

Media release

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For immediate release

Report on Townsville’s Cleveland Youth Detention Centre released

The *Cleveland Youth Detention Centre inspection report: Focus on separation due to staff shortages*, prepared by the Inspector of Detention Services, was tabled by the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament on Tuesday 27 August 2024.

Under the [Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022](#) (IDS Act) the Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Anthony Reilly, is also the Inspector of Detention Services (Inspector).

The report makes 15 recommendations for improvement at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre on issues including staffing levels, approval processes for separations and the provision of basic facilities in separation rooms and holding cells.

This is the first Inspector’s report released under the IDS Act.

The Inspector’s report finds staff shortages have been experienced for many years at the centre and, as a result, the centre regularly locks children in their rooms alone. This practice is known as ‘separation’.

Mr Reilly said, “Separation can affect children’s psychological wellbeing and raises significant human rights issues.

“While the use of separation in response to staff shortages reduced at the centre during 2023, it has not been eliminated.

“Until more staff are available, the centre needs to identify how it can improve the amount of meaningful contact and time out of rooms that children have while separated.

“The Department of Youth Justice also needs to undertake broader reform of the centre’s workforce, infrastructure and systems.”

Improvement needed to the *Youth Justice Act 1992*

Mr Reilly said this review had found that children who are under separation while detained in youth detention centres have fewer legislated safeguards than many of their counterparts interstate.

“In fact, they have fewer safeguards when separated than adults detained in prisons in Queensland do.

“We recommend that the Queensland Government amends the *Youth Justice Act 1992* to address this inequity and protect children.”

About the Inspector

The Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services is an independent officer of the Parliament. Staff from the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman support the Inspector’s functions under the IDS Act.

The goal of the IDS Act is promoting the humane treatment of detainees and the prevention of harm through reviews, inspections and independent reporting.

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Key facts about the report

What is the role of the Inspector of Detention Services?

The focus of the Inspector is on the prevention of harm rather than responding to complaints when harm occurs. This preventative focus examines the systems and the lived experiences of people detained.

The purpose of the of [Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022](#) is to promote the improvement of detention services and places of detention:

- with a focus on promoting and upholding the humane treatment of detainees, including the conditions of their detention
- preventing detainees being subjected to harm, including torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The Inspector's functions include:

- Prepare and publish standards for carrying out inspections
- Inspect places of detention (youth detention centres, prisons, work camps, watch-houses)
- Review and monitor detention services (including places of detention, health care and education services provided to detainees, and transport of detainees)
- Report to parliament on each inspection and review (all reports will be publicly available)
- Report annually on operations (report tabled in Parliament).

More information about these services is available at <https://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/detention-inspection>

What are the key issues in the report?

- How staff shortages lead to separation (see pp. 16-23)
- Experience of separation due to staff shortages (see p. 24-31)
- Impact of separation on access to services (see p. 32-40)
- Approval process for staff shortage separations (see p. 41-43)
- Other separation issues (see p. 44-54)
- Necessary systemic reform (see p. 56-58)

What happens next with the recommendations?

The recommendations directed to the Department of Youth Justice were accepted in principle by the Director-General. We will monitor the actions taken in response to the recommendations as part of our ongoing program of inspections of youth detention centres.

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