



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 12th May 2008

### **Should Smoking be banned in Prison?**

The acting Inspector of Custodial Services Barry Cram said: "I am pleased to launch today the first in a series of Papers that will tease out some of the difficult issues confronting prisons and juvenile detention facilities in Western Australia".

"The first of these papers confronts the question of whether smoking should be banned in prison. This is a pertinent issue because the introduction of smoking bans in a number of prison jurisdictions around the world has generated discussion about whether this should happen here in Western Australia."

"Smoking has not been totally prohibited in the general community, despite its known health risks. Prisoners go to prison as punishment but not for further punishment. Is it fair and appropriate to ban smoking altogether in prisons when this has not been done in the community? Or does the notoriously poor health of prisoners justify such a move in the interests of public health policy? The paper explores these questions and reveals a number of human rights issues, complex occupational health and safety responsibilities, and some practical difficulties that stem from the realities of imprisonment."

"Smoking is very common in prisons, where around 80 per cent of prisoners and 40% of prison staff smoke compared to around 15 per cent in the Western Australian community. Prisons are therefore an excellent target for some sort of intervention to reduce smoking, but the restrictions and boredom of prison life can make stopping smoking even more difficult than it is on the outside."

"But what about the health risks of being locked up in such an environment for the 20 per cent of non-smoking prisoners, or non-smoking prison staff? The health risks of passive smoking are now well known, and exposure to second-hand smoke has immediate adverse effects."

The Issues paper attempts to present all sides of the arguments in a simple format and to promote a reasoned debate about real and contemporary issues in our prisons. I would welcome views and responses through our website.

**Barry Cram**

**Acting Inspector of Custodial Services**  
**Telephone 9212 6200**

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