



28 October 2021

Media Statement

OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER MONITORING REPORT: SAFE CARE

The Honourable Selena Uibo, Attorney General and Minister for Justice has tabled the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) report on the monitoring of Safe Care facility in parliament last night.

Safe Care facility is a secure accommodation option used in exceptional circumstances for children and young people in out-of-home care who present a significant risk to themselves and/or others. It is designed to provide a stable and predictable environment to address complex behaviours. Safe Care facility is run by Territory Families and Communities (TFHC) and is an important element in the continuum of child protection.

From September to November 2020 the OCC assessed the Safe Care facility by conducting monitoring visits to inspect the facility in Darwin, and to speak with the young people accommodated, as well as staff and service providers.

The Safe Care facility Monitoring Report outlines key findings together with 23 recommendations following an examination of the standard of care provided, and the quality of services delivered by various government and non-government providers in Safe Care facility.

Some of the key findings and recommendations from the Report include:

- Whilst Safe Care facility is in the early phase of implementation, it was found that TFHC were not operating in either of the two therapeutic models of care set out in the operating manual.
- The lack of a comprehensive therapeutic model of care, and associated policies, procedures and training of staff presented a major concern for the OCC.
- The physical environment operated and felt like a facility instead of a home-like environment, with minimal child-friendly information or care planning for young people.
- Safe Care facility did not develop a clear plan on how to exit young people from Safe Care to a less restrictive placement.
- The procurement of an independent consultant to thoroughly integrate a clinical model of care is a key recommendation. This would include formalised training of staff, embedded evaluation strategies, independent monitoring and oversight.

The OCC will continue monitoring the implementation of the recommendations from the Report.

The OCC thanks the young people interviewed whilst at Safe Care facility, TFHC, the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Department of Health for their cooperation and collaboration with the OCC throughout the monitoring process.



Quotes from A/ Children's Commissioner, Sally Sievers:

- TFHC have advised they are progressing through the recommendations in this report and will provide updates to OCC.
- If done properly, Safe Care facility has the potential to offer a vital service to the Territory's children who are most at need, in order to help them thrive.

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