

MEDIA STATEMENT



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AUDITOR GENERAL FINDS MANAGEMENT OF PAROLE SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In his report tabled in Parliament today, Auditor General Colin Murphy found that the Department of Corrective Services (DCS) had adopted a stricter approach to parolee non-compliance with parole conditions, resulting in a big increase in the rate of cancelled parole orders.

Mr Murphy said DCS had responded to the findings of several internal reviews of its management of parolees and over the last two years had made significant changes in both policy and practice.

“There is no doubt parole is a controversial issue and there is ongoing debate about the best way to ensure the community remains safe,” he said.

“Minimising the risks and maximising the benefits of parole relies on the effective and consistent supervision and monitoring of parolees, making sure that offenders comply with parole conditions, and when they do not, appropriate action is taken.

“Stricter enforcement of parole conditions by DCS has meant that breaches are more often resulting in consequences for the parolee, such as the cancelling of their parole.”

Western Australia has a lower rate of offenders on parole and a higher rate of offenders in prison compared to the Australian average. Figures outlined in the report show since 2009, the number of offenders released on parole in Western Australia has fallen significantly and there has been a significant increase in the rate of cancelled parole orders.

Mr Murphy said this had increased the prison population by over 700 at an estimated cost of about \$115 950 per day.

“Parole carries a short term crime risk, but it is also a cost effective way to supervise some offenders, and can help reduce the long term risk of reoffending by providing controlled reintegration into the community,” Mr Murphy said.

“Even though DCS’s policy framework has been improved there is inconsistency in the management of parolees and the monitoring of some parole conditions.

“If parole conditions are not monitored effectively then some parolees may be breaching conditions without DCS knowing and some parolees may return to the behaviours which contributed to their initial imprisonment.

“Unapproved changes in accommodation, the way DCS uses drug tests and the manner in which they ensure program attendance are examples of conditions that can be better and more consistently monitored.

“DCS has made significant changes to its management of parolees, but there is more to be done if it is to minimise the risks and maximise the benefits of parole.”

The Auditor General’s report, *Management of Offenders on Parole*, can be downloaded from www.audit.wa.gov.au.

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