

Youth Detention Operations and Reform Response to Youth Detention Inspection Report

March 2023

Department of Youth Justice,
Employment, Small Business and Training

YDOR Response (for publication on Government Portal)

On behalf of the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training (the department), we welcome the Youth Detention Inspectorate's March 2023 inspection report for the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC), Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC) and West Moreton Youth Detention Centre (WMYDC).

Rigorous and transparent oversight is essential to ensuring young people in detention are managed appropriately, safely and securely in accordance with the *Youth Justice Act 1992* and *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*. Inspection recommendations provide critical insights to ensure youth detention services evolve with contemporary best practice.

The inspection process focused on areas concerning staffing this quarter, including:

- induction and training for professional officers (POs),
- supervision processes, and
- staff wellness and support.

The department welcomes and accepts the March 2023 report.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the Youth Detention Inspectorate (YDI) for their important work to improve the youth justice system. I also acknowledge the youth detention staff who work in these challenging environments and their commitment to improving the lives of young people and ensuring the safety of youth detention centres.

Michael Drane
Senior Executive Director
Youth Detention Operations and Reform
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training

YDOR Response to Recommendations including Actions and Timeframes

Focus Area 1 – Induction and training for Professional Officers (PO)

Finding 1

The inspectorate identified the following themes and opportunities relevant to this focus area:

- The importance of developing a formal induction and onboarding process for all POs to ensure consistency in practice and staff's ability to fulfil role requirements. As there is no central, consistent onboarding approach or resource, each youth detention centre is currently developing their own methods and resources.
- Variances in staff awareness in navigating the iLearn system to locate appropriate training material relevant to their role.
- The need for youth detention centres to regularly use the iLearn training program *Introduction to Security Protocols in Youth Detention (Visits Beyond Visits)* for staff onboarding and induction to provide a foundational understanding of the safety and security requirements of the centre.
- Feedback from staff completing the Communication and Resolution Techniques (CART) Lite training is positive, allowing staff to be trained on defensive, disengagement and distraction techniques.
- Acknowledgment that the development of an online induction package for new Caseworkers will support consistent practice, ongoing learning and development and assist to contextualise the detention setting for new staff members.
- The opportunity for the Learning and Development Team to raise awareness and understanding of the training modules available on the iLearn platform for POs and other staffing groups in the youth detention centres.

YDOR response

Through the ABC (Activation, Building Continuous) learning framework, PO staff complete a range of foundational modules as part of the 'Activation' phase relevant to a case management and other aspects of PO roles. The 'Activation' modules also include all of the mandatory departmental modules. Once 'Activation' is complete, staff progress to the 'Building' phase which builds on the foundational knowledge. 'Building' modules are delivered face-to-face and are scheduled multiple times a year across the state. Staff can enrol in the session that suits their availability and location. Training is designed for both community-based and youth detention centre PO staff.

Finding 1 is also highly relevant to the work underway on the Training Needs Analysis for youth detention centres. On-boarding, induction and ongoing training for PO staff has been included in scope of this project. YDOR will ensure the project team is provided relevant excerpts of YDI's report to inform their final report, which is due in October 2023.

This work is also highlighted in the most recent YDRAG Action Plan under 'People' actions (pages 2 and 3).

Focus Area 2 – Supervision processes

Finding 2

The inspectorate identified the following themes and opportunities relevant to this focus area:

- The challenges across the youth detention centres in sustaining formal supervision (particularly for operational roles) and developing and maintaining a supervisor/supervisee relationship because of staffing demands.
- Recognition that CYDC and WMYDC leadership teams have attempted to establish a supervision model that aligns with centre structure and needs.
- Staff acknowledgement that additional training and skills development regarding supervision practices and completion of Performance and Development Agreements would be beneficial to support the embedding of supervision processes within the youth detention setting.
- Acknowledgement that Unit Managers attend morning briefs and incident debriefings focused on practice reflections and learnings, wellbeing and support. All centres have also implemented and embedded more creative and informal supervision approaches to support staff in operational roles.
- The importance of youth detention centres fostering a supportive and communicative environment to reduce burnout and mitigate reduced commitment and negative attitudes towards young people, aligning with each centre's workforce plans supporting retention, wellbeing, and resilience.
- Recognition by the youth detention centres to reinforce reporting lines to ensure staff at all levels are aware of their roles in supervision and staff development.
- The need for supervision to occur more regularly for Caseworkers as a priority for all three youth detention centres.
- To support, develop and retain staff in a complex and challenging environment, youth detention centres should continue to explore formal supervision opportunities by establishing a fit-for-purpose model for the operational and professional staffing cohort. Ideally a system-wide approach would encompass the five elements of the Relationships, Ethics, Acumen, Core Practice and Health (REACH) framework, the department's supervision framework and include a cultural component.

YDOR response

As noted in the YDRAG Action Plan, professional development and supervision remains a priority for all youth detention centres. Formal supervision for operational staff is recognised as an area for improvement, noting a range of operational supervisors do undertake performance reviews and work to support the wellbeing and resilience of the operational workforce. PO staff including case workers undertake regular supervision carried out by the team leader.

Focus Area 3 – Staff wellness and support

Finding 3

The inspectorate identified the following themes and opportunities relevant to this focus area:

- Acknowledgment of new roles within the youth detention centres (Staff Wellness Officer and Principal Safety Officer) to promote and support proactive workforce health and safety frameworks, expedite investigation frameworks for work-related matters and support the management team in organisational health, wellbeing, and resilience.
- Strong staff awareness at each youth detention centre of the Staff Wellness Officer role and the ability and willingness to access this support if needed.
- Recognition of the development of a confidentiality framework in response to concerns raised by staff about confidentiality and privacy, aligning with the delivery of individualised support and broader workforce health, wellbeing and resilience initiatives.
- Recognition that the collaboration between the Staff Wellness Officer, Principal Safety Officer and other key roles at BYDC and CYDC has fostered the development of a team-based approach that focuses on individual employees and systems and processes. This new approach has anecdotally seen a reduction in Workcover claims and the length of time staff may need support before returning to full work duties.

YDOR response

The department acknowledges that workforce is key to achieving outcomes, as recognised in the [YDRAG Action Plan](#). The new safety, health and wellbeing positions have strengthened the department's capacity to support staff while at work and returning to work after a period of injury, ill health, work-related trauma exposure/violence and enhance critical incident debriefing processes.

The centralised health, safety and wellbeing team are in the process of developing a confidentiality framework to support staff and privacy provisions to ensure staff confidence when accessing wellness and support services onsite.

Other Observations and Issues

The March 2023 inspections did not identify any issues and observations of concern.