

Youth detention centre OPERATIONAL POLICY

Title: YD-3-8 Youth detention – Separation

PUBLIC VERSION – OPERATIONALLY SENSITIVE CONTENT HAS BEEN REDACTED

Policy statement

The department is committed to ensuring that separation is used in strict compliance with the requirements outlined in sections 21 and 22 of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016* and the associated directives issued under sections 21(1)(c) and 21(4) of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*.

In particular, it is acknowledged that section 21(1)(d) and (e) type separations (referred to in this policy as incident-related separations) must be:

- for the protection of a person, property or to restore order in the youth detention centre (YDC)
- approved by the relevant delegated officer
- used for the minimum amount of time necessary
- facilitated in a way that supports the young person's safety and wellbeing while they are separated
- recorded per the requirements of section 22 of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*.

It is also acknowledged that young people in youth detention are highly vulnerable. While separation is sometimes necessary to keep people safe, the department recognises that this practice may perpetuate a young person's trauma. For this reason, and in addition to the above requirements:

- young people will be separated in their own accommodation room wherever possible¹
- incident-related separations will be reviewed as per the incident review and reporting procedures²
- separation responses must promote physical, emotional, psychological and cultural care and safety and be responsive to the individual assessed needs of young people
- allegations or suspicions of unlawful separations will be referred to the relevant parties/agencies for review and action as required.

Separation decisions must respect and uphold the human rights of young persons affected. We recognise that at times, separations have the potential to impact young people's human rights, including specifically:

- protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 17 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*), and
- humane treatment when deprived of liberty (section 30 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*).

¹ Noting the required risk assessments and associated processes outlined in [operational policy 1-4 'Room Sharing'](#).

² Refer to [chapter 3 'Incident Management', Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual](#).



The department must ensure that any limitation on a young person's human rights is reasonable and justified for the purposes outlined in section 21 of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*.

Principles

1. Separation types

1.1 As per section 21(1) of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*, separation is authorised only for the following purposes:

Non-incident-related separations Section 21(a), (b) or (c) of the <i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i>	Incident-related separations Section 21(d) or (e) of the <i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i>
a) if the young person is ill b) at the young person's request c) for routine security purposes	d) for the protection of people or property e) to restore order in the YDC.

1.2 Approval processes, record keeping requirements and other obligations are dependent on the type of separation. Incident-related separations are subject to additional accountability mechanisms, as outlined in the policy below (sections 2 to 10 inclusive).

2. Appropriate use of incident-related separation

2.1 A section supervisor or shift supervisor³, will request approval for an incident-related separation from the relevant approving officer⁴. This section aims to assist the assessment and decision-making of the:

- requesting officer
- approving officer.

2.2 To ensure the use of incident-related separation is compliant with the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*, risks to people, property or the order of the centre must exist; and the separation can only occur for as long as the risk remains.

2.3 This may involve a range of scenarios, including:

- the risk of further harm to people, property or the order of the centre remains following the use of physical interventions to resolve an incident
- during an incident (often an emergency situation) the order of the centre is put at risk and a lockdown of accommodation units or sections is required to ensure the safety of people
- insufficient operational staff to maintain the safe supervision ratio⁵.

2.4 Young people cannot be separated solely based on historical behaviour where there is no ongoing risk identified. Evidence of ongoing risk may include:

[REDACTED]

2.5 If a young person poses a risk to others, that young person must be separated, not the young person who is at risk.

[REDACTED]



2.6 Similar to the risk assessment frameworks that support the appropriate use of physical interventions and restraints, the decision to use separation must be reasonable in the circumstances, i.e. a proportionate response to the level of risk present. For example, while separation is permitted to protect property, the extent or degree of the risk to property must be balanced with the decision to limit the young person's human rights by separating them.

2.7 As per the *Human Rights Act 2019*, alternate and less restrictive options to manage the risk to people, property or the order of the centre must also be considered. Options will be dependent on situational factors, but could include:

- escorting the young person to a quiet space or diverting their attention to another activity
- considering keeping young people section bound rather than a lockdown
- if separation is necessary, other actions that can be taken to limit restrictions, such as out-of-room time and ensuring access to therapeutic interventions/materials and other in-room activities as appropriate (refer to section 7 for more information).

2.8 The young person's individual needs and circumstances must also be considered and balanced with the decision to separate them, for example:

- in considering the young person's age, culture, mental health and wellbeing, abilities/disabilities and cognitive functioning, would separating them cause them more harm than the risk they are posing to others, property or the order of the centre?
- as per section 2.7 above, if separation is necessary, these considerations will inform other actions to support a young person's wellbeing while they are separated.

2.9 The totality of the situation, risks posed and the impacts on the young person to be separated must be considered on a case-by-case basis by both the officer recommending separation and the delegated approving officer. The officer recommending separation must outline the relevant considerations and rationale for separation to the approving officer. This may also include advice from multi-disciplinary staff, particularly for extended separation periods.

3. Approval requirements

3.1 All incident-related separations require approval from the relevant delegated officer, as per section 21(2) of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*. The level of approval increases the longer the separation continues.

3.2 Time periods and required approvals for incident-related separations are as follows:

Time period	Requirements
Up to 2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved by one of the following: shift supervisor, unit manager, assistant director (AD), deputy director (DD) or executive director (ED). • [REDACTED]
2 hours up to 12 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved by the ED or delegate⁶
12 hours and up to 24 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved by the ED or delegate. The ED must also notify the Senior Executive Director (SED) of the separation.
Greater than 24 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be approved by the SED. • A new approval is required every 24 hours thereafter.

⁶ As per the Instrument of Authorisation.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. Counting time separated

4.1 Time spent out of a locked room (e.g. for meals, phone calls or activities) while an incident-related separation remains active, will continue to count towards the overall separation time.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. Supervision requirements

- 5.1 Any young person in separation (regardless of reason), must be observed at a minimum every 15 minutes, or more frequently [REDACTED]
- 5.2 All observations must be conducted and recorded per the requirements in chapter 1 of the Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual (YDCOM). For staff at WYRC, the [local operating procedure](#) in relation to observations must be complied with.
- 5.3 Young people must be able to contact staff at all times while in separation (e.g. via intercom).
- 5.4 Young people must be supervised and managed in conjunction with the behaviour support framework. This will include staff engaging therapeutically with young people subject to separation to understand and address the underlying causes of their behaviour.

[REDACTED]



5.5 Young people must be permitted a **minimum of two hours total outside of the room** in each day (unless it is unsafe to facilitate this). If it is not safe to facilitate this, records must be made outlining the reasons why⁸.

6. Use of separation rooms, holding cells and soft rooms

6.2 To remove any doubt, separations in a separation room or holding cell should be avoided wherever possible and should only take place if the separation cannot safely occur in an accommodation room, or if one is not available.

7. Use of therapeutic interventions during separation

7.1 Young people must be provided with assistance to self-regulate and settle while in separation. Supervising staff must engage with the young person and attempt to resolve the risk as quickly as possible. Therapeutic, educational and cultural supports should be facilitated whenever possible.

8. Recording and reporting responsibilities for incident-related separations

8.1 The following details about incident-related separations must be recorded in DCOIS:

- the name of the young person who was separated
- the date of the separation event

⁹ Noting not all YDCs have a soft-room. Staff should also refer to youth detention operational policy Suicide and self-harm risk management for further information.

¹⁰ To remove any doubt, this includes self-harm risk.



- the room in which the separation occurred [REDACTED]
- all times in and out¹¹ of the locked room while the episode remained active¹²
- the time the separation episode ended
- name of the staff members who supervised the young person while separated
- the name of the officers who authorised the separation¹³
- the reason/s for the young person's separation.

8.2 To ensure the requirements of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016* are satisfied, staff must consider and address the following questions when recording the reasons for incident-related separations:

- Who or what was at risk as a result of the young person's behaviour?
- What was the young person doing that created this risk?
- Why was separation the most appropriate way to manage the risk? Why was there no other alternative?
- What needs to happen before the young person can exit separation? How can the young person's time in separation be minimised?
- What did I or another staff member do to assist the young person while they were in separation?

8.3 All times in and out of room must be recorded on DCOIS, along with a brief description of the activities the young person undertook during their time outside of the locked room.

8.4 Food and medication provided during separation must be recorded. If food or medication is not provided due to a significant safety issue, the reasons why must be recorded. Food and medication must then be provided as soon as it is safe to do so.

8.5 If a young person is separated in a room without bathroom facilities, the provision of water and bathroom breaks must also be recorded.

8.6 Any other information relevant to the way the young person is managed (e.g. choosing not to leave their room or not to eat) must also be recorded in DCOIS as relevant.

8.7 As part of the observation process, staff are required to record any other relevant information on DCOIS, including the behaviour exhibited by the young person during separation and supports provided (e.g. multi-disciplinary attendance, activities, visitors, phone calls & etc.).

9. Requirements during a lockdown

9.1 A lockdown is a separation event and may occur as part of an emergency response to ensure the safety and security of the centre. Depending on the circumstances, lockdowns can be a centre-wide event or specific to accommodation units/sections.

9.2 A lockdown does not refer to young people being section bound i.e. where they are allowed out of their rooms but not out of their accommodation sections due to risks elsewhere in the YDC.

9.3 A decision to enact a centre-wide lockdown due to an incident can be made by a shift supervisor (as per section 3.2 above) in consultation with the unit manager or on-call manager, who is then responsible for notifying the ED or delegate and providing information about the justification for the decision.

¹¹ Time in and time out refer to the time a young person enters and exits the locked room while the period of separation remains active.

¹² Per section 4 of this policy, the last time out should be the same as the time the separation event was completed.

¹³ If the authorising officer is of the view that the separation is not justified, they must immediately instruct section staff remove the young person from separation if this has already occurred, and reject the separation on DCOIS.



9.4 If the shift supervisor or incident controller determines a lockdown must continue for more than two hours, the normal incident separation approvals and recording responsibilities apply.

10. Unlawful use of separation

YDC staff must not:

- 10.1 separate a young person for any longer than required in the circumstances
- 10.2 record or administer separations in a way to avoid the required approvals (e.g. seeking multiple 0-to-2 hour separations, when 2-to-12 hour separations are required; or recording a type b separation, when an incident-related separation is required)
- 10.3 use separation to discipline or provide a consequence to a young person
- 10.4 request and/or utilise separations in any other way than are justified in circumstances.

YDC staff must:

- 10.5 manage separations in a way that minimises the impact on individual young people and protects their safety and wellbeing.

Objectives

This policy aims to ensure that separation is used in strict compliance with sections 21 and 22 of the [Youth Justice Regulation 2016](#), the *Human Rights Act 2019* and the relevant directives issued by a delegate of the Chief Executive under sections 21(1)(c) and 21(4) of the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*.

Scope

This policy applies to the use of separation for one or more of the following reasons:

- if a young person is ill
- at a young person's request
- for routine security purposes
- for the protection of people
- for the protection of property
- to restore order in a YDC.

Interventions and other responses necessary to protect persons or property, or to restore order in a YDC are relevant to the incident management framework. Accordingly, this policy must be read in conjunction with related policies and chapter 3 – Incident management of the YDCOM.

Roles and responsibilities

- YDC operational staff:
 - liaise with the shift supervisor in relation to separation approvals and management of young people while in separation
 - demonstrate a duty of care towards young people who are separated through vigilant observation and engagement, working towards ending the separation as soon as it is safe to do so
 - liaise with relevant staff regarding any therapeutic interventions and supports for young people
 - make full, accurate and timely records of the separation event (e.g. time spent out of room, provision of meals, medication, provision of phone calls, visits by support staff)
 - successfully complete separation training on an annual basis.
- Multidisciplinary staff:



- work collaboratively with operational staff to support the safety and wellbeing of separated young people
- recommend, provide and support the delivery of appropriate therapeutic interventions, supports (including cultural supports) and other sensory tools/aids to young people during and after the separation event.
- BYDC, CYDC and WYRC practice support manager and the WMYDC client relations officer and/or intelligence officer:
 - at the request of the ED, AD or DD, conduct an ad hoc audit to ensure compliance with this policy and incident reporting requirements.
- AD/DD, on call, shift supervisors or unit managers:
 - review and approve separations up to 2 hours in strict compliance with this policy, including rejecting separations whether there is insufficient justification
 - seek approval for all separation extensions
 - ensure YDC operational staff demonstrate a duty of care towards young people when using separation to ensure their safety and wellbeing [REDACTED]
 - proactively explore and action any possible mitigations to reduce the impact of the separation on individual young people, including re-deployment of staff, unit-based programming and activities or tailored multidisciplinary team supports
 - ensure staff make accurate and timely records of each separation, including all times in and out of room and the time the separation event was completed
 - ensure that any periods of separation are monitored and reviewed in accordance [REDACTED]
 - successfully complete separation training on an annual basis.
- ED (or delegate):
 - authorise separation events as required
 - liaise with the SED in relation to notifications and approvals of separation events as required
 - ensure there are arrangements in place to monitor the use of separation to ensure compliance with this policy
 - ensure there are arrangement in place to monitor observation compliance for young people who are separated, as per the [Observations Directive](#)
 - identify and take appropriate action in relation to separation events that do not comply with this policy.
- Director, Youth Detention Operations:
 - provide practice support and advice to YDC staff and management about issues relating to compliance with this policy
 - review and update this policy as required.
- SED, Youth Detention Operations and Reform:
 - approve separations as required
 - liaise with the ED in relation to notifications and approvals of separation events as required.

Authority

- *Youth Justice Act 1992*



- *Youth Justice Regulation 2016*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*

Delegations

Position	Delegation
Deputy Director-General Assistant Chief Operating Officer Senior Executive Director Executive Director, Youth Detention Centre Director, Youth Justice Regional Operations Director, Statewide Intel and Secure Services Support	<i>Youth Justice Act 1992</i> Section 263 (2) – Issue directions, codes, standards and guidelines for the security and management of detention centres and the safe custody and wellbeing of children in detention.
Deputy Director-General Assistant Chief Operating Officer Senior Executive Director Executive Director, Youth Detention Centre Deputy Director, Youth Detention Centre Assistant Director, Youth Detention Centre Director, Youth Justice Regional Operations Director, Statewide Intel and Secure Services Support	<i>Youth Justice Act 1992</i> Section 263 (5) – Must ensure principles are complied with
Deputy Director-General Assistant Chief Operating Officer Senior Executive Director	<i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i> Section 21(2)(b) and (c) – notification if the separation is for more than 12 hours, authorise a period of separation greater than 24 hours.
Deputy Director-General Assistant Chief Operating Officer Senior Executive Director	<i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i> Section 21(4) – Separation must comply with observation directions.
Deputy Director-General Assistant Chief Operating Officer Senior Executive Director Executive Director, Youth Detention Centre Deputy Director, Youth Detention Centre Assistant Director, Youth Detention Centre Unit Manager, Youth Detention Centre Court Supervisor, Youth Detention Centre Shift Supervisor, Youth Detention Centre Section Supervisor, Youth Detention Centre Visits Coordinator, Youth Detention Centre Detention Youth Worker, Youth Detention Centre	<i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i> Section 22(1) – Must keep a record for each child who is separated in a locked room.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

Term	Definition
Accommodation room	A room that is purpose built to as far as possible resemble a bedroom. Accommodation rooms have a window, built-in bed bases, bathroom facilities (shower, toilet and basin), shelves, cupboard, desk and stool. WYRC infrastructure is slightly different.
Active separation	A separation event that has not been finalised on DCOIS
Assistant director	The assistant director of a YDC.
Basic room entitlements	Bedding (e.g. mattress, pillow, blanket), clothing, stimulation and hygiene products (e.g. toilet paper, deodorant) television remote and food snacks.
Behaviour support framework	The individualised development of strategies and plans which target specific problem behaviours exhibited by a young person. The framework can be informed by a range of multi-disciplinary staff including therapeutic, health, educational and operational staff.
Centre-wide lockdown	An event when every accommodation unit (that is operational) is subject to a lockdown. It also means that every young person accommodated in those units is separated.
Complete separation	A separation event that has been finalised on DCOIS.





Term	Definition
Separation	To place a young person in a locked room by themselves for a purpose defined in section 21 of the <i>Youth Justice Regulation 2016</i> .
Soft room	A purpose-built accommodation room with walls covered in a rubberised coating to minimise injuries (if a young person were to knock their head or other parts of their body into the walls).
Unit	The accommodation units or sections within the YDCs.
WYRC	Wacol Youth Remand Centre, which is designated as a youth detention centre.
YDC operational staff	A staff member who has direct care responsibility for young people, for example a detention youth worker or section supervisor.

Human rights compatibility statement

Youth Justice is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the [Human Rights Act 2019](#), Youth Justice has an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with and properly considers human rights. When making a decision about the care and management of young people, decision-makers must comply with that obligation.

Multicultural Queensland Charter

Youth Justice supports the [Multicultural Queensland Charter](#), established under the *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016* (Qld). The Charter seeks to promote Queensland as a unified, harmonious and inclusive community.

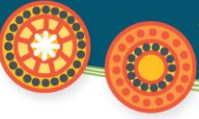
Child safe standards

The Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sexual Abuse developed several national [child safe standards](#) for institutions and organisations working with children. Youth Justice is cognisant of these standards when considering operational practice guidelines and service delivery in community and youth detention centres.

State disability plan

Youth Justice will work with our partners to build a fairer, more inclusive Queensland where people with a disability, their families and carers are able to access the same opportunities, on the same basis as everyone else. We will take actions to progress the priorities of [Queensland's state disability plan](#) and support improved access to services for Queenslanders with disability.

Version number:	1.11
Date of approval:	10 April 2025
Approved by:	1.0 Director-General DJAG (22 November 2012)
	1.1 Assistant Director-General, Youth Justice (22 May 2015)
	1.2 Director, Practice, Program and Design (16 November 2017)
	1.3 Director, Youth Justice Practice (29 August 2018)
	1.4 Senior Executive Director (12 April 2019)
	1.5 Director, Secure Services Operations and Practice (1 October 2019)
	1.6 Youth Detention Executive Directors (17 July 2020)
	1.7 Director, Statewide Intel and Secure Services Support (17 February 2022)
	1.8 Senior Executive Director, Youth Detention Operations and Reform (20 February 2023)



- 1.9 Senior Executive Director, Youth Detention Operations and Reform (31 July 2023)
- 1.10 Director, Youth Detention Operations (31 October 2023)
- 1.11 Director, Youth Detention Operations (10 April 2025)

Date of operation: 10 April 2025

Date to be reviewed: Three years from the date of approval

Office: Youth Detention Operations

Help contact: Youth Detention Operations and Reform
[REDACTED]

Communication strategy

- ☒ publish on intranet
- ☒ publish on internet
- ☒ advise staff to read
- ☒ supervisors discuss with direct reports

Links

[Australasian Youth Justice Administrators \(AYJA\) service standards for juvenile custodial facilities](#)
[Human Rights Act 2019](#)
[United Nations Rules for the Protection of Young People Deprived of Their Liberty \(Havana Rules\)](#)
[United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders \(Bangkok Rules\)](#)
[United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice \(Beijing Rules\)](#)
[United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners \(Mandela Rules\)](#)
[Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual](#)
[Youth Justice delegations](#)
[Youth Justice policies](#)

Bob Gee

Director-General



[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]			
[REDACTED]			

[illegible]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Appendix C – Human rights considerations

This appendix has been drafted to support the comprehensive consideration of human rights as part of separation practices. When making a decision to separate a young person, you need to consider human rights relevant to them as an individual, and either not limit those rights or do so only to the extent necessary.

You must consider the following.

Can I identify my decision and the reasons I made it?

For example, why separation was necessary in the circumstances.

Can I identify which human rights are relevant to the decision?

Which may include:

- protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 17 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*)
- protection of children (section 26 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*)
- humane treatment when deprived of liberty (section 30 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*)
- right to education (section 36 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*).

Does my decision limit those human rights? If so, are those limits reasonable?

For example, did the separation logically address the safety risk? Was separation the least restrictive option to achieve the same goal? Could I have taken the young person to a quiet space instead, or diverted them with an activity?

Overall, how important was it to use separation on this occasion versus how important was it to not limit a young person's human rights?

Consider the totality of circumstances. Something that is permissible under the *Youth Justice Regulation 2016* also needs to be justifiable under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

What can be done to minimise the impact on the young person?

Consider how the separation can be managed to ensure a young person's wellbeing. This could include:

- redeployment of staff
- accommodation unit programs and activities
- tailored supports from the multidisciplinary team
- out of room time.