

Justice

While there are some promising earlier intervention spends in youth justice, and nearly \$40 million for 'justice reform initiatives', this budget ultimately reflects a deep ongoing imbalance in how justice funding is allocated. The amount spent on imprisoning people after crimes have been committed is vast while the funding allocated to preventing crime is comparatively minimal.

Overcrowding in prisons is driving major spending on adult prison expansion, with over \$270 million allocated in this budget. Yet Unit 18 – a wing of Casuarina Adult Maximum Security Prison that was temporarily repurposed for youth during the peak of the youth justice crisis – was last week sitting empty. Reopening it for adults could free up a significant number of beds immediately, but this would require the WA Government to act on the Coroner's comments and community calls to stop incarcerating children there.

The WA Government continues to develop policies and legislation that could see more people in prison, with the "post and boast" laws currently before Parliament a perfect example. The more the WA Government continues to ignore expert advice and push policies that will imprison people for minor offences, the more taxpayer funding will be required for endless prison expansion.

The best way to keep Western Australians safe over the long term - while also saving millions of dollars – involves a shift in focus. Greater investment in early intervention, diversion, and genuine rehabilitation offers a far more effective and therapeutic path forward.

Justice Reform

Initiative	Justice Reform Initiatives <i>(BP2, V1, P135) (BP2, V2, 388, P402, P403, P442, P480)</i>
Investment	\$39.3 million over four years.
Description	Investment in Justice Reforms are distributed across Treasury, WA Police, Department of Justice, Office of Public Prosecutions and Department of Communities. The budget papers suggest initiatives will improve system efficiency, reduce delays and strengthen coordination across the justice system, by supporting earlier intervention, more effective case progression and improved access to treatment and legal pathways.
Implications	<i>While there is little information regarding the specifics of these initiatives, there are significant opportunities for reform in our justice system, which prioritises system coordination, diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration.</i>

Crime Prevention & Rehabilitation Focused Justice

Initiative	Yiwarra Kuju Martu Western Desert Justice Program (BP2, V2, P402)
Investment	\$2.4 million over four years.
Description	Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa's (KJ) Yiwarra Kuju justice reform is grounded in Martu culture and leadership. It shows how community-led approaches can reduce incarceration and strengthen communities in ways mainstream systems often fail to achieve.
Implications	<i>The investment reflects the importance of Aboriginal-led, place-based and culturally grounded approaches to justice reform. The initiative aligns strongly with justice reinvestment principles by supporting community-led solutions that strengthen culture, improve wellbeing, and reduce incarceration in ways mainstream systems often fail to achieve.</i>

Initiative	WAPOL Community Safety and Crime Prevention Partnership Fund (BP2, V2, 397)
Investment	\$1.6 million for one year, then decreasing over forward estimates.
Description	The Police Community Services Fund provides funding for services and programs that address the needs of the communities and the local police who support them, in particular youth engagement, family violence, alcohol and other drugs (AOD), and community safety initiatives.
Implications	<i>The fund is an important source of support for early intervention and prevention initiatives focused on youth engagement, family violence, AOD issues, and community safety. However, the reduction in funding across the forward estimates raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of these programs and risks weakening community-based responses that help prevent contact with the justice system.</i>

Police

Initiative	WA Police Community Liaison Officers (BP2, V2, 388)
Investment	\$8.8 million over four years.
Description	This investment will support an additional 15 community liaison officers. This will improve the quality of policing engagement with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, ensuring approaches align with cultural identities and lived experiences.
Implications	<i>The investment in additional Community Liaison Officers is a positive step toward more culturally appropriate and community-informed policing approaches. Place-based and culturally connected engagement can help strengthen relationships between police and Aboriginal communities,</i>

	<i>improve trust and support responses that are more aligned with local cultural identities and lived experiences.</i>
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Initiative	Custody Notification Service <i>(BP2, V2, P402)</i>
Investment	\$3.9 million over four years.
Description	A phone service operating 24/7 for Aboriginal people in WA who are detained by police, aiming to prevent deaths in custody, harm suffered and the infringement of legal rights.
Implications	<i>A decrease in funding to the lifesaving CNS was raised as a matter of concern last financial year (\$2.2 million), due to seeing more Deaths in Custody of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, across the country and in WA. The increase by almost 79 per cent this financial year is significant.</i>

Prisons

Initiative	Prisoner Population Initiatives <i>(BP2, V2, P402, P406)</i>
Investment	\$9.9 million over 4 years.
Description	In response to sustained growth in the adult custodial population, the Department of Justice is progressing infrastructure planning and capacity-expansion measures as part of a broader response to custodial population growth, supporting operational flexibility, safe custody and the effective functioning of the custodial system.
Implications	<i>There has been a significant increase of this funding, with an eight-fold increase between the 2025-26 budget and the 2026-27 allocation of over \$4 million. This is driven by the significant overcrowding in WA's Prisons.</i>

Initiative	Adult Prison Expansion <i>(BP2, V2, P402, P403, P412, P413)</i>
Investment	\$226.6 million over three years.
Description	In response to sustained growth in the adult custodial population, the Department of Justice is progressing infrastructure planning and capacity-expansion measures as part of a broader response to custodial population growth, supporting operational flexibility, safe custody and the effective functioning of the custodial system. This includes an additional 100 prison beds through internal expansions in custodial estate and significant 480-bed expansion of Acacia Prison.

Implications	<i>Given the significant overcrowding in WA's prisons, and the resulting deterioration of conditions, securing additional prison capacity in this budget was an inevitable necessity.</i>
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Initiative	Prison Health Services <i>(BP2, V2, P402, P403)</i>
Investment	\$33.9 million over four years.
Description	Sustained growth across the custodial population has increased demand on prison health services. The Department of Justice will expand prison health workforce capability, including through the recruitment of additional staff, to support safe environments, continuity of care and improved access to health services for people in custody across WA.
Implications	<i>Another inevitability with a growing prison population, prison health services have had a four-fold increase in this budget.</i>