

# STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

13 NOVEMBER 2024

## HOLTZE YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE

Last week the Minister for Corrections released a statement regarding damage to the Holtze Youth Detention Centre (HYDC). In response, the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) wrote to the Minister about the need for safety and security for all people, including staff, in the centre and outlined concerns regarding the conditions and treatment of young people in the centre.

The physical environment of a youth detention facility significantly impacts on a child's experience of detention and their rehabilitation journey.

Safe environments are the baseline responsibility for government institutions caring for children that have lost their liberty and they are critical for successful rehabilitation. It is in the best interests of Territory children, and indeed the broader community, to see children who interact with the justice system rehabilitated.

Therapeutic models of care are not ideological.

Therapeutic models are evidence-based and crucial to the safety and security of staff and children in detention. Therapeutic models of care contribute to a child's rehabilitation by meeting their physical, social and emotional needs and addressing the underlying factors that have led to their offending.

The OCC raised concerns about the readiness of HYDC to accommodate young people. A safe youth detention centre for young people and staff required completion of construction works, tested security measures, active facilities to support a full and structured day and enabled uninterrupted access to services, programs and activities.

In their visit to HYDC on 5 November 2024, OCC staff observed staff shortages, no access to outdoor recreational spaces for young people, limited access to programs and activities coupled with limited transition planning for children with disability to understand and manage significant change.



**Protecting the best interests of Territory children**

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I urge all members of our community, especially our leaders, to prioritise the needs of vulnerable children when implementing measures to safeguard our community.

It is important that the Minister ensures the safety and security for all people in a fully operational, therapeutic and purpose built environment that supports the needs of vulnerable children.

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