



21 June 2019

Media Statement

The first independent monitoring reports of the Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) have been tabled in the Northern Territory Parliament.

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Hon Natasha Fyles MLA, tabled the reports during yesterday's (20 June) parliamentary session.

A total of 26 recommendations have been made across these two reports.

Positive and important changes have been made in relation to the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, however the OCC has ongoing concerns in regard to the management of separation within the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre.

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory emphasised "the importance of independent scrutiny" in the context of ensuring that the rights of children being held in detention are both respected and upheld.

Commissioner Colleen Gwynne stated: "In the absence of legislation to equip my office with the powers to undertake these inspections there is a reliance on the full cooperation of the Department of Territory Families. The Department has a culture that welcomes oversight and monitoring and sees such scrutiny as an opportunity to improve operations and reduce risk."

Recommendations from these reports are designed, firstly, to address any immediate risks to the wellbeing of young people and staff in detention and secondly, to complement the reform framework identified in the report of the Royal Commission and the reform agenda committed to by Northern Territory Government.

The full reports are available at www.occ.nt.gov.au.

Quotes from Children's Commissioner, Colleen Gwynne:

"The benefits of proactive monitoring and inspections cannot be overstated, to be in the centres and examine the systemic gaps as a proactive measure makes sense. We are moving from an approach that relied on complaints as the primary information source, which is problematic, as young people are less likely to use such formal processes, and language and literacy may also be an impediment to speaking with the OCC."

"Conditions within the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre remain a significant priority. The refurbishment of the Centre is urgent, consideration must be given to finding an interim alternative until works can be finalised."

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