



Executive Summary

Delegated Inspectors (the Inspectorate) within the Systems, Quality Review and Support Unit, Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business, and Training conduct statutory detention centre inspections each quarter, pursuant to [Section 263](#) of the [Youth Justice Act 1992](#). This report describes the outcomes of the quarterly statutory inspections conducted in June 2023 for the Youth Detention Centres (YDCs), namely Brisbane YDC (BYDC), Cleveland YDC (CYDC), and West Moreton YDC (WMYDC).

The focus areas for the March to June 2023 quarter were *Youth Detention Centre Transfers* and *Pre-court procedures and legal rights*. The following actions and recommendations were made:

- **Action** – Youth Detention Operation and Reform (YDOR) to review the 2019 practice directive relating to in-person court appearances by detained young people to ensure applicability in the current environment and provide practical operational guidance to ensure consistency across YDCs.
- **Action** – YDOR to develop an all YDC practice guide or tip sheet reaffirming transfer requirements, including need to consult young people, families and stakeholders during the transfer assessment process (as appropriate) and ensuring all key decisions are accurately recorded in the ICMS.
- **Action** – The Court, Regional Operations and Practice Support (CROPS) team to raise with the fast-track sentencing pilot steering committee the continued difficulties reportedly experienced by detained young people in relation to contacting and providing instructions to legal representatives, in an attempt to explore or develop an appropriate escalation process.
- **Recommendation** – Future Quality and Improvement (Q&I) processes evaluate the impact of the Court Support Officer role, including analysing whether the position has resulted in improved engagement between young people and their legal representatives, increased information sharing and reduced workload pressures on Casework, Cultural Unit and Programs staff.

Observations and findings were discussed with relevant Executive Directors (ED) at the conclusion of the inspection and with the Senior Executive Director (SED), YDOR during a post-inspection briefing. Other issues raised during and immediately following the site visits are monitored in an Issues Register and will continue to be examined during future inspections.

The status of active recommendations from previous Inspectorate reports are detailed in a Recommendations Register which is reviewed during the December inspection each year and published online. A copy of the Recommendations Register can be obtained by making a request through the Office of the Executive Directors ACOO_YJSWS@cyjma.qld.gov.au.

Focus Area one – Youth Detention Centre transfers

The [Youth Justice framework for practice foundations](#) notes that to be effective in supporting young people, stakeholders need to work in partnership to build and maintain open, transparent and collaborative working relationships. Further, YDC staff are required to liaise with young people and involved stakeholders to ensure their views are considered, including during transfer planning processes¹. Inspectorate discussions revealed YDCs do not always consult with young people, families, carers, or guardians prior to a young person transferring to another YDC, with risk assessment outcomes, transfer timing and safety and security cited as the primary reasons for withholding information. At times, young people or families initiate transfer requests, therefore are openly consulted and aware of transfer process and progress. In situations where the young person was unaware, transfer decision making is not consistently recorded in the young person's ICMS profile. Current YDC practice needs to adjust to ensure alignment with policy and ensure considered and individualised transfer risk assessment on a case-by-case basis. The development of additional YDCs provides an opportunity to proactively strengthen existing processes, potentially via targeted communication, identifying the requirement to consider young people's views and wishes, ensure individualised transfer decision-making processes, and improved record keeping.

[Policy](#) identifies when transfers are required, all casework and risk assessments need to be completed to support continuity of service delivery. Inspections revealed YDC transfer processes, including information sharing, considerably differed within YDCs, between operational and client services staff. From an operational perspective, necessary information was generally made available to support a young person's admission. Operational staff did reflect some complications with suicide risk management, with DCOIS not immediately recognising YDC transfers, leading to some information being unavailable when the young person was received (i.e., suicide risk management plans). Within Client Services, staff reported experiencing ongoing challenges in receiving the necessary information to support admission. Staff identified handovers were generally comprehensive for high-risk young people but varied considerably for moderate, low, or newly admitted young people. The inspection revealed there remains opportunities to strengthen YDC information transfer processes, via purposeful relationship-building activities between YDCs, the development of a standardised casework handover process and potential DCOIS upgrades to improve the timeliness of YDC transfers.

Inspection area 2 – Pre-court procedures and legal rights

During inspections, Caseworkers and Team Leaders reported experiencing challenges supporting young people to understand their court matters, including delays in young people being appointed a legal representative, difficulties establishing and maintaining contact with a legal representative, frequent and protracted court adjournments, and capacity of the young person (i.e., cognitive impairments). Caseworkers identified that understanding was further impacted if the young person had multiple court matters. This was confirmed by young people, with some voicing confusion regarding the status of their matters and an inability to easily contact their legal representative. To combat delays in applying for bail and representative communication difficulties, there may be benefits to considering the development of an escalation process, potentially via initial discussion at the Local Operational Working Groups

¹ [Policy - Transfer of a young person](#)

(LOWGs) overseeing the fast-track sentencing pilot² with consideration for an appropriate ongoing state-wide solution given LOWGs are limited to trial sites.

In 2023, Court Support Officers (CSOs) were temporarily established and introduced to YDCs as part of the fast-track sentencing pilot to support the court process and young people's engagement with legal representatives. During inspections it was revealed each YDC was at different stages of recruiting, establishing, and embedding the CSO role. It is recommended that an evaluation of the role occurs within suitable internal Q&I review processes, analysing whether the position has resulted in improved engagement between young people and their legal representatives, increased information sharing and reduced workload pressures on Casework, Cultural Unit and Programs staff.

In 2019, the Senior Executive Director issued a state-wide directive to YDCs regarding the management of in-person court refusals by young people³. During consultations, YDOR confirmed any non-compliance with YDC directives should be managed via existing performance and conduct management measures. There was no evidence to suggest that WMYDC and CYDC were using this escalation pathway when young people refused attendance and were subsequently not presented to court. BYDC identified when use of force is required to ensure court attendance, infrequently QPS will refuse to accept responsibility of the young person. The courts increasing preference for young people to appear via video link and differentiating application of the practice directive by YDCs suggests clarification is required, including a clear escalation pathway should QPS refuse carriage of a young person following the application of reasonable force.

² [Stronger laws for community safety](#)

³ [Youth Detention Centre Directive](#).