

## Executive Summary to Inspection Report Brisbane Youth Detention Centre March quarter 2017

The Inspection of the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC) occurred from 20 to 24 February 2017. The inspection focus areas were **Security** and **Management**. Areas subject to regular monitoring were the **Use of Force**, **Incident Reporting**, and the **Separation of young people in locked rooms**.

### Security

Inspectors found the centre still recovering from an incident on 30 January 2017 in which young people destroyed much of the interior of the Ironbark Unit and mounted a rooftop protest. At root, the incident was largely precipitated by alleged staff favouritism shown toward three youths transferred in from the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC) after leading the riot there on 10 November 2016. There were related allegations and some presenting evidence that the CYDC arrivals had been used by staff as 'enforcers' to intimidate troublesome BYDC youths. In any event, the factional tension between CYDC and BYDC had severely disrupted schooling provision.

It was further found that BYDC had insufficient staff to operate the centre without frequent and costly recourse to overtime. There had been additional school cancellations when gaps in the roster were unable to be filled. No new youth worker recruits had come on board since early 2015. It was not infrequent for staff to be working twelve-hour shifts for days or nights on end. Positively, the centre has committed to running two new youth worker intakes this year, and has made some improvements to the management of rostering, overtime allocation, staff leave, and the casual pool.

Other significant security issues identified during the inspection were:

1. No additional or revised security directives had been issued in the wake of the 30 January 2017 incident in the Ironbark Unit. Inspectors observed mops and brooms still laying around in some units, despite these having been taken up as weapons by the perpetrators of that incident. A table tennis table that had been used to scale the Ironbark roof had been fixed to the floor in that unit, but not in any others.
2. A lack of training and authorisation to allow the deployment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE; i.e., shields and body armour) in response to various incidents including that on 30 January 2017. Positively, PPE training had commenced at BYDC earlier in January 2017, and the deployment issue has now been resolved in policy.
3. Young people were blotting CCTV camera lenses in their bedrooms for weeks on end. BYDC took steps during consultation to combat this issue.



## **Seventeen-year-old offenders**

A major theme running through this inspection was the absorption into the youth justice system of offenders 17-years-old and over (scheduled to occur from November 2017). There was widespread staff concern about the centre's readiness to receive this cohort. Population numbers were already high, and there were manifold considerations yet to be worked through in relation to security, structured day movements, the capacity and siting of accommodation units, and the provision of age-appropriate education and vocational training. During consultation, the ED BYDC advised the Inspectorate that the substantive Operations Manager had returned to the centre after an absence of approximately five years. The Inspectorate welcomes the stabilisation of this key security role at a time of volatility among the existing BYDC population and the upcoming admixture of 17-year-olds.

## **Management**

The key issues as regards Management were:

- The general appearance of the centre was poor, with extensive graffiti and wilful damage rife throughout accommodation units. The ED BYDC advised the Inspectorate that professional maintenance works are to be brought forward, and a local painting program involving young people revived.
- A concomitant need for greater coalface monitoring of accommodation units by centre management. During consultation YJ committed to take positive action in this regard.

## **Monitored areas**

In relation to the monitored areas, necessary improvements were identified in relation to the viewing of, and response to, CCTV footage of incidents. Inspectors brought to light footage depicting a high-risk CYDC youth apparently being used by staff as an interloper during an incident. Further concerns were identified within footage of another incident, this time involving force. During consultation the ADG YJ advised the Inspectorate that CCTV oversight functions will now be centralised.

## **Recommendations**

The report makes two recommendations (repeated below in full) to address identified issues in relation to enhanced PPE training and de-obscuring CCTV camera lenses. The recommendations were accepted by the ADG YJ and ED BYDC.

### **Recommendation 1**

It is recommended that expert advice is sought from QCS and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to evaluate and provide input and advice in relation to the standard of training being provided to youth detention staff in the use of PPE for defensive purposes.

**Accepted:** Yes

**Responsible Officer:** ADG YJ



**Nominated Timeframe:** Decision to be taken by 30 June 2017 as to whether intermediate PPE training will be provided to selected staff (i.e. beyond the rollout of basic PPE training to accommodation and operations staff at both centres that commenced in January 2017). During subsequent inspections the Inspectorate will monitor the development and rollout of any intermediate PPE training that is committed to by YJ.

**N.B.** The CYDC March 2017 inspection report makes a further recommendation for cross-centre incident control training, which will necessarily flow on to BYDC. 30 June 2017 was again the agreed timeframe in which a decision will be taken by YJ as to the development of that training.

## Recommendation 2

- Staff and young people be issued with a directive advising them that the covering of CCTV cameras is to cease immediately, and that further infractions will attract consequences;
- BYDC resolve the privacy curtain issue forthwith so that young people are less driven to compromise centre security by covering cameras.

**Accepted:** Yes

**Responsible officer:** ED BYDC

**Nominated timeframe:** The ED BYDC advised during consultation that this has now been completed.

