

Office of the Assistant Director-General
Youth Justice

Response to the Youth Detention Inspectorate September 2017 – Cleveland Youth Detention Centre

Youth Justice welcomes the September 2017 quarterly Youth Detention Inspectorate (YDI) report for the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC).

In order for the youth justice system in Queensland to be effective in addressing the underlying causes of offending, there must be rigorous oversight mechanisms to ensure young people in detention are managed appropriately, safely and securely in accordance with the *Youth Justice Act 1992* and the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*.

This is the first CYDC inspection report that has been delivered to the Director-General of the newly created Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women following the transition of youth justice from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General after the State Election in November 2017.

The focus of the report includes an assessment of the preparedness for the transition of 17-year-old offenders, complaints mechanisms, incident reporting, and the use of force by staff.

Overall, the report is positive and makes no new recommendations.

It is worth noting two important issues that have arisen since the YDI undertook their review.

First, the number of young people in CYDC has increased. The preparedness work for the anticipated entry of 17 year olds noted by the Inspectorate has enabled the detention centre to effectively manage the recent increases.

Second, on 12 February 2018, the Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women, Di Farmer MP, reinforced the Government's commitment to historic youth justice reforms, including the transition of 17-year-olds into the youth justice system from the adult system. Due to an increased number of young people in both Cleveland and Brisbane Youth Detention Centres, the process of moving 17-year-olds currently in adult prisons to youth detention is being delayed to ensure there is sufficient capacity in detention centres to safely cater for additional people.

The Minister also announced oversight of the final implementation of reforms would be undertaken by former Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson. That work is very important and will inform future directions about detention centre capacity management, diversion and restorative justice opportunities, and strategic workforce development. This latter point aligns with the observations from the Inspectorate regarding recruitment and selection and employee retention.

As the youth justice reforms continue to roll out it is critical that the voice of young people, in detention and in the community, is heard and responded to. The work of the Inspectorate is a valued avenue of engagement with young people as well as an important oversight mechanism of our detention centres.

Youth Justice is also actively working on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Independent Review of Youth Detention. This work complements the significant reforms Youth Justice have undertaken since 2015 in recognition that an effective youth justice system could not be determined by compliance alone but must provide real outcomes for young people that lead to positive changes in their lives which address the underlying causes of offending.

I want to thank the Youth Detention Inspectorate for their work in compiling this report for the September 2017 quarter which contributes to the effectiveness of youth detention in Queensland and ultimately provides better outcomes for young people in the youth justice system.

I also want to thank youth detention staff who work in these challenging environments on a daily basis and who are committed to improving the lives of those young people who they work with.

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