

# Executive Summary

This is a joint report of quarterly statutory inspections of the Brisbane, Cleveland, and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres (BYDC, CYDC, and WMYDC). The on-site inspections by the Youth Detention Inspectorate occurred from 5 – 9 September 2022 at BYDC, 12 – 16 September 2022 at CYDC, and 19 – 21 September 2022 at WMYDC. Inspections aim to contribute to improving operations across all youth detention centres and the report is provided to the Director-General.

Since the inspections and preparation of this report the responsibility for inspections has moved from the Department of Children, Youth Justice, and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) to the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training as part of minor machinery of government changes.

The inspection focus areas for this quarter were: visits to young people; structured day and program delivery; and centre facilities and environment. The key observations and findings, in relation to the focus areas, are summarised below. No recommendations have been made in relation to these focus areas. Observations and findings were discussed with relevant Executive Directors (ED) at the conclusion of the inspection and with the Senior Executive Director (SED), Youth Detention Operations and Reform (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 at [ACOO\\_YJSWS@cyjma.qld.gov.au](mailto:ACOO_YJSWS@cyjma.qld.gov.au).

## Focus Area 1 – Visits to young people

All youth detention centres staff acknowledged the importance of promoting and facilitating family and community contact for young people in custody, as well as maintaining the safety and security of the centre at all times. Each centre is proactive in encouraging families and community agencies to visit and support young people in the centres, offering financial assistance, alternative visiting options (e.g. video links), or flexible visiting hours (where operationally viable).

The visits process is clear in each centre, with families being supported to complete relevant documentation as required. One area that may be an opportunity for further exploration is the assessment process in determining the appropriateness of visitors, and any visiting restrictions that may need to be considered. To help alleviate current limitations it may be prudent to strengthen the YDC Visits Policy to provide more specific assessment criteria and authorise access to intel from outside of the youth justice jurisdiction (e.g. information held by QPS or QCS relating to family members or significant others). The Inspectorate encourages YDOR to consider extending the scope of a current project regarding the YDC Intel Framework to incorporate an examination of the Visits Policy and the specific role of the Intel Officer to support visitor screening processes.

It was recognised there is often a lack of regular engagement from youth justice and child safety service centre staff with young people in custody. Current policy and practice manuals only stipulate the need for them to visit 'regularly'. The Inspectors believe it would be beneficial

to better define minimum expectations for staff regarding the level of engagement when a young person on their case load is placed in custody.

The increased reliance of court appearances occurring via video link is having an impact on the visit's centres within the two larger YDCs (i.e. BYDC and CYDC). Both centres work closely with judiciaries to assist them in understanding the complexities of producing young people on short notice and supporting a more efficient process.

Visits Beyond Visits (VBV) is a process being utilised primarily at BYDC and WMYDC to support youth justice and child safety service centre staff, and community agency staff to attend the centres to engage with young people beyond the visits centre, without the requirement for an escort. CYDC is planning to undertake a pilot of VBV specific to the Centre, taking into account current staffing shortages and subsequent security concerns.

### **Focus Area 2 – Structured day and program delivery**

All three centres operate within a structured day timetable that includes young people having access to education, vocation, therapeutic, recreation, and cultural programs.

Each centre is exploring opportunities to increase their capacity to deliver change-oriented interventions to young people, aligning with the department's priority to address offending. At the time of writing the report, policy deliberations were underway about whether young people's participation in offence-based programs are voluntary while in custody. Program delivery is facilitated by programs staff (BYDC and CYDC) and casework staff and cultural liaison officers (WMYDC).

It is positive to note that staff across occupational groups within each centre identified minimal program refusal by young people. Staff deploy strategies to encourage participation, and respond to program refusal, in accordance with policies and procedures.

Funded service providers are engaged with young people in detention centres to varying capacities, through either cultural programs and support, or other risk assessed needs. Engagement can depend on a young person's readiness to engage. Information from BYDC staff indicates that less than half of funded service providers are having regular face to face contact with the centre, though this can be augmented by use of phone and video. Increasing funded services engagement with young people in custody to support transition, enhance family and community engagement and address risks relating to offending behaviour was identified by the Inspectors as a potential future opportunity, and will be monitored

### **Focus Area 3 – Centre facilities and environment**

The cleanliness and maintenance standards at each centre differ, with BYDC showing greater signs of age and deterioration. The need for regular additional cleaning in accommodation units was identified to maintain appropriate health and hygiene standards. While centres attempt to maintain their weekly accommodation unit cleaning schedules, with young people actively engaged, limited staffing and high turnover of young people in the centres can impact these practices. Young people at BYDC and WMYDC made suggestions about areas of the accommodation units they felt required a deeper clean, including carpets and air conditioners.

Graffiti was identified as an issue across each centre, but more so at BYDC. CYDC and WMYDC actively discourage graffiti with consequences/reparation occurring with those young people who have engaged in graffiti. In BYDC, for young people who have had their rooms repainted, it was evident they are trying to keep them looking clean, with minimal to no graffiti noted in these rooms.

Extensive maintenance requirements were identified as a challenge across each centre. In CYDC, young people regularly damage light fittings, sprinklers, and smoke detectors due to low ceiling heights, therefore a large proportion of maintenance and QBuild time is spent repairing these issues. In addition, BYDC have identified the ageing infrastructure and increase in capacity of the centre in recent years as a major challenge and requires the development of a long term, maintenance, or upgrade schedule

Although WMYDC is a new purpose-built centre, during the inspection process several design issues were raised by staff and young people. Of note were the colour scheme used throughout the centre, and feedback from young people that the accommodation rooms feel like watchhouse cells. An additional issue identified was the limited outdoor space, with the oval only able to be used for low-risk activities (no running) due to safety concerns with the uneven ground.

The work currently being undertaken by the Youth Detention Reform Action Group (YDRAG), includes consideration of more contemporary and diverse infrastructure designs and operating models to reduce potential risk and provide more targeted intervention and support to young people.