

Executive Summary

This is a report of the first quarterly statutory inspection of the West Moreton Youth Detention Centre (WMYDC) which partially opened in December 2020. The on-site inspection occurred from 22 to 23 February 2021. Statutory detention centre inspections are conducted by delegated inspectors, located within the office of the Deputy Director-General, Department Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. This is the first report covering the inspection of the WMYDC within the first three months of opening and is provided to the Director-General to advise of on-site observations during the initial stages of operation.

General

The WMYDC opened in December 2020. According to information published by the WMYDC, operations and design involved consultation with Elders, young people, family members, community services, law enforcement and other professionals in Forest Lake (Western Districts Youth Justice Service Centre) or Ipswich (Ipswich Youth Justice Service Centre).

The WMYDC has 32 beds across five, purpose-built accommodation units. At the time of the inspection, one, eight bed unit was operational. Young people have access to a school and teaching staff, health practitioners, psychologists and a range of additional staff within and external to the WMYDC.

The WMYDC was specifically designed to encourage young people, staff and community partners/stakeholders to work together in a client-centred way. Restorative practice, trauma informed care and positive behaviour support principles underpin the centre's philosophies, values and practice. Further, the WMYDC have committed to cross agency collaboration, working closely with local community partners and stakeholders to ensure a consistent and successful transition for young people.

To ensure the integrity of the community partnership approach, young people admitted to the WMYDC come from either of two catchment areas – Forest Lake (Western Districts Youth Justice Service Centre) or Ipswich (Ipswich Youth Justice Service Centre).

Staffing

Most staff have been recruited at the WMYDC with additional recruitment currently being undertaken to fill any outstanding positions.

Feedback from all staff interviewed regarding the WMYDC values, operating model, forward planning and general views was positive. Some feedback was received in relation to reduced availability and variety of programs and services currently available for the eight young people at WMYDC. Acknowledgements were however made to this issue being a symptom of current infrastructure and staffing which will improve in the coming months and when Stage 1b and Stage 2 of WMYDC is operational. All staff acknowledged the patience being displayed by the eight young people currently on centre at the WMYDC.

Current Infrastructure and Temporary Buildings

At the time of the inspection, one, eight bed accommodation unit was open which included a multi-purpose room being used as temporary office space for staff. At Stage 1b, the multi-purpose room will be vacated and used for its intended purpose. Temporary buildings are currently being used for office space, school, visits, health and operations. These buildings will be moved once Stage 2 is opened.

Young People's Accommodation and Services

The accommodation unit ('Koala') open at the time of inspection was at capacity. An additional two, eight bed accommodation units, and two, four bed accommodation units will be handed over and will enter a commissioning period to prepare for the opening. Each accommodation unit will be opened one at a time to ensure safety and security.

Caseworkers are based in the office area of the accommodation units to give greater and more timely access to the young people and enhance communication with stakeholders involved with the young people daily. The plan moving forward is to have a caseworker allocated to each eight bed unit and will have each young person within that unit on their caseload. There will also be a caseworker allocated to the two, four bed units and will have each young person for those units allocated to their caseload. The strategy for lower caseloads is to allow caseworkers more time to engage with the young people, address issues as they arise and enhance case planning, particularly transition.

The inspectors spoke with all young people based within the accommodation unit. The general feedback was positive, however, some young people made mention of the lack of variety of services and programs available currently. This is already acknowledged by the Department of Education and the WMYDC management and will be addressed with more services and suitable facilities when the centre is fully operational.

Education

The school within the WMYDC is operational and led by a Head of Campus reporting, to the Brisbane/West Moreton Youth Education and Training Centre Principal and operating under the Brisbane Youth Education and Training Centre Registered Training Organisation. Teachers are currently obtaining accreditation to deliver Vocational Education, and connections are being made with providers to have certain trades available when the centre is fully operational. The temporary facilities currently in use during construction of WMYDC do not meet the requirements to run accredited courses but, the practical content is being delivered in accommodation units focusing on life skills and content that can be accredited when facilities are complete.

Health Care

A nurse station, Child Youth Mental Health consultation rooms and medical facilities including a sick bay are part of the current temporary infrastructure. Dental services are facilitated by the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

Connection to Community

An important aspect of WMYDC as communicated by staff is to maintain a strong connection to community to allow for cross agency collaboration to enhance transition for young people, therefore, the priority is to establish and maintain strong links with the service centres and community agencies servicing the WMYDC catchment areas.

Incidents and Contraband

Incidents within the WMYDC are minimal with a total of 45 incidents recorded over three months on DCOIS since opening in December 2020 and two incidents of contraband. The contraband incidents have resulted in a review of practice through the intelligence function review of CCTV and search methods.

Similar to the other detention centres, the WMYDC has established an Incident Review Panel (made up by the management team and chaired by the Assistant Director) which meets once per month to review significant incidents. Depending on the severity of the incident, this panel will meet the following day as required to address immediate needs.