



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

Response to OICS Draft Report:

2024 Inspection of Albany Regional Prison

November 2024

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Response Overview

Introduction

On 2 October 2023, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2024 Inspection of Albany Regional Prison (Albany), with the on-site inspection taking place from 5 to 9 February 2024.

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 29 October 2024, the Department received the draft Inspection Report for review and has provided comments and responses to all 15 recommendations.

Department Comments

The Department welcomes the draft report on the 2024 Inspection of Albany Regional Prison which provides an independent insight into the functioning of the facility and identifies areas for improvement.

Albany continues to serve as a valuable and unique facility within the custodial estate, being the only maximum-security facility in regional Western Australia.

The Department acknowledges the issues raised in the draft report and previous inspection reports (2018 and 2021) regarding the ageing infrastructure at Albany.

Progress to address the issues raised in previous inspection reports has been incremental. The persistence of these issues, together with the increasing demands on the custodial estate and staffing challenges arising from a significant rise in WA's prisoner population, highlights the need for further investment to fully resolve the issues.

The appointment of the new Commissioner of Corrective Services in October 2023 has seen a renewed focus on addressing critical issues through extensive planning, communication and stakeholder engagement. The Commissioner has prioritised initial investment in capability development, infrastructure and technology to enable the WA prison system to effectively manage the increasing demands whilst maintaining safety and security.

Key initiatives to address the long-term strategic and infrastructure planning for Corrective Services include the development of a Strategic Plan 2025-2030 and a Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan (LTCIP) 2025 – 2035.

The LTCIP sets out proposed infrastructure works across the custodial estate over a 10-year period to meet current and future population demands and to replace ageing infrastructure.

It identifies a number of infrastructure upgrades for Albany. These works will be part of a wide range of infrastructure works proposed for the entire custodial estate to meet current and future population demands and are subject to prioritisation and funding availability.

The Department also recognises the importance of digital technology for people in custody and is implementing an Offender Digital Services Platform (ODSP), which is part of the Department's Long-Term Custodial Technology Plan.

The ODSP will replace the end-of-life Prisoner Telephone System (PTS) and provide the foundation to enhance information and communications technology (ICT) capability across the custodial estate. Initiatives to improve prisoner digital literacy and digital access to programs and education form part of a wider program to modernise the backbone ICT infrastructure across the custodial estate.

Corrective Services has made significant progress in its efforts to recruit additional prison officers. The realignment of the bulk recruitment function has provided Corrective Services with direct oversight of the recruitment of prison officers, allowing for focused and tailored campaigns. The number of Entry Level Training Programs has increased from 11 schools in 2023 to 16 in 2024 and an Accelerated Training Program for people with prior custodial experience who wish to work for the Department.

A number of the schools are delivered in regional locations to promote greater access for trainees and help attract local recruitment. Two Albany-based training schools were run in 2024 and graduations for these were held in August and November 2024, resulting in 32 new probationary officers being assigned to Albany. Local recruitment and training are expected to continue in 2025.

In addition, as part of a renewed focus on industries and employment, Albany has commenced an intensive recruitment campaign for the recruitment of Vocational Support Officers (VSO's), with three VSOs appointed since April 2024 and a further four pending approvals. This will bolster the operation of industry workshops and is expected to increase prisoner employment through constructive activity and enable increased access to education and recreation on the oval.

Other strategies to address staffing across the adult custodial estate include streamlining of re-engagement processes to recruit suitable former employees.

A Workforce Plan and a Leadership Development Plan are also under development to assist in forecasting future prisoner populations against staffing requirements and to further attract and retain staff.

It was positive to note relations between staff and the senior management team have strengthened under the support and guidance of the new leadership at Albany. While the Superintendent position is filled on an acting basis, a recruitment campaign to substantively fill all vacant Superintendent positions statewide is scheduled to commence in February 2025.

The Department acknowledges the performance of Albany and its team of hardworking and dedicated staff who provide a high standard of service provision and ensures the efficient and effective operation of the facility. It is anticipated the permanent appointment of a Superintendent in 2025 will bring further stability and strategic direction to an already strong performing workforce and help maximise the services and opportunities provided to prisoners at Albany.

Response to Recommendations

1 Develop a strategic infrastructure plan for Unit 1 and other ageing infrastructure at Albany Regional Prison.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges OICS' ongoing concerns in relation to the infrastructure issues at Albany. The Department has undertaken some refurbishment of A and B Yards in Unit 1, and Unit 1 has been proposed for replacement in the long-term infrastructure planning underway.

The Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan (LTCIP) 2025 – 2035 proposes a number of upgrades for the facility, including for Unit 1, though it is important to note that all works identified under the LTCIP require internal prioritisation against other planned infrastructure works, technical planning, business case development and funding availability.

2 Re-establish a maintenance team that provides accredited training to prisoners.

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

Response:

Albany is in the process of re-establishing a maintenance team comprising Vocational Support Officers (VSOs) and eligible prisoners employed as maintenance workers. The prisoners will be provided with accredited training and employment opportunities while they undertake necessary maintenance work around the prison grounds.

To facilitate this, an intensive recruitment campaign commenced in April 2024 for the recruitment of additional VSOs for Albany. Three VSOs have been appointed so far and a further four are pending approval. It is expected the VSOs will provide assistance to those prisoners seeking to obtain qualifications in *Certificate II in Construction Pathways (Maintenance)*.

Planning is also underway to relocate the maintenance team, who historically were located external to the prison fence, to better support the prisoners, enable shared use of equipment and reduce unnecessary movement of the maintenance team in and out of the external perimeter.

3 Develop a strategic workforce plan for Albany, including regular local recruitment and local training of prison officers.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Operational Support

Response:

Corrective Services has made significant progress in its efforts to recruit more prison officers, including at Albany.

The number of Entry Level Training Programs has increased from 11 schools in 2023 to 16 in 2024 and an Accelerated Training Program for people with prior custodial experience who wish to work for the Department.

A number of the schools are being delivered in regional locations to promote greater access to the schools and a high chance of local recruitment. The two Albany-based training programs conducted in 2024 resulted in 32 new probationary officers being assigned to Albany. Local recruitment and training are expected to continue in 2025.

4 Ensure prompt appointment of a permanent Superintendent.

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

Response:

A recruitment campaign is scheduled to commence in February 2025 to substantively fill all vacant Superintendent positions across the custodial estate.

In the interim, an Expression of Interest process is underway to establish a pool of qualified staff to temporarily fill Superintendent vacancies until permanent appointments are made. This includes the appointment of a permanent Superintendent for Albany.

5 Ensure adequate resources are available to address the backlog of prison charges.

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

Response:

In late 2023, the Prosecutions Officer position was made exempt from redeployment, unless as directed by the Superintendent, to address the backlog of prison charges.

At the time of the inspection, there were 180 outstanding charges. As at 20 November 2024, a backlog of 123 charges had been actioned.

Although Albany is making significant progress in reducing the backlog, prison charges are not able to be heard due to the difficulties with securing available Visiting Justices (VJs) noting several unsuccessful attempts by Albany to recruit VJs. However, Albany has also committed to make cells available to hear prison charges when a VJ is on site.

6 Revise and update orientation materials.

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

Response:

Albany supports a review of the orientation materials. Following the 2018 Inspection, the orientation manual was revised through consultation with peer support prisoners and introduced in Vietnamese due to the number of Vietnamese prisoners in Albany at the time.

The Acting Superintendent acknowledges orientation to be a critical step in supporting prisoners to adjust to prison life and has committed to revising and improving this process. This reflects an understanding of the importance of providing clear information and guidance to prisoners upon their arrival, ensuring they are better equipped to navigate through the prison system and access available services.

A review of the orientation materials is planned in 2025. In the interim, orientations are completed by ensuring Orientation Officers are not redeployed to other duties.

7 Re-establish peer support involvement in the orientation process.

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

Response:

Peer Support Prisoners (PSPs) have been reintroduced into the orientation process since the inspection. PSPs greet new arrivals each Monday on the weekly escort and attend orientation sessions delivered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, culminating in a tour of the grounds to show new prisoners the layout of the facility.

8 Increase overall prisoner employment levels.

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

Response:

The Employment Officer (EO) position has been redeployed for some time to manage prisoner movements and staffing. The Superintendent has advised that commencing January 2025, the EO will resume their standard duties in assisting prisoners to obtain meaningful employment.

This coincides with the renewed focus on industries at Albany to increase workshop operations and establish new and previous industries areas through the recruitment of additional VSOs.

9 Ensure Aboriginal prisoners are proportionately represented in employment.

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

Response:

Aboriginal employment overall has increased since the inspection with approximately 49 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners employed as at 27 November 2024, compared to 46 per cent at the time of the inspection in February 2024.

Aboriginal employment has increased in almost all gratuity levels, particularly level 1, which has increased to approximately 14 per cent, compared to 5 per cent during the inspection. While acknowledging there continues to be fewer Aboriginal prisoners employed at higher gratuity levels, the rates are improving and expected to increase further with Albany's renewed focus on industries and prisoner employment.

There are no barriers preventing further placement of Aboriginal prisoners into higher level gratuity positions at Albany. Many Aboriginal prisoners choose to work in employment areas where there are elements of social interaction and cultural connections, such as art related positions within Education, or working outdoors, such as maintaining prison grounds and gardens.

The Aboriginal Services Committee at Albany, which is also responsible for monitoring employment levels of Aboriginal prisoners, continues to identify work opportunities culturally appropriate for Aboriginal prisoners at all gratuity levels. An example of this is the Indigenous Gardens Project which involved the combined efforts of Education, TAFE, prison management and the garden VSOs. A group of 10 Aboriginal prisoners enrol each term to work on this project and receive a higher level of pay for the duration of their work on the project.

Corrective Services through the Cultural Services and Innovation team is committed to identifying strategies to progress increased participation in higher levels of employment for Aboriginal prisoners.

10 Explore opportunities within the Digital Capability Fund to pilot tablet technology in cell for prisoners at Albany.

Level of Acceptance:	Noted
Responsible Division:	Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate:	Knowledge, Information and Technology

Response:

The Department recognises the importance of in-cell technology for people in custody and appreciates OICS canvassing for access for the use of digital literacy technology, including in-cell resources, for prisoners.

The Department is in the process of implementing an Offender Digital Services Platform (ODSP) which is part of the Department's Long-Term Custodial Technology Plan.

The ODSP will replace the end-of-life Prisoner Telephone System (PTS) and provide the foundation to enhance information and communications technology (ICT) capability across the custodial estate.

Initiatives to improve prisoner digital literacy and digital access to programs and education forms part of a wider uplift program to modernise the backbone ICT infrastructure across the custodial estate.

11 Install additional prisoner telephones in each accommodation wing.

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

Response:

Works to facilitate the installation of four additional phone lines per unit are currently in progress.

Following installation of the phone lines a request for funding will be submitted for the purchase of 12 additional phone units.

12 Provide additional resources to manage video link court appearances and official visits.

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

Response:

A business case to establish an additional Video-Link Officer is underway.

In the interim, to ensure the video-link workload is managed, an officer is being redeployed during visit sessions to support the Video-Link Officer and assist in facilitating court appearances and official visits via video-link.

Enhancements have also been made to the E-visits room by installing dividers for privacy and making it soundproof.

13 Increase availability of addictions programs and treatment.

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

Response:

The 2025 offender programs schedule for Albany currently includes eight Pathways programs scheduled for delivery twice each quarter, which more than meets the current demand for sentenced prisoners recommended for and agreeing to participate in the Pathways program.

The therapeutic Alcohol and Other Drugs program, Solid Steps, is also facilitated at Bunbury Regional Prison and Casuarina Prison and made available to eligible prisoners willing to transfer to these facilities.

14 Replace the medical centre with a facility meeting modern standards in health delivery, patient privacy and security, including a purpose-built crisis care unit.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges ongoing concerns raised by OICS over the state of the health centre at Albany.

As with Unit 1, the Department undertook minor works to improve the conditions and operation of the health centre in response to these recommendations, with the facility listed for replacement in the long-term infrastructure plans in effect.

The replacement of the Albany Health Centre is proposed and under consideration in the LTCIP 2025 – 2035, which is subject to internal prioritisation, technical planning, business case development.

15 Address the backlog of treatment assessments.

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

Response:

In October 2024, five Treatment Assessor positions FTE (one Supervisor Treatment Assessments and four Treatment Assessors) were approved to convert from temporary to permanent and will be advertised for recruitment once established.

Ten additional Treatment Assessment positions FTE (one Supervisor Treatment Assessments and nine Treatment Assessors) have been temporarily funded for a period of two years.

This additional resourcing is anticipated to help address the backlog of treatment assessments, noting they continue to be centrally allocated to ensure outstanding assessments are prioritised state-wide in accordance with earliest eligible dates and/or maximum dates.
