

## MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 PM ON 23 August 2024

### People in custody with an intellectual disability

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A report released today by Inspector of Custodial Services, Eamon Ryan has found not all people with intellectual disabilities who enter custody in Western Australia are identified, adequately catered for or supported.

Between 2018 and October 2023, only six per cent of the adult and youth custodial populations were identified as having an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment, which is significantly lower than research estimates. This partly stems from the over-reliance on self-reporting as a mechanism for identification. Mr Ryan conceded that 'early identification of people with disability can be complex and often intellectual disability may not be obvious or easily detected'. However, the Department of Justice has recently introduced a new screening tool which has assisted in identifying more people with cognitive impairments. Mr Ryan welcomed this progress, and particularly the progress made identifying young people:

We have already seen some early signs of improvement with the presence of the onsite health team from the Child and Adolescent Forensic Health Service, in Banksia Hill and Unit 18. This initiative is filling a well-known gap found in the 2018 landmark study by the Telethon Kids Institute. It is to be commended and encouraged.

The Department acknowledged early identification is important to ensure appropriate supports for people with intellectual disability are in place and they are not unfairly disadvantaged. However, information sharing remains a significant barrier to improving their lives. The report identified several areas where silos existed within the Department, particularly when a young person enters adult custody. Amendments to legislation have helped streamline the transfer of information for those who directly transfer from youth to adult custody. But for those who leave youth custody and later enter adult prison, processes are not automated and can be unreliable. This ultimately affects their day-to-day care.

Conditions in custody for effectively managing people with an intellectual disability also remain problematic. There are few dedicated living areas for people with complex needs while making reasonable adjustments to existing infrastructure also remains a challenge. Barriers exist to accessing supports from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), there are no tailored criminogenic programs, and poor governance exists around the use of prisoner carers.

**Eamon Ryan**  
Inspector of Custodial Services

#### For Further Media Information

The Inspector, Mr Ryan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on 23 August 2024 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.

The full report will be available on the Inspector's website ([www.oics.wa.gov.au](http://www.oics.wa.gov.au)).