



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Custodial Inspector Tasmania Annual Report 2019-20

Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock has called for more funding and resources to adequately resource the authority to enable it to fulfil its reporting obligations in the Office of the Custodial Inspector Annual Report 2019-20.

The Annual Report 2019-20 released in both Houses of Tasmanian Parliament today outlined that since the establishment of the inspectorate in 2016, the initial budget which has since continued as the funding model was, and continues to be, inadequate for the inspectorate to adequately function.

“Now in its fourth year of operation, the inspectorate has completed a three-year cycle of inspections and it is overwhelmingly apparent that additional staff are required,” said Mr Connock.

“The permanent staffing establishment remains the Inspector (myself), one Principal Inspection Officer (0.9FTE) and one Inspection and Research Officer (0.6 FTE) and with multiple roles under my Ombudsman Tasmania jurisdiction I can only dedicate ten per cent of my time to the inspectorate,” he said.

“I have therefore formally dedicated all of my functions and powers under section 6 and 8 of the Custodial Inspector Act to both members of staff.”

“With six custodial centres and transport vehicles to inspect across the state, the inadequacy of staffing is reflected by the long delays between onsite inspections and the publication of reports,” he outlined.

“Funding also has a direct impact on not only the inspection process but the monitoring and review functions of the inspectorate which identify immediate issues for attention. However, these issues are currently only being addressed during inspections,” he said.

“Inspectorate staff have unfettered access to custodial centres and prisoners and detainees and for safety and security reasons, inspection activities are always undertaken by two staff members. This in turn restricts the time the other staff member can dedicate to other tasks such as report writing or research and has a significant impact on productivity,” said Mr Connock.

Custodial Inspector funding process

Mr Connock said staffing issues have been raised with the Department of Treasury and Finance in requests for funding through the budget process, discussed at length with the Minister for Corrections in regular meetings and the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts has also been advised of my concerns.

“Additional funding requests have also been submitted each financial year to allow the inspectorate to fulfil its ongoing responsibilities but regrettably these have all been declined.”

“In addition, the work of the inspectorate is only set to increase with construction of the Southern Remand Centre at Risdon and a new prison in the north of the state increasing the number of custodial centres in Tasmania from six to eight.”

“The existing staff establishment is stretched to its limits and without additional resourcing both financial resourcing and staffing the three-year mandatory inspection timeframe will not be met,” he said.

Department of Justice response to inspection reports

In 2019-20 four inspection reports were finalised and a further three reports provided to the relevant Ministers for tabling in both Houses of Parliament outlining significant issues to be addressed across Tasmania’s custodial system.

Mr Connock also noted ongoing concerns regarding many of the progress updates by the Department of Justice (DoJ) on recommendations from inspection reports which do not always reflect the reality at custodial centres.

In particular, many of the responses by DoJ to the *Inspection of Adult Custodial Services in Tasmania, 2018: Custody Inspection Report* and the *Adult Custodial Services in Tasmania, 2017: Care and Wellbeing Inspection Report* do not reflect the operational environment at Tasmania Prison Service and are misleading in respect of progress against recommendations,” he said.

“In 2020-21, progress against recommendations will be a primary focus for the inspectorate to ensure that my reporting accurately reflects the operational reality in custodial centres,” he concluded.

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Media enquiries:

Natalie Geard 0407 862 135
contact@nataliegeard.com