

Opening Statement to the Public Administration Committee of the WA Parliament
Inquiry into the Transportation of Prisoners in Western Australia

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Thank you and good morning Chair and Committee members. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.

Serco Australia has held the contract to provide court security and custodial services, including the transportation of prisoners in Western Australia for almost four years. It is an incredibly expansive contract covering the entire state and we recognise the privilege and responsibility we have in this vital role.

Since contract inception we have undertaken almost 125,000 transports that equate to more than 4.6 million kilometres of travel. In addition we have provided thousands of hours of hospital sits. We are measured against a set of Key Performance Indicators and achieve greater than 99 per cent success against these.

To undertake this work we employ 400 people and maintain 23 individual sites from Kununurra in the north to Albany in the south and Kalgoorlie in the east.

These statistics give a view of the tasks we undertake on a daily basis. This is only done with the commitment of our staff, who do their jobs with skill and dedication, often in very trying circumstances.

Importantly we treat the people in our care with dignity and respect in a secure environment. These duties are outlined in the contract, but are embedded in the values of our organisation and our people.

There have been a number of high profile incidents that have been widely reported. We don't shy away from these. Where we have made mistakes we have sought to find the source of any problem and rectify it.

Between January and May last year we had four escapes. We have challenged ourselves and worked hard with the department to improve performance and ensure the security we need to provide.

As I said before, this is in the context of some 30,000 transports a year and for the past 12 months there have been no escapes and a level of performance against our KPIs that we are proud of.

I want to briefly touch on accountability and performance measures. Claims are often made that the contract is conducted with some level of secrecy.

This is not the case, and in fact we are under continuous scrutiny and are subject to significant accountability measures.

In addition to the competitive tender process, government service contracts deliver a level of accountability that few other organisations face. The accountability measures contained in our contract include key performance indicators; financial and reputational sanctions for failure to meet service levels; independent inspections and audits; and departmental monitors. Of course, the ultimate accountability for a private sector provider is that they will be replaced if their performance is found to be unsatisfactory.

Our contract, the significant key performance indicators, abatements and even our pricing schedules are available and we are subject to requests under Freedom of Information.

We report regularly to the Department and other stakeholders, and each year our performance is reported to the Parliament.

These accountability measures help to ensure the highest standard of service, they drive innovation, they direct the provider's focus to the government's priorities, and they help to ensure value for money for tax-payers. Serco believes that clear and strong accountability is a critical element in successful service delivery – whether it's public or private.

Thank you and I look forward to questions.