



# Bandyup Action Group

a subcommittee of the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee (WA) Inc.

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## **DEATH IN CUSTODY AT OVERCROWDED BANDYUP WOMEN'S PRISON**

A WOMAN AT Bandyup Women's Prison has died in custody, confirmed today by the state coroner's office.

The 50-year-old woman died yesterday, 15 June 2015. The Deaths in Custody Watch Committee is attempting to obtain details of the circumstances surrounding her death in custody.

In our April news release about double-bunking, we wrote the words: 'We hope it will not take a death in Bandyup before the government acts on the numerous suggestions, reports and recommendations on women's imprisonment in WA.'

This is exactly what we have feared and the reason why DICWC established the Bandyup Action Group. One death in custody is one too many. The overcrowding at Bandyup has led to stressful and harmful conditions for the women imprisoned and for staff.

We call on the government to act immediately to address the overcrowding:

- release all women in prison for fine default and other minor offences
- accommodate bail for women on remand
- release minimum-security prisoners to home detention, or parole if necessary

This would immediately reduce the population of Bandyup to a manageable size. The prison has estimated that by the end of 2015 there will be 370 women in Bandyup and 450 by mid-2016. The government's proposed 'fix' – converting part of Hakea men's facility into a remand facility for women – will not be ready until the end of 2016 at the earliest. The women inside Bandyup cannot wait that long.

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### **Background and statistics**

In 2014 the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) released a report that described Bandyup as the 'hardest and most neglected prison in the state'.

The prison has a design capacity of 183. In December last year, there were 348 women at Bandyup. More than one-third (n=121, 35%) of these women were on remand.

Maximum security: 32 (9%), including 13 on remand

Medium security: 253 (73%), including 93 on remand

Minimum security: 63 (18%), including 15 on remand