

Executive Summary

This is a joint report of quarterly statutory inspections of both the Brisbane and Cleveland Youth Detention Centres (BYDC and CYDC). The on-site inspections occurred from 14 to 18 June 2021 at CYDC and from 21 to 25 June 2021 at BYDC. Statutory detention centre inspections are conducted by delegated Inspectors, located within Learning and Development, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. This is a joint report covering both inspections provided to the Director-General, which aims to contribute to improving youth detention centre operations across both centres.

The focus areas under inspection in this quarter were Facilities and Environment, Family Contact, Court Processes and Diet/Nutrition. The key observations in relation to the focus areas are summarised below. These observations were discussed with relevant centre managers at the conclusion of the inspection and with the Senior Executive Director, Youth Detention Operations and Reform during a post inspection briefing. No recommendations are made in this report.

Focus Area 1 – Facilities and Environment

The Inspectorate's focus on facilities and environment is to ensure that detention centres provided a safe and clean environment for young people to live whilst in custody and facilities are maintained and fit for purpose for staff and young people in keeping with the rehabilitative aim of youth detention.

Both BYDC and CYDC have increased the number of accommodation facilities (i.e. rooms and beds) since 2017 and regularly reach maximum capacity. Due to the demand pressure, the main priority is to keep rooms inside the detention centres habitable. Rooms are often (multiple per day) damaged by young people (e.g. damaged smoke detectors and fire sprinklers) which can render the room unusable until repairs are completed. Room repair work is prioritised which then affects the ability to perform other maintenance and upgrades on schedule.

Building and maintenance is provided by Qbuild, managed by an onsite foreman, contractors and onsite maintenance staff employed by the centres. Upgrade works are scheduled at both centres over the next two-four years including:

- enhanced educational facilities for young people;
- culturally appropriate beautification of accommodation and education areas; and
- improved safety and security of young people's accommodation and staff facilities.

Focus Area 2 – Family Contact

The significance of maintaining family contact is recognised in Queensland legislation and is a basic right under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, which states a young person has a right to stay connected with their family while in detention via visits, sending letters, making phone and video calls.

The Inspectorate commends both centres for the prioritisation of family contact during difficult circumstances such as restrictions associated with COVID-19 and the short staffing incidents throughout the June quarter. Cancellation of family visits to the centres is not common (unless restricted following state health advice) and if these events occur, every effort is made for young people to maintain contact with their families via phone and video calls.

Both centres have purpose-built visits areas located within them with dedicated staff who are available to organise bookings and assist young people's families to attend the centre as needed. The assisted visits process is available for families who have difficulties personally attending the centres due to distance and/or lack of funds.

Family members (where appropriate) are invited to case reviews for young people. Family members can opt to link in via teleconference or attend the centre in person. Further, family contact can occur during special events such as NAIDOC week and Sorry Business.

Focus Area 3 – Pre-court Process

Inspection of pre-court process included an examination of whether young people are sufficiently prepared physically and emotionally for their upcoming court appearance. Facilitating a young person's attendance at court is an integral function of detention centres, and the high rate of young people on remand with unfinalised court matters within Queensland, correlates with a high number of court appearances at both BYDC and CYDC. The onset of COVID-19 and associated restrictions has seen an increase in court video links and as such video link facilities have been increased at both centres. Visits centres at both sites manage the facilitation of court video links in partnership with the casework team. The cultural unit at CYDC shares the responsibility of co-facilitating the pre-court process and court appearance with the casework team which includes support prior to court and sitting with the young person during proceedings.

The majority of young people interviewed stated they relied on information from their legal representatives or caseworkers (both external and internal) to prepare them for court. All reported adequate phone contact with legal representatives prior to planned court appearances. BYDC have recently installed an additional phone within the education building specifically to increase young people's access to legal representatives during school hours.

The Inspectorate examined the pre-court process for when a young person attends court in person. It appears the process is well run by both detention centres and the Queensland Police Service (QPS), who transport the young person to and from court. Both centres have formal clothes suitable for court available to young people and in some instances family members are able to provide clothes, however, the uptake on clothing requests from young people is minimal and most attend court wearing casual, centre issued clothing.

Focus Area 4 – Diet and Nutrition

The inspection of diet and nutrition involved consultation with young people and staff including, Youth Workers, Kitchen Supervisors and relevant managers. Inspectors visited the kitchen for a walk through at BYDC to observe food preparation and sampled food at both BYDC and CYDC.

The dietary needs of young people must meet the Australian dietary requirements for adolescents and any changes to a young person's diet, due to medical or religious needs, is done in consultation with Queensland Health staff. The suggestions of young people are also taken into account via surveys, Community Visitors and young person/staff committee meetings.

Menus are set by the professionally qualified Kitchen Supervisors (chefs) and reviewed by an accredited dietician every two years. All meals are cooked daily from fresh ingredients, adhering to food safety standards and portion controlled in line with the dietary requirements. Cultural Units at both centres have worked with the kitchen to ensure cultural foods for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are included on the regular menus as well as NAIDOC celebrations. Cultural teams also cook food with young people as part of programs and other accommodation section-based activities.