

Executive Summary

This is a joint report of the quarterly statutory inspections of both the Brisbane and Cleveland Youth Detention Centres (BYDC and CYDC). Statutory detention centre inspections are conducted by delegated Inspectors, located within the office of the Director-General, Department of Youth Justice. This report which covers both inspections, is provided to the Director-General and contributes to improving youth detention centre operations across both centres.

Due to safety precautions implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inspections of both centres were conducted remotely. The remote inspection of BYDC occurred from 15 to 19 June 2020 and the remote inspection of CYDC occurred from 22 to 26 June 2020. The restrictions in relation to professional visits lifted across both centres on 15 July 2020 and Inspectors were on-site at BYDC for one day on 16 July 2020. The Inspectors utilised this day to interview young people, section staff and physically assess security. Access to CYDC was not able to occur due to COVID-19 restrictions.

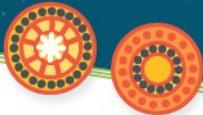
The focus areas under inspection in this quarter were COVID-19 pandemic response, mental health and disability assessment and services, security management and body worn cameras. Due to the remote nature of the inspections (with the exception of the one day visit at BYDC) all interviews were conducted via telephone and video-call technology. Emerging issues and themes were corroborated through consultation with relevant managers and inspection of available data.

Focus Area 1 – COVID-19 – Pandemic Response (up to and during the Inspections from 15-19 June and 22-26 June 2020)

The Inspectorate made no recommendations in relation to this focus area. Commencing in late March 2020, both BYDC and CYDC continue to practice increased sanitation measures, social distancing and restrictions guided by Queensland Health Advice. At the time of inspection (BYDC 15-19 June 2020, CYDC 22-26 June 2020), there were no infections of young people or staff at BYDC or CYDC. Over the period in scope school, internally provided programs and health services continued as per normal.

All staff, young people and visitors continue to have their temperature checked on entry to the centres. Staff and visitors who present with a high temperature or cold/flu-like symptoms were instructed to self-isolate and obtain medical clearance before returning to work. Young people showing symptoms were tested and quarantined until a negative test result was returned. Young people quarantined were provided education packs and allowed time in the section for leisure and exercise separately from others. YDI acknowledges there was a later pandemic response that occurred at BYDC and CYDC in August 2020, and this response will be examined in the September 2020 report.

During COVID-19 restrictions, Inspectors will continue to monitor detention centre practices via client data information systems, CCTV and body-worn camera footage. Inspection meetings and interviews were conducted with detention centre management, staff and young people via telephone and video conferencing facilities. Once professional visits recommenced Inspectors were able to attend BYDC on 16 July to physically observe security practices and personally consult with staff and young people regarding themes raised during the remote meetings with managers.



Focus Area 2 – Mental Health and Disability Assessment and Services

Queensland Health sits within BYDC and CYDC and provides services specific to addressing mental health and substance use needs for young people. There are several points of contact where referrals can be made to services within Queensland Health and feedback from consultations was positive. The Inspectorate found that while mental health and substance use needs of young people receive significant focus and resourcing, areas of opportunity exist in regards to responding to the needs of young people with suspected or diagnosed impairments and disabilities. The introduction of Speech Pathologists within the centres has been a step in the right direction to assist in addressing this need, with the Inspectorate receiving overwhelming positive feedback from all staff and young people who were consulted.

The Inspectorate acknowledges integrated and coordinated care for the health and developmental needs of young people with disabilities or suspected disabilities is a complex and multifaceted issue and involves partnerships between multiple agencies. The findings centred on the detention centres working with these agencies to resolve current barriers in service provision for young people with disabilities and impairments and suspected disabilities and impairments. It is recommended that Youth Detention Operations continue to build on and develop relationships across agencies to enhance the provision of paediatric services and comprehensive neurodevelopmental assessments. Areas of opportunity also exist in relation to multi-agency communication and record keeping.

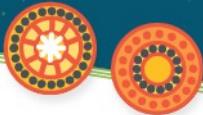
Additional findings were made in relation to workforce capability with regards to the different types of disabilities and impairments and effectively managing behaviours of young people with a disability. The recent survey of youth justice staff conducted by the Child Health Research Centre at University of Queensland (UQ) provides preliminary indication while staff are motivated to increase their knowledge base, however they have identified opportunities to improve practice and increase their capabilities in relation to identifying and managing neurodevelopmental impairments. The Inspectorate made a recommendation for Youth Detention and Operations to engage with and address the full results of the UQ survey once finalised, and explore training and professional development opportunities for all operational and professional staff.

Focus Area 3 – Security Management

There are no recommendations in relation to this focus area, however, the Inspectorate notes a previous recommendation made in 2019 around reviewing the effectiveness of contraband search methods. Whilst the amount of contraband detected at both centres is low, risks are highlighted around admissions and visits entry points.

Due to COVID-19 social distancing measures, some elements of staff training have been postponed and reprioritised. Mandatory competency training, including first aid, CPR, suicide response and fire safety has been maintained at high levels with BYDC achieving up to 80 per cent current and CYDC up to 96 per cent current as at 30 June 2020.

Staff shortages, as a result of illness, staff suspensions and other leave have increased to similar levels experienced in the June 2019 quarter, in part, due to the COVID-19 safety response and is being managed through overtime, use of casuals and staff rotations. This issue was not raised as having an impact on school attendance when Inspectors consulted detention centre and Department of Education staff. Further, young people who were consulted did not complain of lock downs and spoke to Inspectors about the education/programs they had attended or were scheduled to attend.



List of Recommendations

Focus Area 1 – COVID-19 – Pandemic Response (up to and during the Inspections from 15-19 June and 22-26 June 2020)

Nil recommendations made.

Focus Area 2 – Mental Health and Disability Assessment and Services

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that continued discussions occur with the relevant agencies (Youth Justice, Queensland Health, NDIA, Department of Education and Department of Child Safety) to continue to improve and develop an integrated and coordinated partnership approach to addressing health and developmental needs (specifically in the context of neurodevelopmental impairment/disability) of young people within the youth justice system, particularly high risk young people and resolving current barriers in service provision.

It is further recommended that Youth Detention Operations explore opportunities to improve communication and continue to build on and develop relationships across agencies to enhance the provision of paediatric services and comprehensive neurodevelopmental assessments.

Recommendation 2

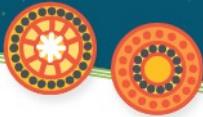
It is recommended that Youth Detention and Operations conduct a review of interagency and external communication methods and procedures and implement necessary changes to improve communication across agencies to ensure all relevant information can be considered in intervention and case planning for young people.

It is further recommended that Youth Justice Operations review youth detention centre caseworker responsibilities and practice guidelines with the goal to continue to improve coordination and collection of information to guide more effective case planning to better support the holistic needs of young people.

Whilst the Inspectorate acknowledges constraints within the current client information system, it is further recommended that feedback is provided to the business liaison officer for the new upcoming information system regarding improvements to be made to centralised recording of outcomes of assessments and testing relevant for intervention and case planning with young people.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that Youth Detention and Operations engage with and address the full results of the UQ survey once finalised, and explore training and professional development opportunities for all operational and professional staff to increase workforce capability and confidence in managing behaviours associated with neurodevelopmental and other cognitive impairments.



Focus Area 3 – Security Management

Nil recommendations made.

Focus Area 4 – Body Worn Cameras

Nil recommendations made.