

Executive Summary

This is a report of a quarterly statutory inspection of the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC). The on-site inspection occurred from 27 to 31 August 2018. Statutory detention centre inspections are conducted by delegated inspectors, located within Governance, Corporate Services. A report of each inspection is provided to the Director-General.

The focus areas under inspection in this quarter were education and training, programs and purposeful activity, use of force and incident reporting (including harm reporting). In gathering evidence, Inspectors visited all units over the inspection week and spoke to staff and young people in each unit as well as a private group discussion with the Young Person Liaison Committee.

The Inspectorate's focus in the first two areas of education and programs concentrated on outcomes, for example, the attainment of qualifications and whether there is a seamless transition for young people to continue education and programs commenced before, during and after their detention period.

The key observations, findings and recommendations in relation to the focus areas are summarised below. Other issues raised and discussed with relevant centre managers and the acting Senior Executive Director, Youth Justice Services during and immediately following the site visits.

Focus Area 1 – Education and Training

Advice and attendance records provided to inspectors indicate a positive increase in the delivery of school sessions since the first term. School attendance is a priority unless there is proper justification and a risk assessment as to why individual young people should not attend class.

School attendance recording cannot be fully captured (e.g. which young person attended each school session) by the Education Queensland (EQ) 'One School' program. This is due to issues specific to detention, for example, young person throughput, section movements and young person conflicts that restrict who can attend class together. The report recommends addressing this in collaboration with EQ to provide better records of attendance including reasons for absence.

There were some good examples of Vocational Education and Training (VET) participation occurring at BYDC including Cert 3 Fitness and Forklift Accreditation but this was limited due to age and remand/sentenced status. More VET and job readiness training is required to give young people the best opportunity to successfully reintegrate into the community. This was communicated to inspectors by the young people themselves.

More courses are scheduled to become available in 2018-19 but EQ advised there is difficulty retaining TAFE involvement in BYDC and cost is an issue. The inspectorate recommends investigating value for money options to engage young people in VET courses and job readiness training while on centre and through transition, with incentives for retaining young people in courses through to completion. Other options may also include providing adequate supervision to enable young people to attend TAFE on campus.

Focus Area 2 – Programs and Purposeful Activity

There is a lack of communication between the case workers within BYDC and those in the Youth Justice Service Centres (YJSCs) when it comes to the continuation of programs commenced whilst detained and services required when supervised in the community.

Reintegration needs to be a major focus as soon as a young person is received into detention to allow adequate planning for a successful life in the community and reduce recidivism.

A focus group of young people requested more programs to teach job interview and general life-skills as well as better links to accommodation and employment/education prior to and post release. Young people advised that while in detention they have positive support and good intentions, however, they feel lost and fall back into the same cycle due to a lack of coordinated support in the community. The young people spoken with weren't familiar with the department's vocational training and therapeutic service, Transition 2 Success (T2S), as availability is limited to only a few locations which prevents many of the young people participating in this program in the Brisbane catchment area.

Many young people on remand may only spend up to a few days in detention and often have little to no participation in programs or links to community services. While in detention, even if only for a short period, there is an opportunity to at least link these young people with services and this opportunity should be maximised.

Young people on remand, which make up 86% of the population can participate in general communication and emotional regulation programs but can't have criminogenic needs addressed until they are sentenced and these programs are also very limited for sentenced young people. Regardless of remand/sentenced status, a high number of young people would benefit from receiving criminogenic education as a preventative measure and to positively influence their peers.

Focus Area 3 – Use of Force

Youth Justice Service statistics as at August 2018, show that while the number of incidents remains steady, the monthly rate of force used per incident at BYDC is at its highest point in three years. The frequency of use of force per incident has been consistently rising since July 2017. At this time the Inspectorate isn't able to determine the cause of the rise in frequency but recommends the Youth Justice Service Review team work with BYDC to analyse and address this issue. Feedback from Youth Justice Services indicates drivers may relate to the change in cohort of young people in detention, training competency benchmarks and mandatory training, and rates of experienced versus new staff in the centre as a result of increased recruitment.

While the frequency of use of force has increased, complaints relating to the use of force handled internally at BYDC are quite low with 20 matters received from March to September 2018, approximately 10 of which are under investigation with the Professional Standards Unit (PSU). The Inspectorate's review of incident data also confirms the issue communicated by PSU that incident reports lack sufficient level of detail to justify why force was used which then impacts the resolution of investigations.

Focus Area 4 – Incident Reporting (includes Harm Reporting)

The issues around staff capability and quality of reports discussed in this report are known to Youth Justice Services and work is underway to address this through training. However, in the short term the Inspectorate recommends that Youth Justice Services amend Detention Centre Operations Information System (DCOIS) to prompt more detailed information from staff, in the same way the paper-based incident reports did before the implementation of DCOIS in 2011.

The current workflow of incident review was resulting in some extended delays past the mandatory review period at the time of inspection. The timeframes (five days for level 1 incidents and 14 days for others) are there to ensure the timely management of young people and staff wellbeing and the immediate treatment of root causes of multiple incidents. Delays appear to be due to longer than expected relieving arrangements in middle management with inadequate up-skilling of relieving staff. While the Inspectorate understands those incident reviews with the longest delays have since been completed, incident review delays remain an issue and the report recommends improvements.

BYDC has implemented a new harm process which involves caseworkers reviewing all incidents for indicators of physical and emotional harm to young people. Caseworkers will then follow-up with the young person to check on their wellbeing and make the necessary arrangements to address any concerns. The Deputy Director overseeing the casework and behaviour support teams also reviews incidents to provide a level of assurance that potential harm is identified and treated.

Other Issues

A number of issues were observed by inspectors and raised directly with BYDC management. Notable issues include:

- the continuation of medical treatment commenced before admission to BYDC;
- delayed deployment of body-worn cameras which have been proven to improve behaviour and reduce incidents, complaints and investigation timeframes; and
- delayed operation of the contraband detection scanner which is intended to drastically reduce the need for searches of young people that require removal of clothing.