



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR
OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES

2023 INSPECTION OF EASTERN GOLDFIELDS
REGIONAL PRISON

152

FEBRUARY 2024

*Independent oversight
that contributes to a more
accountable public sector*

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2023 Inspection of Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

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Inspector's Overview

There were a lot of positives seen in EGRP in 2023, but fundamentally it is a prison that remains underutilised.

Our last inspection of Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP) was undertaken in 2020 with the report published in April 2021. The first two recommendations arising from that inspection, neither of which were supported by the Department, related to the underutilised infrastructure and staffing shortages (see recommendations 1 and 2; OICS 2020). These issues are as relevant today as they were in 2020, and in the current environment probably even more so.

During this inspection we again found that Unit 3, an earned privileges unit for men, was significantly underutilised and Unit 5, a minimum-security transition unit located outside the secure perimeter fence, had never been used.

We also found similar staffing issues with difficulties in attracting and retaining staff at EGRP, particularly custodial staff, leading to regular understaffing and reports of staff burnout and reductions in services. We heard that the prison regularly operated with up to 20 custodial staff short each day and on many occasions were unable to fill the 10 available overtime shifts to reduce the shortfall. Many custodial staff told us they were already undertaking overtime on a regular basis and were too fatigued to accept more.

There are, however, two critical factors that have changed the dynamic of these two issues since 2020. The first is the widely reported change in the Australian labour market which has significantly impacted recruitment and retention of staff across many sectors, including the public sector. The second is the rising prison population and the high occupancy rates for maximum- and medium-security facilities in Perth and the regions. Recently, the adult male prisoner population exceeded the previous all-time high recorded in March 2020. This increases the imperative to address both issues.

Resolving the staffing issues could mean up to 100 beds would be available to be brought online to relieve population pressure on the adult male estate.

One of the key elements of the staffing issue is retention rather than recruitment. New recruits who are posted to EGRP can transfer out after only 12 months. Many told us they were encouraged to take a posting to EGRP with the incentive that it was only for 12 months as they could put their names on the transfer out list as soon as they commenced. Although we understand this may not be encouraged by the Department, it was certainly being actively practiced at the time of our inspection.

We also heard that there were significant disparities between the allowances available for local staff compared to non-local staff, with many local staff telling us this could mean a difference in pay of several thousand dollars each year. The Department's response advised that the regional incentive allowances are available to all staff under the relevant Award. Access to subsidised housing remains the major disparity.

There is merit in the Department pursuing options to resolve the staffing issues, looking at both recruitment and retention. Doing so would open options to make better use of the spare accommodation capacity at EGRP and relieve some of the population pressures.

There are other perhaps less obvious benefits to resolving these issues. Better use of the infrastructure would allow the State to maximise the benefits of the existing Public Private Partnership contract. Improved staffing could offer better rehabilitation services and support to the men and women sent to live there. It could also enhance safety and security of the prison. All of which would have an overall positive benefit to the community.

Our report contains 13 recommendations all of which the Department supported in full or with some caveat. The Department's response, which is an appendix to this report, included information about several initiatives that have been commenced or completed since our inspection. Most notable is the filling of vacant health and mental health positions, the installation of CCTV cameras in reception, and the return to pre-COVID orientation processes. These initiatives, and several others listed in the response, are a very positive indication the Department is proactively taking steps to address many of the challenges facing EGRP.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For part of 2023, we had one Independent Prison Visitor who was a community volunteer appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. Unfortunately, he was unable to continue due to other commitments and resigned last year. He had attended EGRP on a regular basis providing an opportunity for the men and women placed there to raise issues and feedback that information to our office. I acknowledge the importance of the work previously undertaken and thank him for the contribution made over several years to our ongoing monitoring of EGRP. We are once again actively seeking expressions of interest from community volunteers for this interesting and highly valued volunteer role.

I also acknowledge the support and cooperation we received throughout the inspection from the Superintendent and staff at EGRP and from key personnel in the Department.

The men and the few women living in EGRP who took the time to speak with us and share their perspectives also deserve our acknowledgement and thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the inspection team for their expertise and hard work throughout the inspection. I would particularly acknowledge and thank Ben Shaw for his hard work in planning this inspection and as principal drafter of this report.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

20 February 2024

Executive Summary

Complex governance and staffing challenges limit the prison's potential

Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP) remained modern, well maintained, and secure, yet it was not fully utilised despite its impressive facilities. With Unit 3 open for isolating newly admitted prisoners to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks, and Unit 5 remaining uncommissioned, almost 100 beds were unused. This contrasts with the rising state prison population, which has recently reached record highs. Recruitment and retention challenges for custodial staff persisted, compounded by outdated strategic plans and disparities in incentives for local versus non-local recruits. Limited input from Aboriginal staff and concerns about entrenched workplace culture and grievance resolution processes were also noted. Community relations were improving, supported by efforts to engage external stakeholders and the establishment of the prison's art gallery, Palya Walkaly-Walkylpa.

Staff shortages restricted the daily regime

There was a commitment to ensuring prisoners received time out of their cells and we observed prisoners attending the oval, education, and essential employment areas. However, staffing shortages resulted in the regular redeployment of Vocational Support Officers. Despite attempts to manage redeployments and avoid lockdowns, over half of surveyed prisoners reported their time was not spent in useful activities. Additionally, few prisoners were seen in industry workshops, and there were limited structured recreation sessions available.

Management of at-risk prisoners was good, but crisis care was not therapeutic

The prison demonstrated thorough management of at-risk prisoners through clear processes and multidisciplinary meetings involving key staff. While staff generally considered the services for suicide prevention and at-risk management as acceptable, some believed additional training was necessary. However, the Crisis Care Unit (CCU) remained untherapeutic, lacking cleanliness and meaningful prisoner-staff interaction. Prisoners expressed a preference for placement in a standard living unit during a crisis and often refrained from verbalising their thoughts due to fears of being placed in the CCU.

Women were supported but wanted more time with their children

Overall, female prisoners expressed satisfaction with the infrastructure and opportunities available in Unit 4, which had a robust progression process. However, more attention was needed to support mothers, as the facilities of the mother and child cottage remained underutilised and not fully aligned with their intended purpose. During the inspection, the Female Life Skills Officer position was vacant. However, a recent liaison visit revealed the position had been filled by a dedicated and highly respected individual who was expected to support female prisoners in Unit 4.

Positive staff-prisoner relationships were impacted by a lack of hierarchical progression and delays in prosecutions

The closure of Unit 3 as the earned privileges unit led to limited options for male prisoners, in contrast to the opportunities available for women. Male prisoners expressed dissatisfaction with the limited incentives and opportunities. Most relationships between custodial staff and prisoners were positive, but fewer prisoners said they got on well with unit staff. Despite having a full-time prosecutor, staff perception of the prosecution process had declined due to significant delays in hearing charges, often resulting in their withdrawal. There were concerns this could undermine the deterrence of negative behaviour.

Social visits were well managed, but the e-visits system was problematic

The social visit system operated effectively, with efficient booking management and positive feedback from both prisoners and visitors. However, attempts to facilitate e-visits encountered technical issues, including poor connections and frequent audio or visual problems, compromising the effectiveness of this communication channel. A solution is needed to address these technical challenges to ensure reliable e-visits for prisoners and their families, as well as video-link access for courts and other official visits.

Aboriginal prisoners were disadvantaged and unemployment was high

At EGRP, over 70% of prisoners are Aboriginal, with over 90% of them not engaged in work. More non-Aboriginal workers received the highest level of gratuities (Level 1). Shortages of employment opportunities within the prison were evident, coupled with a prevalence of low-skilled unit-based work. Nine out of 26 Vocational Support Officer positions were either vacant or temporarily filled by casual workers, leading to frequent redeployment that impacted prisoner-staff relationships.

Primary health services were well catered for, but delays for specialist and dental services were common

The health services at EGRP provide a comprehensive range of care, including primary health services and mental health support. Notably, the prison successfully secured a permanent full-time Mental Health Nurse, a commendable achievement in a competitive job market. Other challenges such as prolonged wait times for specialist appointments and shortages of dental staff, which are beyond the prison's control, exacerbate mental health issues among prisoners. Therefore, prioritising the filling of positions to address mental health concerns in prisoners is critical.

Treatment assessments impacted the completion of programs

The assessments team at EGRP demonstrated a strong commitment and expertise under the leadership of an experienced Case Management Coordinator (CMC). However, staffing shortages and statewide delays in treatment assessments led to backlogs in Individual Management Plans and hindered prisoners' ability to complete mandatory programs. Program delivery was further impacted by staffing levels, resulting in the cancellation of six programs during 2021 and 2022. Additionally, there was an absence of voluntary programs, which benefit prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration.

Addressing the backlog in treatment assessments and improving staffing levels are essential for enhancing the provision of services and supports available to prisoners.

The education centre provided meaningful opportunities

A diverse range of educational opportunities were offered to EGRP prisoners, ranging from basic education to university studies. Despite facing staffing challenges, the team successfully facilitated accredited adult education and vocational training programs tailored to the regional job market. High enrolment numbers demonstrated strong prisoner engagement with education and training initiatives, with 193 distinct students enrolled in adult basic education in the 12 months leading up to November 2022. The presence of an Aboriginal Education Worker was particularly central in engaging Aboriginal prisoners in education and training.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation	Page	DOJ Response
Recommendation 1 Review the Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison incentives package to provide parity between local and non-local recruits.	6	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 2 Empower Aboriginal staff to provide input into the design and delivery of cultural events and activities.	7	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 3 Develop a process for grievance officers to record informal grievances appropriately.	8	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 4 Install additional CCTV cameras within the reception area.	11	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 5 Re-establish an effective and thorough orientation process.	12	Supported – Current Practice / Project
Recommendation 6 Subject to the appropriate risk assessment, allow eligible women the opportunity for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children.	17	Supported
Recommendation 7 Enhance the incentives and privileges available to men at Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison.	19	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 8 Explore options to identify technical issues and improve video conferencing communications for staff and prisoners at Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison.	25	Supported
Recommendation 9 Minimise the redeployment of recreation officers to allow more regular access to structured recreation activities.	27	Supported in Principle
Recommendation 10 Schedule regular maintenance and service of all kitchen equipment and maintain adequate records to ensure the schedule is followed.	30	Supported – Current Practice / Project

<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>Fill the vacant PHS position to support mental health service provision at Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison.</p>	<p>35</p>	<p>Supported – Current Practice / Project</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>Increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs for prisoners at Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison by ensuring the timely completion of all outstanding treatment assessments.</p>	<p>39</p>	<p>Supported – Current Practice / Project</p>
<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>Investigate the viability of opportunities to expand industries and increase meaningful prisoner employment.</p>	<p>42</p>	<p>Supported – Current Practice / Project</p>

FACT PAGE – EGRP INSPECTION



NAME OF FACILITY

Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison



LOCATION

The prison is located in the town of Boulder, 596 kilometres east of Perth.



INSPECTION DATE

2 – 6 April 2023



ROLE OF FACILITY

The Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP) is a minimum- medium-security prison for men and women. It services the Goldfields district from Wiluna in the north to Esperance on the south coast, and the Ngaanyatjarra Aboriginal communities east to the South Australian and Northern Territory border.

HISTORY

In May 2009, the State government allocated funding for the construction of EGRP as a 350-bed facility. The new prison's size was intended to allow all Goldfields and desert prisoners to be brought back to Kalgoorlie.

The prison opened in August 2016 and operates under a Public Private Partnership (PPP). Facilities Management is carried out by Honeywell Inc. The contract guarantees whole-of-life replacement for all infrastructure and equipment delivered, as part of the initial build and regular proprietary software upgrades. Built at a cost of \$234 million, EGRP was commissioned in August 2016. AMP Capital are the current owners of EGRP.

EGRP is the home prison for the Warburton Work Camp, approximately 900 kilometres north-east of Kalgoorlie.

NUMBER OF PRISONERS HELD AT COMMENCEMENT OF INSPECTION

231



226

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS REGIONAL PRISON



5

WARBURTON WORK CAMP

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS REGIONAL PRISON CAPACITY

367



350

STANDARD ACCOMMODATION



17

SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOMMODATION

WARBURTON WORK CAMP CAPACITY

24

MINIMUM BEDS



14

CURRENT OPERATIONAL CAPACITY



6

MAXIMUM REMAND BEDS

1 Introduction

This was the eighth inspection of Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP) and the third since the new prison opened.

1.1 Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

The 350-bed EGRP was commissioned in 2016 to allow prisoners from the Goldfields region to be accommodated on country, close to their families and community. It would seek to address issues including overcrowding in metropolitan prisons, high rates of recidivism in the Goldfields region, the continued overrepresentation of Aboriginal people, and the neglect of female prisoners' needs (DoJ, 2015).

During the 2023 inspection, EGRP held between 231 and 240 prisoners, with only a few prisoners accommodated in Unit 3 to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak. Unit 5, the prison's minimum-security external unit has never been opened. The Public Private Partnership (PPP) model is not impacted by prisoner numbers, with the cost remaining static regardless of the prison's population.

Demographics

We heard from prisoners and staff during our inspection that EGRP was a prison for people from the Goldfields region. But there had been a significant change in prisoner demographics between this and our last inspection. In 2019, departmental data indicated 82% of prisoners were from the Goldfields or Western Desert region. In 2023, just 132 of the 229 prisoners (58%), resided in this area.

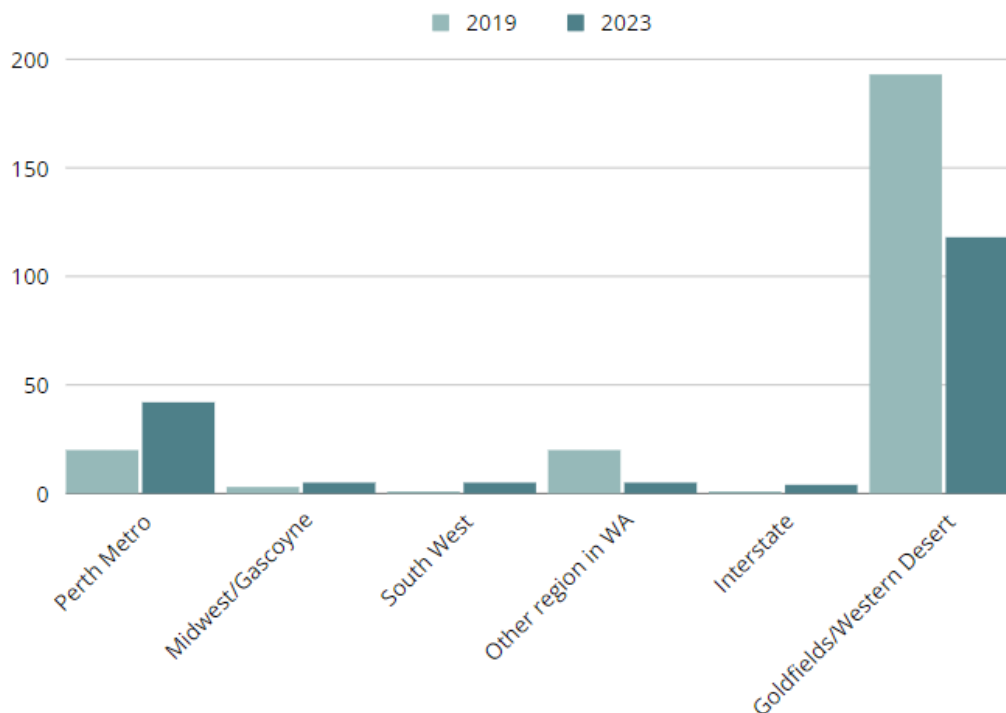


Figure 1: EGRP's population demographics change reported in departmental data

Prisoners at EGRP were mostly young men, with 40% of the population aged between 25 and 34 years (91 individuals). Twenty-eight per cent were aged between 35 and 44 (64) and 15% (35) were between 18-24. Despite making up only 4% of the general population, 71% of prisoners at EGRP were Aboriginal. Most prisoners were sentenced (66%), and around 80 prisoners (33%) were on remand.

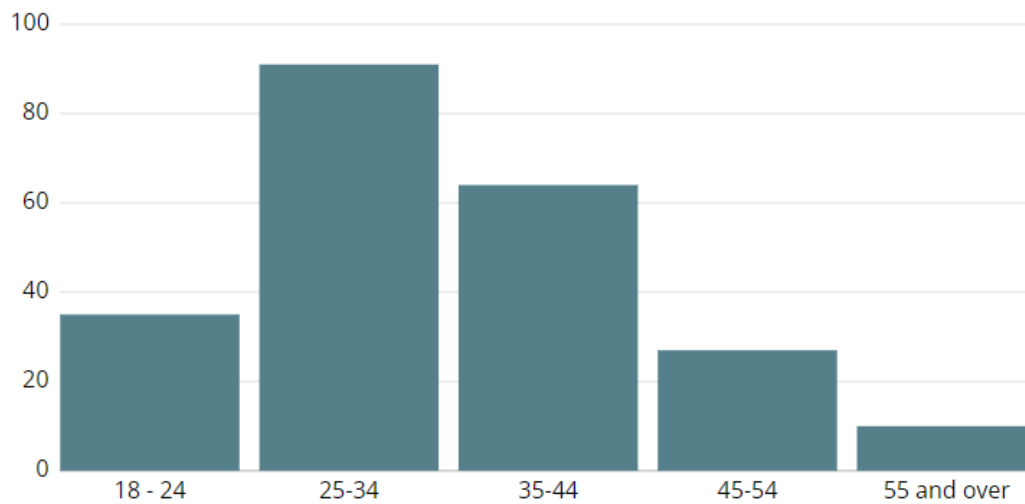


Figure 2: Young men and women made up over half the population

2 Governance

2.1 An impressive but underutilised facility

EGRP lacked a strategic vision

In 2023, we found several of EGRP's key plans were out of date. The Strategic Plan (2016-2017), Operational Philosophy (2019-2021) and Business Plan (2019-2020) all aligned with departmental plans and frameworks dating back several years. We were told there were no plans to update these documents.

The existing Strategic Plan covered actions for a newly built prison's mobilisation stage. Recruitment of key staff, engagement with local Aboriginal communities and installing essential communication platforms included in the plan were completed shortly after the prison opened. By 2023, EGRP had established itself as a well maintained and modern prison. However, in the absence of clear long-term plans, its direction and purpose in the wider custodial estate remained unclear.

The existing Operational Philosophy referred to the ability to optimise available infrastructure to enhance prisoner accommodation, population management and constructive activities. We found the prison's infrastructure remained underutilised. Unit 3, the earned privileges unit for men with a focus on rehabilitation, was being used in a limited capacity accommodating new prisoners for COVID isolation, existing prisoners who developed symptoms of COVID-19, or prisoners in protection awaiting transfer to another facility. Additionally, Unit 5, which was designed as a separate minimum-security transition unit remained uncommissioned, despite the prison successfully negotiating staffing levels with the Western Australian Prison Officers' Union (WAPOU).

The leadership team had changed but worked well together

Just before our inspection, the Business Manager position at EGRP was vacated. The substantive Assistant Superintendent Offender Services (ASOS) was acting in this position which had created movement within the principal and senior officer groups. During the inspection, we found that of the nine senior management positions, five were substantively filled. Another key leadership position, the Case Management Coordinator (CMC) was due to transfer to another facility in July 2023.

Despite this, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Operations (ASO) were substantive, and both had been in their roles for many years. Those acting in other leadership positions were also experienced. We found a leadership team who overall, worked well together and had clear direction. Well-managed organisations not only need clearly articulated plans that set focus, directions, and operating philosophies, but a degree of stability with substantively filled senior management positions.

The PPP model was a benefit to the state, but EGRP remained underused

Maintenance of infrastructure at large facilities can be costly and time-consuming. The PPP model at EGRP is designed to maximise the efficiency and durability of the facility. Maintenance, fault, and defect requests were managed by the prison's unique Contract Manager position, who acted as a liaison for the facilities management contractor, Honeywell. The process had been streamlined

shortly after the 2020 inspection, with senior officers given authority to log maintenance requests, which the Contract Manager could review electronically. This provided transparency and a clear procedure to arrange maintenance, repairs, or replacements.

With Honeywell undertaking regular maintenance and facility management for the 25-year contract, the benefits to the state are likely to increase further into the agreement. In most public prisons budget constraints make timely repairs and ongoing maintenance difficult. EGRP, however, continues to be well maintained, benefits from regular hardware and software upgrades, and has the potential to become increasingly cost-effective for the remaining term of the lease.

With the limited use of Unit 3, and Unit 5 having never been commissioned, it is difficult to say that EGRP reflects value for money. Regardless of how the Department uses the prison's resources, payments to the facility owners remain the same. Our previous reports have recommended the Department maximise the potential of its existing infrastructure. These recommendations have not been supported, with staffing challenges cited as one of the key barriers to unlocking the full potential of EGRP.

We were told parts from vacant units were being removed to repair equipment in operational units, rather than ordering new ones. This could mean that bringing Unit 5 online could take some time. As the prison ages, the need for increased maintenance will become evident. This is where the PPP model should become cost-effective to the state.

2.2 Staffing issues remain a barrier to unlocking EGRP's potential

Limited staffing and low satisfaction with management

On the first day of our inspection, EGRP was operating at 65% capacity. The prison is currently staffed for 310 prisoners with a Full Time Equivalent of 161 custodial staff across all ranks. Despite this, 18 of the 111 prison officer positions were vacant. Although staff absences through unplanned personal leave or workers compensation claims were not at critical levels, these did add to the 20-plus vacant positions the prison was experiencing daily.

Some negativity from staff was identified in results from our pre-inspection survey and during discussions with custodial groups suggesting staff had a poor view of local management. Only 22% of staff told us support from local management was good and only 21% felt there was good communication. Both figures were much lower than our last survey (37% and 29% respectively) and were below the state average (24% and 23%). The decline can partially be attributed to disagreements with local management decisions, particularly concerning matters such as escorts, prisoner consequences, and accommodation placements. There was also a perception among staff that some senior managers were excessive in their disciplinary actions.

Custodial staff were stretched despite overtime opportunities and redeployments

To provide enough staffing for prisons and to control the spending on overtime, the Department allocates each prison a daily overtime cap. EGRP has a cap of 10 shifts per day, which we were told was difficult to fill. In our pre-inspection survey, 43% of staff told us they had worked one or more

overtime shifts per week. This compared to 15% of staff three years ago. Given this, it is unsurprising to hear the staff were becoming too fatigued to accept overtime opportunities.

Redeployment within the Vocational Support Officer (VSO) group raised concerns. When the prison face staffing shortages in critical areas, VSOs are redeployed from roles in recreation, assessments, reception, and gardens. The prison had developed a VSO redeployment roster, to help staff plan their weekly activities and anticipate redeployment days. While the roster had some success, we were informed many VSOs were still being moved from their designated position despite the roster.

Human resource processes were effective, but local recruitment was difficult

Human resource services such as pay, rostering, and processing of leave applications rated highly in the staff survey. However, it was a concern that only 10% of staff felt recruitment was 'mostly effective'. EGRP continued to struggle to recruit and retain custodial staff (OICS, 2020; OICS, 2017; OICS, 2014). We were told the Corrective Services Academy had one recruit assigned for deployment to EGRP in each of the next three Entry Level Training Program groups for prison officers. There had not been a recent local recruitment school in Kalgoorlie and efforts to attract local applicants had been unsuccessful, with too few candidates attending recruitment sessions to run a school.

Recruitment was not keeping pace with the attrition rate

In the 12 months to November 2022, 20 custodial officers who were employed at EGRP permanently separated from the Department through resignation, retirement, or dismissal. During this time, a further 13 prison officers transferred to another facility. Only eight transferred in from other prisons to replace these officers, and 12 new recruits came from the Corrective Services Academy. Of the 12 recruits, only six had been recruited locally.

New custodial recruits in Western Australia must serve a minimum of 12 months at their appointed prison, before becoming eligible to transfer to another facility. The Department does not encourage recruits posted to EGRP to immediately put their name on the transfer out list upon starting at the prison. However, we heard new staff were frequently encouraged to do so, including several who told us this was part of the incentive offered to accept the appointment. Issues with the availability of housing in Kalgoorlie were also cited as a barrier to recruits wanting to come to EGRP.

The Department produces a monthly transfer list for all uniformed prison staff. In April 2023, 64 prison officers from EGRP had put their names down to transfer to other prisons, but only five officers were on the list to transfer in from other prisons. There were no senior officers on the list who wanted to transfer to EGRP, but several wished to transfer out.

Despite staffing issues, our survey indicated there were many positives to working at EGRP. Eighty-four per cent of staff reported feeling safe. We heard many examples of positive staff-to-prisoner relationships throughout the inspection, and staff expressed how working with prisoners and offering opportunities could be the most satisfying aspect of their roles.

*Seeing prisoners be **self-aware** of their issues and **working** on them.*

*Providing **opportunities** to prisoners.*

*Working with prisoners to **create change***

*Training prisoners for **prospective employment***

Quotes from staff in our pre-inspection survey regarding job satisfaction.

Differences between local and non-local incentives

We regularly heard during the inspection that the disparity in conditions and incentives between local and non-local staff were impacting local custodial officers' decisions to remain at EGRP. A non-local recruit posted to EGRP is provided with a Tier 1 Regional Incentive Allowance, which was paid fortnightly, and they may also be eligible to access subsidised rental housing. Local recruits are not eligible for housing assistance. Logically it would seem that people from the region, who may have long term family and community connections, are more likely to stay and provide stability to the staffing group.

A further District Allowance is paid to both local and non-local workers as monetary compensation for the increased cost of living, isolation, and climate factors of regional locations. The Regional Incentive Allowance is paid at almost twice the rate of the District Allowance. This combined with potential housing benefits provides non-local recruits several thousand dollars per year more in financial incentives compared to their local counterparts.

Recommendation 1

Review the EGRP incentives package to provide parity between local and non-local recruits.

Aboriginal staff had decreased and had limited involvement in cultural activities

Over the years, our inspections have clearly demonstrated that Aboriginal prisoners will seek out Aboriginal staff for support and assistance. Our 2016 report on recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff in the Department of Corrective Services, highlighted this had many benefits, including building communication, bridging the gap between staff and prisoners, reducing risks to both prisoners and staff, and improving the prospects of rehabilitation (OICS, 2016).

With the overrepresentation of Aboriginal prisoners throughout the state, effective recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff is critical. The Department has set an aspirational target of 7.25% Aboriginal employment within its Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategic Commitment to be achieved by 2025, (DoJ, 2021).

Around 70% of prisoners at EGRP identify as Aboriginal. In November 2019, 12 members of staff self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, but by November 2022, this had decreased to nine. The prison had successfully recruited and retained a few key non-custodial

Aboriginal-specific positions including the Senior Aboriginal Health Worker, Prison Support Officer, and Aboriginal Education Worker. In November 2022, the reported Aboriginal custodial staffing at EGRP made up about 6.2% of the total custodial workforce.

Aboriginal staff expressed their frustration to us about not being involved in planning, design, and delivery of key cultural events such as the annual National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) celebrations. Some had been at EGRP for many years and were unable to attend the events as they were required to remain in units which were short staffed.

Recommendation 2

Empower Aboriginal staff to provide input into the design and delivery of cultural events and activities.

Staff culture issues continue to be prevalent

In 2020, the staffing culture at EGRP was such a concern we recommended identifying and addressing the root causes of dysfunction among staffing groups (OICS, 2020). In our 2023 survey, perceptions of bullying, communication inconsistencies and unprofessionalism were common.



Figure 3: Bullying concerns among staff remains a key issue

During our on-site inspection and interactions with staff, it became apparent that the extent of negative cultural issues reported in our staff survey did not reflect the same widespread pattern as it did during our 2020 inspection. However, certain individuals expressed concerns regarding the persistence of bullying and instances of verbal abuse, indicating that such issues continued.

During a group meeting we heard two staff members had experienced racially motivated abuse. It was concerning they were later discouraged from reporting it, primarily due to the affiliations and influence of the responsible individual. The fear of retribution and the potential complications it may introduce served as a significant deterrent against reporting the behaviour.

However, while some staff described personal experiences of bullying and harassment, the majority reported hearing about instances of bullying, rather than directly encountering them. Some respondents raised the possibility that reports of bullying behaviours may be due to poorly received performance management feedback.

A negative workplace culture can undermine morale, productivity, and overall employee well-being. The issues reported by staff during our inspection are indicative of complex and multifaceted cultural challenges. Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive approach that includes measures to encourage open reporting, establishing clear procedures for addressing misconduct, and fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and professional development.

Grievances were not being recorded

Although no formal grievances had been lodged at EGRP for the 12 months up to November 2022, staff survey results suggested a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the grievance process. Just over half of staff survey respondents (51%) said they could express work-related grievances, but only 21% believed they could be resolved. What is not clear is whether this reflects a degree of unhappiness with the integrity of the process or the actual outcome that was achieved for them.

There are both formal and informal mechanisms available to staff to resolve workplace issues and grievances. When we looked into the number of informal grievances lodged, we found they were not being recorded. This was particularly concerning given the response to our pre-inspection survey questions relating to bullying and other behaviours. Record keeping during a grievance resolution, even at the informal first step, is an essential part of any grievance procedure. Retaining adequate records captures the issues and provides evidence of decisions and actions taken in response. It also provides EGRP with a record of actions in the event the issue escalates to a more formal process, or a complaint is made relating to the grievance process. An opportunity may exist to improve recordkeeping and monitoring to track local resolution of grievances at EGRP.

Recommendation 3

Develop a process for grievance officers to record informal grievances appropriately.

Staff training was meeting requirements

EGRP has a dedicated Satellite Training Officer position who was assisted by management and the Corrective Services Training Academy to deliver Key Performance Indicator training. The training officer was experienced and enthusiastic, having performed the role for many years. Infrastructure at EGRP also provided the trainer a variety of usable training locations both within the perimeter and inside the external buildings. However, this position was not exempt from redeployment, and critical staffing levels meant they were at times required to cover other uniformed positions.

In our pre-inspection survey, staff were asked if they felt they had received adequate training across 16 training areas. Satisfaction with training requirements had increased in nine areas, including using restraints and chemical agents. But staff told us they were less confident in the use of breathing apparatus or in responding to a loss of control incident.

Satisfaction rates for training in Occupational Health and Safety, Case Management, responding to a loss of control and responding to a fire or natural disaster remained below the state average. Results for two new questions introduced in the 2023 survey, relating to the management of prisoners with physical disabilities and management of prisoners with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, produced low satisfaction rates.

Table 1: Staff satisfaction had mostly increased in three years

Training requirement	2023	2019	State Average
Use of Restraints	61%	55%	53%
Use of chemical agents	63%	55%	55%
Use of breathing apparatus	27%	31%	23%
CPR/First aid	63%	71%	61%
Occupational Health and Safety *	41%	51%	52%
Suicide Prevention	54%	46%	54%
Case Management *	30%	25%	31%
Cultural Awareness	60%	57%	55%
Interpersonal Skills	56%	52%	51%
Management with prisoners with drug issues	32%	25%	28%
Managing prisoners with mental health issues	26%	25%	26%
Management of prisoners with physical disabilities	29%	N/A	N/A
Management of prisoners with intellectual/cognitive disabilities	33%	N/A	N/A
Use of the disciplinary process	42%	43%	41%
Emergency response: loss of control *	24%	26%	28%
Emergency response: fire, natural disaster *	30%	29%	38%

* Lower satisfaction than the state average

Staff felt unprepared for critical incidents, despite up-to-date emergency management exercises

Emergency management exercises are intended to measure the ability to manage emergencies, test existing plans and build confidence for staff to respond. Departmental policy requires a minimum of one live emergency management exercise annually. In 2021, a total of 24 emergency management exercises had taken place, with 14 occurring in a live setting. In 2022, this had reduced to 17, with 10 being carried out live. Emergency response training in loss of control or a fire/natural disaster were two areas further highlighted in the free comments section that staff felt unprepared for.

The security team at EGRP had identified the need to increase emergency management exercises based on requests by staff or through debriefs from actual incidents. We heard the team were looking to increase the involvement of external agencies such as Western Australia Police, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and St. John Ambulance. In turn, this may help responding services in their general knowledge of the layout of the prison.

2.3 Relations with the community were much improved

Increased external members on the Aboriginal Service Committee was positive

During our pre-inspection community consultation, we found EGRP had good working relationships with many external organisations which provided services to the prison. Many providers told us their direct contact person at the prison regularly provided advance notice if operational requirements were likely to impact their services. We were told providers as a group would appreciate the opportunity to meet regularly with EGRP staff. This would benefit their understanding of the different services provided by other organisations and encourage further interaction and information sharing.

In September 2022, no external stakeholders attended the prison's local Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) meeting. However, within six months this has risen to 16 representatives from community agencies. The March 2023 meeting was attended by the Superintendent and 13 other members of EGRP, including several Aboriginal staff. It was a positive initiative to increase the number of external attendees to this important committee.

External service contracts benefitted the community

EGRP had previously struggled to engage with local organisations to provide services (OICS, 2020). In 2023, the prison had made progress in securing several external contracts. Laundry services and meals were provided to the local police station, renal services at Kalgoorlie Health Campus and the Renal Hostel (separate to the main hospital). Neami National's Mental Health Step Up / Step Down Service was also supplied with meals. Prisoners in industries were busy creating easels and boomerangs for local schools and frames for a mural on buildings in Kalgoorlie town.

The Section 95 VSO was qualified to train and assess prisoners in vocational courses including skid steer, working at heights, and forklift operation. The Section 95 team were working on various projects in the community through work at a local cemetery, cutting down trees and stripping the bark to make fence posts.

The only art gallery in Western Australia within an operational prison

Palya Walkaly-Walkylpa art gallery opened its doors to the public on 4 November 2022, with the intent to showcase the artistic capability of prisoners housed within the Goldfields area. It is the only art gallery in the state located on the grounds of an operational prison. The naming of the gallery was a collaboration between local Aboriginal Elders and the Art Gallery Committee. The name means Good Coloured Patterns in Ngaanyatjarra Language.

Money from the sale of prisoners' artwork is credited to a prison account and made available to prisoners on release. Since the gallery's opening, around 40 pieces have been sold amounting to approximately \$16,000.

3 Early days and duty of care

3.1 Thorough reception procedures, but security upgrades needed

Reception worked well but was short staffed

The reception area is the first point of staff contact for incoming prisoners. We found the reception processes at EGRP were working well. Newly arrived prisoners were provided with a meal, given a clothing and bedding pack, and their personal property recorded before being stored away.

Sixty-three per cent of prisoners surveyed said staff helped them 'very well' or 'ok' when they first arrived. This was down from 70% at the last inspection, but still higher than the state average (57%). We saw and heard respectful interactions between prisoners and reception staff from new arrivals and those preparing for release.

Staff in reception, like several areas of EGRP, were subject to redeployment, but the team was further strained, with vacancies for a second VSO position and property officer. Not all staff rostered to covering the reception VSO position were experienced in routines and processes. This meant more work for the substantive VSO and some tasks took longer to complete.

Infrastructure limitations presented a risk to prisoners and staff

During the last inspection, we reported how some design limitations impacted how reception functioned (OICS, 2020). In 2023, little had changed. New arrivals were interviewed at an open desk in reception. The desk was close to the sally port, which made conversations less confidential, as information could be overheard by other prisoners who were arriving. This could result in critical information, such as a prisoner's vulnerabilities not being disclosed. The lack of a safety screen across the reception desk was an oversight which would offer staff some protection, should a prisoner become aggressive.

Several areas in prisoner reception may benefit from extra CCTV cameras. Staff were required to physically check on prisoners at regular intervals to monitor wellbeing in the holding cells. This added to the pressure of an already stretched team who, among their many responsibilities, were required to monitor potentially vulnerable and at-risk prisoners and process other arrivals and releases. Similarly, there were no CCTV cameras in the property store to observe prisoners working in this area. With reduced staffing in the reception area, EGRP should consider the need to expand the use of CCTV in these areas to ensure safety of staff and prisoners working in reception.

Recommendation 4

Install additional CCTV cameras within the reception area.

Mental health expertise in reception could offer more safeguards

Entering prison can be a stressful experience. Many prisoners received at EGRP have been involved in the justice system before, and reception staff told us their pre-existing rapport and knowledge of an individual was an important tool when observing interactions and mood. However, almost a third of prisoners who responded to our survey told us it was their first time in prison. Therefore, many arrivals will have no pre-existing rapport with staff, while others may not reveal complex mental health concerns for a range of reasons.

EGRP is a receptional prison, with new prisoners arriving throughout the day and night. Many may be affected by substances, experiencing withdrawal, or suffering poor mental health. Often prisoners present with a combination of factors that require extra psychological and mental health support and monitoring. It was positive to hear the newly appointed Mental Health Nurse (MHN) was attending reception when available, to provide further support to newly arrived prisoners. This is a good risk management practice and likely to be beneficial to vulnerable new arrivals.

3.2 COVID restrictions greatly impacted the orientation process

Newly arrived prisoners often present with increased support needs. A thorough prison orientation assists to settle them into the environment. It also allows prisoners to learn rules and operational procedures, understand what supports are available and how to seek them. During the last pre-inspection survey, prisoner and staff responses indicated orientation processes had improved. However, in 2023 following the impacts of COVID preventative restrictions, orientation services had been reduced.

To manage the risk of COVID transmission, all new male arrivals to EGRP are now isolated in Unit 3 cottages and likewise female prisoners were placed in a designated cottage in Unit 4. We were told prisoners were given an orientation booklet, but this did not reflect the current practice. We also heard that staff in Unit 3 were not trained to undertake prisoner orientation and there were no longer peer support prisoners undertaking orientation tours of the prison and providing support to new arrivals.

Many staff were concerned that gaps in the prisoner orientation process meant that prisoners missed out on information that may help them, such as what education courses may be available and how to access them, or what release preparation support was available. It was unsurprising only 34% of prisoners surveyed told us they had received enough information about the prison when they arrived. Prisoners also told us they had to rely on other prisoners for an informal orientation.

The prison's Business Plan, although out of date, contained several key visions for EGRP including using the prisoner peer support group in reception or admission processes (DoJ, 2019). We encourage EGRP to reinvigorate the orientation process, so prisoners have an opportunity to adjust to prison life and benefit from the support and opportunities available.

Recommendation 5

Re-establish an effective and thorough orientation process.

3.3 Remand prisoners' opportunities were limited

'Dead time' for remand prisoners

During the inspection, remand prisoners made up 33% of the prisoner population at EGRP (a slight increase from 30% in 2020). But in the weeks following our inspection, this increased to almost 40% of prisoners being held on remand.

Remandees told us they had limited access to Department run programs and activities and were unable to access formal offender treatment programs. Remand prisoners cannot be assessed for programs relating to the charges they are facing, but access to some voluntary programs may address underlying behaviours or other disadvantage. Voluntary programs covering subjects like alcohol and other drug use, emotional regulation and management, or maladaptive coping skills could potentially impact recidivism rates.

Prisoners spoke of 'dead time' while on remand awaiting the outcomes of court cases. They had limited opportunities to participate in areas which may enhance their prospects for rehabilitation on release such as, counselling, education, or employment. Education courses were prioritised for sentenced prisoners, with remandees unable to start long-term courses. More meaningful employment opportunities are often linked to security status, therefore remand prisoners who are rated as maximum security, could only work within the confines of their accommodation unit and were unable to be housed at the work camp.

Access and currency of legal resources was poor

Access to basic legal information should be available and accessible to all prisoners to assist in preparation for court or other legal processes. The few legal resources available to prisoners at EGRP are found in the library. Forty-four per cent of staff at EGRP said access to the library was acceptable but only 21% of prisoners thought access was good, a significant reduction from 64% three years ago. Regular redeployment of the Recreation Officer, who is required to supervise prisoners in the library, meant the library did not open on most days.

The legal computer appeared unused, and prisoners who worked in the library had no knowledge of what was available or how to access documents contained on the system. Policy Directives which have long been succeeded by the Commissioner's Operational Policies and Procedures (COPPs) were found within resources on a few shelves in the library with other official documents. Prisoners were unable to remove many resources, including legal texts from the library which were marked 'not for loan'.

Access to legal materials is a well-established right for prisoners (Corrective Services Administrators' Council, 2018). But we often see poorly organised and inaccessible legal resource materials in prison libraries. We also hear that demand for access is generally low in most prisons. What we do not know, however, is whether this is driven by a genuinely low level of demand or whether it reflects the inadequacy of the resources and equipment.



Photo 1: The mostly unused legal computer and documents

3.4 More can be done for the management of at-risk prisoners

At risk management was good, but staff felt more training was required

Overall, EGRP has few prisoners monitored through the At-Risk Management System (ARMS), but PRAG meetings were able to be quickly convened to discuss an identified prisoner. Meetings were attended by the Psychological Health Service (PHS), Prison Support Officer (PSO) and the newly appointed Mental Health Nurse (MHN). Primary health had been attending, but this was to be reviewed with the inclusion of the MHN.

Eighty per cent of staff surveyed thought services for the management of suicide prevention and at-risk prisoners were mixed or acceptable. This was unchanged from the last inspection and well above the state average of 69%. However, we observed some contributions into risk management as potentially generic, non-specific, and lacking detail. Just over half of the staff surveyed (54%) thought they were adequately trained in suicide prevention and only 26% felt adequately trained to manage mental health issues, both of which were equal to the state average. All new prison officer recruits receive Gatekeeper suicide prevention and mental health first aid training. Additionally, online courses in at-risk management are available to all staff, and the prison training schedule included specific presentations by senior staff relating to prisoners who are subject to at-risk or support monitoring systems.

Prisoners did not want to spend time in the Crisis Care Unit

Where possible, many at-risk prisoners were managed in units, close to friends, family, and cultural supports. When prisoners report a distress of a cultural nature, such as being accommodated in or near to a cell where a death in custody occurred, we heard appropriate prisoners may be asked to perform a smoking ceremony to cleanse the area. This was a positive example of promoting cultural awareness.

Prisoners told us they did not want to be in the Crisis Care Unit (CCU). They felt lonely and more unsettled there. During the last inspection, we recommended the CCU be developed into an area that is appropriate for vulnerable prisoners in need of high-level support (OICS, 2020). There had been some improvement, with a sofa added to the lounge, and the outdoor area now overlooking a mural of the ocean.

Despite regular cleaning by reception workers and prisoners who leave their placement in CCU and return to standard accommodation, the overall cleanliness of the CCU even when unoccupied, was poor. Another notable observation was the enclosed officers' station, which failed to promote meaningful engagement between prisoners and staff. Effective communication between prisoners and staff is of paramount importance, especially for those needing support. Many prisoners seeking assistance often attempt to communicate with staff to establish a sense of security. However, the presence of a glass barrier in this area limits communication.

The current state of the CCU falls short of meeting the therapeutic needs of prisoners who require placement and heightens the risk that prisoners may forgo seeking assistance, posing further risks to the mental health and coping abilities of these prisoners. Addressing these issues is critical for improving the overall environment and, most importantly, for the well-being and rehabilitation of the prisoners.

3.5 Foreign nationals wanted more support with immigration matters

There were 12 prisoners subject to immigration alerts at EGRP at the time of the inspection. Ten of these were sentenced prisoners who had received terms greater than 12 months, placing them at risk of visa cancellation. We met with a group of foreign national prisoners who were uncertain what may happen at the end of their sentence.

Prisoners at risk of visa cancellation and deportation were not provided help while in prison to liaise with the Department of Home Affairs or seek assistance to build their case. But if they were in the community or an immigration detention centre, they would have access to the telephone or internet to source information and support. Obviously, unrestricted access to the internet or phones is not possible in prison, but more could be done to assist and support prisoners who are subject to visa cancellation and deportation.

The extra stress of not knowing what's going to happen makes time harder.

Quote from a prisoner.

3.6 Women were mostly satisfied, but more could be done for mothers

Unit 4 had good infrastructure and a clear hierarchical progression process

The infrastructure in Unit 4, where female prisoners are accommodated, was in relatively good condition. The grounds were undergoing various landscaping projects and some accommodation cottages had vegetable gardens. One cottage was used for COVID isolation where women were held

until cleared, before being moved to a shared cell in another cottage. Women had opportunities to transition from a standard cottage, through hierarchical progression to several independent living cottages. The six-bed mother and child cottage, which to date has only been used once for its intended purpose, continues to provide full self-care privileges for eligible women.

Opportunities existed to keep women busy, engaged and supported.

A full-time Regional Women's Support Officer arranged activities for women and provided support to meet their needs. The Female Life Skills Officer position had been vacant for around six months. However, the prison had been active in securing an individual for the role and we heard the successful applicant was due to start the week after our inspection.

Meaningful opportunities for women to work outside of the unit were available in the afternoons including in the kitchen, laundry, and gardens. Women also had access to four structured recreation sessions outside of their unit each week, but these were subject to change if the Recreation Officer was redeployed. The women thought more gym equipment within Unit 4 may help to fill the gap when sessions were cancelled.

Women were generally included in education depending on their needs, with two women being supported to undertake tertiary education studies. It was also a positive to see mixed education courses between men and women at EGRP through initiatives such as the Keys for Life driver education course.

Women wanted more quality time with children

The mother and child cottage in Unit 4 was described as outstanding in our 2020 inspection report (OICS, 2020). This description remains appropriate, the cottage has bathrooms (with bathtubs) and programs rooms. Prisoners are not locked in cell at night and can have free use of the amenities in the house. Women in this cottage were generally happy with their accommodation and raised few issues about the unit.

But, despite being called the 'mother and child cottage', there has never been a mother and resident child accommodated there. Women told us they would value the opportunity to have their child live with them. At the very least they wondered why there were not extended visit options to maintain and nurture connections with their children. Women at Bandyup Women's Prison and Boronia Pre-Release Centre have opportunities for full day or overnight visits with children. The dedicated mother and child cottage at EGRP would seem suitable to provide either option, with ample storage space, equipment, and a separate children's play area. Bandyup, for example, has a demountable building that serves as the precinct for mothers having day stays with their children. EGRP could consider this for Unit 4.



Photo 2: Stored accessories within the mother and child cottage

Recommendation 6

Subject to the appropriate risk assessment, allow eligible women the opportunity for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children.

3.7 Young prisoners were identified, but no specific services were offered

Almost 30% of prisoners at EGRP were under 25 years at the time of the inspection. We were told if an 18-year-old arrives at EGRP, and it is their first time in custody they are placed on ARMS and monitored and supported by unit staff. When required, they are referred to the PSO and PHS counsellor. Theoretically, this appears to be good practice and should allow first-time prisoners to receive more consideration and support. However, as previously mentioned, currently new arrivals are placed into Unit 3, as a COVID precaution. EGRP attempted to facilitate visits for new prisoners in Unit 3 with family members who may be in the prison, but this was from behind a glass screen and wearing masks was compulsory. Their placement in Unit 3, while an understandable precaution, reduced meaningful interaction with other prisoners including peer support prisoners, friends and family members.

Several younger prisoners told us they preferred to avoid the older men and instead associate with their peers. Some even suggested having a unit or wing of their own. Older men told us that the younger ones do not listen to them and many lacked respect. This suggests a breakdown in relationships, which may be problematic from a cultural perspective and building respect for elders.

4 Managing behaviour and security

4.1 Encouraging positive relationships with male prisoners was difficult with the lack of progressive opportunities available

Relationships between custodial staff and prisoners were mostly positive

Relationships between staff and prisoners were mostly good at EGRP. Our pre-inspection survey of prisoners found results at EGRP compared better than the state average.

Table 2: Prisoners' ratings of 'good' communication with custodial staff

At EGRP, how well do you get along with	2023	2019	State Average
VSOs	67%	61%	52%
Unit officers	62%	67%	59%

The survey also indicated 60% of responding prisoners felt they were treated with dignity by officers. This is considerably higher than the state average of 38%. Prisoners commented they felt respected, and that custodial staff contributed to feeling safe at EGRP.

Although these survey results were largely supported during the inspection, we did hear examples of both positive and negative interactions between staff and prisoners. Treating prisoners with respect and decency helps build trust, respect and positive relationships which are essential elements in a safe and secure prison environment.

Senior management at EGRP told us that in an effort to keep prisoners engaged, they tried to minimise lockdowns by the use of structured redeployment of custodial positions. Excessive lockdowns often contribute to prisoners feeling unsafe, but at EGRP 82% per cent of prisoners who responded to our survey said they mostly felt safe.

The lack of hierarchical progression accommodation opportunities for men was concerning

Good behaviour in prison is often rewarded by progression through a hierarchical privilege system. Experience shows that most prisoners respond positively to incentives and privileges, which can include things like access to enhanced living opportunities through self-care facilities, better cells, and lower supervision levels. But the closure of the self-care houses in Unit 3 has significantly reduced progression options for men at EGRP.

The absence of hierarchical progression opportunities for men at EGRP is an issue that is often raised with us during our regular liaison visits, in prisoner and staff surveys, and in reports from our Independent Visitor.

During the inspection, a total of 155 prisoners were sentenced, while 47 were subject to an earned supervision level. Male prisoners had access to a similar set of incentives to those offered in other facilities, including:

- enhanced canteen spending limits
- increased availability of electrical items in their cells
- ability to send additional letters
- more money on telephone accounts
- up to four one-hour contact visits per week (subject to staff availability).

In contrast, women residing in independent living accommodation in Unit 4 enjoyed the benefits of a hierarchical management system, which enabled them to cook meals and launder clothing. Male prisoners in the Unit 2 cottages, while having access to more comfortable accommodations, lacked the amenities required for self-sufficiency, such as stoves, washing machines, or dryers. With Unit 3 unavailable for progression, male prisoners at EGRP encountered limited incentives, ultimately compromising the effectiveness of the independent living system.

During our inspection, men were increasingly vocal about the growing disparity between the opportunities for men and women at EGRP. Men expressed their desire to prepare their meals and manage their laundry. Many had previously been accommodated at other facilities where they had learnt valuable life skills including budgeting and cooking. Encouraging positive behaviour becomes a challenge when incentives are lacking. It is important to efficiently offer and provide these opportunities, particularly for men who spend extended periods within their units.

Recommendation 7

Enhance the incentives and privileges available to men at EGRP.

4.2 Charges were well prepared, but often did not progress

A full-time prosecutor was in place at EGRP, which allowed the individual time to manage their caseload of charges and other duties, despite regular redeployment. But only 29% of staff who responded to our survey thought the prison was effective at applying charges and prosecutions. This was down from 58% three years ago. Departmental data showed in the 12 months up to November 2022, 228 charges had been generated with 59 resulting in a guilty plea. But almost one third (74) were withdrawn due to the prisoner being released from custody before the charge was heard. A further 47 charges were without an outcome and 28 had been referred to a VJ. Often significant delays in the hearing of prison charges can be problematic. Prisoners potentially see no long-term consequences for negative behaviour, leading to staff feeling unsupported in preferring formal prison charges.

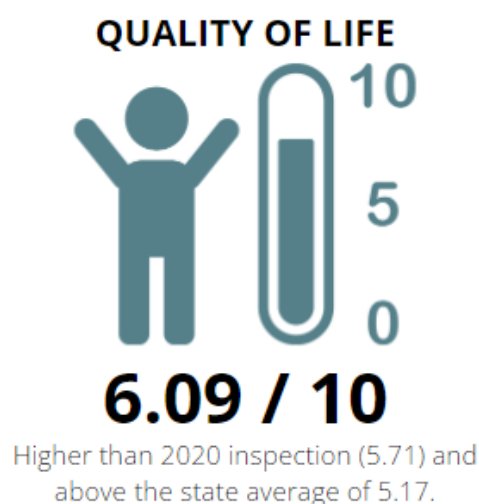
5 Daily life

5.1 Lockdowns were minimised but the regime was limited by staff shortages

We have said before that a prison's regime should be purposeful and sufficiently flexible to account for the diversity of the prisoners (OICS, 2020A). EGRP was committed to maximising time out of cell for prisoners. Although lockdowns occurred occasionally, EGRP minimised the duration and regularity of prisoners spending excessive time in cell.

During our inspection, we observed a regime that allowed both male and female prisoners regular access to recreation, either within the confines of their unit, or externally at the gym or oval. Prisoners were also observed undertaking bulk movements to work, education or programs.

While other facilities struggle to unlock prisoners due to shortages of custodial staffing, EGRP was providing some purposeful activities because of its size and flexibility to manage staffing groups. This may go some way to explaining why prisoners rated their quality of life higher at EGRP than three years ago, and much higher than the state average.



However, these movements came at a cost. While we did see men and women out of cells and engaged in recreation or education, lockdowns were mostly avoided due to the redeployment of VSOs to cover vacant custodial positions. VSOs run several key prisoner activity areas including structured recreation sessions, industries, canteen, and stores. When VSOs are redeployed from these areas, prisoners' access to meaningful activities and employment is reduced. We found few prisoners in industries areas and workshops had been regularly closed due to redeployments. In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, 53% of prisoners felt their time was not spent doing useful activities. Many prisoners told us they wanted more opportunities to build skills, improve their education and keep busy during the day.

5.2 Prison infrastructure was generally in good condition

The infrastructure at EGRP overall, was far better maintained than most prisons in the state. As previously mentioned, EGRP benefits greatly from the PPP model, with Honeywell providing facility management over the 25-year contract term. We rarely see such structured replacement schedules at other prisons or maintenance requests that are actioned as promptly as they are at EGRP.

Wear and tear, however, was becoming more evident in high-traffic areas, particularly in standard living units and in cells. The level of maintenance required in these areas will naturally increase as the prison infrastructure ages.



Photo 3: Single occupant cells were spacious

In our pre-inspection prisoner survey, 60% of prisoners said their unit was good, but this was down from 74% three years ago. Similarly, our staff survey suggested a decrease in the cleanliness of the ground and buildings, where 49% said it was acceptable compared to 62% at the last inspection. But during our inspection, we did not observe evidence of a significant decline in general living conditions, and it was clear many prisoners we spoke to would prefer to be at EGRP than at other facilities. But there were concerns raised by prisoners about things like mattresses and food, which are covered later in this chapter, and this may provide an explanation about why satisfaction has dropped in these areas.

5.3 A new laundry process was unpopular, but the new mattresses had been well received

In 2020, we found a marked improvement in the quality of clothing (OICS, 2020) and commended the laundry services. In March 2023, there was a change in the laundry process for male prisoners. It transitioned from a personal issue clothing system to a one-for-one replacement except for underwear and socks which remained personally issued and were placed in a separate bag for washing. The new process involved:

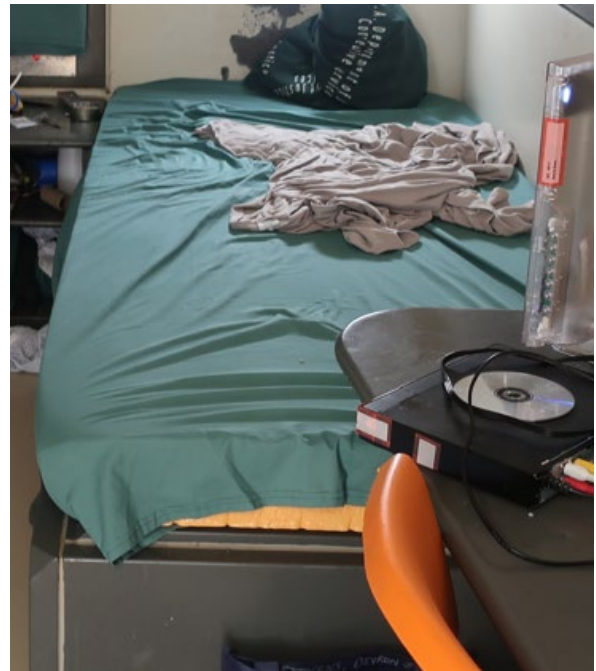
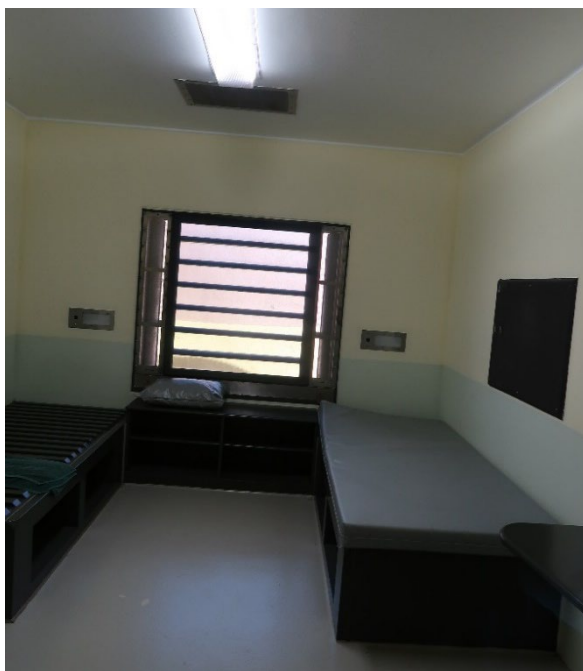
- prisoners placing items in a clothing bag with their laundry number attached
- bags are then taken to the laundry
- items are swapped one-for-one by laundry workers
- the prisoner's clothing bag is returned the same day and issued by unit staff.

Laundry workers reported much of their time was previously spent sorting through personal issue clothing after it had been washed and dried. Laundry workers and unit staff requested a change, and the new process was hoped to free up laundry workers time to secure and facilitate future external contracts.

However, prisoners in the units we spoke to were very unhappy with the new process. Some had not received clothing back or had been issued different sizes. Some had requested washing machines in their units, while others had taken to washing clothes in a bucket to avoid using the service. Laundry workers were being blamed for the errors. There was also frustration from unit staff who issued the returned items, but then had to attend the laundry to rectify issues.

While the feedback we heard from staff and prisoners was negative, it is acknowledged the change was only brought in two weeks before our inspection. It may still be too early to draw conclusions as to the efficiency of the process, but it is something we will monitor in future liaison visits.

In our pre-inspection survey, 63% of prisoners felt the bedding at EGRP was good, up from 43% in 2020. Much of this improvement can be attributed to the replacement of mattresses which was carried out shortly after our 2020 inspection. The new mattresses were thicker and made of fabric in contrast to the thinner, plastic-wrapped mattresses that had previously been in use, that provided little support and were uncomfortable. Prisoners had complained that they could feel the wooden slats of the bed base under the thinner mattresses. The thicker mattresses provided more comfort and support.



Photos 4-7: Different mattresses were found in circulation at EGRP

5.4 Social visits operated well, but improvements to e-visits were needed

Contact with family had been reduced

Prisoners at EGRP had several options to maintain contact with families but there had been some significant changes including:

- cancellation of Thursday social visits
- cancellation of the fourth social visit session on weekends
- re-introduction of a \$4.00 payment per e-visit (with no charge for distant visitors)
- e-visits were unable to be booked more than two weeks in advance.

These changes were introduced to alleviate pressure on custodial staffing shortages, and the impact of court processes. Visit bookings could be made six days a week. Protection, and prisoners with a restricted visits alert were prioritised for child-free visit sessions every Tuesday. Visits lasted one hour, but prisoners could request permission for two-hour visits if their visitors did not reside in the local area. We found the visits booking system was effective, with two administration assistants performing this task. We spoke with prisoners and visitors who were happy with the booking process for social visits. We also heard that staff were generally polite and respectful to social visitors.



Photo 8: Outdoor tables at the visits centre



Photo 9: Children's play centre

The e-visit system was problematic

To mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department fast-tracked installation of e-visit technology into all prisons to provide an alternative resource for prisoners to maintain contact with friends, families, and officials. With the increasing demographic of prisoners at EGRP from the Perth metro, and the spread of family from all areas of the state, access to e-visits remains an important support mechanism.

Prisoners at EGRP were required to submit paperwork requesting a 20-minute e-visit no more than two weeks in advance and paid \$4.00 per session if their visitor was based locally.

Departmental policy prohibits charging prisoners for an e-visit in cases where a visitor resides at a distant location and cannot attend an in-person social visit. This policy also extends to situations where social visits are suspended due to emergency events, including pandemics. The policy allows for the consideration of charging prisoners for an e-visit when they have the option to access a social visit with the same visitor. In such cases, the cost should be equivalent to that of a telephone call. During our inspections and liaison visits to all prisons within Western Australia, we have found EGRP to be the only facility charging prisoners for e-visits.

Two afternoon e-visit sessions took place six days a week. There were four e-visit terminals available for prisoners each session. A total of 48 e-visit sessions were available for booking each week. E-visits took place at the same time as social visits, so staffing was stretched at these times. But there were no social or e-visits on Thursdays to allow visits staff to focus on court proceedings.

In our pre-inspection survey only 23% of prisoners felt it was easy to maintain contact with family through e-visits. Many told us e-visits were difficult to book as paperwork had been lost or sessions cancelled due to official and other legal video-links taking priority. Others had been charged for their session, despite their visitor not residing in the local area. Many felt 20 minutes was not enough time to maintain contact with family, friends, or children.

But by far the biggest concern prisoners had was their experience of poor connections in their e-visit, which we understood was frequent audio delays and video issues due to bandwidth limitations. We were told the use of an older video conferencing platform was creating issues, as many organisations had moved to newer versions or platforms. Through our on-site observations in the video-link area, and our own video conferencing with the prison before the inspection we have seen and experienced similar technical issues which appear to be the source of frustrations for prisoners and staff. EGRP is a modern facility, and this should be reflected in its ability to incorporate stable communications and technology in its essential services. We encourage the Department to explore all options to address whatever the technical issues EGRP continues to face in the delivery of reliable e-visits sessions.

Recommendation 8

Explore options to identify technical issues and improve video conferencing communications for staff and prisoners at EGRP.

5.5 Recreation was available most days but limited by staffing shortages

Prisoners had regular access to recreation inside and outside units

Prisoners at EGRP accessed unit-based recreation by making use of basketball courts and isometric exercise equipment in unit yards, and table tennis tables in the dayroom. Tables in units had graphics with solitaire and chess boards for passive recreation.



Photo 10: Passive recreation in unit dayrooms

Outside of the living units, the main recreation areas were in the centre of the prison and included a gymnasium with exercise equipment and an indoor multi-use court, an outside basketball court and football oval.

A recreation timetable provided each unit with regular access to the main recreation areas. If recreation officers were redeployed due to custodial staff shortages, prisoners would still be provided with the opportunity to attend the main recreation areas, but access to equipment and structured activities was limited. We saw custodial staff involved in an indoor soccer game with the men from Unit 2 on the first day of our inspection. These interactions go a long way to fostering healthy relationships and encouraging positive behaviour.



Photo 11: Prisoners and custodial staff playing indoor soccer

Structured recreation was limited by staffing shortages and redeployments

EGRP had two recreation officer positions which were both filled substantively. They completed 10-hour shifts and were rostered seven days per week. On Wednesdays, both officers were rostered on duty together. Unfortunately, we were told the recreation staff were among the first to be redeployed. As a result, there was a lack of consistency in recreation and many prisoners were losing interest. Units 1 and 2 had football teams which competed on weekends. However, match frequency was often reduced when recreation officers were redeployed. The following tables show results from staff and prisoner surveys reflected declining views on structured recreation provision at EGRP.

Table 3: Prisoners were asked 'In this prison what do you think about the...?'

Item	2023		2019		State Average	
	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good	Poor
Amount of organised sport	35%	53%	42%	54%	35%	60%
Gym	25%	64%	55%	41%	52%	48%
Access to other recreation	22%	67%	39%	56%	34%	66%
Access to library	26%	61%	64%	32%	50%	47%

Table 4: Staff were asked 'How would you rate the following in this prison?'

Item	2023			2019		
	Unacceptable	Mixed	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Mixed	Acceptable
Access to sport and physical recreation	8%	28%	54%	2%	9%	75%
Access to the library	12%	35%	44%	2%	11%	75%



Photo 12 -13: Recreation taking place on the oval, and the popular prison library where access was limited

The library was popular, but its use was almost exclusively for borrowing DVDs rather than books. When recreation officers are redeployed, the senior officer of the unit attending recreation may open the library. But we were told many did not want to do this as prisoners required supervision. Given many prisoners felt there was a shortage of meaningful activities, the redeployment of recreation officers was particularly damaging to accessing various types of recreation. Stable staffing within the recreation group would provide more opportunities to run structured sessions, run exercise classes, organise competitions or develop new activities to engage the interests of more prisoners.

Recommendation 9

Minimise the redeployment of recreation officers to allow more regular access to structured recreation activities.

5.6 Prisoner satisfaction with the food had declined

Meals at EGRP were cooked, frozen and served the next day in portioned, disposable containers. The food preparation processes we observed in the kitchen were good and the facility appeared to be in good condition and fit for purpose. But prisoners were less positive about food than they had been in 2020. Only 34% of survey respondents said the quality of the food was good, down from 43%

during the previous inspection. Similarly, prisoners felt the amount of food provided had fallen from 61% saying this was 'good' to 55%.

Many prisoners told us the food at EGRP was of a poor standard. The main complaints we heard were:

- repetitious meals – particularly cold meat, salad, and rolls for lunch on most days
- cold food – despite being delivered in insulated trolleys
- oily and water saturated meals
- unhealthy meals.



Photo 14: A healthy looking special diet meal

We acknowledge the difficulties in catering for a large population of over 200 prisoners. Preparation of a variety of meals at various times of the day, including lunches and dinners for prisoners and staff and catering for special occasions and events would be difficult to manage. Dissatisfaction with food among prisoners is also a common source of complaint we hear during inspections. But the extent and intensity of the complaints we received from prisoners at EGRP during our pre-inspection processes and our on-site interactions showed a high-level of dissatisfaction with the food.

During the inspection we could not identify the underlying causes of these negative perceptions and the comments we heard. We spent a considerable time in the kitchen observing food preparation processes, inspecting the environment, interviewing staff and prisoners who worked in the kitchen and even tasting food which was to be served to prisoners over several days. All of which did not provide sufficient evidence to explain the prisoners strong dislike for the food they were served. What it did establish was a basis for better dialogue between prisoner representatives and the relevant staff to explore possible sources and solutions to the level of dissatisfaction we heard.

Kitchen staff endeavoured to provide a varied and appropriate menu for prisoners

The kitchen was a busy workplace, employing up to 25 male prisoners during the morning, and up to eight female prisoners in the afternoon. There were three chefs, two chef instructors and one chef supervisor.

We saw evidence of a varied menu that changed over a five-week cycle. Fresh fruit was provided daily, and desserts twice a week. Meals for special occasions were prepared and we sampled some of the freshly baked hot cross buns on the day of the non-denominational Easter service.

The kitchen also provides cultural foods, through kangaroo sausages and stew. Many Aboriginal prisoners we spoke with did not view the former as a traditional cultural method of preparing kangaroo. We did hear kangaroo tails sourced from South Australia were provided occasionally for special occasions, such as NAIDOC week. These were cooked using the traditional cultural method in the outdoor fire pit.

A variety of special diets were available. These included meals for 25 vegetarians and for prisoners with allergies or intolerance to lactose or gluten, all of which were prepared in a separate area of the kitchen to avoid contamination.



Photo 15: Workers in the kitchen

Some kitchen maintenance issues were being addressed, but others remained

We were told the kitchen floor was scheduled to be re-painted again later in the year. This was to be the third application to the floor in seven years, the last only being in 2021. Several complaints had been made by both prisoners and staff who had slipped and fallen on the floor while working.

The kitchen was expected to be out of commission for around six weeks while works were completed. Planning to manage the shutdown of the kitchen and provide the required meals was in progress. Plans to cook extra meals to freeze were being hampered by essential equipment being out of order. The machinery needed to seal individually portioned meals was broken, and therefore extra meals could not be cooked before this was repaired.

We heard there was no regular maintenance carried out on large equipment such as ovens despite regular maintenance issues arising. For industrial sized equipment, particularly machines which are required for an essential purpose, a regular maintenance schedule should be in place and followed. There are substantial risks to kitchen operations and potential impact on prisoners if essential equipment fails and there are delays in repairs or replacement.

Recommendation 10

Schedule regular maintenance and service of all kitchen equipment and maintain adequate records to ensure the schedule is followed.

5.7 Accessible religious and spiritual support included an impressive non-denominational Easter service

EGRP is serviced by two long-term chaplains, who between them are available for a minimum of four weekdays. They were well respected and attend units to speak with any prisoner who wishes to engage. Individual referrals for pastoral care services may come from unit or other staff such as the PSO. Chaplains provide an additional source of welfare support, particularly for vulnerable prisoners.

Saturday services were available, but these were prone to cancellation due to insufficient staff to provide supervision. Men in Units 1 and 2 attend the chapel on alternating Saturdays while a service is held for women in Unit 4.

During our inspection, a whole of prison non-denominational Easter service was held. The two chaplains were joined by three approved religious visitors to deliver a combined service for male and female prisoners. Around 100 prisoners attended the service, which took place without incident. This initiative is commendable, and demonstrates that with effective planning and collaboration, important pro-social services can be arranged for large groups of male and female prisoners.



Photos 16: The popular non-denominational Easter service at EGRP

5.8 Canteen and spends operated well but prisoner concerns were noted

Prisoner satisfaction with the canteen had dropped significantly since the last inspection. Only 47% of prisoners felt the canteen was good, which was less than the state average of 55% and down from 67% three years ago. Prisoners complained the canteen lacked a range of healthier options and items were frequently out of stock. This was consistent with our observations during the inspection. We heard that supply issues appeared to stem from issues around the capacity to re-stock shelves from the supplies held in the external stores. Consideration could be given to ensure more regular transfer of goods from external stores to replenish stock in the canteen.

The canteen itself was a busy area which was managed with confidence and efficiency by the canteen officer and two women prisoners employed as canteen workers. Previous concerns raised about the limited storage space at EGRP for canteen products (OICS, 2020), had been addressed to some extent by the rearrangement of shelving within the canteen. However, the area was still quite cramped and there was very little spare capacity. This was noteworthy considering the prison was well below full capacity.

Many prisoners were paid well, but just as many were not working

Prisoners who work are paid gratuities based on the nature of the work they do. These range from Level 1 through to Level 5, with each level supposed to reflect a prisoner's willingness to engage, and the skills, aptitude and diligence required. Sentenced prisoners at EGRP who refuse to work do not receive gratuities until they recommence work. Level 1 is the highest achievable daily rate available within the prison for standard positions. Trusted prisoners approved to live in a work camp or undertake Section 95 activities outside the prison are paid a higher rate at Level 23.

Departmental policy sets guidelines around gratuity profiles for each level and requires EGRP to develop a Prisoner Constructive Activity Profile which shows the distribution of gratuities within the prison. This profile also reflects the prison's employment and industry priorities.

Table 5 shows that prior to the inspection, the prison was paying almost a quarter of all prisoners at the highest level of gratuities. However, the same number of prisoners were being paid Level 5 (not working), which may suggest a shortage of employment positions. Prisoners were underrepresented at levels 3 and 4 when compared to the recommended distribution of gratuities percentages contained in the policy.

Table 5: Gratuity profile – Department policy mandated level versus actual at 28 March 2023

Gratuity level	Policy	Actual Numbers	Actual %	Daily rate paid
1	10%	53	23.5%	\$11.25
2	20%	50	22.1%	\$8.60
3	45%	49	21.7%	\$6.74
4	15%	16	7.1%	\$4.77
5	10%	53	23.5%	\$3.53
23	N/A	5	2.2%	\$14.10
Total	100%	226	100%	N/A

The gratuities profile suggests underrepresentation of Aboriginal prisoners in higher levels

Aboriginal people at EGRP were underrepresented at Levels 1 and 2 (and 23) and overrepresented at Levels 3, 4 and 5. Over 90% of prisoners who were not working were Aboriginal. There are many factors that may contribute to this, including employment history, skills, qualifications, and personal motivation to work. However, in regional prisons, where the population is mostly made up of Aboriginal prisoners, the prison system must seek to identify and address obstacles that prevent proportional representation in employment. This is essential to overcome Aboriginal disadvantage.

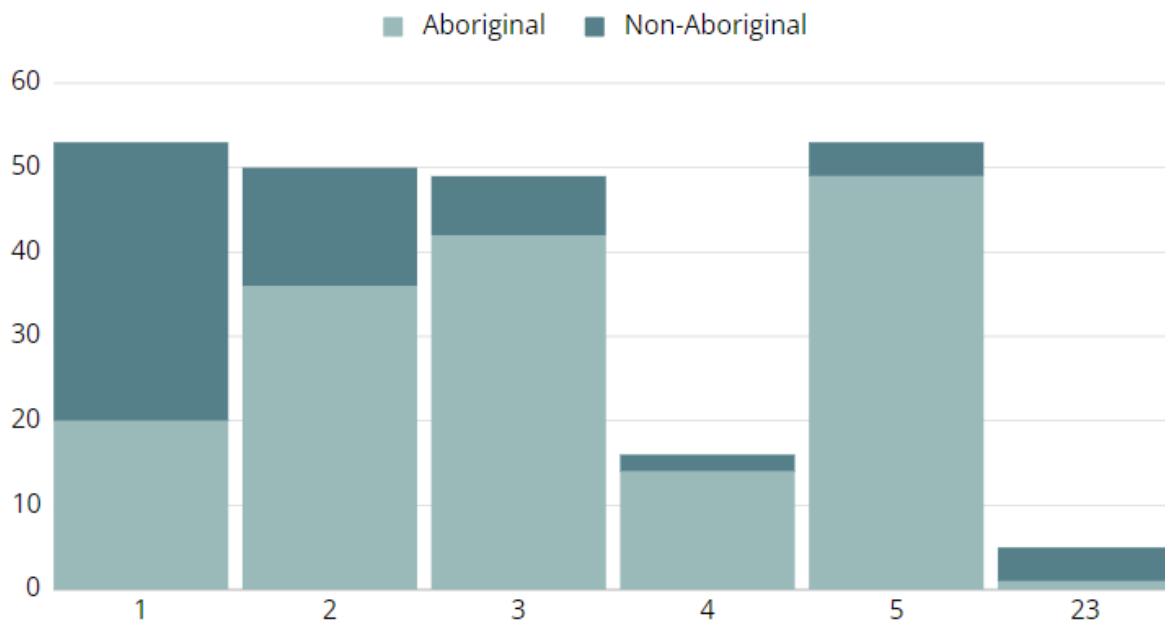


Figure 4: Number of prisoners per gratuity level by Aboriginality 28 March 2023

6 Health and support

6.1 Primary health care provided a good range of services

Health care workers provided a good range of services at EGRP. There was a GP presence, either in-person or via telehealth for up to two days a week. This service was stretched, with a backlog to see the on-site GP, whose clinical time was also taken up with admission assessments. A substantive clinical nurse was acting as the Clinical Nurse Manager (CNM) and was working extended hours to lessen the impact on prisoners and colleagues.

A Senior Aboriginal Health Worker was an asset to the health team providing a valuable link between Aboriginal prisoners and health services while also maintaining the diabetes portfolio.

Other staff focussed on sexual and reproductive health and chronic disease management. Allied health services included physiotherapy once every two weeks, podiatry once a month, and an eye specialist visit every three months.

At the time of the inspection, we heard that nurses (who are required to attend a medical incident in the prison) must communicate incident details and updates to staff in the Master Control Room (MCR). The MCR in turn contacts emergency services and provides those details to clinical response services, including dispatched ambulance paramedics. It was suggested to us that nurses having access to an emergency mobile telephone could strengthen the prison's response to medical emergencies. This would provide the responding nurse a direct line to liaise with clinical response services. When this was put forward, prison management seemed receptive to the idea.

A caring, responsive service

Extended nursing hours, an on-site GP and relatively good staffing numbers, had been maintained since the previous inspection. Fifty-seven per cent of prisoners surveyed said general health services were good or okay. Prisoners told us they felt cared for and welcomed when they attended the clinic. We observed medication being issued, and nurses following-up with prisoners who were known to be unwell. The service appeared respectful and responsive to prisoner needs.



Photo 17: The prison medical centre

Some prisoners were employed as carers for vulnerable men and women and received Level 1 gratuities for this work.

Despite the effort and hard work of the team, health and medical still ranked as the most frequently raised concern to our Independent Visitor. Similarly, of the 50 complaints to ACCESS, the Department's formal complaints resolution system, in the 12 months leading up to November 2022, 12 were related to health. Many prisoners told us there were long waitlists to be seen by specialists, however, we understand that the prison had little influence over such delays. Some prisoners believed that clinical staff viewed them as drug seeking, which influenced their satisfaction with the service.

Health services were impacted by custodial shortages

The Medical Duty Officer (MDO) is a clinic-based custodial position, responsible for providing a level of security and processing prisoners into and out of the health centre. We heard that this position was often redeployed.

Unit-based staff and health centre staff worked together to ensure prisoners were called to their scheduled appointments if the MDO position was redeployed. Unit staff escorted prisoners to the clinic, or health care staff would attend units. Unfortunately, the latter was not popular with prisoners because there were no consulting rooms in the units and confidentiality was potentially compromised. This meant some prisoners could miss out on health and mental health care when the MDO was redeployed.

Dental services did not meet demand

Regional prisons continue to experience significant challenges in providing dental care to prisoners. In our 2021 review into dental care, we found the average wait time to see a dentist at EGRP was the second longest across the prison estate, at 13.8 months (OICS, 2021). Although the Department recognised the need to improve dental care, it has been difficult to attract and retain dental staff at EGRP. The prison has a fully equipped dental suite within the health centre, but with the shortages of dental staff locally, a dentist did not visit EGRP as often as required to meet demand. Appointments for prisoners with the community clinic were also often cancelled either through staff being unavailable to escort prisoners or the community dentist being unavailable.

At the time of the inspection, close to 60 prisoners were waiting to access dental services but wait times had reduced from 2021 levels. We heard that a minor dental issue could quickly deteriorate and require medical intervention, such as pain relief or antibiotics to manage an infection. In our prisoner survey, only 14% of respondents were satisfied with dental care and there were many references to dental being one of the key negative aspects of the prison. In the 12 months before the inspection, a quarter of all external medical escorts were for dental services. EGRP staff were clearly trying to do what they could to provide dental services for prisoners, but overall, the provision of dental care was poor.

6.2 Mental health services were better resourced

Mental health services at the last inspection were found to be inadequate at EGRP (OICS, 2020). At that time there was no MHN, only a single PHS counsellor, and a fly-in-fly-out psychiatrist who attended in-person one day per month and via tele-health one day per month. Because of this, prisoners were often sent off country for mental health care.

Just before the 2023 inspection, a MHN was appointed to EGRP on a three-month contract, which was subsequently extended to a full-time substantive position in August. The efforts of the prison staff in securing this position are acknowledged, as it represents a highly valued and beneficial resource for prisoners. The MHN worked with prisoners in areas such as at-risk management or alcohol and other drugs (AOD) counselling. At that time, we saw good collaboration between PHS and mental health services which was prisoner focussed, with a common goal to allow unwell prisoners to remain on country at EGRP and reduce transfers to Perth for ongoing care.

One PHS position was vacant, but the addition of the MHN, created capacity to deliver some therapeutic interventions to prisoners. These interventions focussed on areas such as family and domestic violence and AOD use. Two counselling groups had also been run covering grief and loss and managing stress from COVID-19 lockdowns. PHS counselling resources were also boosted by support from PHS staff based in West Kimberley Regional Prison.

While not all prisoners will require mental health support, in a reception prison like EGRP, there is likely to be a higher demand for mental health services. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the addition of the MHN to the admissions process was beneficial to the initial risk assessment of new prisoners.

We urge the Department to recruit and fill the vacant PHS position. Otherwise, many of the improvements we have noted above risk regressing to the levels of service we saw in 2020.

Recommendation 11

Fill the vacant PHS position to support mental health service provision at EGRP.

Some prisoners were missing out on early welfare supports

PSOs are responsible for providing support to all prisoners, but particularly contribute to the overall suicide and self-harm prevention and intervention strategy in custodial settings by providing ongoing support and cultural expertise to at-risk prisoners. Each PSO manages a team of peer support prisoners, who help to support prisoners with problems or issues they may be experiencing. To be effective, a PSO must work collaboratively with management, staff, and prisoners.

The PSO in each prison reports to a manager based in Perth within the Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs (MHAOD) directorate. This directorate also has responsibility for the Aboriginal Visitor Service (AVS). During the 12 months up until November 2022, 13 visits had been conducted by AVS. Unfortunately, EGRP was without an AVS worker at the time of the inspection, and despite continued efforts, a suitable candidate has not been found.

Peer support meetings chaired by the ASOS provide a forum for prisoners to raise general issues. We heard these meetings had not been taking place for some time but had recently returned to a minimum of one every two months. The PSO led a team of five peer support prisoners including one female volunteer. Two of the men were Aboriginal and provided cultural support.

Although no formal training had been provided to peer support prisoners, it was encouraging to hear the prison had been actively pursuing Talking About Suicide (TAS) awareness sessions to deliver relevant training. TAS sessions can only be delivered in person, by an experienced Lifeline facilitator and community support person. The prison had submitted a training and development case to allocate funds to cover costs involved to enable peer support prisoners and prison-based staff to participate in the delivery of the training.

EGRP have some good supports available, but at the time of the inspection, prisoners in Unit 3 were missing out on support from the peer support team as the unit was being used as a COVID isolation space. Isolating prisoners as soon as they enter prison increases anxiety which in turn increases vulnerability. At the time of writing, a liaison visit established that Unit 3 had been closed, with all new arrivals accommodated in Unit 1.

7 Rehabilitation and reparation

7.1 The assessments team were knowledgeable and highly committed

At the time of the inspection the assessments team at EGRP was led by an experienced CMC who was responsible for case management and assessments. The CMC was committed to providing a quality service to prisoners and had an in-depth knowledge of not only the assessment portfolio, but also of a range of issues within the prisoner population and wider community.

A senior officer of assessments and two VSOs designated as assessment writers completed the team. One assessment writer was on parental leave at the time of the inspection, but a part-time replacement was due to start. These positions were not immune from redeployment and daily custodial staffing shortages impacted their ability to keep on top of caseloads.

Unit staff were responsible for drafting funeral applications. However, the CMC provided regular input into applications and made recommendations. Some examples we heard of the team's dedication to providing achievable outcomes for funerals included:

- liaison with local police to provide transport vehicles
- assessments staff volunteering themselves for prisoner escorts
- the CMC personally attending local funerals for video recording purposes.

We became aware the CMC was relocating to another facility shortly after the inspection. We hope that the exemplary practices and high-quality services established by the previous CMC will continue.

Treatment assessments were adding to the delay of completing IMPs

Most sentenced prisoners require an Individual Management Plan (IMP) to be completed, that outlines their educational and treatment intervention needs.

If a prisoner is sentenced to more than six months imprisonment, the Risk of Reoffending Prison Version (RoR-PV) - a four-question screening tool - is used to determine whether more comprehensive assessments are necessary. Regardless of the RoR-PV score, a qualified assessor will complete a document called a Treatment Assessment Report (TAR).

Where treatment needs are identified, a TAR becomes a time consuming and complex document to write. Consequently, we often see a backlog of IMPs due to TAR completion delays. During our inspection, we found that 30 out of 35 prisoners without an initial IMP had not been assessed for treatment needs.

The delay in completing treatment assessments directly affected the assessment team's ability to finalise IMPs. Consequently, their focus shifted towards producing comprehensive parole reports. At the time of our inspection 56 prisoners remained in custody after their Earliest Eligibility Date (EED) for release. Of these, 36 were considered to have unmet treatment needs and were denied release to parole by the Prisoners Review Board (PRB). For many prisoners, the delay in completing screening and assessment tools means they miss out on timely interventions or the possibility of an

early release. The following case study illustrates the potential benefits of having timely treatment assessments and how their completion may influence decisions around early release.



Case Study

A man was remanded into custody in September 2020 and transferred to EGRP.

In December 2022, he was sentenced to four years and six months imprisonment.

In March 2023 he became eligible for release to parole.

No RoR-PV or TAR was completed. Subsequently he did not have an IMP.

He was denied release by the PRB who outlined he had yet to be assessed for treatment programs.

Five days after his earliest eligibility date for release, a RoR-PV was administered.

The result deemed he did not require any criminogenic interventions through mandatory programs.

He engaged in a voluntary program, maintained good prison behavior and secured accommodation for his release.

The assessments team at EGRP helped him to reapply for parole.

In May 2023 he was released to parole.

7.2 Program delivery was affected by staffing levels, but new staff had started

In 2021 and 2022, 61 prisoners participated in six criminogenic programs at EGRP. Anglicare is contracted to deliver two family and domestic violence programs annually (Connect and Respect), however only one of these programs was delivered, with participation from just 10 men. We were told the reason a second course could not be delivered was due to incomplete treatment assessments.

Table 6: Criminogenic programs completed in 2021 and 2022

Program	Category	Courses	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Pathways (Male only)	Addictions Offending	2	13	6	19
Medium Intensity	General Offending	1	5	5	10
Not Our Way	Violent Offending	2	22	0	22
Connect and Respect	Violent Offending	1	10	0	10
Total		6	50	11	61

During the same period, five more criminogenic programs at EGRP were cancelled. Vacancies in programs staffing levels influenced cancellations in four of these programs and no criminogenic programs for women ran during this time. Women consistently voiced their dissatisfaction at the lack of programs at EGRP to meet their parole requirements and many refused to transfer to other facilities. We were told there was insufficient demand for a female Pathways program at EGRP. While six women were assessed as requiring the Choice, Change and Emotions program, only one completed it. Others refused to transfer or participate in the program or had alerts with other prisoners at the prison where the program was to be facilitated.

In 2023, EGRP had doubled its programs staffing level compared to 2020 levels. Four staff were now in place to undertake face-to-face treatments assessments and deliver criminogenic programs.

One Programs Officer had received training in delivering the new Violence Prevention Program (VPP), but due to the backlog of treatment assessments, no prisoners at EGRP had been assessed as requiring this program. The fact that the VPP is available for prisoners at EGRP is a step in the right direction, but assessments must be undertaken to take advantage of this opportunity and to increase mandatory program provision at EGRP.

There were too few voluntary programs

Engagement in voluntary programs can be beneficial to prisoners as they prepare for release. If, for whatever reasons, prisoners are unable to complete a criminogenic program, the PRB may recognise engagement in voluntary programs as an indication of an intention to address offending behaviours.

In January 2023, we were made aware of a change in the requirement to complete treatment assessments to prioritise prisoners who had the most realistic chance of completing a program prior to their early release date. Prisoners negatively impacted by the change would be informed in writing and advised of voluntary courses and reintegration services that may be available to them.

Unfortunately, at EGRP voluntary programs were scarce with only two regularly offered to sentenced prisoners - a health awareness program (HIP-HOP) and a Jobs Club to assist prisoners in finding post-release employment. Beyond these, there was a distinct lack of voluntary programs at EGRP which address substance use, violent behaviours, emotional regulation, or parenting.

Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) had not been running, and male prisoners had no access to a life skills instructor to prepare them for independent living upon release.

The availability and delivery of criminogenic and voluntary programs at EGRP is concerning. While there have been improvements in programs staff levels, the backlog of treatment assessments prevents prisoners from benefitting from the additional programs that can be delivered. The lack of voluntary programs further increases the gap in accessing developing skills to assist prisoners in rehabilitation and reintegration.

Recommendation 12

Increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs for prisoners at EGRP by ensuring the timely completion of all outstanding treatment assessments.

7.3 The education team provided a range of meaningful opportunities

The education team at EGRP was small but committed to providing a quality service. The team comprised:

- an Education Campus Manager
- two Prison Education Coordinators (PEC)
- an Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW)
- two casual tutors
- an Education Clerk.

A substantive PEC was acting in the position of Campus Manager. The two PECs coordinated a range of general education courses, from basic entry level to certificated general education courses for adults. Some students were also supported in undertaking university studies.

The AEW role at EGRP was very important to engage Aboriginal prisoners in education and training, which was vital in addressing poor levels of literacy and numeracy often experienced by Aboriginal prisoners.

Historically, EGRP has had difficulty in recruiting and retaining casual tutors, so it was encouraging to hear that two casual tutors were working at the prison delivering arts and vocational support to students.

In the 12 months up to November 2022, there were high numbers of prisoners engaged in education or training at EGRP. Education staff focussed on delivering accredited adult basic education courses, and vocational training was facilitated in industry areas using the local TAFE and private Registered Training Organisations. The vocational training was tailored to identified skills shortages in the Goldfields Region and Central Western Desert Communities so that prisoners could gain qualifications that may help them with post-release employment.

Table 7: Education and training delivered at EGRP (November 2021 – November 2022)

Delivery area	Total unit enrolments	Distinct students enrolled	Units currently enrolled	Units completed
Adult Basic Education	410	193	24	282
Vocational Education	178	75	58	94
ASETS (Business, Hospitality, Sport, and Recreation)	42	25	4	14
TAFE Schooling	139	76	54	78
Traineeship units	38	3	0	29
Tertiary (University other)	13	4	2	10

There were also three students at the time of the inspection who were undertaking university courses. One was an Aboriginal man studying art, and two women were enrolled in journalism and business courses.

Two new formal traineeships, in supply chain operations and cleaning, had recently been approved, adding to the existing hospitality traineeship. All were valuable courses which result in industry-relevant qualifications.

The education centre also facilitated weekly delivery of the White Card training by the Section 95 VSO. This is an essential qualification for those wanting to work on construction or mining sites.

7.4 Many men and women had regular access to work

The availability of meaningful work did not match the prisoner population

Although many prisoners at EGRP were engaged in meaningful employment, almost a quarter of the population were unemployed and a further 17% only worked within their residential unit undertaking relatively low skilled tasks. The shortage of meaningful work ought to be a concern, particularly given that the prison population was well below capacity.

The two most sought-after employment opportunities were in the kitchen and laundry. Both are deemed to be essential industries and, as such, they did not suffer from shutdowns or restrictions when there were staff shortages. The kitchen operated seven days a week and the laundry five days a week. Men worked in these areas during the morning shift, and women worked the afternoon shift. During the inspection 51 prisoners, or 23% of the population, worked in the kitchen and laundry.

Other employment opportunities elsewhere at EGRP included unit-based work and in service areas such as the grounds, garden, and canteen. Prisoners also worked in non-essential industries, including the cabinet and metal workshops. But VSO vacancies and regular redeployments to cover custodial shortages often led to reduced activity or even closure of many of these areas. When closures occur, prisoners continued to be paid, but remained idle in their units.

We also heard complaints from many VSOs that they were unhappy with being regularly redeployed to cover custodial officer vacancies. Many resented having to close their workshops and voiced concerns about the potential to negatively impact the working relationships they had built with their prisoner workers. Some even suggested that this was a significant factor in their intentions to seek other employment opportunities.



Photo 18: The prison laundry was a sough after employment location

During our inspection nine of the 26 VSO positions at EGRP were either vacant or temporarily filled by casual workers. We heard it was hard to recruit and retain VSOs in Kalgoorlie, given the possibility of lucrative employment opportunities in the mining sector and the more general challenge of skills shortages in regional areas. Despite these challenges, many of the VSOs at EGRP had trade or other qualifications that added valuable industry experience to the operation of prison industries and workshops which was highly valued by prisoners.

Recommendation 13

Investigate the viability of opportunities to expand industries and increase meaningful prisoner employment.

There are opportunities to expand industries and increase employment within the prison. One obvious possibility would be to make use of the vacant site of the old prison which has remained vacant for over seven years since its demolition. In fact, during the original planning of the new prison and in the Department's Prison Industries Operational and Service Delivery Plan (DoJ, 2017) this site was considered suitable to develop a market garden. Such a proposal would not only improve prisoner employment but could contribute fresh produce for EGRP and even the entire prison population.

7.5 Release preparations for sentenced prisoners were good

Transitional services were improving

The role of transitional services is to provide prisoners with relevant support and resources to prepare them for their release back into the community. During our liaison visits and through feedback from our Independent Visitor, we heard that transitional services at EGRP had fallen away since the previous inspection. The impact of pandemic restrictions was one of the biggest reasons

for the decline. But by October 2022, a new Transitional Manager (TM) had commenced, and transitional services were improving. The TM had identified that security clearances for many of the contracted transitional service providers had lapsed, which meant that many of them were unable to enter the prison to deliver their programs or services. Although progress was slow, the backlog was being cleared and providers were returning to the prison.

The TM provided services such as obtaining copies of identification or driver's licences, assisting prisoners with fine conversions and contact with external agencies, such as the Department of Communities for housing and Centrelink for welfare payments.

The TM also conducted information sessions for prisoners who were within six months of release, outlining the available programs and advice on how to access them.

Prisoners from any prison who are from the Goldfields can be referred to Centrecare, the Department's contracted re-entry service provider for the region. Centrecare can provide eligible prisoners with reintegration services, including parenting, accommodation, and transport support, prior to their release and for up to 12 months post-release.

Recidivism rates have fallen, but Aboriginal rates of return are still high

In our request for departmental data, we asked for statistics regarding the rate at which prisoners return to custody. Specifically, we were interested in the data for sentenced prisoners who came back to serve a sentence within two years. During our 2020 inspection of EGRP, we received data on the rate of return for prisoners released between 1 October 2016, and 30 September 2017. Our 2023 inspection gathered new data, which included information on prisoners released between 22 November 2019, and 21 November 2020. In comparing these two data sets, it was clear that the overall recidivism rate at EGRP had dropped from 51.7% to 35.5%.

Throughout the prison estate, only two other prisons, Bandyup Women's Prison and Broome Regional Prison, achieved greater reductions.

Table 8: EGRP recidivism rates comparison for the two comparable periods (12 months up to)

Period	Aboriginal discharges	Aboriginal returns / percentage	Non-Aboriginal discharges	Non-Aboriginal returns / percentage	Overall recidivism rate
30 September 2017	145	78 (53.8%)	35	15 (42.9%)	51.7%
21 November 2020	167	68 (40.7%)	53	10 (18.9%)	35.5%

Despite the decrease, EGRP's overall recidivism rate remained higher than the state average of 31%. Additionally, during the later period EGRP's Aboriginal recidivism rate, although lower than the state average of 42.1%, ranked as the 12th highest out of the 17 adult custodial facilities in the state, rising two places between the two comparable data sets.

Post-release employment opportunities were being highlighted

The TM was based in the education precinct and had formed collaborative working relationships with the Education Campus Manager and the Employment Coordinator (EC) aimed at improving reintegration outcomes. Together they were working on the development of a holistic model of service delivery for prisoners nearing their release.

The EC had developed an initiative called 'Job Club', which was available every two months for sentenced prisoners, including women, who were in the final eight weeks of their sentence. The Job Club included a week of activities to showcase the various employment opportunities and resources available for prisoners' post-release. The last session prior to our inspection had 12 participants.

Activities and agencies showcased included:

- information sessions by BHP, Mack Force, and other organisations from the mining sector
- supports available from a community agency to arrange identification documents prior to release
- information on possible apprenticeship opportunities
- information sessions by Training Alliance
- input from Centacare on reintegration supports
- assistance in preparation of resumes.

As is often the case, most of these opportunities were reserved for sentenced prisoners. On rare occasions opportunities for remandees to participate were made available, but most were unable to attend due to the limited availability of places.

7.6 Life at Warburton

EGRP is the home prison for the Warburton Work Camp and, as part of this inspection, we had intended to include a section on life at the work camp. Unfortunately, due to limited travel options it has proven very difficult to arrange a visit out to Warburton to physically inspect the facility, meet with staff and prisoners, and talk to key stakeholders. As at the time of writing, numerous travel arrangements to visit the Warburton Work Camp had been cancelled, but we are very hopeful that by the time this report is published we will have undertaken this visit.

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Appendix B Acronyms

Term	Expansion of Abbreviation
AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ASC	Aboriginal Services Committee
AEW	Aboriginal Education Worker
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
ARMS	At-risk Management System
ASETS	Auwest Specialist Education and Training Services
ASO	Assistant Superintendent Operations
ASOS	Assistant Superintendent Offender Services
AVS	Aboriginal Visitor Scheme
CCU	Crisis Care Unit
CMC	Case Management Coordinator
CNM	Clinical Nurse Manager
COPP	Commissioner's Operating Policy and Procedure
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DOJ	Department of Justice
EC	Employment Coordinator
EED	Earliest Eligibility Date
ELTP	Entry Level Training Program
EGRP	Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison
GP	General Practitioner
IMP	Individual Management Plan
MAP	Management and Placement
MCR	Master Control Room
MDO	Medical Duty Officer

MHAOD	Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs
MHN	Mental Health Nurse
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islander Day Observance Committee
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PEC	Prison Education Coordinator
PHS	Psychological Health Services
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRAG	Prisoner Risk Assessment Group
PRB	Prisoner Review Board
PSO	Prison Support Officer
RoR-PV	Risk of Reoffending – Prison Version
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technological and Further Education
TAR	Treatment Assessment Report
TAS	Talking About Suicide
TM	Transitional Manager
VJ	Visiting Justice
VOTP	Violent Offender Training Program
VPP	Violence Prevention Program
VSO	Vocational Support Officer
WAPOU	Western Australian Prison Officers' Union



Response to OICS Draft Report:

2023 Inspection of Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison

January 2024

Version 1.0

Response Overview

Introduction

On 28 November 2022, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the 2023 Inspection of the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (Eastern Goldfields). The inspection took place between 2 – 6 April 2023.

To assist with the inspection, the Department of Justice (the Department) facilitated the provision of a wide range of documentation, including policies, procedures, statistics, as well as access to systems, custodial facilities, staff and prisoners upon request from OICS for the purpose of the inspection.

On 1 December 2023, the Department received the draft inspection report for review and comment.

The Department has reviewed the draft report and provides further context, comments and responses to the 13 recommendations made following the inspection.

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

Department Comments

Eastern Goldfields is a minimum-medium-security facility for male and female prisoners commissioned in 2016. It mainly accommodates prisoners from the Goldfields region in proximity to their families and communities.

The Department acknowledges the draft inspection report's findings and recommendations and supports all 13 recommendations.

Since receipt of the report, the Department has implemented positive changes to address issues identified by OICS. These measures include the installation of additional closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in key areas of reception to enhance overall safety within the facility, a return to pre-COVID orientation procedures and concerted efforts to provide more employment opportunities for prisoners, ensuring industries such as the woodshop operate at full capacity.

Noteworthy advancements include Eastern Goldfields' enhanced mental health services following the successful recruitment to key roles. The prison now has a full-time substantive mental health nurse, and all vacant prison Health Service positions have been filled. This recruitment has been essential in supporting the mental health care needs of prisoners. It has also enabled the delivery of therapeutic interventions, as validated by OICS in the inspection report.

Eastern Goldfields has also made significant improvements in prisoners' rehabilitation, with the inauguration of the Palya Walkaly-Walkalya art gallery in November 2022, the first art gallery within a WA prison. The art gallery showcases artwork created by prisoners through education and vocational training and fosters a connection between prisoners and the community.

Members of the public can purchase the artwork and money from sales is made available to the artists upon their release, further supporting prisoners' reintegration.

The art gallery is a testament to Eastern Goldfields' commitment to providing prisoners with a purposeful prison regime. It complements existing employment opportunities in the kitchen, laundry and gardens. More than a space for artistic expression, the art

gallery also serves as a conduit to traditional education by helping break down barriers to the classroom.

Acknowledging the ongoing staffing challenges in the Goldfields region as emphasised by OICS, the Department is continuing efforts to recruit and retain staff.

The Department has no influence over the Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) regulations and requirements and who qualifies for subsidised housing. Furthermore, there is a housing shortage in many regional areas, which impacts on the Department's ability to provide eligible employees with accommodation. The Department has been engaging with the Department of Communities to explore options of houses available under the GROH program.

The Department has developed an incentive package for specified positions, including nursing jobs. This incentive is available to new and existing employees, and is payable after 12 months of service, in addition to existing employment entitlements. It is hoped the new incentive will further assist Eastern Goldfields to attract and retain eligible nurses.

There is no distinction within the Award in relation to eligibility for a regional incentive allowance. All employees, local and non-local, are entitled to access this allowance.

The Department appreciates staff redeployment has inevitable impacts on service delivery including the ability to provide structured recreation, however, it is deemed necessary to safeguard critical services and maintain the safety of both staff and prisoners.

In recognition of the impacts, Eastern Goldfields has developed a redeployment matrix to guide the decision making and equitable redeployment of staff. This is designed to minimise the disruption to industries, education and recreation, while not compromising the continued safety, security and good order of the prison.

Despite staffing issues, the Department is pleased to note most staff working at Eastern Goldfields indicated they felt safe and had positive staff-to-prisoner relationships.

OICS has further acknowledged that despite vacancies and movements in the prison's senior management team, those acting in the leadership positions were experienced and the leadership team worked well together with clear direction and operating philosophies.

The Department will continue to work with Eastern Goldfields to improve all aspects of its operations to provide the best possible care for the people at the facility.

Response to Recommendations

1 Review the EGRP incentives package to provide parity between local and non-local recruits.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Workforce Services

Response:

The Department notes that prison officers, whether local or non-locally recruited, receive the same pay and incentives as set out in the relevant industrial agreement.

Housing is provided via the GROH scheme as managed by the Department of Communities which the Department notes differentiates between local and non-local recruits and therefore is in support of a review of the EGRP incentives package.

2 Empower Aboriginal staff to provide input into the design and delivery of cultural events and activities.

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

Response:

Cultural events at Eastern Goldfields are planned and co-ordinated by the Aboriginal Services Committee (ASC) and a local working group. Membership of the ASC consists of seven Aboriginal staff. In addition, staff are invited to participate in a sub-committee to organise the cultural events.

To encourage maximum staff participation in cultural events such as NAIDOC, Eastern Goldfields ceases other non-essential activities to ensure staff and prisoners are provided the opportunity to participate in cultural events should they wish to.

Eastern Goldfields will continue to promote and empower Aboriginal staff to provide input and engage in the design and delivery of cultural events through the ASC.

3 Develop a process for grievance officers to record informal grievances appropriately.

Level of Acceptance: Supported - Current Practice/Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Human Resources

Response:

Appendix 1 of the *Grievance Officer Handbook* contains a sample interview template for Grievance Officers (GOs) to record informal grievances raised by a complainant. GOs use these templates to provide broad-based (confidential) quarterly reporting to Workforce Development.

The recording of informal grievances is however not mandatory and is being considered as part of a review of the Conflict and Grievance Resolution Policy that is currently underway.

4 Install additional CCTV cameras within the reception area.

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

Response:

Since the inspection in April 2023, six new cameras have been installed within the reception area as follows:

- Three additional cameras within the holding cells;
- Two additional cameras at the entry/exit point to the property room; and
- One additional camera inside the valuable property room.

The Department anticipates the installation of additional CCTV cameras in these critical areas will alleviate pressure on staff and enhance the safety of staff and prisoners working in reception.

5 Re-establish an effective and thorough orientation process.

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

Response:

The orientation process at Eastern Goldfields was curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the impact of the virus on the facility and people within the Department's care.

Since the inspection in April 2023, and following the removal of COVID-19 isolation procedures, Eastern Goldfields has reverted to normal orientation procedures and Unit three is no longer being used as an isolation unit. Peer support prisoners have recommenced undertaking orientation tours of the prison and providing support to new arrivals.

In addition, the orientation manual has been updated to reflect current practice and a direction issued to staff to advise them of the orientation process.

6 Subject to the appropriate risk assessment, allow eligible women the opportunity for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children.

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

Response:

The Department has not received any applications in the past 12 months from women prisoners for extended day-stay or overnight visits with their children within Unit four, the dedicated mother and child cottage at Eastern Goldfields.

Notwithstanding, the Superintendent will issue a notice to all female prisoners, advising that should they wish to access this arrangement, they should discuss with their Unit Manager. Any applications received will be risk assessed and accommodated if determined safe to do so.

7 Enhance the incentives and privileges available to men at EGRP.

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

Response:

Eastern Goldfields provides a hierarchical privilege system in accordance with COPP 10.1 - *Prisoner Behaviour Management*, whereby male prisoners can achieve Earned Supervision status through good behaviour and gain access to additional privileges such as extra visits and phone calls.

The Department's ability to enhance privileges and incentives available to people in custody at Eastern Goldfields such as independent living is limited due to staffing impediments and the limited availability of beds within Unit 2.

Despite the limitations surrounding independent living, the Department continues to promote the privilege system noting that since April 2023, there has been an increase in people in custody within Eastern Goldfields who have achieved Earned Supervision, from 20 in April 2023 to 56 in November 2023.

8 Explore options to identify technical issues and improve video conferencing communications for staff and prisoners at EGRP.

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

Response:

The Department acknowledges that at the time of the inspection, Eastern Goldfields was experiencing technical issues with the communications and information technology systems.

Since then, improvements have been made to servers and bandwidth. Additional works to extend fibre-optic cable to the street is scheduled to be completed in early 2024. It is anticipated this will further improve stability and reliability of communication systems at Eastern Goldfields.

9 Minimise the redeployment of recreation officers to allow more regular access to structured recreation activities.

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

Response:

The Department recognises the importance of structured recreation, affording people in custody at Eastern Goldfields with consistent access to recreation activities, and does not support the redeployment of recreation officers as a long-term strategy to managing the prison population. Redeployment of staff is, at times, unavoidable to help meet the operational needs of the prison.

To minimise the impact, Eastern Goldfields has developed a redeployment matrix to guide the decision making and equitable redeployment of staff across activities such as industries, education and recreation whilst maintaining a focus on the ongoing safety, security and good order of the prison.

10 Schedule regular maintenance and service of all kitchen equipment and maintain adequate records to ensure the schedule is followed.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice/Project
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement Infrastructure & Contracts

Response:

Eastern Goldfields operates under a Public Private Partnership facilities management arrangement. Honeywell is the service provider contracted to undertake regular maintenance and repairs of equipment within the facility. The Department's Contract Manager continues to liaise with Honeywell to ensure compliance with maintenance schedules and repairs are undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

It should be noted that kitchen-related repairs and maintenance can be affected by availability of required parts, over which the Department has no influence.

11 Fill the vacant PHS position to support mental health service provision at EGRP.

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

Response:

The Psychological Health Service (PHS) position at Eastern Goldfields was substantively filled on 3 December 2023.

12 Increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs for prisoners at EGRP by ensuring the timely completion of all outstanding treatment assessments.

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

Response:

The Department is committed to the timely completion of treatment assessments and to increase the provision of appropriate criminogenic and voluntary programs.

Steps taken by the Department to address identified issues include:

- Establishment of an Individual Management Plan (IMP) Taskforce comprising subject matter experts across disciplines including sentence management, treatment assessments, clinical governance, program delivery and custodial representatives. The Taskforce meets fortnightly to track performance,

consider current barriers and develop solutions for immediate and sustained improvements to manage overdue Treatment Assessments and IMPs.

- Implementation of weekly static reporting requirements to identify resource and operational issues.
- Implementation of a triage process to screen out those offenders who do not require more comprehensive assessments, enabling faster completion of the treatment assessment process for those who are low risk.
- Engagement of Regional Senior Programs Officers (SPOs), supported by clinical staff, to complete assessments on a regular basis.
- Actively recruiting Treatment Assessors to improve staffing levels and productivity, with telehealth as an option to manage assessments at Eastern Goldfields and other regional sites. The current recruitment process is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

13 Investigate the viability of opportunities to expand industries and increase meaningful employment.

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

Response:

Significant efforts are being made by Eastern Goldfields to expand industries and increase meaningful prisoner employment. In January 2023, the Assistant Superintendent Offender Services position was filled, and the incumbent has focused on strengthening training and employment opportunities for prisoners.

The following improvements are noted:

- an increase in external contracts for catering with 33 males now employed for morning catering sessions and seven females employed for the afternoon catering sessions;
- the laundry process has been enhanced to allow for prisoners to be engaged in external contracts for laundry services;
- gardening crews now include male and female prisoners;
- the woodshop is now operating at full capacity;
- a prison catalogue has been established resulting in more meaningful work in industries whilst generating revenue, which in turn has led to additional employment and training opportunities;
- implementation of a new traineeship scheme resulting in four graduates; and
- increased rehabilitation and education through implementation of skid steer and forklift training.

The Assistant Superintendent Offender Services position will continue to explore ways to expand industries as a business-as-usual activity.

The Department acknowledges the development of a market garden on the old prison site at Eastern Goldfields, as OICS suggests, would provide employment and training opportunities for prisoners. However, the cost to operate it is prohibitive.

Appendix D Inspection Details

Previous inspection		
9 - 13 February 2019		
Activity since previous inspection		
Liaison visits to EGRP	6 visits	
Independent Visitor visits	15 visits	
Surveys		
Prisoner survey	30 January 2023	102 responses (43%)
Staff survey (online)	9 – 31 January 2022	103 responses (64%)
Inspection team		
Inspector	Eamon Ryan	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Lauren Netto	
Principal Inspections and Research Officer	Liz George	
Inspections and Research Officer	Jim Bryden	
Inspections and Research Officer	Kieran Artelaris	
Inspections and Research Officer	Ben Shaw	
Community Liaison Officer	Joseph Wallam	
Queensland Ombudsman	Kylie Faulkner	
Queensland Ombudsman	Damien Hitchens	

Key dates	
Inspection announced	28 November 2022
Start of on-site inspection	2 April 2023
Completion of on-site inspection	6 April 2023
Presentation of preliminary findings	2 May 2023
Draft report sent to Department of Justice	1 December 2023
Draft response received from Department of Justice	15 February 2024
Declaration of prepared report	20 February 2024

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



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