



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

# MEDIA RELEASE

**From:** Ms M.M. Quirk, MLA  
Chair

**To:** ALL MEDIA

**Date:** 28 November 2013

## No time for complacency on sub-standard lock-ups

There is great scope for improvement of police lock-ups in terms of their physical condition, compliance with detainees' rights, training, administration and oversight, says Committee chair Margaret Quirk.

Although there had been some improvements in lock-up conditions and detainee care since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC)

made its recommendations 22 years ago, many recommendations had not been implemented and there was no ongoing audit of the state of WA's lock-ups.

"The Committee has identified some concerning gaps in regard to lock-up design, treatment of detainees, training, administration and oversight, and has made 22 recommendations," Ms Quirk said.

The Committee found that while the new Perth Watchhouse conformed to design principles embodied by the RCIADIC recommendations, many lock-ups around the State – particularly in regional WA – fell way short of what is safe and fully functional.

The Committee's report, *In Safe Custody – Inquiry into Custodial Arrangements in Police Lock-ups*, presents evidence that some lock-ups were unclean, still contained hanging points, did not have functioning CCTV and alarms, and had no facilities for detainees to meet confidentially with lawyers and visitors.

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*Three decades after John Pat's death in the  
Roebourne lock-up focussed national  
attention on deaths in custody, we still cannot  
afford to be complacent. – Community  
Development and Justice Standing Committee chair  
Margaret Quirk*

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Detainees were also often unable to access timely legal advice and medical services as required by law. The Committee has called for 24-hour 7-day-a-week medical coverage at the Perth Watchhouse and on-call medical assistance for all other lock-ups.

Ms Quirk said that resourcing and staffing pressures contributed to the inadequacy of lock-up conditions. The ability of WA Police personnel to provide better care was often hampered by a lack of funding to improve the physical conditions of lock-ups.

She said that WA Police officers did a commendable job in difficult circumstances but low staffing levels sometimes meant there was inadequate supervision in lock-ups. Inflexible contractual arrangements with the custodial transport contractor (Serco) also put pressure on police.

The Committee also found that there was no comprehensive system of oversight in relation to lock-ups. Internal affairs investigations were timely and comprehensive but were regarded as lacking independence. CCC investigations were a small proportion of the total number of allegations and the lack of expedition adversely impacted station morale.

There was universal support for the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) to have its jurisdiction extended to police lock ups. This would require more resources being allocated to the OICS.

The Committee highlighted in its report that a lack of ongoing training and cultural competency was an impediment to effective policing and orderly and efficient administration of lock-ups.

The Committee also called for interim measures to ensure minimum standards of safety and comfort were being met at all lock-ups throughout the State.

*The Community Development and Justice Standing Committee members will be available to discuss the report findings:*

<b>Date:</b>	Thursday 28 November 2013
<b>Time:</b>	12:00pm (midday)
<b>Venue:</b>	Legislative Assembly Committee Room (1-49) Parliament House, Perth

*Copies of the report will be available at the conference and will also be available for downloading from the Committee's website under 'Reports' at [www.parliament.wa.gov.au/cdjsc](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/cdjsc)*

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