

MEDIA RELEASE

REVIEW OF YOUTH CUSTODY: FOLLOW-UP TO 2023 INSPECTION (PART TWO)

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12PM, 19 DECEMBER 2024

Today the Inspector of Custodial Services, Eamon Ryan, has released his follow-up report to the 2023 inspection of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Unit 18 at Casuarina Prison. The report focussed on access to services and welfare supports for young people in custody and the facilities' challenges and progress since February 2023. Mr Ryan noted there had been improvements in young people's time spent out of cell, as well as increased access to education, programs, and activities. Culturally safe and secure practices had been and were continuing to be embedded, while there was also better access to health services, screening, and support.

However, Mr Ryan was cautious as it was only early days, and there was still much to do in the implementation of the Model of Care. He said he wants to see wholesale, system-level reform:

Within this follow-up report I have highlighted several 'green shoots'; positive examples where the Department of Justice has made inroads addressing the crises we identified not only in our 2023 inspection, but many times before. We are pleased there has been tangible progress in various areas.

However, what we have also seen since our last inspection is the very lowest and most tragic point for Youth Custodial Services with two young men tragically taking their lives. We all must accept some level of responsibility for these outcomes, myself included. I have constantly asked myself if we could have done more or advocated harder for change. But what is absolutely clear is that we must not let these devastating events be repeated. Urgent, meaningful, and enduring reform to the youth justice system must occur and every Western Australian has a responsibility to ensure this happens.

Mr Ryan also noted that prior to his report being lodged with Parliament on 18 November 2024, the Department had not provided a response to his findings or recommendations. The response was received on 10 December 2024:

I am pleased to see the Department was generally supportive of the report and its recommendations, particularly expanding the Model of Care to include Unit 18. However, I am disappointed the Department has not supported establishing a youth care role separate to custodial staff. I believe there can be many lessons learned from other jurisdictions which have faced similar challenges to Western Australia, and this recommendation underpins many of those lessons.

Despite this, my Office is keen to see the 'green shoots' grow. We will continue to monitor Banksia Hill and Unit 18 closely, and I call on the Department to publicly and accountably state what it believes good looks like for young people held in custody.

Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services

For Further Media Information

The Inspector, Mr Ryan, will be available for comment from 12 noon on Thursday 19 December 2024 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.

The full report will be available on the Inspector's website (www.oics.wa.gov.au).

The response to the report from the Department of Justice can be found here:

<https://www.oics.wa.gov.au/reports/review-of-youth-custody-follow-up-to-2023-inspection-part-two/background/>