICS Act. To undertake inspections, at least once every three years, of places where prisoners, detainees and other persons in custody are held; and to undertake occasional inspections or occasional reviews of certain custodial services in relation to prisoners, detainees, or other people in custody.

The Inspector has broad powers under the ICS Act to carry out their functions, including free and unfettered access to a wide range of people, places and documents or information.

The functions and powers of the Inspector are set out in Part 4 of the ICS Act.

The Inspector is required to deliver inspection reports to both the Speaker and President of each House of Parliament for tabling. The Inspector also has discretion to deliver reports on occasional inspections or reviews to both the Speaker and President for tabling.

In addition to the access powers outlined above, the Inspector has the power under section 33A of the ICS Act to issue a show cause notice to the Chief Executive Officer. A show cause notice may be given if the Inspector suspects on reasonable grounds that:

1. there is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care or welfare of a prisoner, detainee, or person in custody; or
2. that a prisoner, detainee, or person in custody is being, or has been, subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

The functions and powers outlined above create a clear mandate for regular and ongoing independent custodial oversight and, when circumstances require, more immediate intervention.

Methodology

This report was prepared in accordance with section 22 of the ICS Act enabling the Office to review a custodial service in relation to a prison or in relation to one or more particular prisoners.

The report draws on various information sources including:

- Announced visits to Casuarina Prison, Hakea Prison and Melaleuca Women's Prison where on-site observations and informal discussions with staff and prisoners occurred,
- An unannounced visit to Hakea Prison to verify information obtained from other sources,
- Correspondence from prisoners at Casuarina, Hakea and Melaleuca,
- Correspondence received from other government agencies, lawyers, advocates, friends and family regarding conditions and treatment at Casuarina, Hakea and Melaleuca,
- Pre-inspection survey results for the March 2026 inspection of Melaleuca, and the October 2025 inspection of Casuarina,
- Data sets obtained from the Department's offender database, reporting portal or from prison management, and
- Departmental documentation including policy and procedures.

A draft version of this report was sent to the Department of Justice (the Department) in March 2026 for comment, alongside the Show Cause Notice issued by the Inspector. A formal response was received by the Department on 18 March 2026, as shown in Appendix C.

1 Background

1.1 Hakea Prison – Show Cause Notice and ongoing human rights failures

In 2024, a routine three-yearly inspection of Hakea Prison (Hakea) led the Inspector of Custodial Services to form the view that prisoners were being held in conditions that were cruel, inhuman or degrading (OICS, 2025). The Inspector identified systemic failures that were not isolated or transient but entrenched and worsening. The most acute impacts included:

- excessive and prolonged lockdowns severely limiting time out of cell
- lack of access to meaningful activities, education and rehabilitation
- restricted family contact through visits and telephones
- failure to provide clean clothing and bedding
- meals routinely served in cells as a substitute for normal regime.

These findings were so serious that, on 27 May 2024, the Inspector took the extraordinary step of issuing the Director General of the Department of Justice (the Department) with a Show Cause Notice under section 33A of the ICS Act. Following consideration of the Director General's response, the matter was formally referred to the Minister for Corrective Services on 14 June 2024.

Despite this escalation, and notwithstanding ongoing monitoring through liaison visits and information analysis, the Inspector advised both the Department and the Minister again on 17 September 2024 that conditions had not improved and had in fact deteriorated.

One of the fifteen recommendations arising from this inspection (Report 158), tabled in Parliament on 3 April 2025, was the establishment of a cross-government taskforce to address the systemic justice system failures driving these conditions. While this recommendation was acknowledged as consistent with 'current practice or initiatives', no taskforce of the scale or authority required has been implemented.

1.2 Conditions at Hakea remained unacceptable during follow-up inspection

The 2025 Follow-Up Inspection of Hakea Prison (Report 162), tabled in Parliament on 22 July 2025, confirmed that while minor improvements had occurred, conditions remained entirely unacceptable (OICS, 2025a).

The inspection found that:

- population pressure and staffing deficits continued to drive excessive lockdowns
- prisoners were still not receiving a normal daily routine
- basic standards of humane treatment were not being met
- improvements achieved were not at the scale required to stabilise the prison.

Although recruitment efforts had increased and the Hakea Safer Custody Taskforce had been established, these measures were insufficient to reverse systemic decline.

Crucially, one of the six recommendations in Report 162 called for the Government to establish a formal inquiry into the operations of Hakea Prison, aimed at restoring prisoner rights, re-establishing a normal regime, and ensuring staff safety. As this recommendation was directed to Government, the Department merely noted it. No formal response to this recommendation was received, nor has an inquiry established, so it is reasonable to assume the recommendation was not accepted by the Government.

1.3 Systemic failure is now spreading to Casuarina and Melaleuca

Nearly two years after the Show Cause Notice, conditions at Hakea have not materially improved. Even more concerning, the same conditions and risk factors are now clearly evident at Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) and Melaleuca Women's Prison (Melaleuca).

As the prison population reaches record highs, driven primarily by increasing remand numbers, and staffing shortages persist, pressure is no longer confined to a single facility. It is system-wide with most facilities either close to or above their operational capacity on any given day.

At Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca, we are now observing:

- chronic staffing shortages and unsafe staff-to-prisoner ratios
- escalating use of adaptive routines and prolonged lockdowns
- inability to deliver a normal daily routine with meaningful activity
- erosion of pro-social prisoner–staff relationships
- increasing use of force incidents
- rising rates of self-harm and psychological distress
- reduced access to family contact
- rapidly deteriorating prisoner and staff morale
- staff reporting moral injury and feeling unsafe at work

These operational challenges are no longer isolated to Hakea Prison.

1.4 Similarities to conditions prior to the Greenough Regional Prison riot

The independent *Critical Incident Review into the 2018 Greenough Regional Prison riot* on 24 and 25 July 2018 made clear the riot was not sudden, unpredictable or unavoidable (Shuard, 2018). It was preceded by clear, documented warning signs that were repeatedly raised but not acted upon – including recommendations made by this Office.

Those warning signs included:

- sustained and escalating lockdowns that became the default operating model
- chronic understaffing and roster vacancies
- loss of meaningful activity and routine
- rising prisoner frustration and anger
- deteriorating staff morale
- breakdown of prisoner–staff relationships

- failure of governance systems to escalate risk.

From March 2018 onward, Greenough Regional Prison (Greenough) operated under an 'adaptive routine' almost daily. Lockdowns were no longer a short-term contingency but a permanent substitute for adequate staffing and population management.

The Inspector has repeatedly noted that Hakea has been operating in a comparable state for several years. The deeply concerning development is that Melaleuca and Casuarina are now following the same trajectory.

While current pressures are not driven by overt overtime caps (as was the case in Greenough), the effect is the same. Vacancies, attrition, high numbers of workers' compensation claims, unplanned leave, and loss of experienced officers have left prisons attempting to manage more people with fewer or less experienced staff.

This creates a dangerous feedback loop:

- staffing shortages lead to lockdowns
- lockdowns increase prisoner frustration
- increased frustration elevates risk and use of force
- staff stress and injury increase
- further staff absences occur
- regime restrictions intensify

This is not sustainable.

1.5 Government action cannot be deferred

The custodial system is now fragile and nearing functional collapse.

If Government continues to accept current conditions:

- it is accepting a high likelihood of a major custodial incident, including riot or mass disturbance
- it is accepting heightened risk to staff safety, prisoner safety, and community safety
- it is accepting an increased risk of deaths in custody
- it is accepting ongoing breaches of human rights, including obligations under the Nelson Mandela Rules and Bangkok Rules
- it is accepting a prison system that can no longer effectively rehabilitate, only contain the vast majority of people sent there.

With prisons already over capacity, the system has no resilience. There is nowhere to safely relocate prisoners in the event of a major incident.

It is always worth remembering that most people in custody will return to the community. The public expects that the Government has met its obligation to rehabilitate them, reduce re-offending, and create safer communities. With the current system pressures, it cannot be said with confidence that this objective is being met.

2 The prison system is at a crisis point

This chapter outlines key issues observed at Casuarina, Hakea and Melaleuca that underpin the Inspector’s decision to issue the Department with a Show Cause Notice. The indicators discussed illustrate the significant pressures facing the three facilities and the resulting impacts on staff and prisoner safety and wellbeing.

2.1 Rising prisoner population placing immense strain on the system

The adult prison population has increased substantially, with the daily average across the male and female estates rising from 6,304 in January 2023 to 8,682 in February 2026, a 37 per cent increase. This growth has been driven largely by a rise in unsentenced (remand) prisoners, which increased by 29 per cent between January 2024 and January 2026. The impact has been particularly acute at Bandyup, where the unsentenced population has grown by 190 per cent despite the prison’s primary role being the management of sentenced women.

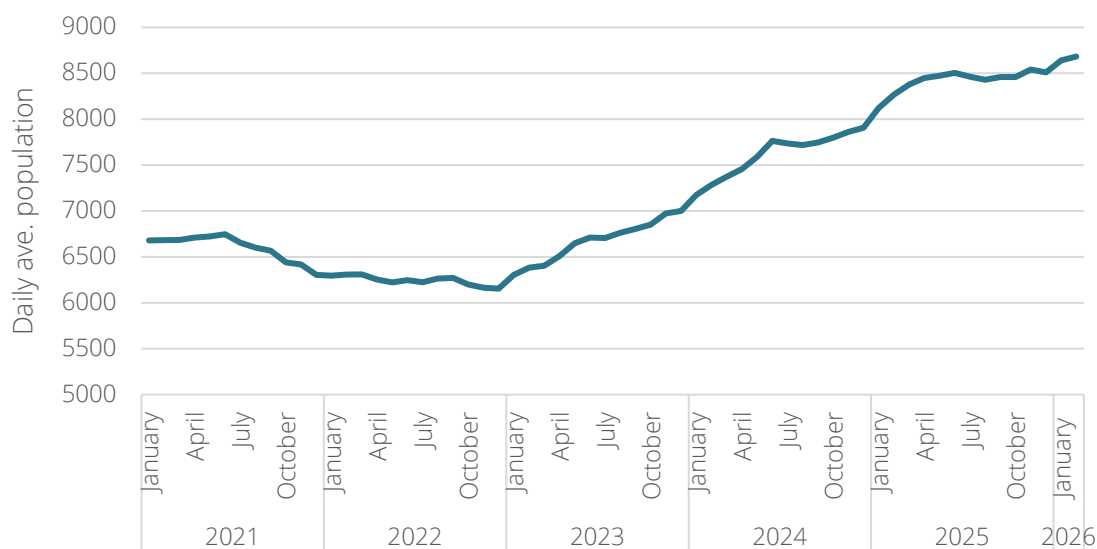


Figure 1: Daily average population across the adult male and female estates has reached record highs in February 2026.

Pressure on the system has been further intensified by an increase in monthly receptions into custody, rising from an average of 1,012 to 1,323 per month over the same period. This has disproportionately affected remand facilities, with Hakea and Melaleuca both recording two-year highs in receptions in January 2026. These trends have been compounded by longer average lengths of stay for unsentenced prisoners. The average length of stay for an unsentenced person in custody on 1 January 2021 was 188 days. By January 2026, this had increased to an average of 705 days, a 275% increase. This shows the prison system is now managing more people for longer periods of time, placing immense strain on existing infrastructure and staffing models.

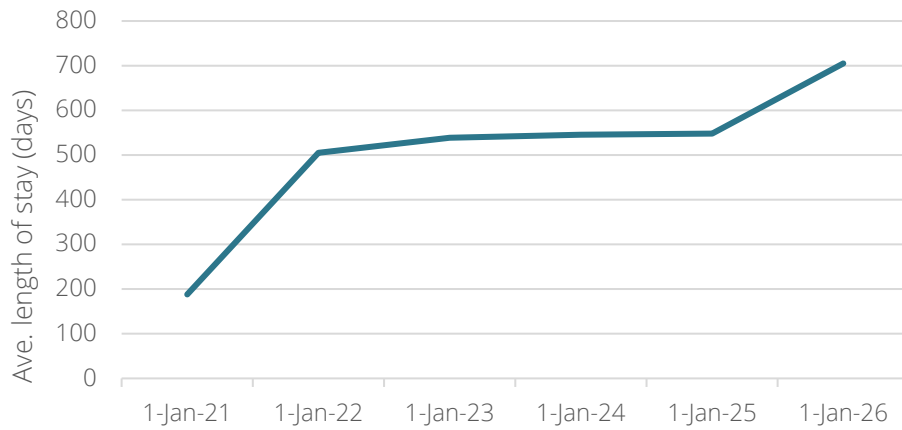


Figure 2: The average length of stay for an unsentenced person in adult custody has increased to 705 days.

As a result, overall system capacity has been significantly eroded. Between January 2025 and February 2026, bed capacity shifted from modest surpluses to deficits in both the male and female estates, despite a net increase of 317 beds achieved through double bunking and other measures. In this period, bed capacity in the adult male estate reduced from 3.3% to -0.9%. The adult female estate reduced from 6.3% to -2.9%. This highlights the extent to which population growth has outpaced capacity expansion across the estate.

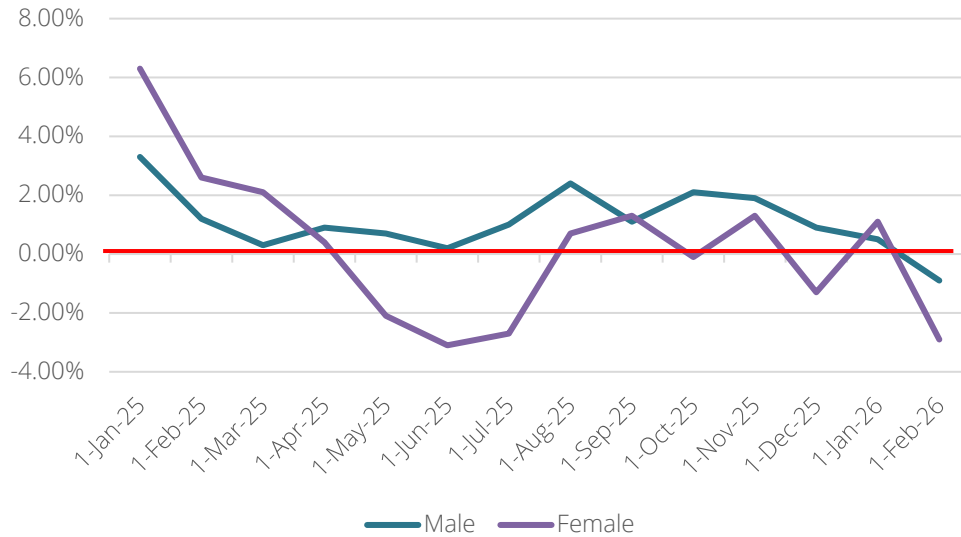


Figure 3: Bed capacity in the adult male and female estate has fallen below 0%.

As a result, on any given day most prisons in Western Australia are operating close to or above 100% capacity. In practical terms, this means men and women are increasingly required to sleep in overcrowded cells, with spaces originally designed for one person now often housing three. In many cases, this includes one person sleeping on a mattress on the floor, close to the toilet.

2.2 Staffing shortages continue to impact daily operations

Staffing shortages at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina are placing significant strain on prison operations and creating unsafe and unstable environments for both staff and prisoners.

At Hakea, although staffing numbers have been temporarily increased to support the prison during this period of crisis, the site continues to manage high volumes of workers' compensation claims and staff taking personal leave. Officers are required to manage high numbers of prisoner movements with a workforce heavily reliant on probationary staff. While the influx of graduates has been welcomed in principle, their limited experience has reduced overall operational effectiveness and increased the workload for senior officers. Staff report frequent abuse from prisoners and describe the operating environment as increasingly difficult to control and demoralising. These conditions elevate workplace stress and burnout, further increasing the risk of unplanned leave and staff attrition.

The situation at Melaleuca was described by staff as unprecedented. The number of staff on workers' compensation more than doubled between January 2025 (17 claims) and January 2026 (49 claims). The rate of staff taking personal leave has also increased by 187% in the same period, as staff are increasingly exposed to violence and are increasingly burnt out. This leads to more frequent daily staffing shortages. Between January and February 2026, the facility had an average daily staffing shortfall representing 30% of the workforce. On multiple days the prison was operating with barely half of its required custodial staff, no nursing staff beyond the Clinical Nurse Manager, and critical functions such as security and the gatehouse severely understaffed. These shortages resulted in prolonged lockdowns, cancelled visits and limited out-of-cell time for women, further escalating tension and significantly increasing the workload for the small number of staff on duty. All of this has a compounding impact, more often than not leading to more staffing shortages, increased lockdowns, and prisoner wellbeing deteriorating further.

Similar pressures were evident at Casuarina, where sustained overcrowding and staffing shortages led to full prison lockdowns, industrial concerns, and reliance on double-time overtime to maintain basic operations. This represents an unusual situation for Casuarina, which has historically sought to manage staffing and population pressures without resorting to lockdowns. Despite additional funding being secured to increase custodial staffing as the prisoner population has grown, there has not been enough prison officers to fill the additional positions. Between January and February 2026, Casuarina recorded a short fall of between 61 and 129 officers a day, the latter representing 37% of its required staffing. While the number of active workers' compensation claims has reduced, the site continues to manage an average of approximately 80 active claims per month, including staff not currently at work and those in graduated return-to-work arrangements. Casuarina also maintains a persistently high rate of personal leave, with an average of 817 shifts being lost to personal leave each month between January 2025 and January 2026.

Across Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca, chronic shortages of health and mental health staff are also a critical driver of deteriorating wellbeing and escalating risk for both prisoners and staff. Each of these prisons are managing growing numbers of people with acute and complex mental health needs amid sustained shortages of nurses, mental health clinicians and rehabilitative staff, compounded by high vacancy rates, staff burnout, and workers' compensation claims. Prolonged lockdowns and restrictive regimes have reduced access to clinical care, observation, therapeutic

intervention and continuity of treatment. A review of estate wide non-custodial staffing in 2024 found one in five positions in Health and Wellbeing were vacant, while more than one in four Rehabilitation and Reintegration positions were unstaffed. Prisons were found to be unable to meet basic equivalence-of-care medical service standards. Psychiatric priority ratings for January and February 2026 also show a majority of prisoners assessed as having either serious or significant psychiatric needs reside at Hakea, Melaleuca, and Casuarina (24%, 31%, 17% of the estate respectively), reinforcing that clinical demand remains high despite constrained service capacity.

The consequences for wellbeing are severe and measurable. Deteriorating conditions are pronounced at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina, seen in staffing shortages, rising self-harm, assaults, and use of force. Reduced access to mental health assessment, delayed follow-up, missed medication and limited observation during lockdowns increase the risk that acute distress goes undetected or unmanaged. Inadequate health and mental health resourcing at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina is not a peripheral issue but a central factor driving declining wellbeing and an unacceptably heightened risk of serious health incidents and deaths in custody.

Across all three sites, staff consistently described burnout, exhaustion and a strong sense that short-term measures are masking deeper, unresolved workforce shortages and capacity issues. These ongoing pressures continue to undermine safety, stability and the effective operation of the prisons.

2.3 Lockdowns are increasing, impacting time out of cell

With the prisoner population increasing and staffing shortages prevailing, lockdowns are becoming increasingly common. Between January 2025 and February 2026, average time out of cell per prisoner has generally declined or remained flat across most sites. Hakea’s out-of-cell time, while previously improving, fell sharply from around seven hours in December 2025 to 5.36 hours in January 2026 and 5.24 hours in February 2026.

Other major sites have experienced more sustained declines. Melaleuca’s average time out of cell reduced from 8.45 hours in January 2025 to 6.54 hours in January 2026, before dropping further to 5.36 hours in February. Casuarina saw a more significant drop from 8.44 hours to just 3.07 hours in

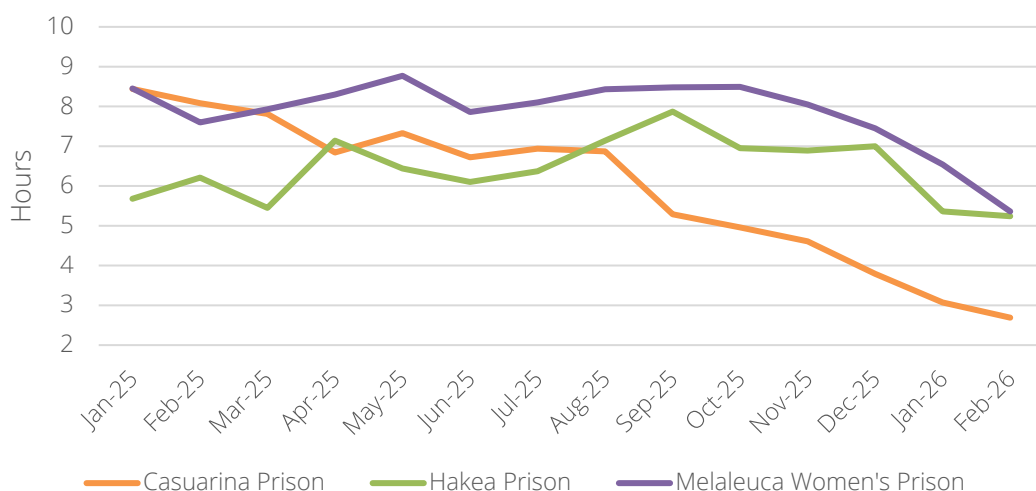


Figure 4: Average time out of cell per prisoner per day, reported monthly, shows a decline at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

January 2026, reducing further still to 2.69 hours in February. Most remaining facilities either trended slightly downwards or remained broadly stable.

These reductions align with a marked increase in recorded lockdowns across the estate. Between January 2025 and January 2026, lockdowns more than doubled at Casuarina, increased significantly at Melaleuca, and rose at Hakea. Overall, Hakea's frequent use of lockdowns and lower out-of-cell hours appear to have become normalised, while Casuarina and Melaleuca have experienced a clear period of operational decline.

As noted previously, reported out-of-cell hours are averages and do not fully reflect the day-to-day reality for prisoners. While some days may allow for more time out of cell, others involve very limited access, which is not apparent from monthly averages alone.

Anecdotal feedback from prisoners at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca indicates that they are frequently receiving minimal time out of cell. Prisoners at Hakea continue to report some days where they receive no time out of cell at all. More recently, women at Melaleuca have also reported spending up to 50 hours at a time confined to cell. This suggests that actual conditions can be significantly worse than the reported figures imply.

In addition, when time out of cell does occur, it is often confined to wings or unit day rooms. Access to fresh air and outdoor exercise is frequently restricted, further limiting meaningful time outside cells and contravening prisoner rights under the Mandela Rules (UNODC, 2015).

On the 23 January 2026 in Unit [redacted] at Hakea Prison these things happened. All prisoners including myself were not allowed out of their cell until after 9am.

Once unlocked all prisoners were given 3 to 4 minutes to get hot water, meds, evacuate bowels while not having 1 to 2 other prisoners within half a meter of them. Hardly any prisoner got to do so.

All basic human rights are being ignored completely.

Extract from a letter from a prisoner at Hakea

By way of example, a visit to Hakea in February 2026 highlighted the operational realities behind these figures. Staff advised that during full lockdowns, typically due to staff shortages, prisoners were unlocked in small numbers for short periods, sometimes receiving only ten minutes to shower and make a phone call. During one recent lockdown, minimal staffing levels meant officers focused solely on essential tasks such as medication and observations, with no capacity for meaningful engagement, and no additional phone access for prisoners on the At-Risk Management System (ARMS) or Support and Monitoring System (SAMS), despite their heightened needs.

2.4 Prisoners find it hard to maintain contact with family and friends

Across Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca, prisoners consistently described significant difficulty maintaining contact with family and friends. At Hakea, men estimated that around 60 per cent of visits were cancelled, with most averaging only one successful visit per month. Prisoners spoke about the emotional impact of this disruption, noting that limited access to phones and cancelled social visits led to a loss of connection with the outside world and feelings of dehumanisation. Missed visits were particularly distressing where family members had taken time off work or travelled long distances, only for visits to be cancelled.

Access to phone contact at Hakea was also affected by lockdowns and operational constraints. Staff and prisoners reported delays of up to a week can occur before phone numbers are approved for use by prisoners. While some units were able to speed up this process, many prisoners still experienced prolonged periods without contact, exacerbated by limited time out of cell. Several described staff as supportive but overwhelmed, with visit cancellations often driven by staffing shortages, routine status, and the need to prioritise unit safety over social contact.

At Casuarina, prisoners similarly reported difficulty staying in touch with family, particularly due to limited out-of-cell time and insufficient access to phones. Family visits were frequently cancelled as a result of staffing shortages, further reducing opportunities for meaningful contact. These disruptions meant that even when visits or calls were technically available, prisoners were often unable to access them in practice.

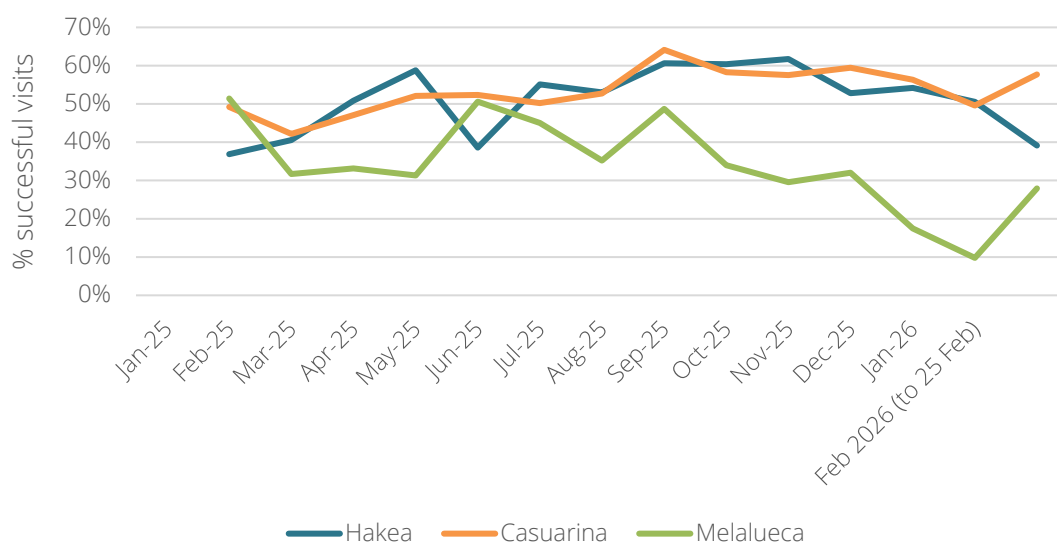


Figure 5: Melaleuca has seen the sharpest decline in social visits, compared to Hakea and Casuarina.

The situation at Melaleuca appeared particularly acute. Survey responses from February 2026 indicated most prisoners did not find it easy to access in-person visits or e-visits, and while phone access remained relatively better, it had also declined. Prisoners reported going weeks without seeing their children due to cancelled visits and lockdowns, with some describing the impact on their mental health. Lockdowns were identified as a major barrier to maintaining family ties, which are a critical protective factor for women in custody, supporting emotional wellbeing and engagement in rehabilitation.

I've seen my kids 3 times since Nov, they book every week without fail, all visits are cancelled. When locked down no phone calls. My kids just got all Nov and Dec mail from me in late January. Brother, sister, and best friends visits all cancelled by prison. Often no envelopes to send mail for days. 2 phones for 32 people.

Comment from a woman at Melaleuca

Data analysis reinforces these accounts, showing consistently low success rates for social visits across multiple facilities. Between January 2025 and February 2026, only around half of all booked social visits were successful at Hakea (51 per cent) and Casuarina (53 per cent), with outcomes at Melaleuca significantly worse at an average of 34 per cent. While Hakea and Casuarina have shown some improvement over time, this has coincided with reduced visit availability, including the removal of visiting days at Hakea due to staffing shortages. Melaleuca experienced a marked decline, with only 10 per cent of visits in January 2026 being marked as 'successful'. While there has been improvement in February 2026, there have been 13 days where all visit sessions were cancelled. This highlights the extent to which operational pressures are limiting prisoners' ability to sustain regular and reliable contact with family and friends.

2.5 An increase in use of force and non-critical incidents

Overall, critical incidents across the custodial estate are trending downward. Despite this reduction, Casuarina, Hakea and Melaleuca continue to account for a disproportionately high share of incidents, consistently comprising more than 40 per cent of all critical incidents between January 2025 and January 2026. Since October 2025, their combined share has increased further to more than 45 per cent, indicating that while overall volumes are easing, serious incidents remain concentrated at facilities experiencing the greatest operational pressure.

Of particular concern is the increase in incidents involving the use of force against prisoners at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca toward the end of 2025 and into early 2026. This trend aligns with worsening conditions at these sites, including overcrowding, staffing shortages and frequent lockdowns. The most pronounced increase occurred at Melaleuca, where use-of-force incidents rose sharply from 16 in February 2025 to a peak of 80 in December, before easing to 43 in February 2026. While most incidents involved physical control and restraint rather than use of chemical agents, the scale and rapid escalation highlight the fragility of the operating environment and the increasing difficulty staff face in managing distressed and unsettled prisoners.

At the same time, non-critical incidents across the custodial estate have trended upward overall. Between January 2025 and January 2026, the same four sites consistently accounted for more than half of all non-critical incidents, reflecting sustained pressure across the system. This pattern intensified through late 2025 before showing some easing in early 2026, suggesting short-term relief rather than a structural improvement in conditions.

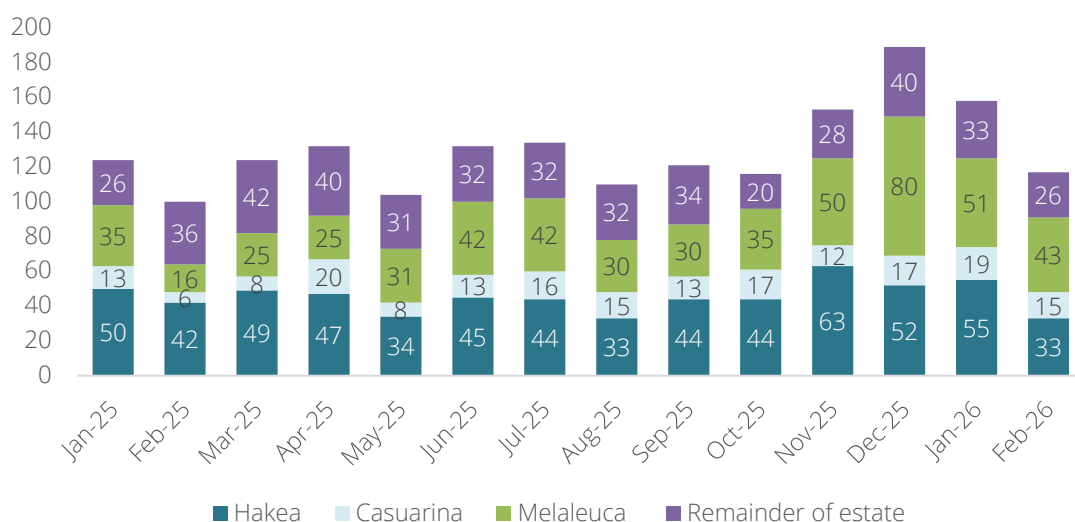


Figure 6: Use of force incidents have increased at both Hakea and Melaleuca in recent months.

Hakea remained the largest contributor to non-critical incidents, with a sharp spike in December 2025 followed by a partial decline in January 2026, broadly mirroring the estate-wide pattern. Casuarina showed the most consistent upward trajectory across the year, particularly in the final quarter of 2025, reaching its highest level in January 2026. Common incident types across both sites included threatening or abusive behaviour, misconduct, self-harm, disobeying an order, physical control and restraint, and medical incidents. Melaleuca also recorded substantial increases in late 2025 that remained elevated into January 2026, driven largely by assaults and self-harm. Together, these trends point to sustained operational stress at these facilities, with deteriorating conditions contributing to higher levels of conflict, distress and intervention.

2.6 Assaults most commonly occur at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca

Across the custodial estate, serious assaults and assaults resulting in minor injury declined overall between January 2025 and January 2026. In contrast, assaults with no injury—where no medical treatment was required—increased noticeably in the latter part of 2025 and remained the most common form of assault. Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca accounted for a significant share of serious, minor-injury and no-injury assaults over the period, indicating that assault activity remains concentrated at these sites despite the overall reduction in more serious incidents.

The increase in no-injury assaults at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca appears consistent with rising levels of underlying tension within these facilities. Persistent overcrowding, reduced staff supervision due to ongoing shortages, and frequent lockdowns have limited prisoners' access to movement, activities and basic entitlements. These conditions are likely contributing to frustration and interpersonal conflict, which may manifest as low-level assaults that do not result in physical injury but nonetheless reflect growing instability within the custodial environment.

Site-level trends support this interpretation. Hakea continued to record the highest overall volume of assaults, although numbers eased somewhat in January 2026 compared with late-2025 peaks. Casuarina showed greater volatility, with spikes in injury-related assaults late in 2025 and a sharp increase in no-injury assaults in January 2026. Melaleuca stood out for persistently high rates of no-injury assaults relative to its size, including an increase into early 2026, suggesting sustained low-level conflict driven by ongoing operational pressures rather than isolated incidents of serious violence.

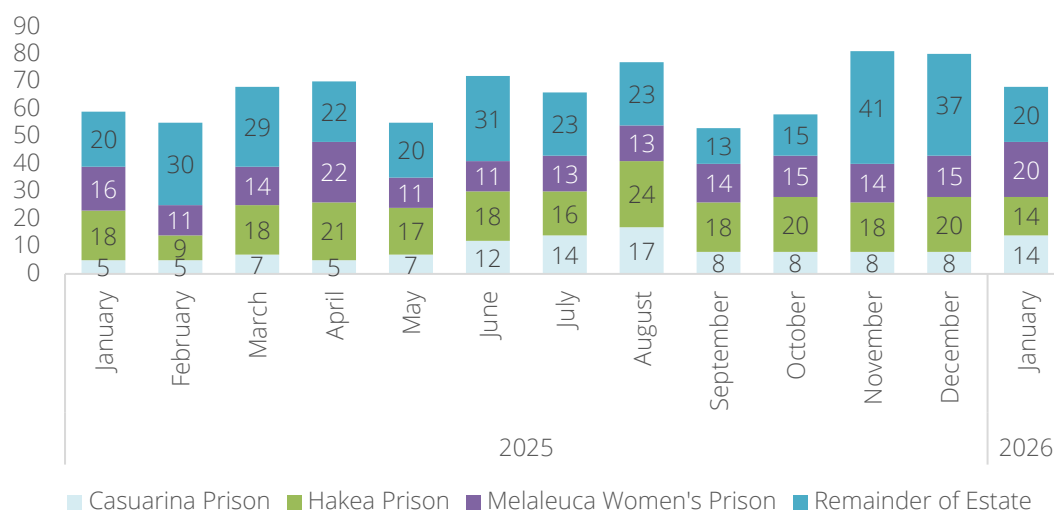


Figure 7: Casuarina, Hakea and Melaleuca are significant contributors to the number of assaults recorded with no injury.

2.7 Self-harm attempts have increased with deteriorating conditions

Deteriorating conditions across Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca are increasingly impacting prisoner wellbeing, reflected in a renewed upward trend in self-harm incidents in January 2026. Population pressures, ongoing staffing shortages and the resulting increase in lockdowns have reduced time out of cell, access to activities and meaningful human contact. On average, these three sites accounted for 60 per cent of all self-harm incidents across the custodial estate between January 2025 and January 2026, underscoring the concentration of distress in facilities experiencing the greatest operational strain.

Women are still self harming and hanging themselves. If not for cell mates deaths in custody here would be sky high. The cell mates are left to deal with it. That's not okay.

Comment from a prisoner at Melaleuca

Consistent with findings from previous inspections at Hakea, self-harm rates appear to rise as conditions for prisoners worsen. While causation cannot be established, this pattern aligns with repeated feedback from prisoners that extended lockdowns, limited movement, and the absence of purposeful activity contribute to declining mental health. Prisoners have described feelings of frustration, hopelessness and emotional distress as their daily lives become increasingly restricted, suggesting that self-harm is, in part, a response to prolonged exposure to these conditions.

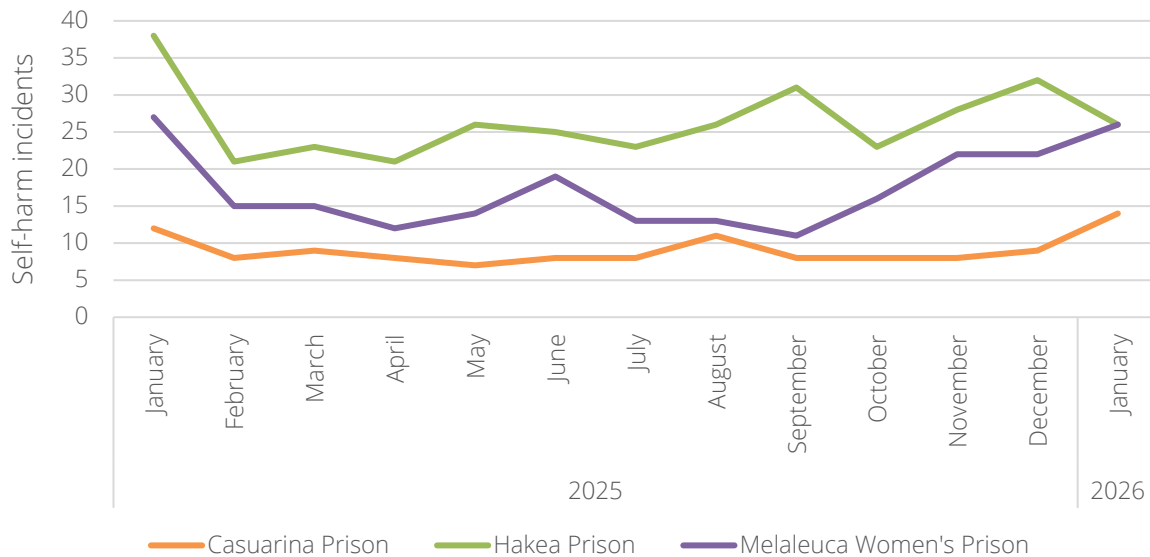


Figure 8: Casuarina and Melaleuca are reporting increased self-harm incidents moving into 2026, while Hakea has had a recent decrease in incidents following a steady period of increase.

Hakea remains the largest contributor to self-harm incidents, with persistently high numbers throughout the period, including a renewed increase toward the end of 2025 and into January 2026. Melaleuca has also experienced a notable rise in late 2025 and early 2026, indicating growing distress among women in custody as conditions deteriorate. While it is positive that Melaleuca has not recorded any attempted suicides since July 2025, the continued increase in self-harm remains a serious concern. In contrast, Hakea and Casuarina accounted for just under half of all attempted suicides across the estate during 2025.

We get locked in too much no fresh water haven't seen my family in 4 week due to cancelled visits makes my mental health shit.

Comment from a resident at Melaleuca

2.8 Two thirds of deaths in custody occur at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca

Between January 2025 and February 2026, there were 17 deaths in custody across adult prisons in Western Australia. Just over half of these deaths were attributed to natural causes, with most occurring at Casuarina, which accommodates the state’s prison infirmary. This reflects Casuarina’s role in managing prisoners with complex health needs rather than a broader trend across all sites.

However, a significant proportion of deaths during this period were apparently unnatural deaths caused by suicide. Eight deaths were classified in this category, representing nearly half of all deaths in custody. Almost two-thirds of these suicides occurred at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca, highlighting that these facilities continue to carry a disproportionate burden of the most serious wellbeing outcomes.

While Melaleuca recorded one death by suicide during the period, this occurred in February 2025, prior to the current deterioration in conditions. Nonetheless, the concentration of suicides at Hakea and Casuarina, alongside worsening conditions, increased lockdowns and rising self-harm at these sites, reinforces concerns about the impact of custodial environments on prisoner mental health and safety. The conditions being experienced by prisoners at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca greatly increase the risk of suicide.

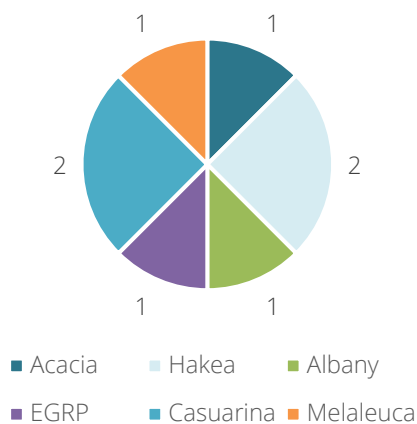


Figure 9: Most deaths by suicide between January 2025 and February 2026 occurred at Hakea, Casuarina, and Melaleuca.

2.9 The conditions are having a significant impact on prisoner wellbeing

Deteriorating conditions across Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina are having a clear and cumulative impact on prisoner wellbeing, with overcrowding, frequent lockdowns and reduced access to basic services shaping daily life in custody. At Hakea, education programs had ceased entirely and overcrowding was acute, with three men routinely housed in cells designed for two. Prisoners and staff described increased tension and squabbling, alongside daily assaults, as men with complex needs—including poor mental health, alcohol and other drug withdrawal, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and family-linked custodial dynamics—were confined together for extended periods with limited relief.

Extended lockdowns were repeatedly linked to declining mental health and loss of dignity. Prisoners reported being locked in cells for days at a time without access to showers, fresh air, phone calls or clean clothes, forcing them to prioritise basic survival needs during limited time out of cell. One prisoner described feeling ‘the most powerless’ he ever had, recounting how prolonged confinement, heat, lack of privacy when using in-cell toilets, and insufficient clothing strained relationships and undermined his sense of self. Staff confirmed that during lockdowns there are no showers, phone calls or clothing changes, and prisoners leave their cells only for medication or appointments. Cells were described as hot, poorly equipped and unhygienic, with missing toilet seats, pests, inadequate bedding and limited laundry access contributing to exhaustion, frustration and distress.

So many cockroaches in cell. No laundry. No use of phones. Toilets are broken. No pillow. It's filthy.

Comment from a prisoner at Hakea

These impacts were particularly evident for newly received and medically vulnerable prisoners. One first-time prisoner described confusion, isolation and anxiety due to a lack of orientation information,

inability to contact family, poor cell conditions and delays in receiving prescribed medication for chronic health conditions. Similar concerns emerged at Melaleuca, where women described repeated lockdowns lasting several days, loss of phone contact, difficulty accessing healthcare, missed medication, extreme heat in cells, and lack of basic necessities such as toilet paper. Women reported that these conditions, combined with perceived group punishment, inconsistent routines and limited access to work, programs and counselling, were significantly harming their mental health.

Lockdowns getting worse up to 24 hrs in cell lockdowns for days at a time. Not even allowed out for water let alone call family. Unable to go outside for fresh air except 1-2 times if we lucky sometimes 1 time per fortnight.

Comment from a woman at Melaleuca

Accounts from Casuarina reinforced these themes, particularly for prisoners transferred from Hakea, who described conditions there as comparatively better but still challenging. Triple cell occupancy, limited airflow, heat and reduced supervision exacerbated mental health and neurodiversity-related difficulties, leaving prisoners feeling crowded, overwhelmed and agitated. Across all sites, prisoner correspondence and survey responses consistently describe an environment of chronic lockdowns, extreme heat, overcrowding and service disruption that is experienced as punitive rather than rehabilitative. The cumulative effect is a profound deterioration in wellbeing, marked by anxiety, depression, frustration, self-harm risk and a pervasive sense of powerlessness and loss of dignity.

2.10 Staff are feeling under pressure and unsafe

Deteriorating conditions across Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina are having a significant and compounding impact on staff wellbeing, safety and morale. Chronic overcrowding, frequent lockdowns and high prisoner movement have created an environment that officers consistently described as unsafe and exhausting. At Hakea, triple-celling has increased tension between prisoners and heightened risk during unlocks, requiring more staff to manage cells and exposing officers to greater danger. Staff reported daily assaults between prisoners and recent assaults on officers, alongside the relentless pressure of managing dozens of daily prisoner movements, court returns and crisis care admissions. One officer described the situation as ‘inhumane, barbaric and broken,’ reflecting the depth of distress and moral injury being experienced by officers working in units.

Despite these dangerous conditions [of overpopulation and understaffing], we are still accommodating the same routines and prisoner facilities we were two years ago when staffing levels were much higher. Staff safety is beyond compromised.

Comment from a staff member at Casuarina

At Melaleuca, staff described severe understaffing, loss of experience and an inability to safely manage increasingly complex and vulnerable women in custody. Officers reported that only a small number of staff had more than a few years’ experience and that probationary officers were often

inadequately prepared for the realities of the role. Staff expressed concern that they were expected to manage high levels of mental illness, trauma and volatility without appropriate training or specialist support, leading to fear for personal safety and deep frustration. Barrier management and prolonged lockdowns were used to maintain control, despite staff acknowledging these measures worsen prisoner behaviour and make the unit harder—not easier—to manage. One officer noted they had ‘nearly lost the unit,’ while another in the Crisis Care Unit reported being assaulted multiple times in recent weeks.

The expectation is far beyond possible, meaning you're always falling short. This leaves you feeling deflated and under skilled for the roles we are expected to undertake. There is no way there is sustainability and therefore I think we will continue to burn though good staff...

Comment from a staff member at Melaleuca

The strain on staff was further exacerbated by ineffective organisational supports and changes in leadership. For example, at Melaleuca, officers highlighted how changes in leadership had undermined consistency, confidence and accountability. In the Crisis Care Unit, staff raised serious concerns about insufficient staffing, outdated first-aid qualifications, inconsistent nursing coverage and rising assaults on staff. Similar themes emerged at Casuarina, where officers described volatile units, increasing risk and a belief that a serious incident was likely if current practices continued, despite strong leadership at the unit level.

Results from pre-inspection staff surveys across these sites reinforce these findings. Officers consistently described high levels of stress, burnout and moral distress arising from unsafe staffing ratios, constant redeployments and an inability to meet professional standards of care and safety. Many reported feeling unsupported by senior management and head office, with decisions perceived as disconnected from frontline realities. The cumulative effect of overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, deteriorating conditions and sustained exposure to violence and trauma is a workforce that feels exhausted, unsafe and increasingly disengaged, raising serious concerns about staff retention, safety and the long-term sustainability of custodial operations.

Hakea Prison is severely understaffed which is leading to Prison Officers resigning or transferring out. Staff are being burnt out and quite a few staff are experiencing stress and other health issues.

Comment from a staff member at Hakea

2.11 Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence indicates that Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca are operating under extreme and sustained pressure, with population growth (driven by unprecedented rises in remand numbers), chronic staffing shortages and capacity constraints fundamentally undermining prisoner and staff wellbeing. Overcrowding has become routine, lockdowns increasingly normalised, and time out of cell, access to healthcare, family contact and rehabilitative activity significantly reduced. These

conditions are associated with rising self-harm, increased use of force and persistent low-level violence, indicating environments that are increasingly volatile and psychologically harmful. Concerningly, we are also observing similar pressures elsewhere across the adult prison system.

At the same time, staff safety, morale and capacity are deteriorating. Officers describe working in unsafe and unsustainable conditions marked by high assault risk, inadequate supervision ratios, reliance on inexperienced staff and frequent redeployments. Prolonged exposure to violence, trauma, and moral distress—combined with short-term crisis responses—has left many staff burnt out and concerned that serious incidents are inevitable. While the prisons continue to function in a technical sense, they are doing so at the cost of prisoner wellbeing, staff safety and long-term system integrity, with the risk of further deaths, serious disturbances or systemic failure remaining unacceptably high without urgent intervention.

Finally, our report documents many of the enormous pressures the prison system is experiencing, but many of the driving factors behind these pressures are outside their control. To name a few, the reasons behind the rapidly rising remand population, the causes of the significant increases seen in the length of time prisoners are spending on remand, and the availability of post-release support services. All of these require attention and reform in equal measure to system wide change in the prison system.

Recommendation 1

The Government must formally commit to and fund the system-level reforms required to address the concerns identified at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina prisons, and across the adult custodial system more broadly.

Within six months of the tabling of this report, the Department must develop, approve, and publicly release a comprehensive, costed reform implementation plan, endorsed by Government.

This plan must:

- finalise and clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term reform initiatives, including operational, workforce, infrastructure and governance reforms;
- identify which initiatives have been approved by Government and fully resourced, including recurrent and capital funding allocations;
- specify a clear and time-bound implementation schedule for each reform, including commencement and completion dates; and
- assign accountable senior officers for delivery of each reform initiative.

The implementation plan must be tabled in Parliament and provide public progress reports at six-monthly intervals until all reforms are completed, including explanations for any delays, funding variations, or departures from the approved plan.

3 A Show Cause Notice was issued

Nearly two years after the issue of the Show Cause Notice in May 2024, conditions at Hakea have not materially improved, and the same serious risk factors are now evident at Casuarina and Melaleuca. Record prison population levels, driven largely by increasing remand numbers, combined with persistent staffing shortages have resulted in system-wide pressure, with most facilities operating at or above capacity. Across these prisons, chronic staffing shortfalls, prolonged lockdowns, and the inability to deliver meaningful daily routines are undermining safety, wellbeing, and rehabilitative outcomes. These challenges are no longer isolated but reflect a systemic deterioration affecting both prisoners and staff.

On 11 March 2026, the Inspector provided a confidential summary report to the Department and issued a 'Show Cause Notice' to the Director General, pursuant to Section 33A of the ICS Act. The Notice detailed the Inspector's concerns and provided the Department with an opportunity to formally respond.

On 8 April 2026 the Inspector referred the Show Cause Notice to the Minister for Corrective Services in accordance with sub-sections 33A(6) and (7) of the ICS Act and advised that this report together with the Notice and relevant attachments would be lodged with Parliament for tabling.

3.1 The Department's response to the Notice

The Department's response to the Notice, received on 18 March 2026, acknowledged many of the concerns and issues raised. The response also outlined initiatives and strategies being pursued by the Department, to try to address the issues and concerns identified.

As a related issue, it is important to note here that many of the problems identified are symptomatic of whole-of-system issues facing the Department that we have regularly identified through our inspection work. For example: a significantly rising prison population, bed capacity at all adult custodial facilities being at or near full capacity, and chronic staffing problems (including recruitment, retention, and high levels of workers' compensation and personal leave).

The Department acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns raised in the Show Cause Notice and accepted that system wide pressures have created significant risks to safety, wellbeing and system resilience across Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca. The response highlighted that these challenges are driven by whole-of-justice demand pressures rather than isolated custodial failures and therefore require coordinated, system-level action. The Department emphasised the importance of strengthened governance, immediate risk reduction controls, demand management measures, workforce stabilisation and a structured short, medium and long-term reform agenda to restore acceptable conditions. It also underscored the need to balance population management measures with community safety, transparency, and sustainable reform, while maintaining close engagement with OICS as actions progress.

3.2 The matter was referred to the Minister

Following consideration of the Department's response, the Inspector referred the matter to the Minister for Corrective Services in accordance with sub-sections 33A(6) and (7) of the ICS Act.

The Inspector advised the Minister that conditions at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca present serious and unsustainable risks to prisoner safety, welfare and human rights, with the prison system operating at or beyond capacity. The Minister was informed that ongoing monitoring, site visits and analysis indicated routine denial of basic entitlements, conditions that may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and a lack of system resilience in the event of a major disturbance.

While acknowledging the Department's commitment and initiatives in response to the Show Cause Notice, the Inspector emphasised that these actions do not yet amount to clear, measurable or adequately resourced reforms capable of addressing the root causes. The Inspector underscored the need for a funded, whole-of-government response and a publicly released, costed reform implementation plan setting out short, medium and long-term system wide reforms.

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Appendix B Acronyms

Term	Expansion of Abbreviation
ARMS	At-Risk Management System
Department	Department of Justice
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
ICS Act	Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services

Appendix C Show Cause Notice to Director General



Our ref: ER/EF/26-010

11 March 2026

Ms Kylie Maj
Director General
Department of Justice
David Malcolm Justice Centre
28 Barrack Street
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Ms Maj

SHOW CAUSE NOTICE SECTION 33A *INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES ACT 2003* – HAKEA PRISON, CASUARINA PRISON, and MELALEUCA WOMEN'S PRISON

I am writing to raise serious concerns about the conditions we are seeing across the prison system in Western Australia, specifically: daily staffing shortfalls occurring in most prisons; a rapidly increasing prison population; most facilities consistently being at or above maximum capacity; significant restrictions to daily routines; and regularly reduced or cancelled support and rehabilitation services for prisoners. This is having a significant detrimental impact on the security, safety and wellbeing of both staff and prisoners.

You will recall that in May 2024 I raised similar concerns about conditions in Hakea Prison (Hakea) and issued a Show Cause Notice under the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* (the ICS Act). Subsequently, my Office released two inspection reports detailing the substandard conditions in Hakea, Report 158 published in April 2025 and Report 162 published in July 2025.

We are now seeing similar issues arise in other facilities.

As an independent statutory agency with a mandate to provide oversight of custodial facilities in Western Australia, we maintain ongoing monitoring of conditions across the prison system. This is consistent with the functions of my Office as provided for in Part 4 of the ICS Act. Recently, this has included liaison visits to Hakea, Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) and Melaleuca Women's Prison (Melaleuca) and undertaking data analysis and research of conditions in each of these prisons and more broadly across the system.

The results from these monitoring activities are such that I am compelled to raise these concerns with you. I fear that the prison system is under enormous and unsustainable pressure. Further, in the event of a major disturbance there is little capacity across the system to accommodate more than a very small number of displaced prisoners.

I have been provided with the attached report which outlines the results of our monitoring work, including data analysis, site visits, and interviews and discussions with prisoners and staff. Having considered the contents of this report, I have formed a suspicion that there is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care and welfare of prisoners at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

I am also of the view that most prisoners in Hakea, Casuarina, and Melaleuca are, on a regular basis, being denied their basic entitlements, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Bangkok Rules, the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia, and our own Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Facilities (collectively the 'various rules'.) This leads me to suspect that prisoners are being held in conditions that are cruel, inhuman or degrading.

Consequently, in accordance with Section 33A(2) of the ICS Act, I have formed a reasonable suspicion that:

1. There is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care or welfare of prisoners held in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca; and
2. That prisoners are being subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

Pursuant to Section 33A(3) of the ICS Act I am writing to you, in your capacity as Chief Executive Officer as defined in Section 3 of the *Prisons Act 1981*, to issue a Show Cause Notice (the Notice) relating to my concerns outlined above. Specifically, I am concerned that prisoners in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca are:

- Being held in conditions that fail to meet minimum standards set out in the various rules.
- Regularly subjected to lockdowns and restricted regimes.
- Regularly not getting access to fresh air and exercise through reasonable time out of their cell or their unit.
- Not receiving sufficient time and opportunity to maintain contact with their family or friends.
- Being held in unhygienic conditions (including not having access to clean and hygienic cells, not always having access to a daily shower, and having to defecate in their cell which is shared with another prisoner).
- Regularly being served and required to eat all meals in their cells (which also contains the toilet), leading to food waste attracting rodents and other pests.

Because of these circumstances I have formed a view that prisoners at these facilities are being treated in a manner that is cruel, inhuman, or degrading.

These problems are compounded by regular staff shortfalls, the current populations in each of these facilities (driven largely by increasing remand numbers) regularly being close to or above 100% occupancy, and the inadequacy of available infrastructure. These pressures have led to significant restrictions to daily regimes and services and supports for prisoners. This, in my view, creates unacceptable risks to the security, control and safety of each facility.

Our analysis suggests that prisoners are increasingly responding to this treatment with an increased level of anger, frustration, and challenging or dangerous behaviours, including suicides and suicide attempts, serious self-harm attempts, and assaults on prisoners and staff.

I have enclosed a confidential copy of my review report which underpins the basis for this Notice. It is my intention to table this review report in accordance with section 34 of the ICS Act. The report is provided in the interests of being transparent with you about the grounds upon which I have issued this Notice, and to comply with the requirements of sub-section 37(2) of the ICS Act.

I am also concerned that almost all the factors evident in the current situation at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca have a striking similarity to those that existed prior to the 2018 Greenough Regional Prison riot, which were well documented in the 2018 report by Ms Jan Shuard PSM.

Relevantly, Ms Shuard identified causal factors to the riot, including: the frequency of staffing shortfalls; regular lockdowns and restricted regimes leading to restricted prisoner activities; insufficient attention to the impacts of lockdowns and deteriorating staff/prisoner relationships; and insufficient focus on the needs of prisoners.

I am strongly of the view that the scale of the problem requires commitment to a blueprint for reform that details short, medium, and long-term strategies and initiatives to address these systemic problems.

Pursuant to Section 33A3(b) of the Act, I require you to show cause why I should not refer these matters to the Minister for Corrective Services.

In accordance with Section 33A(4) and (5) of the Act, you are required to respond to this Notice, either by way of oral or written submission or the provision of other evidence, on or before 5.00pm on 18 March 2026.

How you may choose to respond to this Notice is of course a matter for you. However, in responding to this Notice, you may wish to consider addressing Recommendation 1 by providing details of short, medium, and long term-term initiatives, plans, and strategies being taken to address the identified issues and concerns. And, more importantly, which of these have been supported and resourced for implementation.

Given my level of concern, I am seeking assurance that all possible steps are being taken to address the concerns outlined above.

Yours sincerely



Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

Encl.

cc Commissioner Brad Royce APM
OICS Coordination

Appendix D Department of Justice's Response



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Justice**
Office of the Director General

Mr Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services
Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
Albert Facey House
Level 5, 469 Wellington Street
PERTH WA 6000

By Email: Eamon.Ryan@oics.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Ryan

SHOW CAUSE NOTICE (S33A) – HAKEA PRISON, CASUARINA PRISON AND MELALEUCA WOMEN'S PRISON

The Department of Justice (the Department) acknowledges receipt of your Show Cause Notice (the Notice), dated 11 March 2026, issued under s33A of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* in relation to Hakea Prison (Hakea), Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) and Melaleuca Women's Prison (Melaleuca), together with the attached confidential report outlining the grounds for the Notice. The Department has treated the concerns you have raised as requiring immediate, system-level attention and has deliberately framed its response to be evidence-based, outcome-focused and directed toward sustained risk reduction.

Response to the s33A "show cause" requirement -referral to the Minister

The Department submits that referral to the Minister is not necessary at this time because the Department has already activated extraordinary governance arrangements, implemented concrete measures to reduce risk and improve conditions, and progressed a staged program of short, medium, and long-term actions supported by existing decisions and resourcing, with additional initiatives being progressed through established Government processes.

The Department does not minimise the seriousness of the issues you have identified. Rather, the Department's position is that the risks you have highlighted are being addressed through an escalated and demonstrably active response that includes immediate operational controls, funded demand-reduction initiatives, strengthened cross-agency governance, a structured custodial infrastructure program under the Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan, and a funded, multi-year workforce stabilisation and injury-reduction program.

Departmental stewardship, inter-agency leadership and community safety

The Department is actively stewarding and leading the response to matters raised as a whole-of-system issue, recognising that prison overcrowding and associated conditions are driven by demand across the justice pipeline rather than by custodial factors alone.

David Malcolm Justice Centre
28 Barrack Street PERTH WA 6000
GPO Box F317 PERTH WA 6841
Phone: (08) 9264 1600 Fax: (08) 9264 1121
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Inter-agency mechanisms have been established and strengthened to address these issues across the system, particularly through the Justice Planning and Reform Committee (JPRC), chaired by myself and comprising of senior leaders from Justice, Police, Communities, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Treasury and Finance and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The JPRC provides a Director General-level forum for whole-of-system priorities including justice demand pressures, alignment of reform initiatives, data and system insight, and infrastructure and capacity planning.

I take this opportunity to note that all population-management and demand-reduction measures described in this response are applied only where safe and appropriate to do so, are subject to structured risk assessment and governance, and proceed on the clear principle that community safety and victim protection are paramount.

Actions to address and implement outstanding OICS recommendations

The Department has also taken a systematic and sustained approach to implementing recommendations arising from OICS inspections, with a strong record of support, completion and ongoing delivery across the custodial estate. Recommendations have been addressed through structured action plans, clear accountability, and routine executive oversight to ensure progress is monitored and risks are actively managed.

Across recent inspections:

- Of the 15 recommendations arising from the 2022 Inspection of Casuarina Prison, 14 were supported by the Department, with 11 completed to date.
- The 2023 Inspection of Melaleuca Women's Prison identified 16 recommendations, all supported by the Department, with 14 completed.
- The 2024 Inspection of Hakea Prison resulted in 15 recommendations, the majority of which were supported and are on track for completion in line with agreed timeframes.
- The 2025 Follow-Up Inspection of Hakea Prison identified six recommendations that were either noted or supported, with two completed and the remaining progressing as scheduled.

Work continues to progress the small number of outstanding recommendations, with delivery integrated into broader operational, workforce and infrastructure programs to ensure changes are embedded and sustainable rather than isolated or reactive.

The Department also notes the completion of the 2025 Inspection of Casuarina Prison and anticipates receipt of the report in the coming weeks. In addition, the inspection of Melaleuca Women's Prison scheduled for March 2026 is proceeding as planned. The Department will continue its established proactive approach, including early planning, executive oversight and resourcing alignment, to ensure that any new recommendations arising from these inspections are addressed promptly and effectively.

Immediate actions already implemented (risk reduction and stabilisation)

The Department has implemented a strengthened, intelligence-led governance and escalation framework to manage population pressures, staffing constraints and critical security maintenance risks across the estate.

A Crisis Management Team (CMT), chaired by the Commissioner for Corrective Services, has been established and meets twice weekly to provide coordinated oversight of population management and risk-mitigation strategies. Building on earlier targeted interventions (including the Hakea Taskforce addressing short, medium, and long-term population management pressures), a Population Incident Response Team (PIRT) has been established and remains operational to coordinate the immediate response to statewide critical pressures, including infrastructure deficit, security maintenance requirements, population pressures and workforce challenges.

The PIRT provides daily updates, risk considerations and recommendations through the Department's CMT. These arrangements have enabled more consistent implementation of open and less restrictive routines across the adult estate, with particularly evident improvement at Hakea since the PIRT was established. Weekly population management meetings and senior operational forums further reinforce shared accountability across the estate and ensure decisions are documented, evidence-based and applied consistently.

The Department is also implementing urgent demand-reduction measures recently approved by Government as an immediate response to population growth. These initiatives are being implemented with evaluation and reporting expectations on outcomes and comparative effectiveness alongside other justice reform measures.

As you are also aware, the Department has updated eligibility for early discharge of up to 30-days as a controlled population management measure applied case by case, subject to structured risk assessment and exclusion of individuals where early release would pose an unacceptable risk to community safety.

Evaluation, data reporting and risk management arrangements have been strengthened via dedicated working groups including the Early Discharge of Prisoners Evaluation Working Group and West Australian Crime Statistics and Research (WACSAR) working with Governance and Assurance and Planning and Performance teams to accurately inform the Department's executive of the current status and to recommend potential policy amendments providing assurance and continuous improvement.

Short-term capacity delivered (with quantified outputs)

The Department has delivered short-term capacity increases through double and triple bunking as a temporary, carefully managed measure implemented conservatively and only to the extent compatible with safety, utilities and standards. The Department is investing \$8.3 million in 2025-26 capital funds to double and triple bunk further cells. As of March 2026, the Department has implemented 245 additional beds across the custodial estate, 100 of which are general population beds within Casuarina. The Department acknowledges the need for parallel demand reduction and longer-term infrastructure delivery.

Conditions and entitlements

The Department acknowledges that population growth and staffing availability can, at times, require temporary regime adjustments. The Department does not regard these impacts as an acceptable ongoing condition and has prioritised measures to actively reduce their frequency, duration and severity during periods of acute pressure.

The Department's immediate approach is to minimise the use, duration and frequency of restrictions, prioritise access to showers and hygiene, ensure access to health services and critical supports, preserve family contact where practicable, and mitigate risks to wellbeing and safety through active monitoring and targeted interventions. These controls operate alongside the longer-term reforms and investments set out below. Further, new adaptive routines have been developed at Hakea and Casuarina which will improve access to services and out of cell hours.

Short, medium and long-term strategies

Your letter expresses a strong expectation of "a blueprint for reform that details short, medium and long-term strategies and initiatives to address systemic problems." The Department's approach is anchored in two connected mechanisms:

- a whole-of-system reform agenda led through JPRC, ensuring coordinated demand-reduction and system-integrity actions across agencies; and

- a structured custodial infrastructure response through the Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan informed by demand/capacity analysis and options evaluation workshops.

Short-term (0–12 months)

Short-term strategies focus on stabilising regimes and reducing acute pressure, including:

- Operating the strengthened PIRT governance and escalation arrangements to reduce the frequency and duration of restrictions and prioritise minimum entitlements.
- Maintaining the controlled early discharge policy settings with strengthened evaluation and reporting.
- Targeted resourcing of recently commissioned or repaired accommodation options across the estate, both metropolitan and regional.
- Progressing large-scale recruitment activity over the forward period to materially grow the custodial workforce, subject to training throughput and attrition management.
- Regional incentives and subsidies at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison, West Kimberley Regional Prison and Greenough Regional Prison, supporting the reopening of closed units and improving the Department's ability to safely manage and redistribute people in custody across the estate, including relieving pressure at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.
- Applying Temporary Special Allowances (TSA) at Hakea and Casuarina to support retention and operational stability while broader workforce initiatives take effect.
- In parallel, negotiations on Service Level Agreements arising from the Safer Staffing Review are nearing completion, providing a more sustainable staffing framework and enabling more open and less restrictive prison routines to be implemented consistently across Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

Medium-term (12–36 months)

Medium-term strategies focus on delivering more durable relief, including:

- Sustaining and enhancing justice reform initiatives through JPRC oversight to slow growth and reduce avoidable remand and improve parole readiness, while preserving community safety.
- Examining immediate and scalable options to increase capacity at Melaleuca, subject to due diligence and supporting infrastructure assessments.
- Assessing the feasibility of expanding transitional accommodation options to support eligible people nearing release, with a focus on improving outcomes and reducing demand on secure custodial beds.

Findings from this work will inform advice to Government.

Long-term (36 months and beyond)

Long-term strategies focus on permanent capacity solutions and system integrity, including progressing major infrastructure options through the Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan, including Casuarina expansion pathways, delivered in alignment with program governance and investment sequencing.

Health, wellbeing and workforce stability

The Department recognises your concerns about the impact of current conditions on wellbeing and safety, including self-harm, suicide attempts and assaults. The Department has progressed custodial health capacity proposals that document rising demand and clinical risk and outline a staged approach to restoring baseline health service capacity, including mental health and counselling supports, and implementation measures such as recruitment, telehealth and mobile models.

The Department acknowledges that sustained population growth, combined with the inherently high-risk nature of custodial work, has increased the complexity of managing workplace injury, psychological harm and staff fitness for duty across the custodial estate. Workers' compensation claims impact staffing availability and regime stability. To address these claims and decrease the number of staff unfit for duty, the Department is progressing a significant reform agenda to address the root causes of claims in custodial environments and key measures include:

- establishment of a dedicated Work Health and Safety and Injury Management capability within Corrective Services, including additional on-site WHS coordinators across custodial facilities to proactively identify hazards, improve safety practices and prevent injury;
- expansion of structured return-to-work and transitional duties models to reduce time away from work following injury and increase the proportion of staff safely returned to duty;
- strengthening claims management capacity and capability to enable early intervention, more active case management and improved recovery outcomes;
- development of a contemporary, evidence-based Claim and Injury Management Framework to embed consistent practice, performance monitoring and continuous improvement across the custodial estate; and
- Following the successful piloting of a Workers Compensation Taskforce in the youth estate, the potential to roll out a similar mechanism across the adult estate is being reviewed.

To further address this complex issue, the Minister has established a Ministerial Advisory Committee (Committee). The Committee consists of members nominated by the Minister, Director General, Commissioner for Corrective Services, and the Western Australia Prison Officers' Union (WAPOU). The Committee will foster a cooperative culture between the parties and embed improved consultation practices across the board. The Committee will also work collaboratively to undertake a review of prison safety and risk mitigation measures, to strengthen communication and consultation between the Department and WAPOU on work health and safety matters. The Minister has advised that the Committee will request the independent specialist to undertake a review of the current work, health and safety operations of Corrective Services, with strong consideration of consultation mechanisms.

These measures are expected to progressively increase the number of staff who are fit for duty, decrease overtime reliance, and improve the Department's capacity to deliver consistent regimes while longer-term demand and infrastructure responses are implemented.

In parallel, the Department has progressed a sustained program of recruitment and workforce strengthening to support safe operations across priority facilities. In January 2025, the Department launched the *Towards 1200 Program* to recruit 1,200 Prison Officers over three years in response to increased workforce shortages and rising prisoner numbers. By the end of 2025, 280 new officers were recruited and deployed – an increase on 2024 outcomes. Most officers were placed in the larger metropolitan facilities, directly supporting safer operations and reducing pressure on existing staff.

Significant work was also undertaken to consolidate the number of Senior Officer Job Description Forms (JDFs), and presently there is a promotional campaign for Senior Officers which will assist in providing Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca with new Senior Officers to fill current vacancies. This process is anticipated to be completed by mid-April 2026. Following this, a similar process for Principal Officers will also occur to fill vacancies at Hakea, Casuarina, and Melaleuca. This will increase the number of experienced staff in the custodial estate.

System resilience

The Department accepts that system resilience is constrained when multiple facilities operate close to or above capacity and that a major disturbance would create significant complexity in accommodating displaced prisoners. This is a core reason the Department has progressed parallel responses that both reduce demand and increase capacity, including early discharge controls, temporary bed increases, and the Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan programmatic pathway for infill and longer-term capacity.

The Department has also taken careful account of the lessons identified in prior critical incident analyses regarding the need for early escalation of warning signs, attention to the impacts of restricted regimes on wellbeing and staff-prisoner relationships, and the importance of structured, system-level governance and risk management. The PIRT actively monitors these indicators daily, triaging, planning and treating immediate and short-term risks. The PIRT has provided stability to the system by creating a single point of coordination for population pressures, improving visibility of risks, and enabling faster, more defensible operational decisions. It has shifted the organisation from reactive responses to proactive, doctrine-led management, strengthening safety, staffing resilience, and the integrity of movements.

The Department has prepared an emergency plan document in the case of a critical incident wherein a facility may be faced with impacted operational capacity. This document provides a high-level summary of what each WA prison can offer as temporary accommodation during emergencies that last longer than 48 hours and presents a clear picture of what could be used in an emergency situation.

Next Steps

The Department recognises the seriousness of the grounds set out in the Notice and the confidential report and acknowledges the need for urgent, sustained action to restore acceptable custodial conditions. The Department submits that it has shown cause why referral to the Minister is not necessary at this time, noting the extraordinary governance, resourcing and reform actions already underway. In addition, the Department notes your recommendation, which is directed to Government for consideration.

The Department notes that this response includes information that is not necessarily in the public domain and respectfully requests consultation prior to the publication of any information drawn from it, to allow consideration of sensitivity, confidentiality and appropriate context. In addition, the Department notes that public release of the Show Cause Notice or related matters at this time may adversely impact active recruitment campaigns critical to system stability, and requests consultation on timing should publication be contemplated.

The Department is, as always, committed to continued engagement with you and your office, and to providing ongoing evidence of progress and outcomes. Given the complexity and range of initiatives, a number of which are still subject to decisions by Government, I would like to suggest an in-person briefing be established for you so that a detailed and holistic overview of the plan and initiatives can be provided, which will further inform on the summary responses provided in this document.

Yours sincerely

Ms Kylie Maj
DIRECTOR GENERAL

18 March 2026

Appendix E Referral to Minister for Corrective Services



Our ref: ER/EF2026-10

8 April 2026

Hon Paul Papalia CSC MLA
Minister for Corrective Services
Level 10, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Minister

HAKEA PRISON, CASUARINA PRISON, MELALEUCA WOMEN'S PRISON – SHOW CAUSE NOTICE
SECTION 33A *INSPECTOR OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES ACT 2003*

On 11 March 2026 I wrote to the Director General of the Department of Justice, Ms Kylie Maj, raising serious concerns about the conditions we see across the prison system in Western Australia, specifically: daily staffing shortfalls occurring in most prisons; a rapidly increasing prison population; most facilities consistently at or above maximum capacity; significant restrictions to daily routines; and regularly reduced or cancelled support and rehabilitation services for prisoners. I also highlighted the significant detrimental impact this is having on the security, safety and wellbeing of both staff and prisoners.

In May 2024 I raised similar concerns about conditions in Hakea Prison (Hakea) and issued a Show Cause Notice under the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003* (the ICS Act). Subsequently, my Office released two inspection reports detailing the substandard conditions in Hakea, Report 158 published in April 2025 and Report 162 published in July 2025.

We now see similar issues in most facilities, most acutely in Hakea, Casuarina Prison (Casuarina) and Melaleuca Women's Prison (Melaleuca).

As an independent statutory agency with a mandate to provide oversight of custodial facilities in Western Australia, we maintain ongoing monitoring of conditions across the prison system. This is consistent with the functions of my Office as provided for in Part 4 of the ICS Act. Recently, this has included liaison visits to Hakea, Casuarina, and Melaleuca and undertaking analysis and research of conditions in each of these prisons and more broadly across the system.

The results from these monitoring activities are such that I raise these concerns with you. I fear the prison system is under enormous and unsustainable pressure. Further, in the event of a major disturbance there is little capacity across the system to accommodate more than a very small number of displaced prisoners.

The attached draft review report outlines the results of our monitoring work, including data analysis, site visits, and interviews and discussions with prisoners and staff in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca. Having considered the contents of this draft report, I have formed a suspicion there is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care and welfare of prisoners at Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

I am also of the view that most prisoners in Hakea, Casuarina, and Melaleuca are, on a regular basis, being denied their basic entitlements, as relevantly defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Bangkok Rules, the Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia, and our own Inspection Standards for Adult Custodial Facilities. This leads me to suspect prisoners are being held in conditions that are cruel, inhuman or degrading.

Consequently, in accordance with Section 33A(2) of the ICS Act, I formed a reasonable suspicion that:

1. There is a serious risk to the security, control, safety, care or welfare of prisoners held in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca; and
2. That prisoners are being subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment in Hakea, Casuarina and Melaleuca.

On 11 March 2026, I provided a copy of our draft review report to the Department of Justice and issued the Director General a Show Cause Notice (the Notice) under Section 33A of the ICS Act (copies enclosed). The Notice highlighted my concerns and sought a response from the Director General by 18 March 2026.

The Department's response to the Notice, received on 18 March 2026, acknowledged many of the concerns and issues raised (copy enclosed). The response also outlined, in broad terms, initiatives and strategies being pursued by the Department. The Director General and Commissioner for Corrective Services also provided an in-person briefing on 2 April 2026 during which they elaborated on many of the initiatives contained in their response.

There is genuine commitment to address the issues raised in the Notice from both the Director General and the Commissioner.

Notwithstanding the response from the Department, I do not believe the initiatives outlined in the response sufficiently set out clear and measurable reforms required to address the root causes of the issues and concerns identified in the Notice and the draft review report.

Following consideration of the Department's response and submission, I am referring the matter to you in accordance with sub-sections 33A(6)(a) and 33A(7) of the ICS Act. I am of the

view the plans outlined in the Department's response and submission should be pursued, but there also needs to be agreed, resourced and measurable short-, medium-, and long-term plans and strategies to address the current situation.

Sub-section 33A(7) of the ICS Act requires that I must provide advice or make a recommendation when referring such matters to you. Accordingly, my advice is that a whole of government response is required. I am of the view and recommend that the scale of the problems being experienced across corrections requires resourcing commitment from Government to facilitate short-, medium-, and long-term interventions.

The underlying rationale for my advice and recommendation for a whole-of-system response is grounded in the fact that for many years there has not been an integrated long-term adequately resourced commitment to implement the reforms required.

Our draft review report contains one comprehensive recommendation:

Recommendation 1

The Government must formally commit to and fund the system-level reforms required to address the concerns identified at Hakea, Melaleuca and Casuarina prisons, and across the adult custodial system more broadly.

Within six months of the tabling of this report, the Department must develop, approve, and publicly release a comprehensive, costed reform implementation plan, endorsed by Government.

This plan must:

- finalise and clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term reform initiatives, including operational, workforce, infrastructure and governance reforms;
- identify which initiatives have been approved by Government and fully resourced, including recurrent and capital funding allocations;
- specify a clear and time-bound implementation schedule for each reform, including commencement and completion dates; and
- assign accountable senior officers for delivery of each reform initiative.

The implementation plan must be tabled in Parliament and provide public progress reports at six-monthly intervals until all reforms are completed, including explanations for any delays, funding variations, or departures from the approved plan.

The Department's response did not specifically address this recommendation, noting that the recommendation was directed to Government for consideration.

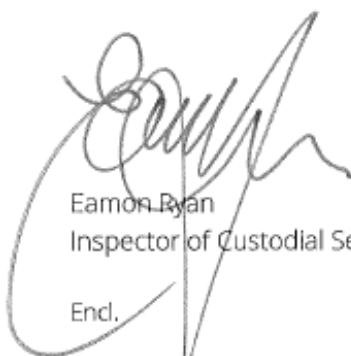
As noted in my letter to the Director General, in accordance with section 34 of the ICS Act it is my intention to table this review report, together with relevant attachments. The draft review report was provided to the Director General in the interests of being transparent about the grounds upon which I issued the Notice, and to comply with the requirements of sub-section 37(2) of the ICS Act.

I will now proceed to finalise the attached draft review report in preparation for lodgement with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council, with a copy of the final report being sent to you.

Sections 34 and 35 of the ISC Act require that once a report is lodged with the Speaker and the President, they are required to keep it in safe custody for a period of 30 days before tabling it in each House of Parliament on the next available sitting day. Sub-section 34(1)(b) requires that I deliver a copy of the report to the Minister, who may prepare a response to the report.

I have provided a copy of this letter to the Director General and Commissioner.

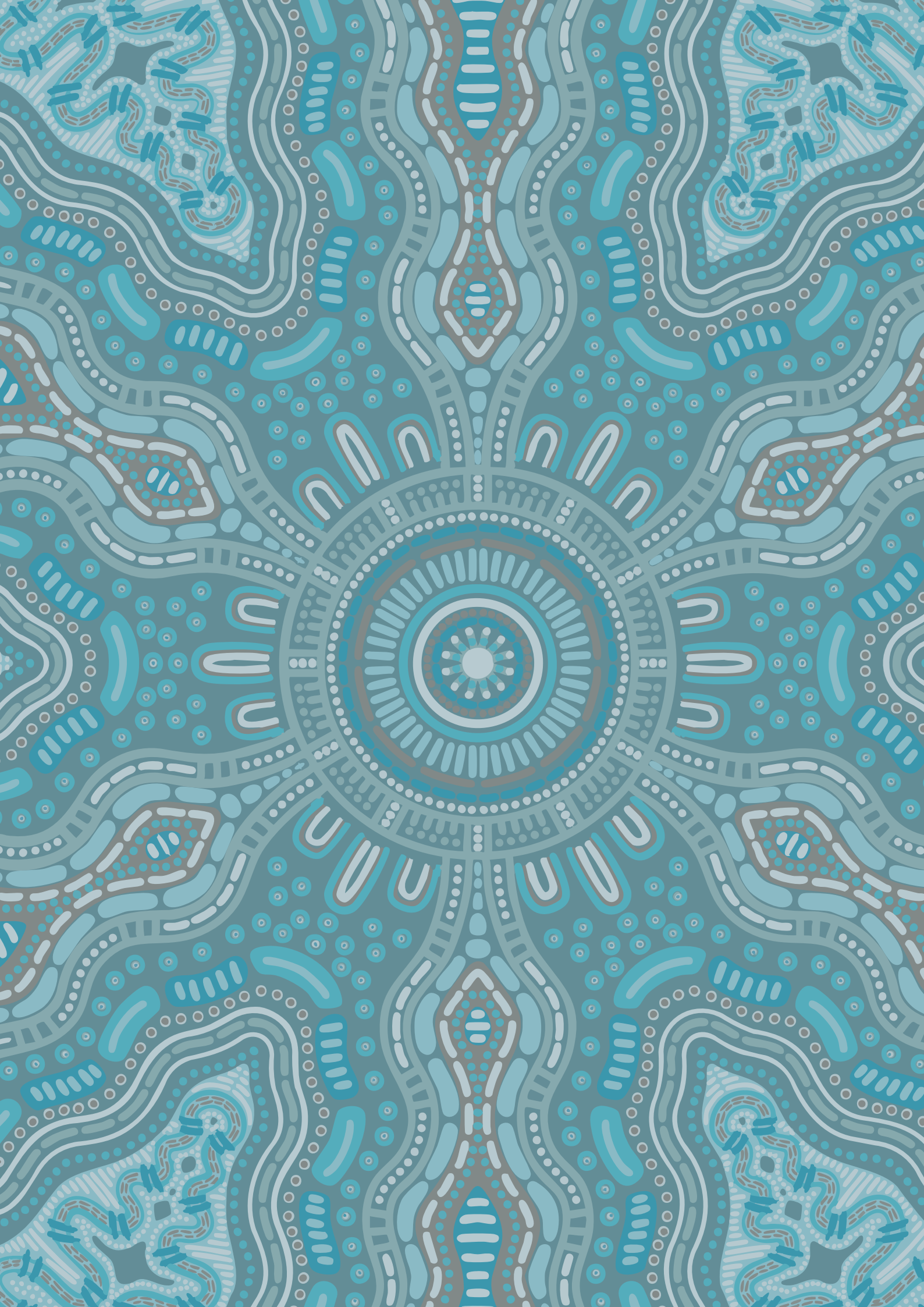
Yours sincerely



Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

Encl.

cc Ms Kylie Maj, Director General
Mr Brad Royce APM, Commissioner for Corrective Services



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

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