



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Justice**
Corrective Services

Response to OICS Draft Report:

**2023 Inspection of Bandyup Women's
Prison**

October 2024

Version 1.0

Response Overview

Introduction

On 8 May 2023, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2023 Inspection of Bandyup Women's Prison (Bandyup), with the on-site inspection taking place from 10 to 15 November 2023.

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

On 5 September 2024, the Department received the draft Inspection Report for review and has provided comments and responses to all ten (10) recommendations.

Appendix A contains comments linked to sections in the draft report for the Inspector's consideration when finalising the report.

Department Comments

Bandyup's role as the primary custodial facility for women in the custodial estate has expanded over the years to deliver a wide range of specialist care and services to the women accommodated at the facility. That includes establishing the Bindi Bindi Unit for women with significant mental health issues, and a neo-natal unit for pregnant women and those with newborns.

These services are provided in addition to regular rehabilitative opportunities available, including criminogenic programs, education, employment, training, and transitional services.

Bandyup has a clear business plan aligned to the Department's women's strategic framework, *Better Futures*, designed to support women in Western Australian prisons. The model builds on a commitment to provide gender-specific, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services, achieving better outcomes for women in custody and improving their opportunities for success on release.

This strategy outlines the Department's commitment towards empowering all women, regardless of their background or circumstances, to nurture their strengths and have control over their future. Reducing women's engagement with the justice system requires a united effort by government and non-government agencies, in partnership with families, communities and the women themselves.

As highlighted in the OICS Inspection Report, Bandyup has commenced building stronger community connections and bolstering external partnerships to drive local actions meaningful to the lives and experiences of the women at the facility.

As Bandyup strives to embed a women-focused, trauma-informed model of care and meet the high needs of prisoners, the Department acknowledges there are challenges, particularly in relation to staffing and ageing infrastructure.

To address these issues several initiatives are underway, including the development of a Strategic Plan for Corrective Services that will outline the division's priorities and take into consideration resourcing requirements and integration with the Department's long-term plans for custodial infrastructure and technology.

Following the completion of the Strategic Plan, the women's strategy will be reviewed to align with Department-wide initiatives for women to maximise their rehabilitation and improve their prospects after release.

Given the high proportion of First Nations prisoners, the revised strategy will incorporate principles to ensure Indigenous women are better supported in custody and have access to services that are culturally appropriate and promote a connection to culture.

The Department is committed to improving infrastructure across the custodial estate and has re-commenced work on the Department's Long-term Custodial Infrastructure Plan. The plan will address population pressures and develop infrastructure necessary to deliver services in line with prisoners' needs, while endeavouring to keep people on Country.

The Department's Long-term Custodial Technology Strategy seeks to improve prisoner digital literacy through controlled access to digital services and platforms. The current priority is to implement an Offender Digital Services Platform across the custodial estate that will replace the Prisoner Telephone System and provide opportunities for digital access to programs and education.

Corrective Services continues to closely monitor staffing and redeveloping a workforce planning framework which will help inform staffing requirements across all facilities.

Several recruitment strategies to increase custodial staffing across the State are underway. A recent restructure of the bulk-recruitment function for Prison Officers under the Corrective Services division has focused and coordinated efforts for recruitment and filling vacancies. The number of Entry Level Training Programs has increased to 16 schools for 2024, with a number of schools being delivered in regional locations.

Efforts are being made to improve the standard of primary and mental health care at Bandyup. An Occupational Therapist position has been established and embedded on site as a critical resource supporting the women. The Department has also established a new Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Nursing Coordinator position that will work closely with the multi-disciplinary team at Bandyup to ensure standards, policies, and best practice across the mental health domain are being attained through better collaboration with primary health and custodial staff.

Bandyup continues to offer rehabilitative opportunities including programs, education, employment and training. From October 2024, the prison plans to restart production gardens led by the Gardens Officer to support healthier eating options and employment opportunities for the women. A Lifeskills program planned for 2025 will replicate community living for self-care prisoners. The women will manage budgets for living expenses and be responsible for house duties, including the planning, purchase, and preparation of meals.

The Department is committed to addressing matters identified in the OICS Inspection Report and will work closely with Bandyup to enhance support and services for prisoners.

Response to Recommendations

1 Bandyup develop and implement a communications framework to ensure information and expectations are shared consistently and regularly across all operational areas and management/employee levels.

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

Response:

Bandyup has a Communication Plan that outlines formal and informal meetings and forums that are held regularly and provides staff with opportunities to have input on the operations of the facility and care of the women.

These include twice-weekly senior officer briefings, monthly town hall meetings for all staff to share ideas, expectations and recognise staff achievements; monthly staff morning teas to support the Barista employment program; and staff wellness events including staff breakfasts every Sunday, health and wellbeing days, staff BBQs etc.

It is recognised not all employees are able to access these opportunities due to staff shortages, work pressures and rotating rosters, therefore formal meetings such as the senior officers' briefings and town hall meetings are documented, and the minutes made available for viewing by all staff via the Bandyup intranet portal.

Bandyup recognises the importance of ensuring all staff have more opportunities to share their ideas and have input into the operations of the facility and will re-establish Unit meetings where staff can raise issues and concerns impacting the Unit's operations. Staff will also be reminded to access the portal for communications that are regularly uploaded.

2 Review Bandyup Women's Prison infrastructure inclusive of the issues identified in Table 1 of OICS Report 131 and include them in the Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan that is being developed.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracted Services

Response:

All infrastructure issues identified in OICS Report 131 are being considered as part of the Department's Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan.

3 Bandyup develop and implement a strategy to improve engagement and in-reach with First Nations community providers to better support First Nations women.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Women's Prisons

Response:

Plans are underway for a review of the women's strategy that is aligned to Department-wide initiatives for women and the Corrective Services strategic plan. The revised strategy will incorporate principles for ensuring First Nations women are better supported in custody and have access to services that are culturally appropriate and promote a connection to culture.

Consultation with stakeholders will occur to ensure issues and barriers impacting First Nations women are considered as part of the strategy's re-development, including the Aboriginal Services Committees at facilities that accommodate women and the Aboriginal Justice Transformation directorate. In addition, the strategy will be linked to current and future iterations of the Department's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

In the interim Bandyup will continue to seek and encourage engagement with First Nations community providers to support the needs and cultural safety of women in custody, noting there is only a small network of appropriate services providers available and limited funding to procure these services. These will be explored through its Aboriginal Services Committee meetings and Prisoner Council meetings with Peer Support and the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme.

4 Provide access at Bandyup to preventative and restorative dental services.

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

Response:

The Department will continue to engage with the North Metropolitan Health Service (NMHS), Dental Health Services (DHS), in an effort to increase dental care service provision at Bandyup.

DHS service provision is impacted by the availability of dentists, with community standards for public dental having significant wait times. Dental treatment at Bandyup is triaged with the most acute cases attended to first.

5 Continue to ensure the provision of on-site occupational therapy services at Bandyup, and the Department undertake an evaluation of the benefits of providing the service with a view to expanding access to other prisons.

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

Response:

The Department currently has two established Occupational Therapist positions; one at Bandyup's Bindi Bindi mental health unit, and one at the Casuarina Prison's Mallee Rehabilitation Centre.

6 All staff rostered to work in Bindi Bindi mental health unit must be provided with the specific training developed for workers in that unit.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Women's Prisons

Response:

Initial specialised training was provided to staff rostered to work in the Bindi Bindi mental health unit at the time of its establishment. This training was sourced from the Western Australian Association for Mental Health utilising specialised funds made available to Bandyup.

The Department will consider the feasibility of reintroducing this training, or similar, to all custodial staff at Bandyup. This is in recognition of the philosophy of the Bindi Bindi unit whereby prisoners are transferred from the unit into general living as their condition improves (step down) and should they destabilise and deteriorate, they are transferred back (step up) into the unit. Staff therefore must be able to work with these prisoners regardless of their location within Bandyup to ensure the best possible health outcomes and supports for these prisoners with mental illness.

This is in addition to training provided to custodial officers as part of the Entry Level Training Program and annual mandatory refresher training in managing prisoners with mental health issues.

7 Mental health, counselling, occupational therapy and other clinical staff in the Bindi Bindi Unit should be managed and operate as one multidisciplinary team with shared notes, care plans, and clinical governance.

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

Response:

The Department has established a Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Nursing Coordinator position that will work closely with clinical staff within the Bindi Bindi unit to ensure better cohesion and collaboration through shared notes, care plans, and clinical governance.

8 Implement a coordinated clinical process involving the psychiatrist, mental health nurses, counsellors, and primary health staff to discuss and provide advice on the care of women in the general living units with complex mental health needs.

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

Response:

The Department's revised healthcare model currently in development will aim to deliver a robust mental-health service on site. The implementation of the model will be subject to funding approval.

It should also be acknowledged that there are currently challenges in recruiting qualified health and mental health staff across the nation.

9 Replace the visits centre, video-link and official visits with a fit for purpose facility that will support the Department's recognition of the importance of, and commitment to, women's connection to family.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Women's Prisons

Response:

An upgrade of the infrastructure for visits at Bandyup has been identified for inclusion in the Department's Long Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan.

In the interim, Bandyup has increased the capacity of the visits centre from six (6) to 10 visits at a time, which is supplemented by the e-visits capacity of five (5).

Bandyup ensures wider social events are organised throughout the year, including days for family visits and annual children's Christmas parties. In addition, livestreaming facilities have been installed to allow women who cannot attend funerals, memorials, or visit dangerously ill persons in the community the ability to participate in these events.

10 The Department develop, incorporate, and action a commitment to improved use of and access to digital technology for prisoners and staff.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Knowledge, Information and Technology

Response:

The Department is working to improve prisoner digital literacy through access to digital services and platforms, though this will be dependent on funding outcomes.

These initiatives are captured under the Department's Long-Term Custodial Technology Strategy, with the current priority being to obtain funding for an Offender Digital Services Platform (ODSP) across the custodial estate.

The ODSP would enable the replacement of the end-of-life Prisoner Telephone System and provide digital access to programs and education.