



1 December 2021

Media Statement

OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER MONITORING REPORTS: YOUTH DETENTION

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) Reports on its third round of independent monitoring of Don Dale Youth Detention Centre (DDYDC) and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre (ASYDC) have been tabled in parliament today by the Hon Selena Uibo, Attorney General.

The OCC examined the operation of DDYDC and ASYDC, speaking to young people, Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC), Danila Dilba Health Services (DDHS), and the Department of Education (DoE). Numerous findings across the two centres related to systems improvements in the following areas:

- Both centres lacked a therapeutic framework to guide the operations of the centres, which has been an ongoing recommendation from the OCC since 2020.
- Staff shortages exacerbated by significant increases in detainees at DDYDC have critically impacted on the centre's capacity to provide young people with access to basic services such as education and medical. These shortages result in frequent lock down of young people in their rooms for extended periods of time.
- The management of young people deemed at risk of self-harm in DDYDC is an ongoing concern, with some young people left in their cells for up to 23 hours and 45 minutes per day while waiting for medical assessment.
- There has been case management improvements for children in DDYDC since the OCC monitoring in 2020, with all young people now having a current and comprehensive case plan.

Together with the ongoing recommendation of an evidence based therapeutic model of care, the OCC Reports made 25 recommendations. These included the need for staff to be educated in developmental trauma, face-to-face education be provided to all young people and for an Aboriginal advisory group to inform the audit of the centres Aboriginal Cultural Security.

The OCC were privileged to meet with and speak to a number of young people in DDYDC and ASYDC who shared their experiences in and outside of detention for these monitoring visits. Their views and experiences have informed the findings and recommendations of this report, and will continue to guide the work of the OCC.

The OCC would also like to thank TFHC staff, DDHS staff and service providers for their cooperation during the monitoring activities.

Quotes from Acting Children's Commissioner, Sally Sievers:

"Staff and service providers within NT Youth Detention centres work in very challenging environments where their skills are tested every day. A clear therapeutic model of care is needed to underpin all practice at DDYDC and ASYDC. This would significantly increase the safety of both young people and staff and improve the delivery of services."

"It is unacceptable that young people are being locked in their rooms for extended periods of time due to shortages in staff. TFHC needs to provide adequate numbers of staff and fully prepare them with trauma informed training, so that these centres have the ability to help young people address offending behaviour."

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