

Executive Summary

This is a report of a quarterly statutory inspection of the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC). The on-site inspection occurred from 19 to 23 March 2018. This was the first inspection conducted under the new Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women following the transfer of Youth Justice functions from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in December 2017. Statutory detention centre inspections continue to be conducted by delegated inspectors, located for this inspection within Internal Audit and Compliance Services, Department of Communities (since relocated to Governance, Corporate Services), and a report of each inspection provided to the Director-General.

The focus areas under inspection in this quarter were security, the use of force (in particular, mechanical restraints i.e. handcuffs), the reporting of harm, relationships between staff and young people, and programs and purposeful activity. The key observations, findings and recommendations in relation to the focus areas are summarised within this section. Various other issues were discussed with relevant centre managers by way of the Inspectorate's encouragement of local monitoring and presaging of potential inspection focus areas in future.

As a general observation, Inspectors found BYDC to be coping with population pressures following the February 2018 intake of 17-year-olds. However, continued demand on the system has unfortunately resulted in young people waiting in state watch-houses for beds to be made available at the detention centres. Inspectors commend both BYDC staff and Queensland Police Service watch-house staff for the professionalism evident in their collaborative work to keep detained young people safe in what are currently difficult conditions for both services to manage.

In this regard, the Inspectorate has made a recommendation that Youth Justice investigate demand on detention centre capacity across the state with a view to improving the safety and wellbeing of young people in youth detention centres and reducing the need to hold young people in watch-houses for extended periods. At the same time, the Inspectorate encourages Youth Justice to position the imminent rollout of the revised Behaviour Development Model towards greater rehabilitation and reintegration of young people through on- and off-centre activities and rewards in an effort to reduce returns to custody. It is acknowledged that a new 16-bed unit is being built at BYDC, with operation estimated to commence in July 2018.

The security-related issue of the adequacy of staffing was a consistent theme affecting all focus areas. Staffing issues and perceived safety risks posed by the high number of young people deemed 'not to mix' with another or others had further impeded the delivery of education and programs within the structured day. In that regard a recommendation is made that BYDC revise its not-to-mix classification process forthwith.

A previous inspection recommendation (accepted by Youth Justice and in progress) was made to address staffing suitability. This has been supplemented in this report by a recommendation concerned with staffing and attendance levels. The Inspectorate notes the efforts by Youth Justice to date in rectifying past staffing shortfalls through the development of rolling recruitment drives and induction courses for new recruits.