

Executive Summary

This is a joint report of quarterly statutory inspections of both the Brisbane and Cleveland Youth Detention Centres (BYDC and CYDC). The on-site inspections occurred from 26 to 30 August (BYDC) and 9 to 13 September (CYDC) 2019. Statutory detention centre inspections are conducted by delegated Inspectors, located within the office of the Director-General, Department of Youth Justice. This is a joint report covering both inspections provided to the Director-General, which aims to contribute to improving youth detention centre operations across both centres.

The focus areas under inspection in this quarter were admissions, searching and management of prohibited items, physical environment, case planning, positive behaviour support model and body worn cameras. In gathering evidence, Inspectors visited all units over the inspection week and spoke to staff and young people in each unit. Emerging issues and themes were corroborated through consultation with relevant managers and inspection of available data.

Focus Area 1 – Admissions, Searching and Management of Prohibited Items

The Inspectorate found that the admissions and induction processes at both centres were well organised, thorough and compliant with legislation, policy and practice guidelines. Admissions holding rooms are being used as a last resort to accommodate young people in BYDC when alternative rooms are temporarily unavailable in the accommodation sections. The Inspectorate has made a recommendation that the centres record the approving officer and rationale for the use of admissions holding rooms for one or more nights in the detention centre operational information system (DCOIS) to enable accurate and efficient reporting of this information, as current data extraction methods are resource intensive. The Inspectorate also found that the intake process undertaken by caseworkers at both centres is comprehensive and has recommended a reduced intake process for young people who have been released and re-admitted to the same centre within a two week period.

The Inspectorate found that search practices are generally performed as per policy and with respect for young people. The centres' most effective search practices in detecting restricted, prohibited and illegal items are scheduled searches of young people's rooms and observations made by detention centre staff. Each centre uses a combination of searching techniques to detect contraband including technology to detect metal and illicit substances. The Inspectorate has recommended a review of search practices based on data showing the relative effectiveness of each method. The Inspectorate also found discrepancies in the recording of restricted, prohibited and illegal items in DCOIS and in off-line registers and has recommended consistent recording of contraband to enable reliable reporting of this information.

Focus Area 2 – Physical environment

The Inspectorate's focus on the physical environment concentrated around the general condition and standards of existing facilities including maintenance programs and the construction of a new accommodation unit at BYDC. The Inspectorate noted that both detention centres were well maintained overall with less graffiti present than noted in previous inspection reports (June 2013, September 2015 and June 2016). At the time of this inspection, the construction of a new 16 bed accommodation unit had commenced with security arrangements around the worksite improved through learnings gained during the 2017 construction of the Paperbark unit.

The Inspectorate has made no recommendations in this area. However, the Inspectorate raised some general maintenance issues directly with management to be addressed at the local level, including minor repairs, keeping young people informed of their maintenance requests and communication between detention centre staff and Q-Build regarding scheduling of work. The advantage of zone fencing at CYDC is also noted as being more conducive in allowing regular, outside physical activity for young people. Renovations of the two Independent Living Units were also underway at CYDC, with operating procedures undergoing staff consultation with a view to accommodating suitable young people in early 2020.

Focus Area 3 – Case Planning

The Inspectorate's focus on case planning concentrated on the level of involvement young people, their families and community have in determining and working towards goals within the detention centre and successful reintegration back into the community. Inspectors observed two case planning meetings at BYDC and consulted with Caseworkers, young people and a sample of parents/guardians who had been involved in case planning for young people at both detention centres.

Young people and parents/guardians consistently advised Inspectors that they felt supported by the Caseworkers at both detention centres and parents/guardians in particular, spoke highly of this service. Both detention centres are focussing on increasing proactive community and cultural involvement in case planning and would encourage the Youth Justice Service Centre Caseworkers to invite community stakeholders to attend case review meetings more often. No recommendations are made by the Inspectorate in relation to this focus area.

Focus Area 4 – Positive Behaviour Support Model

The Inspectorate found the recently revised rewards and incentive models at both centres were viewed positively by staff and young people, following extensive consultation within the centres prior to implementation. Each centre provides options for the use of points earned by young people who demonstrate positive behaviours, including short-term rewards to be used in detention and longer term rewards that can be used after release and support young people's transition to their communities. Accommodation progression and group-based rewards were particularly evident at CYDC. No recommendations are made by the Inspectorate in relation to this focus area.

Focus Area 5 – Body Worn Cameras

At the time of inspection, both centres had installed the infrastructure including charging stations in preparation for the implementation of the body worn cameras in December 2019. Legislative amendments to the Youth Justice Act 1992 support operational guidelines which were drafted in line with privacy obligations and are undergoing consultation across the department. Vests to be worn by staff that allow mounting of the body worn cameras are currently being produced and training in use of the cameras has commenced.

The CCTV upgrade project at BYDC was completed in August 2019 and all accommodation section common areas can be monitored. The completion of the BYDC CCTV upgrade project and the use of body worn cameras will satisfy recommendations made by the Independent Review of Youth Detention (2016) and the Queensland Ombudsman (2019). No recommendations are made by the Inspectorate in relation to this focus area.

List of Recommendations

Focus Area 1 – Admissions, Searching and Management of Prohibited Items

Recommendation 1

The Inspectorate recommends that the centres record more consistently the approving officer and rationale for use of admissions holding rooms for one or more nights in a single field in the detention centre operational information system (DCOIS), to enable reporting of this information.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the centres implement a shortened process 'wellbeing intake' to be performed by caseworkers when a young person has been re-admitted to the same centre within a two-week period.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the centres review searching practices based on the effectiveness of current search methods as shown in the data.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the centres implement consistent methods of recording restricted, prohibited and illegal items located on centre to increase the reliability of available data.

Focus Area 2 – Physical environment

Nil recommendations made.

Focus Area 3 – Case Planning

Nil recommendations made.

Focus Area 4 – Positive Behaviour Support Model

Nil recommendations made.

Focus Area 5 – Body Worn Cameras

Nil recommendations made.