

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON ON 3 APRIL 2025

Report 158: 2024 Inspection of Hakea Prison

The Inspector of Custodial Services, Mr Eamon Ryan, has today released the report for the 2024 inspection of Hakea Prison. This is the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services' eighth announced inspection of Hakea – the state's primary remand facility for adult males.

The conditions observed during the May 2024 inspection were of such concern that Mr Ryan formed a view that prisoners at Hakea were being treated in a manner that was cruel, inhuman, or degrading. This included:

- Excessive lockdowns in the months preceding and during the inspection. Records indicated that prisoners were regularly receiving less than two hours out of cell on any given day, and on some occasions they received no time out of cell in a 24-hour period.
- Time out of cell was often confined to the wing or unit. Access to outside areas and fresh air was rare.
- Access to any form of meaningful activity such as employment, education, programs, and recreation was extremely rare. Employment was generally limited to essential services such as the kitchen and laundry.
- An inability for prisoners to maintain contact with their family through telephone calls or arranged social visits due to increased lockdowns and staffing shortages.
- Insufficient supply of clean clothing and bedding, with men claiming they were required to wear the same clothing for several days.
- Meals being eaten in cell, due to excessive lockdowns, leading to pest infestations and unhygienic living conditions.

These conditions were observed to be contributing to an increased level of anger and frustration in prisoners, which was leading to challenging or dangerous behaviours, such as suicides, suicide attempts, serious self-harm, and assaults. Concerningly, Hakea recorded more attempted suicides between January and March 2024, than throughout all of 2023.

A Show Cause Notice was subsequently issued to the Director General of the Department of Justice on 27 May 2024, under section 33A of the *Inspector of Custodial Services Act 2003*. The Notice was then referred to the Minister for Corrective Services. Both the Department and the Minister reiterated a commitment to addressing the issues identified by the Inspector at Hakea.

Lines attributable to the Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan:

“Our ongoing monitoring at Hakea suggests that, with a few exceptions, conditions have not improved significantly since our inspection in May 2024. Time out of cell has only marginally improved and threats of self-harm or attempted suicides remain high.”

“There continues to be limited, if any, access to programs, education, or outdoor recreation. Employment opportunities are limited to essential services. Approximately half of all scheduled visit sessions with family and friends are cancelled or reduced.”

“Since the inspection, the adult male population has continued to increase placing additional strain on Hakea. Over the past year Hakea has regularly exceeded its operational capacity and cells originally designed for one person are now regularly occupied by three, with one person sleeping on a mattress on the floor in proximity to the cell toilet.”

“Daily staffing shortages continue to have a significant impact on the prison’s regime. And there appears to be little, if any, improvement in the fractured local relationship between prison management and the WA Prison Officers’ Union. The latter point is surprising, and frankly disappointing, as it would be reasonable to expect both sides to have a shared interest in progressing improvements in the conditions for staff and prisoners.”

“To date, the pace of improvement at Hakea has been too slow and the conditions for the men held there remain unsatisfactory.”

“It is also worth bearing in mind that approximately 80% of the men at Hakea are unsentenced, which means they have not been convicted of the alleged offences for which they are being held”.

Given the concerning conditions at Hakea, a follow-up inspection report will be prepared considering findings from an unannounced night visit to Hakea conducted in February 2025 and an announced day visit conducted in March.

Eamon Ryan

Inspector of Custodial Services

For further media information:

The Inspector, Mr Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on 3 April 2025 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.

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