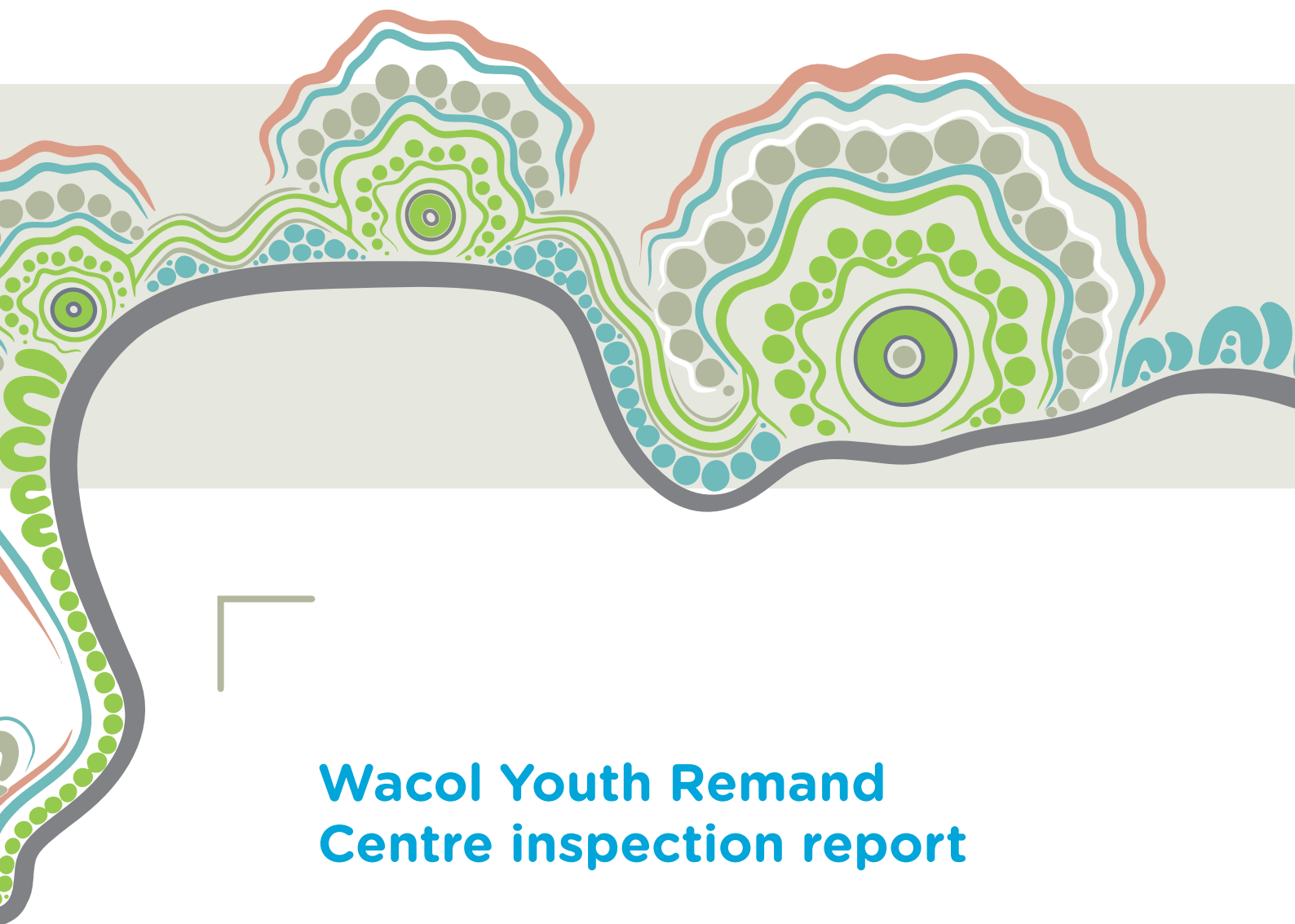


Inspector of Detention Services



Wacol Youth Remand Centre inspection report

October 2026



QUEENSLAND
OMBUDSMAN



Nathaniel Chapman

Leaving Our Mark (2023)

Digital artwork (cover uses elements)

© Office of the Queensland Ombudsman.

Nathaniel Chapman is a Goenpul/Yagara man from Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and Magandjin (Brisbane) with ancestral ties to the Wambia Tribe in the Northern Territory and Wakka Wakka Country in Eidsvold, Queensland.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land throughout Queensland and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Authority

The Inspector of Detention Services prepared this report for the Speaker under the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022*. The final report was given to the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

Public

This document is released to the public space.
It is approved for public distribution and readership.

© The State of Queensland (Office of the Queensland Ombudsman) 2026.

The Queensland Ombudsman supports and encourages the dissemination of its information. The copyright in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC BY-NC-ND) 4.0 International licence.



To view this licence visit:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Under this licence you are free, without having to seek permission from the Queensland Ombudsman, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms. For permissions beyond the scope of this licence, contact this Office.

Content from this report should be attributed to the Inspector of Detention Services, Office of the Queensland Ombudsman, *Wacol Youth Remand Centre inspection report*, October 2026.

ISBN: 978-1-7640973-1-4

Inspector of Detention Services
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
Level 19, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
GPO Box 3314, Brisbane QLD 4001

Phone: (07) 3005 7000

Email: inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Web: ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Contents

Snapshot	5
Recommendations	7
Introduction	9
Role of the Inspector of Detention Services	15
Our approach to this report	16
Our inspection process	16
Acknowledgements	17
Submissions	17
1. Protecting basic rights of children in a diverse and predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	18
Cultural support for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children at the centre	19
2. Early days in the youth detention centre	21
Phone calls during the admission process	24
The centre's induction process	26
3. Duty of care	29
Managing children's suicide and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) risk	30
Suicide risk observations	32
Staff shortage and risk-based separations	34
Requests and complaints	37
The transfer process	39
4. Managing behaviour	41
The centre's incentive model	42
Returning children to the centre for behavioural management reasons	44
5. Daily life	52
A youth detention centre in watch-house infrastructure	52
Centre hygiene and graffiti	59
Daily routine	60
Facilities for time outside of room and recreation	65
Contact with family and community	67
Food and nutrition	73

6. Health and support	76
Health services provided to children at the centre	76
7. Security	79
Routine partially clothed searches	80
8. Rehabilitation and preparation for release	85
Case management and service delivery	86
Education provided to children at the centre	87
Leave of absence	89
9. Equity and diversity	91
The management of girls at the centre	92
10. Governance	94
Youth detention centre operating model	94
Delays in the centre's review of incidents	95
Governance of risk-based transfers to the centre	97
12. Appendices	99
Appendix A: Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support submission	99
Appendix B: Queensland Police Service submission	111
Appendix C: Office of the Health Ombudsman submission	113
Appendix D: Office of the Public Guardian submission	118
Appendix E: Queensland Health submission	121
Appendix F: Minister for Education and the Arts submission	123
Appendix G: West Moreton Hospital and Health Service submission	125

Snapshot

The Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) is located at Wacol, near the Brisbane and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres (YDCs). It was opened in April 2025 because of issues with capacity at other YDCs. It was also intended to prevent children from being held in Queensland Police Service (QPS) watch-houses for extended periods of time.

The centre is designed to accommodate recently arrested children from across the state. This includes children from north Queensland, when the Cleveland YDC does not have enough capacity.

Children receive better support in the centre, from the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support, than they would in a QPS watch-house. They also receive specialised health and education services.

However, the facility was originally designed and built to serve as a secure watch-house for QPS. Its infrastructure is austere and institutional. As with other watch-houses, there is a lack of space, privacy and natural light, which children need. Additionally, the centre's inadequate telephone facilities hinder children's ability to maintain contact with their families and other important people.

While we found that most children spend under a week at the centre, not all are moved quickly, and in some cases, they have stayed for over a month. Additionally, we are concerned to find the department sometimes returns complex and high-risk children back to the centre from YDCs they have been placed in.

Due to these and other concerns, we recommend that the department ensures children remain at the centre for as short a time as possible.

Since we undertook our onsite inspection, the centre has made meaningful efforts to address a number of our initial concerns:

- The centre's body scanners are now operational, which has resulted in a reduction in the centre's reliance on partially clothed searches (also known as strip searches).
- The centre is working with QPS to increase children's access to phone calls.
- The centre's Incident Oversight Committee is making progress in resolving the centre's significant backlog in reviewing use-of-force incidents.
- Children are now provided with pastoral services to support their spiritual and emotional wellbeing.
- One child has been able to access reintegration activity at West Moreton YDC.
- The centre has worked with its external caterer to improve the standard of meals provided to children.
- The centre has recruited mental health clinicians who are involved in suicide risk assessments.

While these improvements are welcome, they do not overcome the fundamental problem of detaining children in a centre that was designed and built as a secure watch-house.

Wacol Youth Remand Centre

The Wacol Youth Remand Centre is a watch-house. However, it was designated a youth detention centre to allow children to be held there while waiting for a room in one of the state's 3 other youth detention centres.

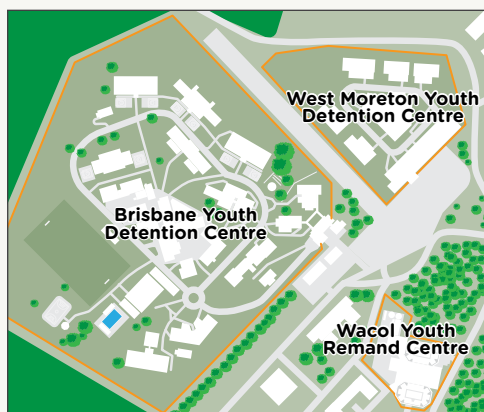
The centre's operating capacity is 76. Safe capacity is 64 (safe capacity is standardised nationally at 85% of the capacity the centre was built for).

Children can access:

- education
- a health clinic (24 hours, 7 days a week)
- recreational activities
- recreational, therapeutic and change-orientated programs (limited).

Children have limited access to outdoor facilities given the built environment.

The centre can grant children leaves of absence to attend Brisbane or West Moreton YDCs to access programs or green space.



Location

The Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) is located at Wacol, Brisbane. This is the traditional land of the Ugarapul and Yuggera nation and its people.



Onsite inspection dates

7, 9, 14-15, 19 October 2025

On 7 October 2025, the centre had:



3
girls

22
boys



4
accommodation units,
which the centre calls 'pods'

an operating
capacity of



76
(number of prisoners the
centre is approved to hold)



11
(44%) who identified as
Australian First Nations
children



Medical

The medical centre is run by
the West Moreton Hospital
and Health Service

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures:

- children only remain at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for as short a time as possible
- withdrawn.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support assists the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to build strong relationships with Australian First Nations communities and Elder groups to boost engagement with children at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to ensure:

- children have an opportunity to make a phone call to family, a guardian or another personal support person as soon as possible after admission
- the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents attempts to make the phone call and the completion of the phone call
- the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents when a child declines an offer of a phone call.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures inductions are conducted for all children entering the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, within the required timeframes.

Recommendation 5

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to develop a process that ensures audits of mandatory observation requirements are conducted.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim support ensures the phone facilities at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre allow for the selection of phone calls from an autodial list. This is available at other youth detention centres, to protect the confidentiality of calls.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that when children are transferred because of the Risk Assessment and Management Panel process:

- behaviour support plans are developed or reviewed for all children transferred
- reintegration plans are developed, with clear behavioural expectations, to ensure children stay at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for the shortest possible time
- behaviour support and reintegration plans are communicated to the children.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support implements additional temporary infrastructure enhancements to further soften the Wacol Youth Remand Centre's harsh and institutional built environment.

Recommendation 9

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support collaborates with the Queensland Police Service to increase the number of authorised phone numbers that can be stored on the phone system.

Recommendation 10

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and the Wacol Youth Remand Centre ensure:

- children receive a minimum of 120 minutes of weekly personal phone time
- available phone contacts are not unreasonably restricted to immediate family members.

Recommendation 11

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that children who have been accommodated at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for extended periods of time are prioritised for leaves of absence to access programs and facilities at the Brisbane and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres.

Recommendation 12

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that the incident review and oversight mechanism is in place when the Woodford Youth Detention Centre opens.

Recommendation 13

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that only a senior executive director can approve the transfer of children from a placement youth detention centre to the Wacol Youth Remand Centre through the Risk Assessment and Management Plan process. The senior executive should consider:

- a risk assessment developed by a multidisciplinary team that explains the immediate risk the child poses to the placement youth detention centre's safety and security
- a clear justification why accommodation at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre is appropriate
- a plan documenting the support to be provided to the child to ensure their return to a placement youth detention centre.

Introduction

The Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) was opened on 2 April 2025, when the first admission took place. It was intended to house children who were waiting for a bed in a youth detention centre (YDC). It was also meant to provide an alternative to holding children in Queensland Police Service (QPS) watch-houses for more than short stays.

The centre is a secure facility for children aged 10–18 who have been arrested and refused bail following an alleged offence. The centre accommodates recently arrested children from across the state – including from north Queensland, when the Cleveland YDC does not have sufficient capacity.

As a remand centre, the facility's primary functions are the reception and short-term placement of children until they are transferred to a place in a YDC or released directly to the community by the court.

The centre is a state-of-the-art secure facility, but it is not a purpose-built YDC. Its infrastructure, based on police watch-house requirements, is intended for short-term detention. It is designed to hold individuals immediately following arrest and before they are granted bail, released or transferred to a court or prison.

The plan has been for the centre to temporarily operate as a YDC until the first stage of the Woodford YDC is opened. The intent has been that the facility will be handed back to QPS once that occurs.

There are 48 individual rooms and 76 beds across the facility. The safe operating capacity of the centre is 85% of its built capacity, which is 65 beds. However, the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support's current policy requirements allow room sharing only where it is assessed as safe to do so. This is consistent with our Inspection standards.

Holding children in watch-houses

Prior to the centre being completed, the Queensland Family and Child Commission criticised the practice of accommodating children in QPS-run watch-houses in its 2023 report: *Who's responsible: Understanding why young people are being held longer in Queensland watch-houses*.

We were also critical of the practice in our 2024 report: *Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report: Focus on detention of children* (Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report).

The criticism focused on the number of children in watch-houses as well as the extended time some were kept there before being transferred to a YDC. Each report found the watch-house environments made them unsuitable for accommodating children, due to their design and lack of appropriate supports. The reports also raised concerns that children were sometimes detained in proximity to adult detainees.

The Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report found that the detention of children in watch-houses creates risk of harm and should be avoided. The report further stated that if detained in a watch-house, children should be held for the minimum time possible and transferred to a more suitable facility as soon as possible.

The QPS's *Watch-house review* was released in June 2025, shortly after the centre started operating. It was also not supportive of the practice of accommodating children in QPS-run watch-houses. It found that they are not equipped to provide the space, privacy, natural light or support needed for children's physical and psychological wellbeing.

A watch-house temporarily operating as a youth detention centre

The centre's temporary designation as a YDC allows the department to operate the facility instead of QPS. The designation also means that only children can be detained at the centre. The department's staff facilitate the centre's daily routine and are responsible for the safety and good order of the centre as well as the children's wellbeing.

The centre operates on a model similar to existing YDCs, but it has a simpler incentive system and delivers a different range of activities for children. Its Wacol Youth Remand Education Support Hub (education support hub) provides children with a daily routine of education classes. Children also have access to child-focused health care through the centre's 24/7 health clinic.

The most significant difference between the centre and existing YDCs is its built environment, which was not designed to accommodate children. Instead, it was built to maximise durability. All surfaces are of hardened concrete and stainless steel, which creates an overwhelmingly institutional environment.

Similarly, children's living areas are confined and lack privacy. Most importantly, the centre lacks outdoor spaces, and children have limited access to fresh air and natural light.

Our inspection found the centre's child-focused workforce and support services represent a significant improvement over the inappropriate conditions previously described in the 3 reports we have mentioned. Despite these improvements, the negative impact of the centre's built environment means it remains an unsuitable place to accommodate children for extended periods.

The centre officially started operating in April 2025. At the time of our inspection, we were able to review records for the centre, as well as practices that had been in place for a period of 7 months. Since our inspection, we have engaged in ongoing consultation with the department, and it has provided us with updated records to support our enquiries.

The length of time children stay at the centre

Over the course of our inspection and subsequent engagement with the department, we received changing advice regarding children's average length of stay at the centre. Due to this, we requested updated length-of-stay data from the department. The most recent data set provided to us was current as of 13 March 2026.

Due to poor reporting functionality in the department's Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS), the centre manually provided the additional information. Our previous inspection reports have identified issues with DCOIS and its ability to generate reliable information.

The most current length-of-stay data provided by the department covered the period from 1 April 2025 to 13 March 2026. This data showed that since opening, the average length of time children had stayed at the centre was 7.1 days.

The centre accommodates children from all over the state, split between 2 catchments. The Cleveland catchment includes all children north of Rockhampton, and the Brisbane catchment includes all children from Rockhampton to south Queensland.

As of 13 March 2026, 87% of the children admitted to the centre were from the Brisbane catchment and the remainder were from the Cleveland catchment. Children from the Cleveland catchment specifically spent an average of 8.7 days at the centre which is just under 2 days longer than the 6.9 day average for children from the Brisbane catchment.

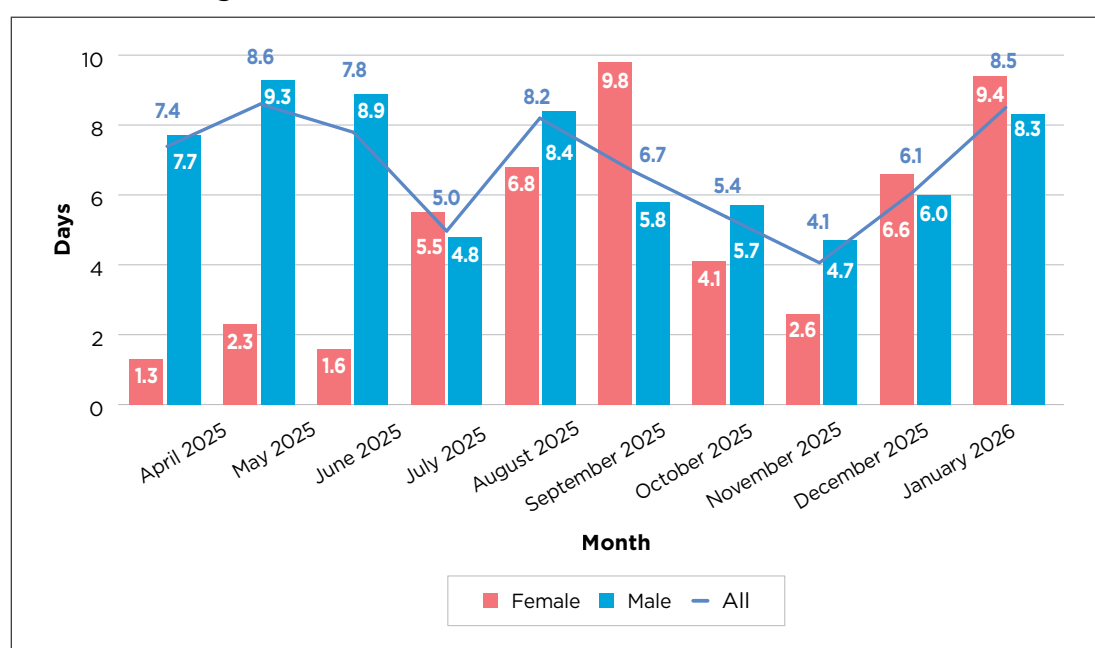
Early length-of-stay data provided to us covered the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 July 2025. This showed children from the Cleveland catchment were, on average, spending 12.3 days at the centre – more than double the average 5.7 days for children from the Brisbane catchment.

During our inspection, we were notified of differences in the average length of stay between male and female children. As the data initially provided to us did not record children's gender details, we requested updated data from the department.

The department provided us with 2 separate datasets, manually collated and in different formats. The first covered the period between April 2025 and January 2026 and showed the monthly average length of stay by gender.

The second and most recent dataset was for the period between April 2025 and March 2026 and records all children admitted to the centre. This contained incomplete gender details, and we have not relied on it to understand length-of-stay trends related to gender. Graph 1 shows the gender differences in stay and was created from the earlier dataset.

Graph 1: Average length of stay of children by month, gender and as a combined average



Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support for the period April 2025 to January 2026.

The data also revealed notable variations and discrepancies in the monthly average length of stay for both male and female children. However, female children experienced more dramatic fluctuations in length of stay.

The length of stay for female children was lowest in April and May 2025 (1.3 and 2.3 days respectively), then rose sharply in later months, reaching peaks of 9.8 days in September 2025 and 9.4 days in January 2026.

The length of stay for male children remained more stable but showed a consistent upward trend towards the end of 2025, culminating in an average of 8.3 days in January 2026.

These variations suggest that operational pressures, such as limitations on available beds in specific YDCs, may affect different groups of children in different ways.

We were advised by the department that longer stays at the centre for late 2025 and early 2026 were driven in part by a rise in youth arrests. This increased demand for admissions and contributed to a backlog at the centre.

Female children were particularly affected by delays in the availability of beds at the Brisbane YDC. In January 2026, fewer females were released than anticipated, resulting in longer waits at the centre for them.

The subsequent increase in length of stay highlights the influence of system-wide capacity constraints, including available beds in YDCs, variations in arrest rates and gender-specific pressures.

Taken together, the data provides a comprehensive picture of the centre’s length-of-stay patterns. It also underscores the importance of continued monitoring to ensure that stays remain as short as practicable, consistent with the department’s stated intent.

In line with the department’s aim of reducing the amount of time children are held at the centre, 62% of the children transferred to other YDCs or released back into the community between 1 April 2025 and 13 March 2026 stayed at the centre for 7 days or less.

Table 1: Length of stay of children at Wacol Youth Remand Centre

Length of stay	0–7 days	8–14 days (between 1 and 2 weeks)	15–21 days (between 2 and 3 weeks)	22–29 days (between 3 and 4 weeks)	30+ days (over 4 weeks)	Total
Number of children	694	297	111	9	8	1,119
Percentage of children	62%	26%	10%	1%	1%	100

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support for the period from 1 April 2025 to 13 March 2026.

The longest amount of time a child spent at the centre was 49 days over the period of time from November 2025 to January 2026. The child was transferred to the centre from West Moreton YDC as part of a risk mitigation and behaviour support strategy. We will examine the department’s practice of transferring children from a placement YDC back to the centre in Chapter 4.

During our time onsite, and in subsequent interviews, staff and managers consistently told us the centre was primarily for the short-term accommodation of children. This theme is consistent with the department’s policy direction to minimise the length of time each young person is held there. We also heard from staff that the centre’s infrastructure meant it was not suitable for accommodating children for longer periods of time.

Throughout the inspection, staff told us about the centre’s lack of grass and natural light, and limited time outdoors having a negative impact on children’s mental health. They could not specify exactly when they first noticed a decline in a child’s mental health, as children react differently. However, they observed that signs usually appeared after the child had been at the centre for about 2 weeks.

Staff told us that children are initially happy to leave the police watch-house when they arrive at the centre. However, after a few days, they become restless, which can result in poor behaviour and incidents.

Additionally, staff spoke about some children from north Queensland, who, after spending extended periods at the centre, displayed negative behaviours and engaged in acts of self-harm to influence and expedite their transfer to another centre.

In feedback to this report, the department provided us with a case study of a child it advised benefited from the support provided at the centre, where they were accommodated for 32 days in 2025. This support included:

- providing predictable routines, developing strategies to respond to the child's sensory needs, and showing respectful and simple communication
- staff understanding the child's triggers, adapting to their needs and creating a calm, consistent environment to support emotional regulation
- using the existing infrastructure of a 2-bed pod in the centre as the child's space. One room is the bedroom and the other is used as a sensory room, with colour and soft furnishings added.

The department compared this to managing the child in Brisbane YDC, where the larger detention environment meant strategies could not be tailored to reduce triggers for the child's underlying conditions and dysregulated behaviour. The department further added that Brisbane YDC does not have the capacity to provide individualised behavioural management approaches or sensory accommodation that reduces the noise that comes with a larger YDC.

We acknowledge the case study provided to us by the department carefully outlines the individualised support provided to the child. The actions taken, specifically adjusting an accommodation pod to support the child to have their own quiet and sensory space, could not be achieved in a larger YDC. However, we are concerned that individualised support, and the other strategies outlined above, cannot be provided to children at Brisbane YDC.

We also consulted with organisations that are involved with the centre. They indicated that children were using the services available to them to raise concerns and complaints about their length of stay at the centre. The trends identified in the length-of-stay complaints, including for children who had been at the centre for up to 28 days, indicated the impact it was having on them.

The concerns raised included:

- A lack of exposure to sunlight and fresh air, and an inability to touch grass, had an impact on their mental health.
- Irregular access to the courtyard limited their access to sunlight and fresh air.
- They were struggling, being so far away from home in north Queensland.
- Children from north Queensland were frustrated when they saw children from south-east Queensland getting placement in a YDC before they did.

In Chapter 3, we discuss in further detail the centre's process for responding to children's complaints.

An update from the department

On 13 January 2026, we informed the centre management of several concerns and positive practices we identified during the onsite inspection. We advised we were worried some children were being accommodated at the centre for extended periods and that this could be harmful to their wellbeing.

On 15 February 2026, the department provided us with a detailed response to our initial concerns. It acknowledged that capacity constraints at placement YDCs can delay transfers of children to those centres.

The department also acknowledged the centre's infrastructure limitations, but emphasised that the alternative to accommodating children at the centre was their continued placement in QPS-run watch-houses.

It stated that the centre provided a significantly safer and more appropriate interim option to QPS-run watch-houses, which are not designed, staffed, or equipped to meet the safety, developmental or wellbeing needs of children.

It also provided us with statistics that show children have, on average, spent a significantly shorter period in QPS-run watch-houses since the centre started operations:

- In July 2024, children spent an average of 12.5 days in watch-houses. By comparison, for the same period in 2025 since the centre opened, children have spent an average of 2.4 days in a watch-house.
- In August 2024, children spent an average of 8 days in watch-houses. For the same period in 2025 since the centre opened, children spent an average of 2.7 days in a watch-house.
- Prior to the centre opening, the longest length of stay for children in watch-houses was 27 days. Since it has opened, the longest length of stay for children in a watch-house has been 7 days – which was due to court appearances and unavoidable logistics involved in transport.

The impact on youth detention centre utilisation rates

The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2026* shows that in 2023–24, Queensland had the highest number of children detained in a youth detention centre in the country. It also had the highest utilisation rate in the country – 99.6%. This means that on an average night across that year, 99.6% of the available accommodation in Queensland's YDCs was being used.

The utilisation rate for 2024–25 dropped to 78.3% because of the introduction of an extra 76 beds to Queensland's YDC capacity through the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) opening.

On the first day of the onsite inspection in October 2025, 25 children were being held at the centre. The department told us that in the 12 months ending 30 June 2026, the average daily number of children at the centre was 32. However, the number has significantly increased since then. In July 2026, the average daily number of children held at the centre was 52 and in August 2026 it was 54.

This shows the number of children being detained has increased. While the children wait for a bed in either West Moreton, Brisbane or Cleveland YDCs, the benefits of the capacity increase created by the centre are being diminished.

Breach Bail, Go To Jail and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2026

In our original consultation draft of this report, we included a second dot point as part of recommendation 1 that the centre cease to be used as a YDC once Woodford YDC was operational. This draft recommendation was based upon our concern about the centre's infrastructure limitations.

However, since that time, the Breach Bail, Go To Jail and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2026 has been introduced to the Queensland Parliament. In its *Human Rights Act 2019 Statement of Compatibility*, the government has anticipated that the Bill's reforms will:

- increase the number of children and adults held on remand or otherwise detained in youth detention centres or police watch-houses
- impact the right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty and may also engage the right to protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

In relation to watch-houses specifically, the government has stated in the Statement of compatibility to the Bill, that:

Increased detention in police watch-houses may affect decisions concerning the placement, classification, transfer and separation of detainees, movements within and between facilities, staffing and security arrangements, as well as access to health, rehabilitation, education and other services (p. 5).

In the year ahead, it may be the case that the impacts of the above reforms are such that the existing 3 YDCs and the new Woodford YDC do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the number of children that our criminal justice system requires to be detained. As a consequence, it is possible that children will need to be detained in large numbers and for lengthy periods in watch-houses.

In this scenario, it would be beneficial for the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to continue to be available to accommodate children to minimise the number of children detained in watch-houses, and the length of their stay. While we do not consider the centre to be a suitable facility for the detention of children, we consider it to be more suitable than detention in police watch-houses.

We have already commenced the second inspection of the centre and will report on its outcomes in 2027. By the time the second inspection is completed, the outcomes arising from the Breach Bail, Go to Jail and other Acts Amendment Bill will be better understood, including its impacts on the capacity of facilities that detain children. We will address these issues further in that report.

Recommendation 1

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures:

- children only remain at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for as short a time as possible
- withdrawn.

Role of the Inspector of Detention Services

The Inspector of Detention Services was established under the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022* (the Act) to provide independent oversight of detention services and places of detention in Queensland.

The purpose of the Act is to promote the improvement of detention services and places of detention, with a focus on humane treatment of detainees and preventing them from being subjected to harm.

Key functions of the Act involve inspecting detention services and places of detention (once every year for youth detention centres and once every 5 years for adult prisons), and then reporting to the Legislative Assembly with advice and recommendations.

As required by the Act, in August 2023, the Inspector of Detention Services published *Inspection standards for Queensland youth detention centres* (the standards). These are designed to provide consistent, transparent assessments of YDCs and are intended to protect the basic rights of people in these centres.

Throughout this report, we refer to relevant standards from this document.

Our approach to this report

As we inspect youth detention centres annually, our inspections have been focused on several topic areas. The department advised us that the intention of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre is to be a temporary facility to reduce the time children spend in QPS-run watch-houses. It also made it clear that it is designated as a youth detention centre. For these reasons, we have considered all our standards in this inspection.

This report highlights the fact that the centre lacks suitable infrastructure to be holding children for long periods of time. We acknowledge the facility was built by QPS to be used as a watch-house, with the intention to return it to QPS once the Woodford Youth Detention Centre is opened; therefore, our recommendations involving improving facilities are assigned to the department and QPS.

With the temporary nature of the centre in mind, the 13 recommendations we have made in this report seek to ensure improvements to the conditions of detention and the services provided to children, in the shortest possible time.

Our inspection process

The inspection process included:

- reviewing information from relevant reports
- reviewing relevant legislation and policies
- assessing data held on the department's 2 information systems: the Detention Centre Operational Information System and Unify
- obtaining information from the entities responsible for providing YDC services, including the department, West Moreton Hospital and Health Services and the Department of Education
- seeking submissions from other government bodies
- engaging with service providers who attend the centre
- seeking submissions from community organisations
- engaging with community service providers including Aboriginal organisations and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations
- interviewing and engaging with staff at the centres, including managers and operational and therapeutic staff
- attending the centres to conduct onsite inspections
- observing (during the onsite inspections)
 - admission areas
 - accommodation pods
 - children's daily routine
 - meetings
 - exercise facilities
 - visitor facilities
- listening to the children detained at the centres.

Table 2: Review period and onsite attendance dates

Timeframe for which data was required or reviewed (review period)	Onsite dates
1 April – 31 July 2025	7, 9, 14–15, and 19 October 2025

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support and assistance we received throughout the inspection process from the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and its staff at the centre.

We also acknowledge the assistance of medical centre staff from West Moreton Hospital and Health Services and staff from the Department of Education.

A range of government and non-government stakeholders provided valuable information during the inspection process, and we thank them for that.

Finally, we acknowledge and thank the young people who took the time to speak to us and share information about their experiences within the centre.

Submissions

As is required by section 24 of the Act, on 1 June 2026, we provided a consultation draft of this report to a number of entities to allow them to make submissions. The entities that provided submissions, and the dates those submissions were received, are as follows:

Table 3: Submissions received

Date	Agency
7 September 2026	Queensland Police Service
27 July 2026	Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support. Note: Attachments referred to in the submission have been reviewed but are not included in the appendix to this report.
13 July 2026	Office of the Health Ombudsman
8 July 2026	Queensland Health
6 July 2026	Minister for Education and the Arts
6 July 2026	Office of the Public Guardian
29 June 2026	West Moreton Hospital and Health Service

We carefully considered each of the submissions prior to finalising this report. Where we considered it relevant, some of the information provided in the submissions has been included in the report.

We have included the submission of each entity, in full, at the end of this report.

1. Protecting basic rights of children in a diverse and predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system in Australia. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Aboriginal young people and Torres Strait Islander young people were 21 times more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be in detention in the June quarter 2025.

The AIHW also indicated that the rate of detention of young people aged 10-17 increased in Queensland over a 3-year period from June 2021 to June 2024, from 33 to 40 per 10,000 young people.

Australian First Nations children accounted for between 40% and 80% of the total population of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) from 1 April to 31 October 2025. The Australian First Nations children detained at the centre come from communities across Queensland.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission's (QFCC) 2024 report, *Exiting youth detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support*, highlights the importance of cultural connection for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children detained in Queensland's youth detention centres (YDCs).

The report was informed by engagement with detained children, their families and front-line youth detention staff. Through these discussions, the QFCC found:

Having a sense of belonging and connection to people, country and culture is incredibly important to the young people we spoke with. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, told us culture is a central element of creating strength, support and direction (p. 8).

The following section of our report considers the cultural support provided to Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support. It also examines children's ability to maintain contact with community and Elders.

Cultural support for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children at the centre

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in youth detention centres have fair and equitable access to services, activities and facilities, including services specifically relating to their cultural identity.
- 38 Support from a child's family and community is encouraged.
- 39 Children's connections to the community are strengthened by participation in interventions and activities involving relevant government and non-government agencies, community organisations and Elders.
- 40 Children are detained as close as possible to their home region.

Principle 3 of the department's *Philosophy of youth detention services* states: 'Services must be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people.' It further explains that:

cultural safety will be promoted in the detention centre environment through initiatives that demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, such as celebration of significant events and dates, cultural art showcases, participation in cultural practices such as Yarning Circles and invitation of visiting supports such as Elders and Cultural Healers (p. 2).

Principle 3 of the philosophy further states that the people most able to provide a culturally safe environment to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people' (p. 2).

The philosophy identifies the establishment of cultural units and cultural liaison officers (CLOs) within each YDC as a key mechanism to build and support cultural capability across all aspects of youth detention delivery.

While the centre is funded to employ 2 CLOs, it does not have an established cultural unit resourced to the same degree as other YDCs. This means it does not have a cultural manager position that would oversee the unit and be part of the centre leadership group. We were informed that the centre's CLOs can seek cultural guidance from the cultural unit manager based at the Brisbane YDC.

During our time onsite, we engaged with the centre's 2 CLOs, who told us they had a greater capacity to engage with Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children than in other YDCs due to the centre's smaller population.

We observed children participating in a cultural art activity facilitated by CLOs in an accommodation pod. The children were given paint, canvases, stencils and paper featuring Australian First Nations symbols. The department advised us that additional cultural activities include cultural cooking, didgeridoo programs and cultural visits from external stakeholders offering Elder engagement and activities such as cultural dance.

Positively, there is a collaborative partnership among cultural units in the Wacol precinct, and CLOs are actively engaging with children at different centres. During our inspection, both CLOs at the centre were female, but we were told that male CLOs from Brisbane YDC regularly attend to provide gender-sensitive cultural support for young men at the centre.

Visits and engagement

The department's *YD-1-8 Youth detention – Visits to young people* policy states that YDCs will actively support Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children to strengthen their relationships with their families and communities. The policy further states that Elders and respected community members will be proactively engaged to support children and promote their sense of cultural identity and belonging.

Our inspection found the centre had limited engagement with First Nations Elder groups in the Brisbane area. The local Elder group had been onsite only once since the centre's commissioning, for a NAIDOC event. One factor affecting this situation is the lack of a cultural unit manager or a community engagement officer to provide a dedicated focus on community engagement.

Strengthening the relationships of young people at the centre with their families and communities is made more difficult by the fact that they are transferred to the centre from across Queensland. As a result, they are often far away from their home community.

While roughly 80% of the children admitted to the centre are from the Brisbane catchment (Rockhampton and below), the remaining 20% are from the Cleveland catchment (above Rockhampton). Nearly all children from the Cleveland catchment identify as an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander person.

For Australian First Nations Elder groups from the Cleveland catchment, particularly from remote areas, attending the centre in person is logistically challenging. No such visits have occurred.

Relevant to this challenge, the *YD-1-8 Youth detention – Visits to young people* policy states that if face-to-face visits are unable to occur, YDCs will make every reasonable effort to facilitate increased phone and/or video call contact between young people and their visitors.

The centre informed us that CLOs have worked with caseworkers from north Queensland community Youth Justice Centres to ensure children from remote communities are able to make phone contact with family members and community. During our inspection, we did not receive feedback from any children from far north Queensland about the level of phone and video contact they had with Elders and significant people.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support assists the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to build strong relationships with Australian First Nations communities and Elder groups to boost engagement with children at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre.

2. Early days in the youth detention centre

Since early April 2025, the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) has served as the primary reception and admission centre for all recently arrested children who cannot secure bail from police or the court. Its catchment area currently covers the entire state, including young people transferred from north and far north Queensland watch-houses when the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (YDC) reaches capacity.

Relevant legislation and policy

The authority to detain a child following an offence is governed by the *Youth Justice Act 1992*. According to s 54 of the Act, a child must be held in the custody of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) – in a watch-house, or in the custody of the department – in a YDC. QPS must make arrangements with the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support for an arrested child, wherever practicable, to be placed in a detention centre until brought before a court.

Admission of a child to a YDC is managed by the department's *YD-2-1 Youth detention – Admission of a young person* policy. This states that YDCs must ensure all admissions are legal and promote the safety, wellbeing and human rights of young people. The admission process follows the following steps:

1. Prioritisation of children for admission.
2. Confirmation of the legality of a child's admission.
3. Risk assessments, complaints and other considerations.
4. Induction.

Prioritisation of admissions

The *YD-2-1 Youth detention – admission of a young person* policy states that, during periods when demand for beds exceeds YDC capacity, the department will operate admission prioritisation processes. This is to ensure those most vulnerable are prioritised for admission, as per ss. 56 and 210 of the *Youth Justice Act*. These processes are led by a central team called the Admission Coordination Unit (ACU). It coordinates admissions for all centres.

The ACU provides daily advice to YDCs about prioritisation, based on an assessment of a child's risks, needs and vulnerability. According to the policy, prioritisation also considers other relevant factors such as:

- operational, safety and security and workforce factors
- out-of-catchment transfers necessary to ensure young people are admitted to the first available bed
- time spent in a watch-house (which is to be minimised).

Once prioritisation advice is received, the responsibility passes to the YDC to oversee and conduct the admission process. YDC shift supervisors reserve available beds and contact the relevant watch-houses to confirm acceptance of the admission and request transfer of the child.

Prioritisation provided by the ACU also influences children's transfers out of the centre to placement YDCs, which we discuss in further detail in Chapter 3.

Once children are transferred to the centre, various elements of the admissions process are completed by detention youth workers, members of the centre's client services team (which includes case workers, mental health clinicians and cultural liaison officers) and Queensland Health nurses.

Detention youth workers conducting the admission process confirm there is lawful authority to detain each child by ensuring they have received relevant legal documents. Otherwise, the admission cannot proceed. Information provided to us by the department did not raise any concerns regarding children being unlawfully detained at any centre during the review period.

Health assessments

According to the department's *YD-1-5 Youth detention – Provision of medical and other health services* policy, all young people must be assessed by health staff upon admission and before being moved to an accommodation section.

West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (HHS) nursing staff are rostered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and complete health assessments for children on admission. The nurses employed by West Moreton HHS are either enrolled, registered or clinical nurses. The nurses are trained in primary health care and undertake several specific programs to support service delivery including culturally appropriate services.

West Moreton HHS provided us with information relating to the training and training completion rates for their staff in the YDCs. There was no record of training provided to nursing staff that would support their involvement in suicide risk assessments. This was confirmed by the Queensland Health submission (Appendix E) to this report, which identified the Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Service as responsible for delivering mental health, alcohol and other drug services to the centre and Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs.

Children are assessed by a nurse twice during their initial admission to the centre. The first assessment is a brief examination that confirms the child is fit to be taken from police custody and admitted to a YDC. Once the child has undergone an admissions search, the nurse completes a second, more thorough health assessment in the centre's health clinic.

We were present for the admission process for several children during our inspection. For each admission, an enrolled nurse was present to complete an initial health assessment upon the children's release from the police vehicle.

The health assessments we observed were completed quickly and appeared to consist of a brief visual head-to-toe examination and some additional clarifying questions. Children were released from QPS custody to the care of the centre only after the nurse confirmed that the child was medically fit.

Out of respect for children's privacy, we did not observe the more thorough admission health assessments undertaken in the centre's health clinic. We made no observations and received no information suggesting deficiencies in the admission health assessments completed by nurses. We discuss health services provided to children more generally in further detail in Chapter 6.

In addition to health assessments, the *YD-2-1 Youth detention – admission of a young person* policy states that additional risk assessments must take place to consider:

- a child's suicide risk, which we discuss in further detail in Chapter 3.
- what type of search is required to locate possible contraband or dangerous items. We discuss searches in further detail in Chapter 7.

YD-2-1 Youth detention – admission of a young person (p. 1) states that YDCs will ‘ensure a young person receives an induction that explains their rights, responsibilities and services and supports available in a YDC’.

We discuss the centre’s process for inducting children in further detail below. We also discuss initial learning assessments undertaken by the centre’s education support hub in further detail in Chapter 8.

Admissions area

The admission process takes place in a dedicated area within the centre, designed specifically for this purpose. Like the rest of the centre, it has been built to maximise durability. All surfaces are of hardened concrete and stainless steel, and security measures such as CCTV and heavy doors are obvious. The overall result is an overwhelmingly institutional environment that is not child friendly.



Photo 1: Admissions holding cells viewed from inside the centre



Photo 2: Inside a secure admissions holding cell (where the centre plans to paint a mural)

Acknowledging the admission area's stark environment, centre managers informed us that the centre planned to paint colourful murals within the holding cells describing the centre's behavioural expectations.

Any plans to make the centre's harsh design more child- and family-friendly are welcomed by the Inspector. We discuss the built environment in further detail in Chapter 5.

During our time at the centre we were present when several children were admitted. We observed staff engaging with children in a manner that was respectful, and directions were provided to children in a calm and professional tone.

Based on what staff and children told us, our onsite observations and a review of relevant records, we did not identify concerns regarding the storage of children's personal property.

We did not observe the admission of any children with specific needs during our inspection.

In the rest of this chapter, we consider how children are managed on arrival at the centre and what services they are provided with. We also consider how they are supported in adjusting to the new environment.

Phone calls during the admission process

Relevant standards

- 4 Children are safe and treated with respect on admission to a youth detention centre. They undergo a comprehensive assessment to ensure their immediate risks and needs are identified within two hours of admission, and they are accommodated appropriately within the centre.
- 5 Induction begins within 24 hours of a child's arrival at the youth detention centre.

Section 29 of the Youth Justice Regulation 2016 mandates that a child in detention has the right to make and receive phone calls at all reasonable times. However, the department's *YD-2-1 Admission of a young person* policy does not specify how soon after entering a YDC a child should be allowed to contact a caregiver or a support person.

Additionally, the department's operations manual, the *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter Two – Admissions, external movement, transfer, and release' only refers to telephone calls to a parent or carer in a diagram describing the admission process.

We found that only the YDC Admissions checklist provides guidance for when a child should reasonably be given a phone call after admission. The checklist states that a young person should be given a telephone call to a family member shortly after admission to reduce feelings of isolation.

The induction booklet provided to children on admission also informs them that 'When you first arrive at the centre, you can make a phone call to a family member, carer or other significant person.' (p. 7)

When we spoke to operational staff at the centre, we found they had an inconsistent understanding of the requirement to provide a child with a phone call shortly after admission, particularly at night and over the weekend. Some staff told us that shift supervisors organise a call for the child at the time of admission, while others said a caseworker organises the child's first call to their parents the following day.

Centre management advised us that providing a child with a phone call can be challenging for after-hours admissions. Operational staff are reluctant to make a phone call to the child's nominated contact person late at night or very early in the morning. This call would be held over until the morning shift.

We were also told that contact information for a caregiver is sometimes not recorded on the Unify recordkeeping system that holds case management information. This means more follow-up is required before a call can be arranged. It includes confirmation from Child Safety that there are no legal restrictions preventing a child from making contact with parents or caregivers.

We observed the admission process on 2 separate evenings and found there was an inconsistent approach to providing children with a phone call. In one instance, a child was offered a phone call, and in another, they were told they would have to wait until the next day. It was unclear if the staff member explained the delay, but we assume it was so the call could be organised by the child's caseworker.

Admission records

Our observation of 2 children being admitted to the centre and discussions with operational staff and managers, provided conflicting evidence. To support our analysis and to gain a better understanding of longer-term trends, we reviewed a sample of 36 admission records on the department's Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS) for the period from 1 April to 31 July.

We found that the standard of recordkeeping in the sample was so poor that it had limited value as evidence. It was impossible to assess with confidence if a child had or had not made a phone call, who they had called and when the call occurred.

We also reviewed the full set of admission records for the long weekend that occurred prior to our inspection in October. We identified that 20 children were admitted to the centre over this 3-day period.

We found some improvement in the standard of recordkeeping and were able to assess that 13 of the 20 children made a phone call on admission. However, the name and number of the person called and the time the phone call occurred were not recorded.

For the remaining 7 children, it was unclear if they made a phone call on admission. These records lacked the required information to allow us to determine if the child had not been provided with a call, or if the child had been offered a call and declined. Similarly, it was unclear if the child had not been provided with a call for the reasons described to us by staff – such as a late-night admission or missing contact details for a caregiver.

Reasons for the delays

The department provided us with a detailed response to the above issues. It stated that when children are admitted after hours, parents and caregivers are notified via Youth Justice After Hours or QPS processes.

The department acknowledged that there may be occasions when children admitted during late night or early morning hours may not receive an immediate phone call to a parent or caregiver. It explained that this may be due to competing safety requirements such as the completion of medical checks and suicide screening.

Staff responsible for admissions must also verify that the phone number provided is approved and that no legal orders restrict a child's contact with the nominated parent or caregiver. The department explained that these checks cannot always be adequately completed during after-hours admissions.

The department informed us that a child's initial phone call to a parent or caregiver is actioned as soon as operationally viable. The department's explanation for why some children's initial admission call may be delayed is reasonable, particularly for children admitted after hours.

Recommendation 3

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to ensure:

- children have an opportunity to make a phone call to family, guardian or another personal support as soon as possible after admission
- the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents attempts to make the phone call and the completion of the phone call
- the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents when a child declines an offer of a phone call.

The centre's induction process

Relevant standards

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1 | All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy. |
| 5 | Induction begins within 24 hours of a child's arrival at the youth detention centre. |
| 21 | Children understand the standards of behaviour and the rules and routines of the youth detention centre. |
| 120 | There are robust and accountable recordkeeping, auditing and reporting systems for major aspects of the youth detention centre's activities. |

We considered the process for inducting children into the centre's rules and operations. Section 267 of the *Youth Justice Act 1992* states that as soon as practicable after a child has been admitted to a YDC they are to be given a document outlining the following:

- the rules of the centre
- the child's rights and responsibilities as outlined in the youth justice principles (which form part of the Youth Justice Act)
- how and to whom a child may make a complaint
- how the child can access legal services while in the YDC
- the obligation for staff to report any harm a child suffers in detention
- any other information that is appropriate.

Consistent with s 267, *YD-2-1 Youth detention – Admission of a young person* states that:

The induction process must be prioritised and should, wherever possible, be completed within the first 24 hours following admission. It may be delivered in several stages and different staff may complete different parts of the process (p. 3).

Orientating children to the centre's rules and routine is the responsibility of detention youth workers, while the child's caseworker undertakes an initial intake meeting to identify immediate support needs and to ensure the child understands their statutory requirements.

The admissions policy further states that children must be given an opportunity to view an induction video and be provided with an induction booklet, which staff must read with children to ensure they understand its contents.

The department's YDCOM 'Chapter Two – Admission, external movement, transfer and release' states that children should be inducted by a detention youth worker, in accordance with the *AD3 Induction of a young person form* (induction form), which should be signed by the child and attached to DCOIS.

Centre induction

During our time at the centre, we inquired whether children felt the rules had been explained to them after admission. Most children agreed that, although the rules were not explicitly explained, they could easily understand them by using common sense and following staff instructions.

However, we also spoke with one group of children who said they did not understand the centre's rules or the consequences for breaking them. Some children we spoke to also reported that they had not received an induction booklet, and during the 2 admissions we observed, neither of the children was given one.

Senior operational staff we spoke to all confirmed they used the induction form when they induct recently admitted children. We were shown an example of a recently completed induction form and we were told the form is used as a guide to get to know the child. Another task in that process is to obtain a contact phone number for the child's caregiver.

We were told that while children are usually provided with an induction booklet during the admission process, staff also keep a spare copy in the staff office in each section as a backup. While we did observe the admission process to the centre, we did not directly observe a child's induction to the centre's rules and routine during our time onsite. We did see a detention youth worker reading an induction booklet with a recently admitted child.

We did not observe children watching an induction video during our time at the centre. After our inspection, we asked the centre if children were able to do this. We were informed that, while children were not currently shown an induction video, work was underway to add it to the centre's screens.

To gain a better understanding of longer-term induction trends at the centre, we reviewed a sample of 36 admission records on DCOIS for the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025. A completed induction form was only attached to 4 of these records. Due to poor recordkeeping relating to the induction process, it is unclear how many children received an induction.

We also reviewed the full set of admission records for the long weekend that occurred prior to our inspection in October 2025. We identified that 20 children were admitted to the centre over this 3-day period. Most of these admissions (15) included an attached induction form.

However, some of the forms indicate the induction was completed anywhere from one to 4 days after admission, and others were not dated at all.

While the more recent set of records we reviewed showed an improvement in the number of induction forms uploaded, it is unclear if this represents an improvement in the number of children that received an induction or simply an improvement in staff recordkeeping practices.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures inductions are conducted for all children entering the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, within the required timeframes.

3. Duty of care

The Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre) has a duty of care to protect children from harm and ensure they are treated humanely while in custody. The inspection standards regarding duty of care address a range of issues such as:

- access to legal representatives and preparation for legal proceedings
- treatment of vulnerable children, such as those identified as victims of abuse or trauma and those at risk of self-harm or suicide
- use of separation and solitary confinement
- management of violence and bullying
- approach to children's transfers
- management of children's requests and complaints.

Based on what staff, children and stakeholders told us, our onsite observations and a review of relevant records, we did not identify concerns regarding children's access to legal representation. Nor did we identify concerns regarding the centre's approach to managing violence and bullying.

In our *2025 Combined inspection report for youth detention centres: A report on our 2024 inspections of 3 Queensland youth detention centres* (2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres) we expressed concerns with the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support's approach to assessing and managing children with a high suicide risk.

We identified similar concerns at the centre, where we found suicide risk assessments were regularly completed without the involvement of a suitably qualified clinician.

Our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres also identified serious non-compliance with mandatory staff observations of children at all 3 of the state's youth detention centres (YDC). Positively, we found no evidence to suggest staff at the centre are not maintaining appropriate observations. However, we identified deficiencies in the centre's ability to audit compliance with the observation requirements.

The department's challenges with staff shortages and the subsequent separation (isolation) of children at other YDCs have been well documented. Fortunately, at the time of the onsite inspection, we found that staff shortage separations had not had a big impact on the children at the centre.

In this chapter, we will discuss improvements to the centre's complaint system through the installation of complaint boxes that children can now access in their accommodation pods. We will also examine how the involvement of external oversight agencies has contributed to improvements at the centre.

Finally, we cover the department's process for transferring children to placement YDCs.

Managing children's suicide and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) risk

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 10 Children at risk of self-harm and/or suicide are promptly identified, and short-term, medium-term and/or long-term plans are created.
- 11 Strategies are developed for children who are at risk of suicide or self-harm, to ensure their safety.

The YD-1-6 – *Suicide and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) risk management* policy identifies children in detention as highly vulnerable to suicide and self-harm, particularly those with elevated risk factors. Given the centre's role as a remand centre, 2 groups with heightened risks are especially relevant:

- Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children from rural and remote communities
- children recently admitted or transferred between facilities.

Upon admission, and whenever new events or behaviours occur, all children undergo an assessment for suicide and NSSI risk. Suicide risk assessment teams (SRATs) operate at each YDC to coordinate a multidisciplinary response. The process consists of:

- development and implementation of an interim suicide prevention plan
- SRAT assessment
- development of a suicide prevention plan
- application of observation, search, clothing and participation protocols
- SRAT review.

In our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres, we reviewed the department's suicide risk management approach, including the implementation of its updated suicide risk management policy. While we noted some improvements had been made, we still identified several issues across the YDC processes, including:

- not all SRAT members regularly attended meetings
- some decisions were being made with incomplete information
- there was inconsistent understanding of the cultural unit's purpose in the SRAT process
- there was no requirement for cultural team involvement when assessing Australian First Nations children.

The department's revised policy outlines that SRAT meetings require input from 3 members, who may include the following:

- psychologist or mental health clinician
- section supervisor or operational staff member
- caseworker
- nurse
- cultural unit representative.

In comparison, Queensland Corrective Services' Risk Assessment Team includes mandatory clinical expertise and cultural input, with meetings chaired by a senior psychologist. If a meeting is considering an Australian First Nations prisoner, it must be attended by a CLO.

We made the following recommendation in our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres:

Recommendation 24

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support implements a suicide risk and self-harm management policy that:

- mandates the involvement of cultural teams in multi-disciplinary assessment of the suicide and self-harm risk of Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children. The cultural teams should receive appropriate training and guidance about the purpose of their role
- requires clinical and management oversight of the suicide risk assessment team to ensure appropriate plans are developed and reviewed to manage these risks.

The department accepted the recommendation 'in principle' in October 2025. It advised that cultural unit attendance is limited by resourcing, though its input is actively sought. It also advised that clinical oversight is being strengthened through a review of the memorandum of understanding with Queensland Health.

In its submission (Appendix E) to this report, Queensland Health clarified that mental health and other drug services are delivered through Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (HHS) and not through Queensland Health.

We therefore consider that Children's Health Queensland HHS should be consulted when the department develops its suicide risk and self-harm management policy.

Suicide risk assessments at Wacol Youth Remand Centre

The statewide policy outlines 2 SRAT formats:

- Interim SRAT (conducted by a nurse and shift supervisor during admission or after-hours events)
- SRAT, which must meet by the next business day and include input from at least 3 specified roles, noted above.

While SRAT processes at the centre are consistent with departmental policy, we are concerned that they regularly operate with no direct involvement of a psychologist or mental health clinician, and there is no oversight from a senior clinician or manager.

Also, while the policy lists a cultural unit representative among the 3 possible staff members who can form the SRAT, they are not mandated to attend. This is the case even when the cultural needs of an Aboriginal child or Torres Strait Islander child are being considered. However, our review of electronic records found that CLOs have consistently provided input to suicide risk assessments for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children.

We also noted that the new suicide risk and NSSI policy has no requirement for senior clinician and management oversight of the full SRAT and Interim SRAT. We spoke to stakeholders from West Moreton HHS, who informed us that training provided to nurses focuses on primary health care rather than suicide risk assessment and management. They noted that additional suicide risk assessment training is delivered by Queensland Health and that some, but not all, nurses have attended this training.

We also spoke to stakeholders from the Children's Health Queensland HHS Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Services (Forensic CYMHS) team. This is a referral-based service that provides specialised mental health interventions to justice-involved children in detention and in the community. Unlike West Moreton HHS nurses, Forensic CYMHS clinicians are not routinely involved in the SRAT process, but they can provide input when requested.

We observed the SRAT meeting to be well organised, and it included the minimum 3 staff members required by YDC policy, but no trained clinician was involved. At the time of the onsite inspection, the centre was finalising the recruitment of a mental health clinician, so there was no clinical input during the meeting.

The SRAT was led by the centre's executive director. This was only a temporary arrangement due to a delay in filling a senior role in the client services team. Normally, the occupant of that job would lead the meeting.

As part of our inspection, we reviewed 30 SRAT records on DCOIS for the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025. Due to poor reporting functionality, records relating to the full SRAT meetings and Interim SRAT meetings cannot be separated without manual review. Our review found a mental health clinician or psychologist only provided input into 2 of the 30 SRAT meetings. We also noted that, of the 30 records we reviewed, 19 were for children who identified as Aboriginal children or Torres Strait Islander children. Of these 19 records, 17 documented that the cultural liaison officer provided input into the SRAT meeting.

In feedback to this report, the department told us that SRAT processes require mental health clinicians to be present and that in the rare circumstances where no mental health clinician was available, the centre would be supported by West Moreton or Brisbane YDC clinicians. Even if they could not be present, they would have provided input ahead of the SRAT meetings, which would be documented.

Our review of the *YD-1-6 Youth Detention – Suicide and non-suicidal self-injury management* policy supports our assertion above that mental health clinicians are not mandated to attend SRAT but are listed as one of the 3 members who can provide input into the SRAT meeting. If there are 3 members from the other categories listed (section supervisor or other operational staff member, caseworker, nurse or cultural unit representative) who can attend the SRAT then the meeting can proceed without input from a psychologist or mental health clinician.

As noted above, no mental health clinician was involved in the SRAT we attended on site, and a review of SRAT records did not identify documented input from mental health clinicians outside of the meeting. The regular occurrence of SRAT decisions being made at the centre without input from an appropriate clinician compounds our concern that the SRAT process receives no oversight from a senior clinician. Recommendation 24 from our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres remains relevant to the issue identified at the centre.

The department advised us, in feedback to this report, that the centre now has 2 onsite mental health clinicians, and oversight of the SRAT is provided by senior staff members at the centre.

Suicide risk observations

Relevant standards

- 10 Children at risk of self-harm and/or suicide are promptly identified, and short-term, medium-term and/or long-term plans are created.
- 11 Strategies are developed for children who are at risk of suicide or self-harm, to ensure their safety.
- 120 There are robust and accountable recordkeeping, auditing and reporting systems for major aspects of the youth detention centre's activities.

Due to the centre's unique infrastructure, which includes a heightened level of closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, the observation schedule at the centre is guided by a local operating procedure. Statewide policy is not clear on the practice of using CCTV for observations, but the centre's local operating procedure; *Observations of Separated Young People* makes it clear that the practice is allowed in the centre.

Observations of children must be conducted:

- physically during daily routine operations (that is, 7:00am to 7:30pm), and
- physically or electronically via CCTV during overnight lockdown.

When we attended the centre, operational staff explained that the quality of the centre's CCTV was vastly superior to anything available at other YDCs. They felt the clear camera footage was a suitable alternative to physical observations through the door to a child's room. The centre's CCTV system appears to be of high quality, and a detention youth worker demonstrated its ability to zoom in on a sleeping child with a few mouse clicks.

After we attended the centre, a manager informed us that the centre's local observations policy was partly introduced due to an issue with the centre's heavy doors. They explained that these must be slammed shut to properly lock, and that routine physical checks would have an unreasonable impact on children's sleep due to this.

Consistent with the department's comments in response to our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres, the centre's local operating procedure requires that the centre conducts audits of its observation practices at least once per month. The policy states that audits may be conducted by reviewing records or CCTV footage.

After our inspection, we were informed that, while the centre undertakes weekly quality assurance of the written suicide risk observation records completed by operational staff, no audits of CCTV footage are completed.

We were told that as staff do not physically leave the office to conduct observations, there is no point in reviewing footage to confirm observation compliance. As the centre does not have the electronic scanners featured outside room doors at placement YDCs, there is no additional way of confirming the observations have been conducted.

A manager explained to us that, due to the centre's unique infrastructure, it is almost impossible to satisfactorily confirm that an operational staff member has completed mandatory observations of children.

While we acknowledge the centre's unique infrastructure and security systems, we are concerned that the only method used to ensure staff comply with observation requirements is through audits of written records. Our review found no evidence indicating non-compliance or falsification of observation records. Identifying such issues without an additional verification source would be challenging, if not impossible.

Recommendation 5

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to develop a process that ensures audits of mandatory observation requirements are conducted.

Staff shortage and risk-based separations

Relevant standards

- 13 Children are never subjected to solitary confinement, including a routine that amounts to solitary confinement.
- 14 Staff consider and strictly comply with the requirements of domestic legislation relevant to separation.
- 15 Children are separated only in accordance with the limited grounds prescribed by law, as a last resort, and where there is a demonstrated need to do so. The separation must be carried out in the least restrictive way and for the shortest possible time.
- 16 Where a child is separated from other children, they are treated with respect and dignity, and have meaningful opportunities to leave the unit, associate with other children and earn privileges.
- 122 Staffing meets the needs of the youth detention centre to manage children safely and meet the centre's operating philosophy.

Children in a YDC may be placed in separation for any of 5 reasons:

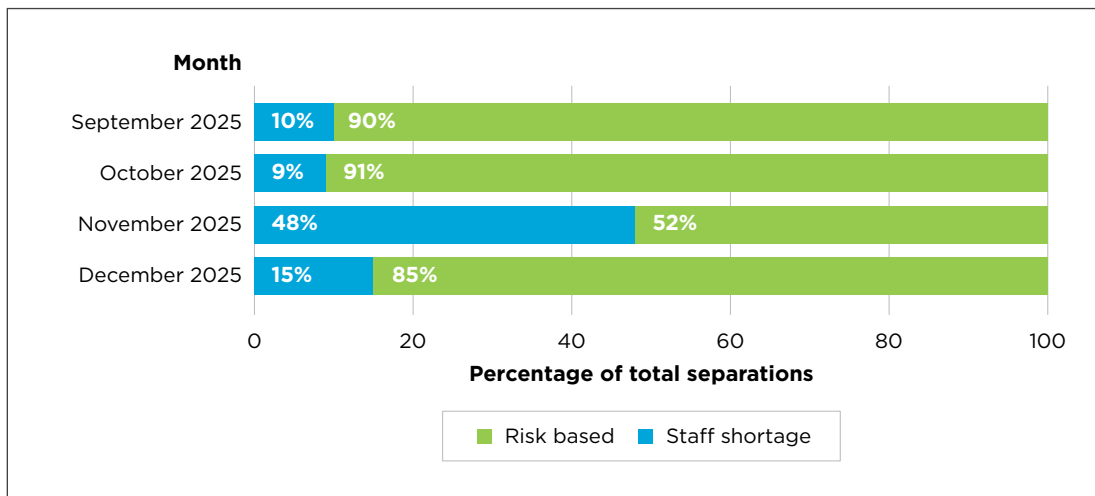
- Type A: the child is ill
- Type B: at the child's request
- Type C: for routine security purposes under a direction issued by the chief executive (these include staff breaks and meetings, searching the centre, shower and hygiene breaks for children, and overnight lockdowns)
- Type D: for the child's protection or the protection of another person or property
- Type E: to restore order in the centre.

The department records provided to us about the use of separations in its YDCs are divided into risk-based separations and staff shortage separations.

The department's policy – *YD-3-8 Youth Detention – Separations* does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a 'risk-based' separation. The term appears to describe events when a child is separated to mitigate the risk they may present to people, property or the security of the centre, compared to when a separation occurs due to staff shortages.

In its feedback to this report, the department advised that risk-based separations are the Type D and E separations noted above, which do not include staff shortage separations.

The department provided us with data in relation to separations at the centre. The separation types focus on staff shortages or risk-based separations. As Graph 2 illustrates, from September to December 2025, most of the separations at the centre were risk-based.

Graph 2: Separation durations – percentage by month

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on information provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support on 15 October 2025, 13 November 2025, 17 December 2025 and 15 January 2026.

Graph 2 demonstrates that, while staff shortage separations at the centre are low, risk-based separations are high. There was a significant increase in that separation type in December 2025. To explain the data above, the department advised that the centre had been recording any separation that cumulatively exceeded 4 hours in a day as a Type D separation, which would then possibly be counted as a risk-based separation.

We also considered the average amount of time a child spends in separation at the centre. According to the *YD-3-8 Youth Detention – Separation* policy, when a child is separated as a risk mitigation strategy following an incident, staff must:

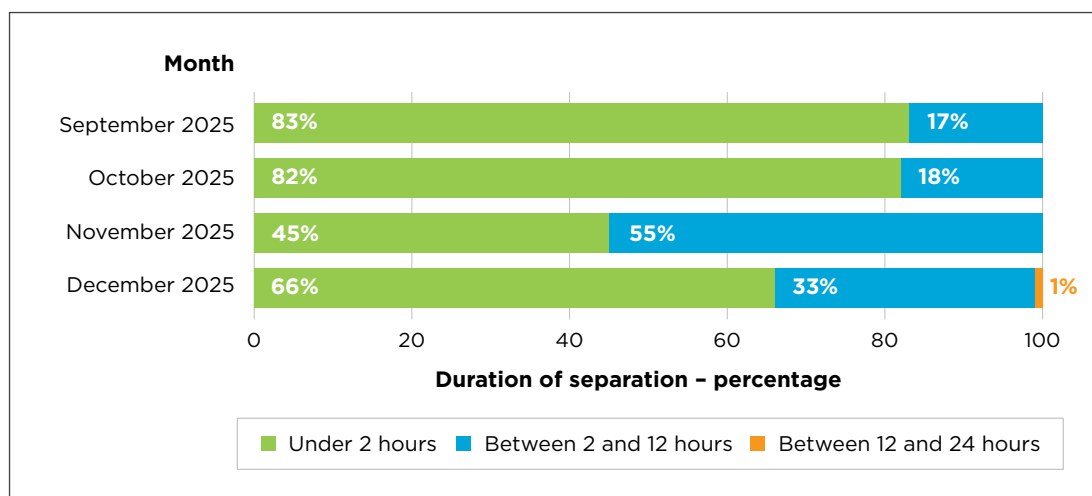
- provide the child with assistance to self-regulate and settle while in separation
- cease the child's separation when the identified risk no longer remains
- not separate a child longer than required in the circumstances.

Given the relative increase in the use of risk-based separations when compared to staff shortage separations, we would expect to see a higher proportion of shorter duration separations.

In our previous YDC inspection reports, we have noted that the DCOIS excludes the overnight lockdown from records of staff shortage separations. That means the time from 7.30pm to 7.30am is not counted. For example, a 12-hour separation recorded in DCOIS reflects a whole day where the child could not leave their room. A 24-hour separation equates to 2 whole days as the period counted in DCOIS is only the time from 7.30am to 7.30pm.

We reviewed separation reports for September to December 2025 and found that most separations during this 4-month period lasted under 2 hours. The exception to this trend is the month of November, which had a higher proportion of separations between 2 and 12 hours.

Graph 3: Separation durations – percentage by month



Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on information provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support on 15 October 2025, 13 November 2025, 17 December 2025 and 15 January 2026

2026 update on separations

To understand the current state of separations at the centre, we requested and were provided with the May and June 2026 separation information by the department.

May 2026

In May 2026, 69% of 906 separations recorded were due to staff shortages – significantly overtaking the risk-based separations.

The majority of the total separation events were for 2-12 hours. This was followed by 12-24-hour separations, which counted for 21% of the separation events and are a significant increase on the 1% of separations identified in December 2025 (Graph 3).

We note with concern the number of separation events that lasted longer than 24 hours. In May, 68 children experienced separation for 2-3 consecutive days.

June 2026

In June 2026, the number of separation events had reduced to 727; however, 81% of these were due to staff shortages, and the number of children subject to extended separations increased.

In terms of duration, the 2-12-hour separations were used the most across all separations, closely followed by the 24-hour separations. In terms of separations longer than 24 hours, there were 119 children who were separated for 2-3 consecutive days and 4 who were separated for 4-5 consecutive days.

The centre also had the highest percentage of children (the average proportion of individual children impacted per month) in staff shortage separations across all 4 YDCs from April to June 2026.

The updated data provided to us shows that from February 2026, the average daily number of children subject to staff shortage separations increased from 13% to 41% in April 2026, 48% in May 2026 and 57% in June 2026.

We will take a more detailed look at separations in our inspection of the centre in 2026.

Requests and complaints

Relevant standards

- 18** Children are consulted about matters which affect them.
- 19** Youth detention centres, health service providers and education providers have effective, transparent and confidential complaints processes in place for children, staff and visitors.
- 20** Children understand and have confidence in the complaints handling system and are protected from repercussions for making complaints.
- 124** All staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and authority to work in a youth detention centre, and are trained to the highest standards of professional competence, integrity and honesty.

Complaint mechanisms

The department's *YD-1-9 Youth detention – Complaints management* policy states that children in youth detention and their advocates will have access to a complaints management system. It is to be accountable, transparent and administered in a way that ensures it is responsive to their concerns.

The policy provides further guidelines to enable children to complain to external agencies such as the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), the Queensland Ombudsman or the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

Children can raise requests or complaints directly with the centre's client relations manager, who regularly visits accommodation pods to engage with children. Based on what staff, stakeholders and children told us, as well as our own observations, we found the centre's internal complaints management system is responsive to children's needs.

Community visitors

Community visitors from the OPG are independent officials who advocate for vulnerable people, including children in care. Their role involves monitoring safety, protecting rights, and resolving the concerns of those in care settings. In YDCs, the community visitors focus on the needs of individual children.

Children can write to the community visitors through padlocked communication boxes, typically located in units within YDCs. When we attended the centre in October 2025, we found the communication boxes were not installed in any of the centre's accommodation pods.

We raised this with the centre at the time of our inspection and were informed a project was underway to install the boxes. On 14 January 2026, we received confirmation that communication boxes had been installed in each section and that children were informed of their function during induction.

In its submission (Appendix D) to this report, the OPG clarified that these boxes are in the airlocks of north and south wings, which means children can only access the boxes when moving to outdoor areas, visits, phone calls or medical appointments. Due to the continued restricted access of the communication boxes, the OPG reported continuing weekly visits by the community visitors to ensure children have a reliable way of raising concerns.

The community visitors visited the centre 17 times between 1 April and 31 July 2025 to speak with children, averaging an attendance of about once a week. During these visits, they documented a total of 209 issues. Of these, the bulk of the concerns were about:

- essential services, including legal assistance, health care and education
- family contact or requests to speak with a case worker
- concerns about living conditions, including the provision of food
- mental health support services
- cultural needs.

The issue may be escalated to the department or an external agency if the matter cannot be resolved by the centre. During the period 1 April to 31 July 2025, 6 matters were referred to the department. Three of these complaints related to the length of stay, 2 related to food, and one related to alleged QPS officer conduct during arrest.

Since the inspection, we have been advised that the complaints relating to food were resolved. The one relating to the arrest of the child is outside the scope of this inspection, and we have considered the length-of-stay concerns in putting together this report.

In its feedback to this report, the department advised us that community visitors can also identify positive practices and outcomes for children, noting that the feedback provided by the community visitors to the department is consistently positive. We acknowledge this advice from the department and welcome the specifics of this feedback for our upcoming inspection.

Official telephone calls

Section 11.2.5 (Official Telephone Calls) of the *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people' states that a young person is entitled to make or receive phone calls to and from:

- legal representatives
- the Office of the Public Guardian
- the Queensland Ombudsman
- the Human Rights Commission
- the Inspector of Detention Services
- caseworkers (Youth Justice Service Centres)
- child safety officers.

It also states that young people must be given privacy for all official calls, and that telephone calls to or from officials are not included in the young person's weekly entitlement of telephone time and are not limited in length.

Section 29(6) of the Youth Justice Regulation specifically protects the confidentiality of calls children make to the Office of the Public Guardian, Inspector of Detention Services and the Ombudsman. Children in YDCs can make unlimited calls to these organisations.

This feature is commonly called the 'autodial' and is part of the YDC phone system. It enables children to speak privately and directly with oversight agencies without informing staff.

The centre does not have a phone system with an autodial function. As a result, children must ask a staff member if they want to make an official call to an oversight agency. To act on this request, a staff member has to manually remove one of the child's existing phone numbers and temporarily replace it with the relevant agency contact.

There are no phones in the accommodation pods. This means an operational staff member must escort the child to another part of the centre to make an official call.

It was interesting to note that operational staff were ill-informed about the lack of an autodial function at the centre. Some appeared unsure when we asked them if children could access it, while others were confident that they could.

In addition, we did not observe any information in accommodation pods or near the centre's phone that described the process for making an official call to any of the state's oversight agencies.

Children at the centre must be able to make confidential contact with any organisation available on the autodial phone list at other YDCs and listed under the Youth Justice Regulation.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim support ensures the phone facilities at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre allow for the selection of phone calls from an autodial list. This is available at other youth detention centres, to protect the confidentiality of calls.

The transfer process

Relevant standards

- 17** Children transferred between youth detention centres are well prepared and supported.
- 18** Children are consulted about matters which affect them.

All transfers between YDCs are guided by the department's *YD-2-5 Youth detention – Interfacility transfers* policy, which states the department is committed to a safe and planned transfer process that:

- prioritises the safety, best interests and rehabilitation needs of young people
- is informed by a coordinated assessment, prioritisation and triage process to ensure equitable, fair and transparent decision-making, while also considering YDC capacity management issues
- ensures all relevant stakeholders are informed, and appropriate information sharing occurs to support service continuity
- ensures the young person is kept updated as appropriate about proposed or planned transfers.

Due to the centre's function as a reception centre, the policy provides additional guidance to streamline the transfer of children to the YDCs they will be placed in (placement YDCs). The aim is to minimise the length of time a child is held at the centre and to facilitate their admission to the first available bed in a YDC.

In addition, the department's *YD-2-1 Youth detention – Admission of a young person* policy states that when demand for beds exceeds YDC capacity, the department will ensure those most vulnerable are prioritised for admission. This is in line with ss 56 and 210 of the Youth Justice Act.

The role of the Admission Coordination Unit

Prioritisations of transfers and admissions between the centre and YDCs are led by the central Admission Coordination Unit (ACU). The available bed capacity at placement YDCs primarily determines how long it takes the ACU to organise a child's transfer out of the centre.

When the number of children at the centre exceeds the capacity of available beds at placement YDCs, the ACU uses a prioritisation tool to score children's relative needs and vulnerability. This is used in a daily prioritisation list that guides transfers between the centre and YDCs.

In addition to the prioritisation tool, a daily allocation meeting between the ACU and the centre staff provides an opportunity to share updates on children's risk and vulnerability. We were told that upcoming court appearances and medical appointments are factored into prioritisation decisions. We were also told that in some circumstances, it may be in a child's best interest to stay at the centre rather than be transferred to a placement YDC.

We were given an example of a child with an upcoming court appearance for a bail application. If the ACU reasonably believes the child will be granted bail, it may decide that staying at the centre for an additional day would be less disruptive than going through the transfer and admission process at another YDC only to be immediately released.

Similarly, if a child has a leave of absence arranged for a medical appointment, the ACU may wait until that is completed before prioritising the child for transfer. This will ensure the appointment occurs as planned.

During our inspection, we observed a child's transfer from the centre to a placement YDC. The child was not given advanced notice of the transfer. They were told the transfer was occurring immediately and directed to gather their belongings and prepare to leave the centre.

During the transfer, the child appeared relaxed and accepting of staff directions, which were provided respectfully and calmly. The process happened swiftly, and we estimate the child left the centre within 10 minutes of being informed of the transfer.

Despite the transfer process occurring smoothly, the lack of prior warning appeared inconsistent with the *YD-2-5 Youth detention – Interfacility transfers* policy, which states children will be kept updated as appropriate about possible and planned transfers.

Centre managers confirmed the process we observed was normal practice. We were told that this occurs because planned transfers can sometimes be delayed due to transport reasons. However, the limited notice is also a way of reducing the potential for behavioural issues if the child does not want to leave the centre.

In its feedback to this report, the department told us that the prioritisation process is complex and subject to change as assessments for children are updated. This can also be affected by notice of available beds in other centres. Advising a child of a transfer that may not occur could create risks for the child and the centre.

4. Managing behaviour

Having an effective behaviour management policy improves the safety of a youth detention centre (YDC) and supports rehabilitative outcomes for detained children.

The department's *YD-1-2 Behaviour support* policy states that YDCs require an effective behaviour support framework that promotes the safety and wellbeing of staff and young people, and outlines expectations of appropriate behaviour for young people.

During our time at the centre, we observed staff engaging with children professionally and positively. When we observed staff giving directions to children, they did so respectfully and calmly. The detention youth workers we spoke with outlined an approach to youth work that centred on building rapport with children and maintaining professional boundaries.

Children often told us they preferred the centre to a watch-house due to the support provided to them by detention youth workers. One child told us the respectful way detention youth workers engage with them makes them feel better and keeps them calm.

As well as supporting children's wellbeing and rehabilitation, the development of positive relationships between detention youth workers and children also supports the safety and security of the centre.

The built environment's impact on children's behaviour

As mentioned earlier, the centre was built as a watch-house, which means it has heightened security measures in place. Compared to the state's purpose-built YDCs, the children in the centre spend more of their time in confined spaces. They also move to different locations less often than those in other YDCs, and they are usually accommodated with only one or 2 other children.

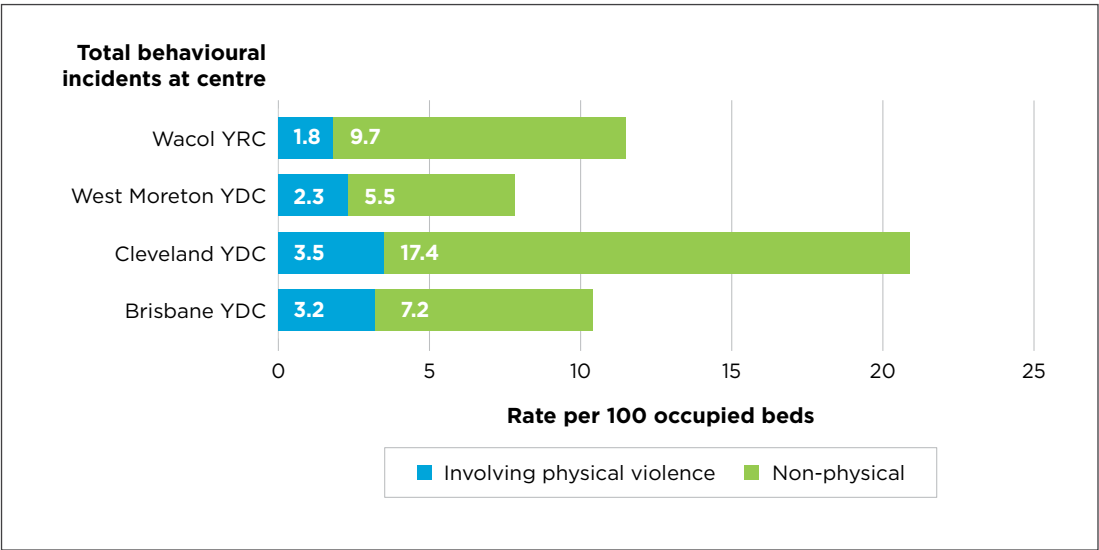
Detention youth workers who had worked at other YDCs told us the centre's heightened security resulted in fewer incidents of inappropriate and high-risk behaviour from children compared to other YDCs. They also told us that they felt calmer at work, which they said improved their ability to engage with children.

We did not observe any incidents of misbehaviour during our time at the centre; nor did we observe the use of force on a child. To better understand the claims made by staff that fewer incidents occurred at the centre, we reviewed incident data for each YDC for the month of October 2025.

Due to the significant difference in each YDC's capacity, comparing only the total number of incidents provides limited analytical value. However, by comparing the total number of incidents with the total number of occupied beds at each centre, we were able to calculate comparable incident rates for each centre, as shown in Graph 4.

Incidents included as involving physical violence were directly recorded as such in the Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS) but also included incidents involving children assaulting other children or staff. Incidents designated as not involving physical violence are recorded as that specifically but also include indecent acts, inappropriate, aggressive or disruptive behaviour, and risk causing program refusal.

Graph 4: Rate of incidents per 100 occupied beds in Queensland’s youth remand centre (YRC) and youth detention centres from 1 April to 31 October 2025



Source: Compiled by the Inspector of Detention Services, from data obtained from DCOIS on 6 January and 13 March 2026.

NB: The rate of ‘per 100 occupied beds’ is a standardised way in which the fluctuations in the centre’s population can be compared to the other YDCs that may not experience the population turnover. It is calculated by identifying the number of relevant incidents in a month, dividing those by the total number of occupied beds per month and then multiplying by 100.

Graph 4 shows that staff perception about incidents at the centre is supported by the data to the extent that the centre recorded fewer incidents of physical violence than the other centres. However, the security created by the watch-house environment may lead staff to believe that overall there are fewer incidents because the infrastructure allows for a higher level of control of children. We found the environment does not appear to impact the number of overall incidents which was higher than West Moreton and Brisbane YDCs.

During our inspection, we became concerned about an emerging practice where difficult-to-manage or otherwise high-risk children from Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs are transferred back to the centre. We will discuss this further in this chapter.

We also found that the centre uses an incentive model tailored to support positive behaviour that can be applied in a short period of time and then transferred to the placement centre.

The centre’s incentive model

Relevant standards

- 21** Children understand the standards of behaviour and the rules and routines of the youth detention centre
- 23** Positive behaviour support schemes are evidence-informed and trauma-informed and take into account children’s cultural, health and disability needs.
- 26** Behaviour management systems define fair and consistently applied rules, where responses to misbehaviour are escalated.

The department's *YD-1-2 Behaviour support* policy states that YDCs may develop tailored, local guidelines to support the statewide behaviour support policy. More specifically, the policy directs YDCs to establish local incentive models to motivate young people to demonstrate positive behaviour, while reinforcing social, educational and vocational skills and post-release goals.

Depending on local arrangements, the incentive model can be integrated with the Department of Education's *Positive Behaviour for Learning* (PBL) incentive model. This does not occur at the centre.

Instead, the centre operates a local incentive model that is based on allowing and restricting children's access to the television and radio in their room. The centre's local instruction:

Access to Television and Radio in rooms states that:

- Television and radio access in rooms is an incentive, not a right.
- Access is conditional on positive behaviour and respectful engagement with staff, peers and programs.
- Negative or poor behaviours, including disrespectful, disruptive, or harmful conduct may result in reduction or restriction of access to these provisions.
- Incentive management must always be applied fairly, proportionately, and in line with the principles of restorative practice, ensuring young people understand the reasons for restrictions and the pathway to regain access (p. 2).

In its feedback to this report, the department stated that access to a radio and television is available to all children outside of school hours and that it is extended access that is incentivised.

Any restrictions on access to television or radio for a child is documented and approved by a unit manager or shift supervisor. The quick reference guide developed for staff to manage this process indicates that the reason for the restriction must always be explained to the child, as well as the process for regaining their access to radio and television. The quick reference guide makes it clear that the child is to be given access once the behaviour improves.

This rudimentary incentive system is different to that at other YDCs, where children may access additional food items or activities as an incentive for positive behaviour. The local instruction states that the centre's simple incentive model reflects the operational realities of a high-volume remand environment, where children's short stays and rapid turnover mean a complex points-based system (used in other YDCs) is not practical.

The education support hub at the centre uses the PBL scheme. Children can earn points for good behaviour, but they must wait until they are transferred to a placement YDC to spend them. Once transferred to a placement YDC, they can spend their PBL points to purchase items from the centre's education and training centre.

Concerns with this approach

The centre's decision to design a simple incentive system for a short-stay, high-turnover environment is reasonable. Similarly, if a child stays at the centre for a short period, it is reasonable that they must wait until transfer to a placement YDC before they can spend points earned for good behaviour in the education support hub.

However, as highlighted in the introduction to this report, some children are accommodated at the centre for extended periods that are beyond the original intent of the rudimentary incentive system.

Our inspection has also found an emerging practice where children demonstrating high-risk behaviour are transferred from one of the 3 YDCs back to the centre as a behaviour management strategy.

For these children, we are concerned that the centre's limited incentive system may not provide sufficient motivation to support positive behaviour, particularly when they remain at the centre for a long time before transitioning back to one of the placement YDCs.

As we will discuss in the section below, we found children who were transferred back to the centre, as a behaviour management strategy were not provided with appropriate therapeutic support.

Returning children to the centre for behavioural management reasons

Relevant standards

- 21 Children understand the standards of behaviour and the rules and routines of the youth detention centre.
- 22 The youth detention centre embeds a restorative practice framework to address children's on-centre behavioural issues.
- 23 Positive behaviour support schemes are evidence-informed and trauma-informed and take into account children's cultural, health and disability needs.
- 24 Children who require support to manage their behaviours are identified and support plans are created by appropriately trained staff. They receive personal and consistent support to address their individual needs and have unhindered access to relevant services.
- 25 A child is accommodated in a separate unit away from other children for the good order, safety and/or security of the centre for the shortest possible time.
- 26 Behaviour management systems define fair and consistently applied rules for behaviour, where responses to misbehaviour are escalated.

When we attended the centre in early October 2025, transfers between the YDCs were guided by the department's *YD-2-5 Youth detention – Interfacility transfers* policy. The policy states that, as part of usual YDC operations, there will be a variety of circumstances that arise requiring children to be transferred between centres.

Our inspection has consistently found the centre is unsuitable for holding children for anything other than a brief period. This is especially true for children exhibiting complex or high-risk behaviours, given the centre's basic behaviour support system, the lack of essential programs, and the absence of therapeutic facilities.

Given these limitations, we were concerned to find that the department is transferring children from placement YDCs back to the centre as a strategy of managing those with high-risk and complex behaviours. Between 1 April 2025 and 13 March 2026, 20 children were returned to the centre through a process known as a 'risk-based transfer'.

Of these 20 children:

- 3 had been returned twice
- 2 had been returned 3 times.

This resulted in a total of 27 'risk-based transfers' from a YDC back to the centre. Of these, 17 were from Brisbane YDC, and the remaining 10 were from West Moreton YDC. No children from Cleveland YDC were transferred back to the centre.

A detailed examination of the circumstances leading to the transfer of each child falls outside the scope of this report, which specifically concentrates on the treatment of children at the centre. Behaviour management practices at the Brisbane, West Moreton, and Cleveland YDCs will be considered during our 2026 inspections. Nevertheless, this report will assess the level of support transferred children received from their original centre during their time at the YDC.

When we attended the centre, we found there was no detailed policy for risk-based transfers back to the centre. The process guiding these transfers was informed by the *YD-2-5 Youth detention – Interfacility transfers* policy, which states the department may transfer a child detained at a placement YDC under the following circumstances:

- to effectively manage YDC accommodation, considering the demographics of young people, bed capacity, and varying risk profiles, with the aim of maximising the safety and security of the centre, staff and young people
- when complex circumstances apply, including safety and security and other operational considerations (e.g. court proceedings)
- when conflicts between co-accused or known affiliations pose a safety or security risk to the YDC, or to uphold provisions of a domestic and family violence (DFV) protection order and separate the respondent and the aggrieved
- to return a young person to their home catchment YDC if assessed as appropriate. (p. 2).

During our time at the centre, staff raised concerns about the practice of transferring children back to the centre as a behaviour management strategy. They told us that there was no clear process for returning a child to their original placement after their behaviour improved or the immediate risk was no longer present.

They also mentioned that, even if a child settles at the centre, transitioning back to the original YDC could still be difficult if the staff from the original YDC have not remained involved in the child's management. Additionally, staff from Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs were reported to have inconsistent engagement with children during their temporary stays at the centre.

A new approach

Shortly after we completed our onsite inspection, the department released detailed guidelines to guide risk management and behaviour support for children displaying high-risk behaviours. *Management of High-Risk Youth* was released on 27 October 2025 as Appendix 1-11 of the *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people'.

The stated purpose of the appendix was to provide a framework for managing children in detention who present serious or ongoing risks to safety, security and/or the good order of the centre. The new framework operates as a tiered model, with each tier representing an escalating level of intervention based on the assessed risk and needs of the child:

- Tier 1: General population management with standard behaviour support strategies.
- Tier 2: Targeted support for emerging high-risk behaviours.
- Tier 3: Intensive support for persistent or escalating risks, including the use of behaviour support units or alternate accommodation within the current YDC.
- Tier 4: High-risk management involving the transfer of the youth to another centre, and oversight by the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP).

RAMP is a multidisciplinary panel that reviews placements, interventions and reintegration plans for children who pose serious or repeated risks to the safety and stability of a YDC.

Behaviour support interventions across Tiers 1 to 3 take place at a child's placement YDC and are outside the scope of this report. This section will primarily address Tier 4, including the process of transferring children back to the centre

According to *Appendix 1-11 Management of High-Risk Youth*, a Tier 4 transfer to another centre is reserved for children who pose an immediate and significant risk to the safety and stability of their current centre. The appendix describes the following overarching principles of the framework:

- RAMP supports safe, structured and defensible decision-making for youths who pose immediate and significant risk to safety, security and/or the good order of the centre.
- All decisions must be informed by dynamic risk assessments that are reviewed regularly and guided by the least restrictive response necessary to manage the identified risk.
- Responses must be trauma-informed and tailored to the individual needs of the youth, including age, culture, gender, developmental level, mental health, abilities/disabilities and cognitive functioning (p. 1).

The appendix provides the following guidelines to support the management of high-risk children transferred to another centre as well as their eventual transition back to a placement at a YDC:

- To ensure continuity of care and appropriate planning, a behaviour support plan must be developed by the sending centre following a child's transfer to another YDC.
- Placement at another centre must be time-limited, regularly reviewed, and supported by a clear reintegration plan.
- Daily planning, communication, and multidisciplinary oversight are essential.
- Staff and the child must be informed of the plan, expectations, and progress by senior operational staff.
- Reintegration planning should begin early and be reviewed regularly.

According to the appendix, transferring a child to another centre through the RAMP process is approved through a collective decision made by the executive directors of each centre. When agreement cannot be reached, the decision is elevated to the senior executive director. The senior executive director must also approve transfers longer than 14 days.

On 7 November 2025, we attended a Special Interest Young Person (SIYP) panel meeting. SIYP panels are made up of operational managers and client services team members. The panels review the strategies developed to manage children who are considered to pose a risk to the safety and security of a centre. The SIYP we attended reviewed the management of 2 children recently transferred to the centre under the Tier 4 RAMP process. Both children had been transferred from Brisbane YDC 2 days earlier.

At this meeting, a staff member informed us that there was an understanding that casework would be shared with Brisbane YDC and that the children's existing caseworkers should continue to visit them during their temporary stay at the centre.

We were also informed that there was an agreement in place that mental health support from the placement centre would continue for children while they were temporarily accommodated at the centre. This included the development of a behaviour support plan. Given that the centre's mental health clinician position was temporarily vacant, this was highlighted as being particularly important.

A manager at the SIYP meeting told us the centre will ensure children's safety and support their return to baseline behaviour during their temporary stay. However, they also clarified that it remains the placement YDC's responsibility to continue engaging with the child and to carry out restorative work with staff or other children affected by the child's previous behaviour.

Despite the information provided by centre staff, *Appendix 1-11 Management of High-Risk Youth* does not specify that staff from the sending YDC must continue to manage or engage with children during their temporary stay at the centre.

The appendix only requires the sending YDC to develop a new behaviour support plan or review an existing one. Although not mandated by policy, the expectation that the sending YDC shares management and mental health support is reasonable.

Case study 1

We reviewed records for 2 children who had been transferred to the centre under the Tier 4 approach.

Both children remained at the centre for 13 days before their transfer back to Brisbane YDC. Our review of case notes found the children were provided with significantly different levels of support during their temporary stays at the centre.

During the 13-day period, one child was visited by a centre case worker once, a Brisbane YDC caseworker twice and a Brisbane YDC psychologist once. The child also received a visit from a Youth Justice community caseworker in the same period.

The other child only saw their Brisbane YDC caseworker once during the 13-day period.

We found no evidence a behaviour support plan had been developed for either child, and existing plans prior to the transfer were not reviewed during the period for either child.

We did not locate any records that indicated what risk assessments informed each child's return to Brisbane YDC.

If the time children spend at the centre is not used to develop a new behaviour support plan, it is unclear how strategies are identified to support the child. It is also not apparent how expectations are communicated to them so that improved behaviour or reduced risk can lead to the child being transferred back to their placement YDC.

After our inspection, we discussed the recently introduced RAMP process with several centre managers. One manager said the new RAMP procedure offered broad policy guidance, but more effort was needed to make transfer decisions clear and consistent.

Clearer guidelines for shared case management and mental health support between YDCs would enhance continuity of care for children with complex behaviours who have been temporarily transferred. We discuss our concerns with governance arrangements for the RAMP process, including the current shared decision-making model, in further detail in Chapter 10.

Some children returned to the centre stayed for an unacceptable length of time

We were particularly concerned to find that some of the children transferred back to the centre had remained there for an extended period of time. As we identified earlier, 20 children had been returned to the centre through a process known as a 'risk-based transfer'.

Of these 20 children, we identified 3 who we consider to have spent an excessive amount of time at the centre. They stayed 49, 38 and 30 days respectively. We discuss their circumstances in the case studies below.

For each of the children we reviewed, we have attempted to understand:

- the justification for the transfer
- the standard of behaviour support and therapeutic intervention provided during their stay at the centre
- if a new behaviour support plan was developed for the child in a timely manner
- the process for supporting the child's transfer back to a placement YDC.

It is important to note that only one of the 3 children reviewed was transferred to the centre after the development of *Appendix 1-11 Management of High-Risk Youth*.

Case study 2

Child 1 was transferred from a placement YDC and remained at the centre for 49 days before returning to the original centre.

Justification for the child's transfer

Records indicate a consistent pattern of complex and challenging behaviour prior to the child's transfer. However, we found no record of a risk assessment or multidisciplinary review that identified the child as posing a serious risk to the YDC's safety and security. Nor did we find justification that transferring the child to the centre was the least restrictive response necessary to manage the identified risk.

Behaviour support and therapeutic interventions

We found no evidence that a plan outlining expectations or behaviour goals was provided to the child upon admission to the centre or at any time during their extended stay.

We were able to locate a detailed behaviour support plan, which outlined the child's strengths and triggers, and strategies for communication and de-escalation, on the child's DCOIS profile. The child was engaged with the Children's Health Queensland HHS Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Services (Forensic CYMHS) team for mental health support prior to admission to the centre, and this continued while they were there.

We found no evidence that core therapeutic programs were delivered to the child during their stay at the centre. However, the centre's client services team regularly engaged with the child. Staff from the placement YDC attended the centre to engage with the child early on in their placement only.

We were unable to confirm the child's involvement in educational and recreational activities, as the attendance records provided to us by the Department of Education and the department do not capture the time the child stayed at the centre.

Transition back to a placement YDC

We found no records of a formal reintegration plan, nor did we find records of consultation and communication between the YDC and the centre.

However, the centre's internal Special Interest Young Person (SIYP) panel reviewed the child regularly. Minutes for these meetings show the centre's multidisciplinary team consistently advocating for the child's transition back to the placement YDC due to the centre's detrimental impact on their wellbeing.

We found no records that show the decision-making process or risk assessments that informed the child's continued stay at the centre.

Based on our review of SIYP panel records, we have inferred that the 2 centres coordinated several reintegration leaves of absence (these are approvals for the child to leave the centre) to support the child's transition back to the placement YDC.

Four reintegration activities to the placement YDC occurred on days 26, 28, 35 and 40 of the child's extended stay at the centre. These appeared to support the child's readiness to return.

We found no records that explain the decision-making process or risk assessments that informed the child's eventual return to the placement YDC.

Case study 3

Child 2 was transferred from a placement YDC to the centre and stayed there 38 days before transferring back to the placement YDC.

Justification for the child's transfer

Our review of records found the child was assaulted at their placement YDC and suffered injuries requiring medical attention at a hospital. The child was subsequently transferred to the centre for their own safety.

Behaviour support and therapeutic engagement

As the transfer was for the child's safety rather than as a response to high-risk behaviour, the child was not provided with a plan outlining expectations or behaviour goals for their return to the placement YDC.

Similarly, the circumstances of the child's transfer did not require the development of a behaviour support plan.

The child was engaged in therapeutic programs at the placement YDC. It appears that engagement in these programs ceased during their time at the centre.

We found the centre's client services team regularly engaged with the child during their stay at the centre. We were unable to find any evidence that staff from the placement YDC attended to provide the child with ongoing therapeutic support.

Attendance records for educational and recreational activities provided to us by the Department of Education and the department do not capture the time period the child stayed at the centre.

Transition back to a placement YDC

Our review found no records of a formal reintegration plan, nor of consultation and communication between the 2 centres.

We found no records that show the decision-making process or risk assessments that informed the child's continued stay at the centre or their eventual transfer back to the placement YDC.

It is therefore unclear if the child's extended stay at the centre was based on medical advice or due to a lack of available beds at placement YDCs.

Case study 4

Child 3 was transferred from a placement YDC and stayed for a total of 30 days at the centre before being transferred back to the placement YDC.

Justification for the child's transfer

Records indicate the child assaulted 2 staff members at the placement YDC several days prior to their transfer to the centre. However, we found no record of a risk assessment or multidisciplinary review that identified the child posed a serious risk to the centre's safety and security.

Nor did we find justification that transferring the child to the centre was the least restrictive response necessary to manage the identified risk.

Behaviour support and therapeutic engagement

We found no evidence that a plan outlining expectations or behaviour goals was provided to the child upon admission to the centre or at any time during their extended stay.

While we located a behaviour support plan on the child's DCOIS profile, the plan appeared to have been developed a year prior to the transfer. It was not clear if the plan was reviewed or amended when the child was transferred to the centre.

We were unable to find any evidence that any members of the placement YDC's client services team attended the centre to provide the child with additional therapeutic support.

We found the centre's client services team engaged with the child regularly, but we found no evidence that core therapeutic programs were delivered to the child during their stay at the centre.

Attendance records for recreational activities provided by the department and attendance information provided to us by the Department of Education did not identify individual children.

Transition back to a placement YDC

Our review found no records of a formal reintegration plan, or of consultation and communication between the 2 centres.

Case notes recording interactions with the child show that the absence of a reintegration plan caused the child frustration and distress. Case notes also indicate the centre's environment contributed to a noticeable decline in the child's wellbeing and mental health.

We found no records of the decision-making process or risk assessments that informed the child's continued stay at the centre or their eventual transfer back to a placement YDC.

Despite the recent introduction of the new RAMP process, the department's emerging practice of transferring complex high-risk children to the centre occurs without adequate risk assessments, justification, planning or recordkeeping. Children with complex needs and behaviours have been transferred from purpose-built YDCs to a short-term facility that has reduced capacity to deliver therapeutic interventions and behaviour support.

The stated purpose of these transfers is to review behaviour support plans, provide intensive support, and establish clear behavioural expectations. However, our review reveals that children have been sent to the centre without a reintegration plan for their eventual return.

Within the centre's restrictive watch-house environment, staff have provided adequate support to transferred children. However, despite efforts by both the centre and external advocates, improvements in children's behaviour have not led to their prompt transfer back to a placement YDC.

The department provided us with a detailed response to the initial concerns we raised about this issue. It acknowledged the centre cannot be relied upon as a long-term strategy for high-risk children. It stated the process is being trialled, monitored and updated as required to ensure it remains responsive to the emerging needs of YDCs – including in preparation for the opening of Woodford YDC.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that when children are transferred because of the Risk Assessment and Management Panel process:

- behaviour support plans are developed or reviewed for all children transferred
- reintegration plans are developed, with clear behavioural expectations, to ensure children stay at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for the shortest possible time
- behaviour support and reintegration plans are communicated to the children.

5. Daily life

This chapter focuses on the environment and conditions in which children live at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (the centre). During our time onsite, we observed the facilities and assessed the standards of hygiene and maintenance. We also reviewed the children's daily routine, their ability to maintain contact with family, and the standard of the food supplied.

The centre is not a purpose-built youth detention centre (YDC), and some of the more restrictive elements of the centre's design may have an adverse impact on children's daily life and wellbeing. The centre's confined spaces, inadequate outdoor recreation spaces and lack of natural light and fresh air stand out as its most significant limitations.

Despite these design limitations, we found the centre staff are working proactively to provide children with a purposeful daily routine. We also found the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support has made some positive changes to the built environment in an effort to make the centre more child friendly.

A youth detention centre in watch-house infrastructure

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 29 The treatment of children and the conditions in which they are held meet contemporary community standards to promote and uphold the humane treatment of children.
- 30 The youth detention centre has a structured daily routine conducive to the rehabilitation and positive development of children.
- 32 Youth detention centres are not oppressive environments and operate flexibly to allow children to feel safe and comfortable.
- 33 The infrastructure of the youth detention centre is well maintained and supports its operating principles and security requirements.
- 35 Children are accommodated in a safe, clean and decent environment which is in a good state of repair and suitable for children.

The importance of a YDC's infrastructure was highlighted by the 2017 *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory*, which stated:

... the physical environment of a youth detention facility – the architecture, buildings, spaces, surroundings, furniture and ambience – greatly affects a child or young person's experience of detention and therefore their prospects of rehabilitation (Volume 2A p. 78).

The *United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty*, known as the Havana Rules, state that a YDC's design and physical environment should be in keeping with the rehabilitative aim of residential treatment and support children's needs for privacy, sensory stimulation, opportunities to associate with peers and participate in sports, physical exercise and leisure-time activities (Rule 32).

There are no minimum standards or guidelines for the design of YDCs in the relevant Youth Justice legislation, regulations or policy. However, Principle 5 of the department's *Philosophy of Youth Detention Services* requires YDCs to be trauma-informed and to provide children with a sense of physical and emotional safety.

The Youth Justice Act's Charter of youth justice principles provides similar guidance, specifically:

Principle 3: The youth justice system should uphold the rights of children, keep them safe and promote their physical and mental wellbeing.

Principle 4: A child being dealt with under this Act should be—

a) treated with respect and dignity, including while the child is in custody

...

Principle 19: A child detained in custody should only be held in a facility suitable for children.

...

Principle 21: A child who is detained in a detention centre under this Act—

...

b) should be provided with a safe and stable living environment

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) 2025 report: *Evidence-based approaches to child justice* provides some guidance as to what may be considered a facility suitable for children.

It encourages YDCs to include therapeutic design characteristics. These include designing small-scale facilities that are as close to a 'home-like' setting as possible, with fewer hard surfaces and overt security measures such as heavy doors and fixed furnishings.

In feedback to this report, the department advised us that for future YDCs it will consider:

- learnings from current centres
- contemporary youth detention infrastructure design including trauma-informed and culturally appropriate principles
- literature on youth justice facility design
- input from users and key stakeholders.

Consistent with this, the 2018 *Report on Youth Justice* (the Atkinson report) highlighted the importance of therapeutic YDC design and recommended that if additional facilities were built in Queensland, smaller, more therapeutic facilities would provide greater opportunity to address children's problem behaviour.

While the centre's 76-bed capacity makes it smaller than Brisbane YDC (162 beds) and Cleveland YDC (112 beds), we do not consider the centre's size is consistent with the 'small-scale' intent recommended by the AHRC and Atkinson reports. West Moreton YDC, with 32 beds, is the only one of the state's YDCs that might reasonably be considered to be of small scale.

Infrastructure inconsistent with the needs of children

Prior to our inspection, we received formal submissions from the Office of the Public Guardian, the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Consistent across all 3 submissions was a concern that the centre had been constructed as a police watch-house instead of being purpose built to accommodate children.

As noted in our introduction, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) *Watch-house Review* (2025) clearly states that the built environment of watch-houses makes them inappropriate places to accommodate children. The review found that watch-houses are not equipped to provide the space, privacy or natural light or support needed for children's physical and psychological wellbeing, which can result in heightened anxiety, distress and increased self-harm.

Throughout this report, we have highlighted the improved support provided to children at the centre compared to what was previously available in QPS watch-houses. However, the lack of space, privacy and natural light remains an issue at the centre.

In line with submissions made by other oversight agencies, we found that the physical infrastructure of the centre is inconsistent with the intent of the Havana Rules and best practice guidelines. The centre's infrastructure is austere and institutional, with no home-like or therapeutic design features. Fixtures such as doors and amenities are made of hard materials such as concrete and stainless steel, to maximise durability.

How the centre is structured

There is a central operations hub with an accommodation wing each side (North and South). The North and South wings each have 2 distinct sections:

- Goanna (North Wing)
- Kangaroo (North Wing)
- Frog (South Wing)
- Serpent (South Wing).

Within each section, there are smaller accommodation pods of varying sizes. Within the accommodation pods, children's rooms resemble cells rather than rooms.

The bed is a sturdy metal frame designed for durability rather than comfort. Basic facilities, including a toilet and sink, are built into the cell, blurring the lines between living and sanitary areas. The extensive use of floor-to-ceiling hardened glass greatly reduces privacy for children in accommodation pods, and in their rooms specifically.

There is a communal shower in the common room in each accommodation pod. Each room has a television and radio, which children can use.



Photo 3: Toilet and shower in the admissions area

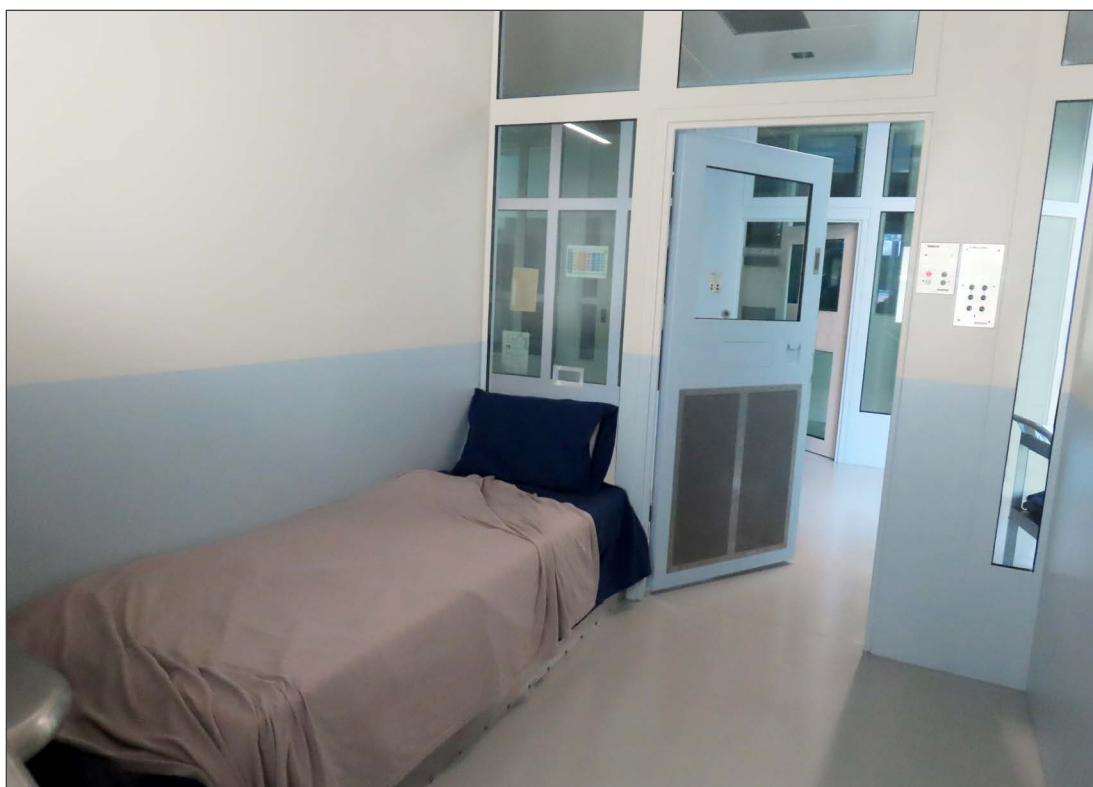


Photo 4: Accommodation room bed (Inspector of Detention Services staff removed from image)

The centre has limited natural light and for the most part, lighting is bright and artificial. Access to fresh air is severely limited and only available in the centre's 2 small outdoor exercise yards.

The exercise yards are enclosed by a high wall on all sides and topped with a steel cage. The centre has no windows that allow observation of the outside world, and there are no established gardens or grassed areas that the children can access.

During our time onsite, we spoke to many staff members who acknowledged the limitations of the centre's infrastructure due to its design as a watch-house. Some even described the building as if it had been designed to limit human contact between detainees and staff.

Members of the centre's client services team informed us that the centre's lack of grass, natural light and outdoor areas can have a negative impact on children's mental health. They said this was particularly the case for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children from remote communities or those who hold a strong connection to land and Country.



Photo 5: Integrated toilet in an accommodation room (Inspector of Detention Services staff removed from image)

During our time onsite, children told us how they felt about the centre. They told us they would like more time outdoors in the sun and fresh air, as well as an opportunity to see the natural environment and touch grass.

Privacy and functionality

We found little privacy for children throughout the centre. Due to the limited space in accommodation pods, when we engaged in conversation with children, the detention youth worker was usually present or at least within earshot of the conversation. It is important to note that we have no concerns with the conduct of detention youth workers during our inspection. They encouraged children to speak to us.

The centre has only one room designed for one-on-one private conversations and only one multi-purpose room for programs and education. As a result, most interaction with children takes place in the accommodation pod, where there is limited privacy. Staff told us the centre's limited infrastructure forces them to have sensitive conversations with children when staff and other children are nearby.

In our past inspections, teachers at other YDCs have told us they do not conduct classes in accommodation units because they are not suitable learning spaces. However, as the centre lacks classrooms, most education and programs are delivered in its accommodation pods.

The pods have minimal furnishings, and teachers must work with children at a small, fixed table with limited seating. The pods also lack basic classroom features such as a whiteboard or storage for learning resources. The department and centre are making improvements, as we discuss in the next section.

Despite the centre's classroom infrastructure limitations, we found children were provided with a high level of education, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 8.

Some of the teachers we spoke to compared their experience in the centre's restricted environment to their experience at other YDCs. They told us they preferred the centre's enclosed environment, as the lack of movement between accommodation units and classrooms reduced distractions for some children.

We have observed the movement of children from accommodation units to classrooms at other centres and acknowledge that the process is logistically challenging. However, complete enclosure of children within the same space is not conducive to their wellbeing or rehabilitation.

While we note reduced distraction may improve some children's concentration, the intent of service delivery should be to support children's eventual reintegration to the community, where some degree of distraction and disruption are a part of daily life.

Complete removal of distraction and disruption through the use of overly restrictive design features or operational models may serve to institutionalise some children. This is inconsistent with the rehabilitative intent of YDCs.

Trying to make the centre infrastructure more child friendly

During our time onsite, staff informed us they had limited ability to make significant changes to the centre's infrastructure, as the centre needs to be returned to QPS with minimal modifications. Within these restrictions, the department has made some effort to soften the centre's austere environment.

To allow easy removal, colourful and culturally themed murals have been painted on boards and attached to walls outside of accommodation pods. The murals add colour and interest to the centre's bland and harsh design.

Unfortunately, the positive impact of the murals is reduced as they are located outside of the accommodation pods where children spend the majority of their time each day. Similar visual enhancements to the accommodation pods would further improve the centre's built environment and have a greater impact on children.

The centre has also purchased durable furniture that is custom designed for use in secure facilities. We observed the soft, colourful and lightweight furniture in accommodation pods and found it provided some increased comfort for children. Pot plants have also been placed at some windows outside accommodation pods, in an effort to add some greenery to the built environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, we were also informed of plans to paint murals of the centre's behavioural expectations in the admissions area and a mural in the visitors' waiting area. The Inspector welcomes any plans to make the centre's harsh design more child- and family-friendly.



Photo 6: Mural outside of the Serpent accommodation pods (Part of image obscured for security reasons)

Until early October 2025, the centre lacked appropriate spaces for program delivery or education. At the time of our onsite inspection, the centre had recently completed infrastructure upgrades to a multipurpose program and education room.



Photo 7: Accommodation pod (Part of image obscured for security reasons)

The new room is separate from the accommodation pods and has more equipment available, such as an interactive whiteboard, iPads, and VR headsets. Staff from the Wacol Youth Remand Education Support Hub told us the new room was more like a traditional classroom and it improved children's engagement in education.



Photo 8: Programs and education room

From a harm-minimisation perspective, we see value in continuing to invest in measures that mitigate the negative aspects of the centre's infrastructure.

We acknowledge that large-scale capital projects are not feasible, and recommend that the department collaborates with QPS to introduce additional temporary measures that help soften the centre's stark, institutional appearance.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support implements additional temporary infrastructure enhancements to further soften the Wacol Youth Remand Centre's harsh and institutional built environment.

Centre hygiene and graffiti

Relevant standards

- 30** The youth detention centre has a structured daily routine conducive to the rehabilitation and positive development of children.
- 33** The infrastructure of the youth detention centre is well maintained and supports its operating principles and security requirements.
- 35** Children are accommodated in a safe, clean and decent environment which is in a good state of repair and suitable for children.

A 2024 thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (UK) – *Improving behaviour in prisons* – highlighted the importance of appropriate maintenance in a detention environment.

The attention given to the physical environment is often a strong indicator of the culture in a prison and the impact of the environment on prisoners' mood, behaviour and motivation should not be underestimated. The 'broken window' theory ... is widely accepted in academic and operational contexts; visible signs of disorder and misbehaviour in an environment encourage further poor behaviour by normalising it. The converse is also true; most prisoners are likely to respect and support efforts to maintain a clean, bright and welcoming environment (p. 22).

The centre's operating manual states that cleaners provide coverage 6pm–2pm 7 days a week, with specialist forensic cleaners engaged if required following an incident or event.

It also states that all areas are cleaned daily, including the shared showers in accommodation pods. Rooms that are vacated by a child receive a deep clean prior to the admission of the next child in that room. The operating manual further states that detention youth workers supervise children in completing daily cleaning tasks such as wiping surfaces and sweeping their rooms and common areas.

During our inspection of the centre, we found it to be clean, organised and well cared for. There were no visible signs of graffiti or property damage in the children's accommodation rooms or common areas. A detention youth worker explained that the cleaner cleans the shared showers in each accommodation pod every morning, while children's rooms are cleaned as needed on an ad hoc basis. They also mentioned that rooms are professionally cleaned before a new child is allocated to them, as stated in the manual.

Another detention youth worker told us that operating well below 'safe operating capacity' (which is 85% of total built bed capacity) allows the centre a high level of flexibility to manage children's accommodation arrangements.

We were told that maintaining a clean, well-kept, and graffiti-free environment has been a top priority for leadership since the centre's opening. They emphasised that graffiti and property damage reflect a lack of respect for shared spaces, and that addressing such behaviour is crucial to upholding standards. Further, maintaining the environment to a high standard supports visual safety for children, which promotes feelings of safety and stability.

We recognise that the centre's strategy requires constant vigilance against graffiti, with staff promptly and decisively responding to all incidents of property damage.

Daily routine

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in youth detention centres have fair and equitable access to services, activities and facilities, including services specifically relating to their cultural identity.
- 29 The treatment of children and the conditions in which they are held meet contemporary community standards to promote and uphold the humane treatment of children.
- 30 The youth detention centre has a structured daily routine conducive to the rehabilitation and positive development of children.
- 31 Children have a minimum 10 hours outside their room each day, including at least two hours in the open and fresh air during daylight hours.
- 43 Children should have daily opportunities for physical and recreational activity, and a regular structured sport and recreation program.
- 46 All children are able to satisfy the needs of their religious, spiritual and cultural life.
- 66 The range of education and programs accommodate the disparate needs of children in the youth detention centre.

Structured day

The department's *YD-1-3 Youth detention – Daily routine, education and program delivery* policy states that a YDC's daily routine will provide children with structure and clear expectations. It will also provide a framework for children to access programs and services that help address their offending behaviours and successful reintegration into the community. It will do this by promoting social, behavioural, educational and vocational development.

The policy further states that keeping children occupied through participation and engagement in activities and programs is a critical part of the incident prevention strategy.

The structured day set out in section 5.2 of the YDCOM 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people' allows children out of their rooms for a minimum of 12 hours per day unless they are separated (isolated). These include separations at the child's request and those related to incidents, staff shortages or illness. The policy also allows children to be separated up to 4 hours each day for 'routine security purposes'. This includes staff breaks and meetings and regular shower and hygiene breaks for children.

The structured day should reflect the normal activities of children in the community such as:

- going to education programs during school hours
- completing housekeeping chores
- taking regular meal and beverage breaks.

The policy also states YDCs will ensure children have access to offence-focused and developmental programs and activities, as well as having the opportunity to engage in daily physical activity.

Under the department's new *Detention with Purpose* framework, participation in education is mandatory for children detained in a YDC.

We discuss the recreational and developmental activities provided to children in this chapter, and we address the educational and rehabilitative services provided to children in further detail in Chapter 8.

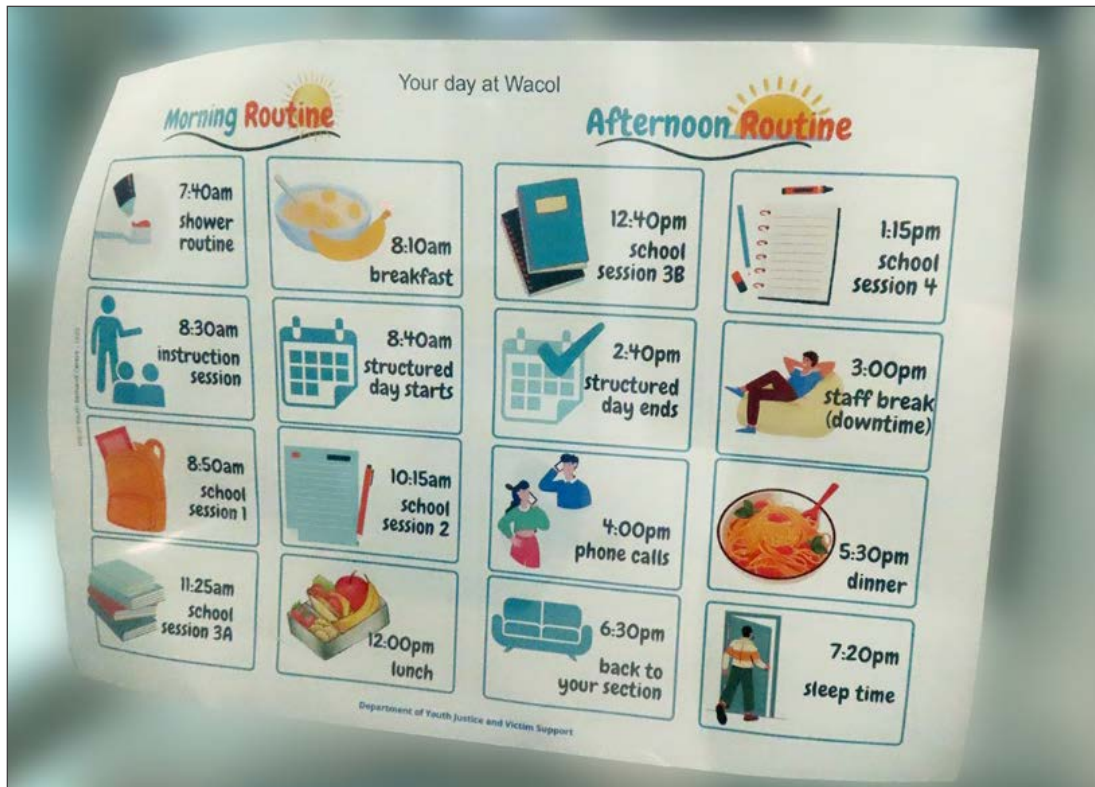


Photo 9: Activity timetable in accommodation pod (Part of image obscured for security reasons)

When we attended the centre, we found easy-to-read schedules of the centre's daily routine were prevalent in accommodation pods. They outlined a routine comparable to a normal day for a child attending school in the community. In line with the schedules, we observed children consistently engaging in educational activities in accommodation pods or physical education in the centre's small exercise yards.

During the 4pm to 7pm evening session, we saw children relaxing in their accommodation pods while an external provider moved between the pods delivering activities. Children were also escorted to the centre's visiting area to call family members. We will discuss further details about children's ability to contact their families later in this chapter.

Programs, education and activities

Children generally gave positive feedback about the programs and educational opportunities at the centre. One group of children told us they enjoy the education support hub because it is fun and helps time pass quickly. Another group of children said they prefer engaging in education and programs to being confined to their rooms.

We also participated in a consultative forum where children expressed appreciation for the support provided by their teachers.

With the exception of movement to the visits centre and the exercise yards, children spent almost the entire day in the small common area of their accommodation pods. As mentioned earlier, these have limited privacy and natural light and no fresh air.

When children did move to other parts of the centre, this occurred by way of windowless internal corridors that were bland, and for the most part entirely featureless. The 4 colourful murals described earlier provide the exception to this.



Photo 10: Hallway outside children's accommodation pods (Part of image obscured for security reasons)

Before we attended the centre, we requested statistical information about the amount of time children spend out of their room. We also asked for information about children's participation in programs, education and activities.

The Department of Education provided us with comprehensive data that showed children's average daily attendance in education classes, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 8. Activity and program participation data is discussed below.

However, in response to our request for time-out-of-room data for the centre, the department advised that the Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS) does not record the information in a way that is easily extractable. Instead, the department suggested our inspection officers manually review section logs recorded on DCOIS. Our previous reports have highlighted limitations with the department's DCOIS record-keeping system

During our time onsite, the vast majority of children we spoke to did not raise any concerns about the length of time they spend out of their room each day. Nor was inadequate time out of room raised as a concern in any submissions from oversight agencies, in stakeholder interviews or by YDC staff members.

Activities provided by external agencies

The department has contracted external service providers to deliver activities to children outside of the education support hub hours in the evening and on weekends. These include prosocial activities such as those related to life skills, recreation and sport.

While the additional activities are not formal change-orientated programs, all of the service providers we spoke to explained there was therapeutic intent to their engagements with children. Some of these activities included songwriting and recording; fitness, health and wellbeing; registered dog therapy; and resilience and team work. The centre's cultural liaison officers also facilitate an Australian First Nations cultural art program that all children can participate in.

The department provided us with attendance records for activities run by external service providers in May, June and July 2025. It also informed us that the centre did not have a dedicated program coordinator until mid-May 2025, and early reporting of program schedules was done on an ad hoc basis. Feedback to the report by the department indicated this was part of the establishment phase of the centre, at which time there was a need to scale service delivery progressively with the workforce and the operating model.

Consequently, the department could not supply us with information about programs delivered by external providers in April 2025. It did provide attendance records for cultural art programs conducted by cultural liaison officers from May to August 2025.

We spoke to some of the services contracted to deliver activities to children at the centre. They told us they have a productive working relationship with centre staff and they were generally well supported by operational staff when facilitating programs. However, one of the activity providers told us they found facilitating therapeutic activities in open accommodation pods very difficult, as children did not feel comfortable expressing vulnerable emotions.

Activity attendance data for the centre is recorded locally on spreadsheets and records the total number of times a child participated in the activities discussed above. While we observed children in programs, we did not observe the content of the program being delivered.

2026 updated program data

In feedback to the report, the department told us that program delivery at the centre has become more consistent and established, and it provided the data shown in Table 4 to demonstrate the programs run and the attendance.

Table 4: Attendance records for programs run at the centre from January to March 2026

Program and category	January	February	March
Art (Recreational)	57		
Fitness training (Recreational)	248	217	245
Cultural architect (Recreational)	14		
Music therapy (Recreational)	281	230	281
Animal therapy (Therapeutic)	34	32	49
Our neighbourhood (religion)	11	25	23
Sound healing (therapeutic)	10	7	13
Cooking		24	
Art (cultural)	1		

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support on 27 July 2026.

NB: The department included data for a program called Tala Barbering for January 2026; however, we confirmed this is a barbering service, not a program, and have therefore not recorded this in the table above.

Cultural programs

We found that children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities have less opportunity to engage in cultural programs compared to children at other YDCs. Programs provided by community organisations to support Pasifika and Maori children, African children and children of the Muslim faith at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs were not available at the centre at the time of the inspection.

In feedback to this report, the department told us that since the onsite inspection, the centre has been able to include Pasifika and Villager (for African youth) programs and will gradually increase the programs it can offer.

The department also provided us with data that was collated by cultural liaison officers relating to cultural program completion. We were advised that the data collection process has been updated and cultural programs data will be recorded with all other program data in future. Table 5 records attendance at programs at the centre.

Table 5: Attendance records for cultural programs run at the centre from January to May 2026

Program	January	February	March	April	May
Cultural program	9	4	9	16	15
Cultural program with Elder		6			
Cultural program (Close the Gap)			5		
Cultural art program		3		1	
Cultural program for men's business				3	

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support on 27 July 2026.

Pastoral care

We were concerned during the onsite inspection that the children at the centre were not provided with pastoral support services. However, after the onsite inspection, the department told us the centre is now facilitating weekly visits from the Our Neighbourhood team, who provide social and spiritual support to children and access to religious services.

The department also told us the centre is establishing a regular chaplaincy visit schedule and options to deliver church and spiritual services on weekends. These are not routinely provided but are available on an individualised basis when requested by children.

Facilities for time outside of room and recreation

Relevant standards

- 29** The treatment of children and the conditions in which they are held meet contemporary community standards to promote and uphold the humane treatment of children.
- 30** The youth detention centre has a structured daily routine conducive to the rehabilitation and positive development of children.
- 31** Children have a minimum 10 hours outside their room each day, including at least two hours in the open and fresh air during daylight hours.
- 43** Children should have daily opportunities for physical and recreational activity, and a regular structured sport and recreation program.

Prior to our onsite inspection, the department informed us that that daily timetables allocate 2 hours of exercise per day, including at least one hour of open-air access in the courtyard. It noted children's ability to access the centre's courtyard was in line with the Havana Rules.

The department further clarified that that actual time outside rooms may vary due to operational complexities, such as association restrictions (some children cannot associate with one another for a reason), staffing constraints, adverse weather, unavailability of program spaces or deliverers, and other security-related issues.

The relevant section (Rule 47) of the Havana Rules states that:

Every juvenile should have the right to a suitable amount of time for daily free exercise, in the open air whenever weather permits, during which time appropriate recreational and physical training should normally be provided. Adequate space, installations and equipment should be provided for these activities.



Photo 11: One of the centre's 2 exercise yards
(Part of image obscured for security reasons)

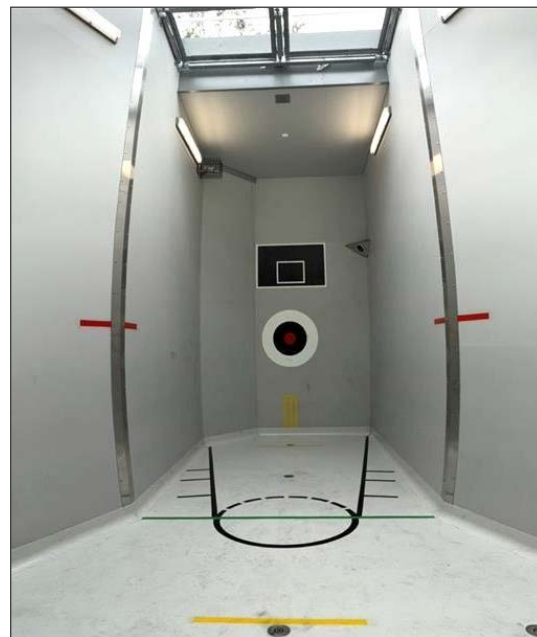


Photo 12: Exercise yard (opposite side to photo 11) [Photo supplied by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support]

Open-air access

The physical limitations of secure facilities, such as the centre, raise important questions about what can reasonably be considered 'open air' access.

Neither the Youth Justice Act nor the Youth Justice Regulations require a minimum amount of outdoor time, nor do they provide a definition as to what constitutes 'outdoors' or 'open air'. The *YD-1-3 Youth detention – Education and program delivery* policy states that children will have daily physical activity but does not set mandatory minimums for outdoor or open-air exposure.

Other jurisdictions – such as adult corrections in Queensland, Victoria and the ACT – set statutory requirements for time in the open air but do not explicitly define what constitutes 'open air.'

A 2026 decision by the Supreme Court of Victoria highlighted the complexity of interpreting the term within a secure facility. The court observed that 'open air' in a prison cannot mean an unconfined environment and must be assessed relative to the inherent constraints of detention. The court concluded there is no clear objective test. Rather, consideration should be given to access to sun, wind, rain, outlook to open space or vegetation, and the capacity to move about for exercise.

We are not satisfied that the centre's exercise courtyards adequately provide children with appropriate time outdoors or in the open air. Although the courtyards allow natural light, they lack space for recreation and sport, contain no grassed or natural areas, provide limited airflow, and offer no outward-facing views.

In addition to considering what constitutes time in the open air, Rule 47 of the Havana Rules also states that 'adequate space, installations and equipment' should be provided for children to engage in recreational and physical activities. The centre's courtyards do not achieve this standard due to their small size, odd shape and complete lack of exercise equipment.

Despite the courtyards' significant limitations, during our time onsite we observed staff from the department and teachers using the courtyards to provide children with physical activities. They did this through the creative use of sports equipment and modified games.

Regardless of the admirable efforts of centre staff, the inadequacy of the centre's exercise courtyards significantly contributes to our overall finding that the centre is not a suitable facility for accommodating children for extended time periods.

In Chapter 8 we recommend the department increases the number of children who are given the opportunity to access outdoor space at West Moreton and Brisbane YDCs through the leave of absence process.

Contact with family and community

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in youth detention centres have fair and equitable access to services, activities and facilities, including services specifically relating to their cultural identity.
- 38 Support from a child's family and community is encouraged.
- 39 Children's connections to the community are strengthened by participation in interventions and activities involving relevant government and non-government agencies, community organisations and Elders.
- 40 Children are detained as close as possible to their home region.
- 41 The importance of peer interaction and social contact to healthy development is recognised during a period of detention.

Children are moved around the state

There is no requirement in either the Youth Justice Act or the Youth Justice Regulation that mandates a child must be detained in a centre close to their home community. Section 263(1) of the Youth Justice Act provides only a broad direction that the chief executive is responsible for the security and management of detention centres, as well as the safe custody and wellbeing of detained children.

While the legislation is silent on location, several departmental principles and policies underscore the importance of keeping children connected to their families and communities.

The department's *Philosophy of Youth Detention* highlights this through Principle 10, which states that children's relationships with family, friends, community members and advocates should be supported. This principle commits the department to helping children in detention maintain appropriate relationships and develop new ones that will sustain them during detention and upon returning to their community.

Similarly, the *YD-1-8 Youth detention – Visits to young people* policy recognises that maintaining positive family, peer and community relationships is essential for a young person's successful transition back into their community.

Current practice, which involves detaining children from across Queensland in centralised locations, is inconsistent with contemporary youth detention design and widely accepted human rights standards.

The benefits of small, local facilities

The importance of decentralised, community-integrated detention centres is articulated in Rule 30 of the Havana Rules, which emphasises that juvenile detention facilities should be small in scale, decentralised, and located close enough to enable regular family contact.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's 2024 *Help way earlier!': How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing* report also identifies small, locally-based facilities as best practice for youth detention systems.

The Northern Territory Children's Commissioner raised similar concerns in Part 2 of the 2024 *Inquiry into the Reduced Capacity Plan for the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre*. This was following the transfer of children from Alice Springs to Darwin, thousands of kilometres away. The Commissioner criticised the decision, highlighting the overwhelming evidence that strong family connections improve reintegration, health outcomes and education, and significantly reduce reoffending.

Decentralised detention centres also offer practical benefits, particularly by improving access to local services that support reintegration. This aligns with the findings of the former Queensland Government's 2018 *Report on Youth Justice*, which recommended smaller, regionally located detention facilities across Queensland.

The report identified far north Queensland, Mount Isa and south-east Queensland as priority areas, noting that localised facilities reduce dislocation and strengthen cultural and community connections. It said this would also allow local Elders and community leaders to work directly with young people to support cultural identity and reduce reoffending among Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children.

The department's own policy framework recognises the risks associated with detaining children far from home. The *YD-2-5 Youth detention – Interfacility transfers* policy explicitly acknowledges that transferring young people outside their catchment can negatively impact them. This is especially the case for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children and their families when they are taken off Country.

Placement decisions

Despite these well-established principles and the clear benefits of localised detention, the department faces complex decisions. The central Admission Coordination Unit (ACU) is often required to balance these ideals against the immediate risks associated with leaving a child in a QPS watch-house for longer than intended.

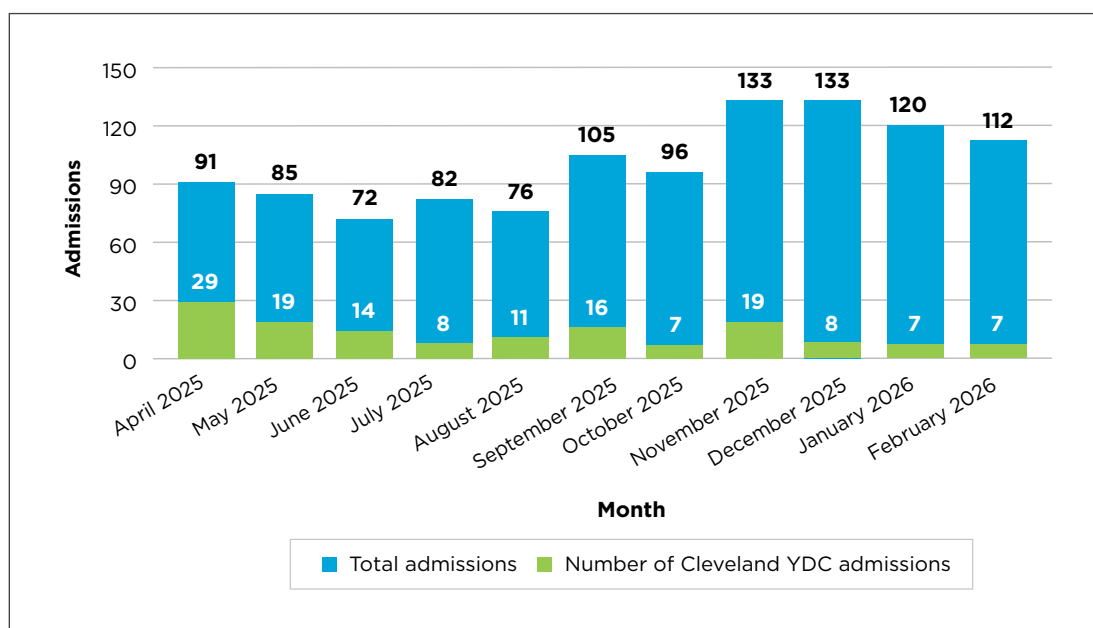
We were told that when a Cleveland YDC bed is unavailable, the ACU team tries to prioritise the child's best interests when deciding on transfers for children in north Queensland watch-houses to the centre in Brisbane.

A stakeholder explained to us that placement decisions involve a difficult assessment of the relative harms and benefits of transferring a child from a remote community to south-east Queensland or leaving the child to spend additional days in a watch-house in their local community.

We acknowledge the challenges the ACU faces.

Positively, the number of children from the Cleveland YDC catchment appears to have reduced since the centre first opened. Admissions data provided to us by the department indicates a clear downward trend, as shown in Graph 5.

Graph 5: Children from the Cleveland YDC catchment admitted to the centre by month



Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support on 13 March 2026.

Given the undesirable impacts of detaining children away from their local community, we encourage the department to continue to reduce the number of children from north Queensland being transferred to the centre.

The centre's visits and phone facilities

The Havana Rules state that every child should have the right to receive regular and frequent visits with family and defence counsel (Rule 60). The rules also state that every child:

... should have the right to communicate in writing or by telephone at least twice a week with the person of his or her choice, unless legally restricted, and should be assisted as necessary in order [to] effectively enjoy this right. (Rule 61).

Section 29 of the Youth Justice Regulation provides a broad requirement that a child detained in a detention centre has the right to make and receive telephone calls at all reasonable times.

More specifically, Section 11: Mail, phone calls and visits of the *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter One - Care and management of young people' states that every child in youth detention has the right to:

- make and return phone calls to parents, family members, carers, friends, other persons, legal support and other professionals
- receive visits from parents, family members, carers, friends, other persons, legal support and other professionals (p 117).

YDCOM Chapter One states that all young people are entitled to at least 120 minutes of personal telephone calls per week to approved contacts, at the centre's expense. This entitlement exceeds the minimum expressed by the Havana Rules and equates to just over 17 minutes a day of phone time.

The centre uses a QPS phone system with fewer features than the new Unity phone system implemented in YDCs and adult correctional facilities in Queensland. Unlike at a placement YDC, children do not have free access to a phone in their accommodation unit common area.

To make a call, children are escorted in small groups to the centre's visits area, where they have a specified window of time to contact family members. Children must use the phone in one of the centre's non-contact booths or video-conferencing suites in the visits centre.

Time provided for phone calls

One of the most common concerns we heard from children was that they had insufficient time to speak with their families. One child stated that a 5-minute call is not enough time to speak with their family.

Consistent with children's concerns, various staff told us that, depending on the centre's population, phone time on a weekday can be as little as 5 minutes per day for each child. If the centre population is low, children may receive up to 15 minutes of phone time on a weekday. On weekends, children can make an additional call, bringing the total to 2 per day.

When we attended the centre, one child told us of his difficulties getting through to his family, who did not pick up his calls. A staff member told us that children can become frustrated when the person they are calling does not answer within the allocated time. Based on this information, we were concerned children who are given scheduled phone access may not be able to make full use of the time available.

After our inspection, we asked centre management how individual children's phone time is managed. We were informed a child's phone time does not begin until a call is successfully connected. Those who connect later receive the full allocated time.

The centre also informed us that children experiencing sorry business, significant personal distress, or difficulty adjusting to the centre environment may be given extended call time to support their wellbeing.

The centre stated that children's calls to their lawyer, Youth Justice community caseworker or professional stakeholders are prioritised to ensure timely legal and case management support.

Based on what staff, children and community stakeholders told us, our onsite observations and a review of relevant records, we did not identify any concerns regarding children's ability to maintain contact with their lawyer or other professional stakeholders.

We also spoke to children who told us that when they use the centre phones, they do not know how much time is remaining. One child described being on the phone with his mother when the call abruptly cut out. A staff member who worked in the visits centre told us that while staff provide a one-minute warning, some children are frustrated by the short call duration and can become escalated when calls are cut off at the 5-minute mark.

During our time onsite, we attended the visits centre while children were making phone calls. We observed an operational staff member giving children a one-minute warning. The staff member's interaction with children was calm and professional, and we did not observe any frustration from the children as their call finished.

While we observed children making phone calls without incident, we do not doubt there is a possibility that children could become frustrated when calls finish.

After our time onsite, we were told the centre was aware of children's concerns about disconnected calls but had not been able to establish if the problem was due to the phone system or issues on the family's end. We were informed that in these situations, children are generally given the opportunity to call again.

Based on what we heard from children and staff, we are concerned that children at the centre may not be consistently receiving the minimum 120 minutes of weekly personal phone time afforded to them in YDCOM Chapter One.

In feedback to the report, the department advised us that when there are 35 or more children in the centre, phone calls are set to 10 minutes and children can make one a day. When the number of children in the centre is less than 30, children can make 2 calls of 10 minutes each per day. The feedback indicated that call length is also influenced by the daily routines, programs and the education schedule.

The feedback also included advice that:

- there are no limits on children redialling a number while trying to connect
- if a phone call is disconnected children are given the opportunity to call again
- review and clarification occurs if the child reports they were unable to connect but the system records that the call did connect.

Records of phone calls

To better understand their access to phone calls, we requested children's phone records from the department. The department provided us with a call log that captured information for 1848 outgoing calls made by young people during the month of October 2025.

Meaningful analysis of individual children's access to phone calls was difficult due to the way the centre's phone system generates reports. The department informed us it had requested more detailed records from the centre's phone system service provider, but it was unable to provide a sufficiently detailed report.

The report does not link each unique phone call to a child's name or DCOIS profile. The centre also re-issues phone PINs to other children after a child exits the centre. To avoid exhaustive manual cross-referencing, we have considered:

- the average time of children's phone calls
- the average number of phone calls made each day.

The dataset showed a combined average call duration of roughly 3 and a half minutes. However, the department informed us this number is possibly inaccurate as the phone call report does not differentiate between attempts to connect a call and connected calls.

When we have removed calls that were under a one-minute duration, the average duration of calls increased to 6 minutes and 47 seconds. Assuming calls under one-minute duration were attempted phone calls, we excluded those, and our analysis showed a daily average of 29 outgoing calls in October 2025.

It is difficult to assess whether each child received an allocation of 120 minutes of phone time per week, as outlined in YDCOM Chapter One. However, based on an average call time of 6 minutes and 47 seconds and 29 outgoing calls in October 2025, it is unlikely that each child at the centre received their entire phone time allocation.

Since our inspection, we have received advice that centre management has been engaging with QPS to explore opportunities to increase children's ability to access phone calls. It was clarified that this engagement had been occurring since the centre opened.

The limitations of the phone list

The Youth Justice Act and Youth Justice Regulation do not specify who a child can make a phone call to during a period of detainment. Section 29 (1) of the Youth Justice Regulation provides only the broad requirement that a child detained in a detention centre has the right to make and receive telephone calls at all reasonable times.

YDCOM Chapter One states that children have the right to make calls to 'friends and other persons' and further states that a person nominated by a child for inclusion on the telephone list must not be excluded unless:

- there are child protection concerns affecting the safety and wellbeing of the child
- there is a significant reason to believe the person may affect the security and good order of the centre, or they have historically attempted to help the child escape or have assaulted the child.
- the person does not want to maintain contact with the child
- the person does not consent to being included on the child's phone list
- the person nominated is a child and their parent or guardian does not approve the contact
- there are legal issues with the child contacting the nominated person, such as an order preventing contact.

The centre's phone system currently only allows a maximum of 5 contacts on each child's phone list. We were told that 3 of the 5 available slots are kept for professional contacts such as a child's lawyer, Youth Justice community caseworker or child safety officer. The remaining 2 slots are for family contacts. By comparison, at a placement YDC, children can add up to 10 approved numbers to their phone list.

When we attended the centre, several children and staff told us that in addition to professional and legal contacts, only immediate family members could be approved contacts on a child's phone list.

The children we spoke to told us they would like to have more people on their phone list beyond their immediate family. One child explained that some children in youth detention do not talk to their immediate family, and not being able to nominate another person to add means they do not have anyone outside of the centre to talk to.

While we understand the centre's phone system was implemented for QPS use in a watch-house, it provides less functionality than the digital phone system in use at placement YDCs. Further, the centre's current practice of restricting phone contact to professionals and immediate family is inconsistent with the clear requirements of YDCOM Chapter One.

The centre should look into increasing the limit on the number of approved phone numbers stored on a young person's phone system, to match the number available in other detention centres.

In January 2026, we were told there are ongoing discussions with QPS to increase the number of phones available for children. We were told QPS had agreed to install an extra phone in each accommodation pod office, which can be passed through a hatch for children to use. However, centre managers explained that adding more phones within the accommodation pods is challenging, due to the differing operational requirements of the department and QPS.

We recognise that retrofitting additional electronic fixtures in a highly secure facility is a complex process. The difficulty is increased because any modifications to better accommodate children must either be removable or aligned with QPS operational requirements when the centre resumes its intended purpose as a watch-house.

We have since been told that the department has now approved these additional telephones in the accommodation pods, and the work was scheduled to commence in March 2026.

It is encouraging that the department and QPS have reached an agreement and have now begun to improve children's access to phones. However, we are unconvinced that adding a single phone to each pod will sufficiently address the concerns we have identified regarding access to phone calls with family members and community supports.

Recommendation 9

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support collaborates with the Queensland Police Service to increase the number of authorised phone numbers that can be stored on the phone system.

Recommendation 10

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and the Wacol Youth Remand Centre ensure:

- children receive a minimum of 120 minutes of weekly personal phone time
- available phone contacts are not unreasonably restricted to immediate family members.

Food and nutrition

Relevant standards

- 29** The treatment of children and the conditions in which they are held meet contemporary community standards to promote and uphold the humane treatment of children.
- 44** Healthy lifestyles are supported through the provision of extensive health promotion and education, nutritious food and drink, and encouragement of exercise and personal hygiene.
- 45** Children have a varied, healthy and balanced diet which meets their individual needs.

YDCOM 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people' provides the following key guidelines for food and nutrition services in YDCs:

- Young people have the right to a variety of nutritious and safe food in sufficient quantities at all mealtimes.
- Young people's medical, therapeutic, religious or cultural dietary needs must be met.
- Menus must be developed with an accredited dietician on a biennial basis.
- Food and drink options available to young people during breaks and through the buy-up scheme must comply with nutrition objectives.
- Food is a basic right and deprivation of food must never be used as a disciplinary or behaviour management tool (p. 101).

Unlike the state's other YDCs, the centre uses an external caterer to provide children with meals and snacks. The department provided us with correspondence showing that a dietician recently reviewed the centre and confirmed the food was consistent with the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

Prepared meals are delivered to the centre daily and stored in a fridge or temperature-controlled hot box until operational staff can deliver the meals to accommodation pods.

We observed operational staff double-checking that appropriate meals were available for children with dietary requirements before starting the delivery to the pods. Children are provided with meals in individual cardboard containers or paper bags that are clearly labelled with dietary information.



Photo 13: Breakfast
(showing dietary information)



Photo 14: Lunch – Sausage rolls

Where children eat meals

Unlike in other YDCs, where meals are communal, we observed children eating meals by themselves in their small accommodation rooms. After our inspection, we asked if this is due to children electing to eat alone or if it is an operational requirement. We were informed that children are directed to eat meals alone in their room due to limited space in accommodation pods.

A common principle in relevant literature and international standards is that detention centres should incorporate ‘home-like’ design elements and mirror the community environment as closely as possible. Sharing meals, which is valued across cultures, serves as a vital way to foster positive relationships. In the context of the YDC, it offers children a chance to interact with peers and staff in a social setting.

As noted by the centre, accommodation pods were not intended to promote communal eating and shared meals. The existing infrastructure in the accommodation pods is limited to a small, fixed table with 3 fixed seats. However, the centre has acquired additional soft tables and chairs suitable for use in a detention environment.

We observed some of these extra soft furnishings in certain accommodation pods and noted they offer much-needed additional seating options for children to sit comfortably. However, these furnishings seem intended to support education and program activities. The centre has not prioritised involving young people in communal dining.

Children routinely eating meals by themselves in a locked room is inconsistent with comparable community standards. They miss important opportunities for social interaction with their peers and staff. As with many other aspects of the centre, the negative impacts of this practice are likely exacerbated when children are kept at the centre for longer durations.

Food quality and portion sizes

During the onsite inspection, children's opinions of the quality of food provided to them was generally positive. However, they consistently complained that the portion sizes of meals were insufficient. Consistent with this feedback, information provided to us by the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) shows children have consistently complained about portion sizes and the quality of food since the centre opened.

Due to the ongoing complaints, the OPG progressed the matter as a formal complaint to the department on 20 June 2025. This complaint focused specifically on the adequacy of food portions for the period between 10 April and 15 May 2025. On 11 November 2025, the OPG informed us it was satisfied with actions taken by the department to improve food services and formally closed the complaint.

On 14 November 2025, the centre reported that feedback from youth, staff and stakeholders indicated ongoing improvements in the quality and quantity of food since the centre's opening. It noted that food-related complaints from children had decreased – at the weekly group discussions the centre holds with children and in staff interactions. It also mentioned the absence of any food-related complaints to community visitors over the previous 3 weeks.

Additionally, on 27 January 2026, the department updated us, highlighting significant enhancements to the meals served to children at the centre. These include:

- doubling lunch portions for older children
- increasing dinner portions by 20%
- providing 2 UP&GO drinks daily to each young person
- expanding snack options throughout the day – closely matching food offerings at the Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs.

We were also told the centre was continuing to engage with the external caterer to improve food services for children. The department was also considering sharing some aspects of food service delivery with the West Moreton YDC kitchen.

The OPG's ongoing advocacy efforts and the centre's ongoing engagement with the external caterer appear to have resolved children's complaints that they were not given enough food.

This positive outcome highlights the importance of the advocacy work of OPG community visitors as well as the centre's willingness to make practical changes to address children's complaints. In feedback to this report, the department told us that the centre had been addressing food quality and portion concerns through engagement with the children, stakeholders and service providers since early in its operation. The actions noted above were part of ongoing service improvement and not just in response to the OPG complaint.

6. Health and support

This chapter reviews the health care and supports the children receive while at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre. It considers their physical and mental health, substance use treatments, and the support offered after health needs are identified.

In partnership with Queensland Health, the centre ensures children have access to health care, services and programs that improve and maintain their health and wellbeing, and access to treatment for special health needs. This is guided by the department's *YD-1-5 Youth detention – Provision of medical and other health services* policy.

As we noted in Chapter 3, the formal memorandum of understanding between the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (HHS) expired in October 2023 but has been extended through letters of agreement between the 2 agencies. Queensland Health told us this would continue to be extended until a new agreement is finalised.

West Moreton HHS is funded to deliver primary health care services for children at the centre through a 24/7 health clinic. The health clinic provides assessment, diagnostics, treatment services and referral to specialist health services. West Moreton HHS also provides primary health care services to children at Brisbane and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres (YDCs), and staff resources are shared across all 3 centres.

Health services provided to children at the centre

Relevant standards

- 49 Children's health needs are addressed through accredited health services.
- 50 The youth detention centre has safe facilities, procedures and practices for the distribution of medication to children.
- 51 An initial medical and psychological assessment of each child is conducted by a health practitioner within 48 hours of the child's admission to the youth detention centre.
- 52 Children in a youth detention centre with actual or suspected mental health issues have access to age and culturally appropriate mental health services in a timely manner.
- 53 The youth detention centre uses specialised harm minimisation and prevention programs administered by qualified professionals.
- 54 Children are aware of the health services available and how to access them.

The centre's health clinic is staffed by nurses on a 24/7 basis, and a doctor attends the centre on Monday and Friday mornings. Outside of business hours, additional on-call clinical support from a doctor or nurse practitioner is available for the centre's nursing staff. Health services provided to children at the centre are comparable to those available at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs.

Children who require specialist health services may undertake a planned medical leave of absence to the medical clinic at Brisbane YDC, which has more resources. A medical event that requires more acute management will require a medical leave of absence to be transported to a hospital. In the event of a medical emergency, the Queensland Ambulance Service will attend the centre.

The HealthSPAN model

In addition to primary health care services, a pilot program, locally referred to as HealthSPAN, has been implemented with interim funding from the Prison and Youth Detention Health Service based within the West Moreton HHS. The program is about Comprehensive Health Assessments (CHA) being conducted in YDCs, which are more about proactive health management than reactive health care.

This program provides children with increased access to screening and diagnostic services across mental, cognitive disability and physical health conditions when they enter a YDC. It also provides funding for Aboriginal health worker and Torres Strait Islander health worker positions.

In addition, interim HealthSPAN funding has allowed for extra nursing, allied health and doctor positions. We were not given information regarding the impact of the HealthSPAN model, and detailed consideration of it was outside the scope of our current inspection. However, we understand the project's interim funding has not been confirmed for extension beyond 30 June 2026.

In its submission (Appendix E) to this report, Queensland Health stated that an evaluation of the program's impact across the state is being conducted and is expected to be completed by September 2026. Confirmation was also provided that the 2-year pilot program for the CHA was completed on 30 June 2026 and West Moreton HHS is currently considering the future state of these assessments in detention centres.

Positive and collaborative relationships

The children and stakeholders we spoke to did not raise any concerns with the health services provided by the West Moreton HHS health clinic. West Moreton HSS staff members informed us the health clinic had a positive and collaborative relationship with stakeholders from the department and the Children's Health Queensland HHSs Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Services (Forensic CYMHS). They said this has led to improved outcomes for children.

During our time at the centre, we were told by health staff that the clinic's leaders have supported nurses in engaging with children in a proactive and positive manner. The staff member stated that these efforts have made children feel more comfortable talking to nurses about their health needs.

Consistent with this statement, we were present when several children were admitted to the centre, and we observed nurses engaging warmly and respectfully with them during this process.

In addition to the initial health check completed during admission, each child undertakes a CHA. This is based on the Australian Government's 715 Indigenous Health Check, which is an annual check designed to support early detection of health risks. While all children receive a CHA, Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children are prioritised for their health assessments during their period of detention.

We also observed a nurse undertake medication rounds with children. This occurred in an orderly manner. However, due to the limited space in accommodation pods, the nurse's interactions with children lacked privacy, and conversations about sensitive health matters occurred within earshot of operational staff and our inspectors.

Mental health and drug and alcohol services

Mental health and drug and alcohol services are provided by the Forensic CYMHS Team. This is a separate service to that provided by West Moreton HHS. Forensic CYMHS mental health workers provide support to children struggling with their feelings, behaviour or drug use. They also provide the service at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs.

Forensic CYMHS mental health workers attend the centre to engage with children who are already working with the service. A Youth Justice caseworker or a nurse may also refer a child to the service. Mental health workers can continue to support children in the community when they are released from detention.

We did not observe Forensic CYMHS mental health workers engaging with children during our inspection; however, youth detention stakeholders described the service as being responsive to children's needs. The children and stakeholders we spoke to did not raise any concerns with the health services provided by Forensic CYMHS.

In their responses to our information request, the Office of the Health Ombudsman and the West Moreton HHS, advised us they had not received any complaints about health service delivery at the centre for the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 July 2025.

7. Security

The first principle of the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support's *Philosophy of youth detention services* is that 'The safety of people in youth detention centres is paramount.' This principle states it is important to ensure that young people, staff and visitors are safe, and that youth detention centres are secure.

The department's *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter Four – Security management' (YDCOM Chapter Four) states that a youth detention centre (YDC) is a secure environment designed to provide safety and security to those in the centre and to the community beyond the centre. It adds that security strategies in a YDC involve an inter-relationship of static (physical and electronic) and dynamic (staff-related) security systems.

Aspects of the centre's physical security include the architecture of the buildings; the strength of its walls, windows and doors; and the durability of fixtures such as beds, tables and toilets. As we have mentioned before, the centre was built to function as a watch-house, so its physical environment has been designed to maximise security and control.

As a result, the centre's overt physical security features are inconsistent with good practice youth detention design principles, which recommend therapeutic and home-like design features.

The centre's electronic security features include comprehensive CCTV surveillance, electronic locks and body scanners. The body scanners offer a convenient alternative to having children remove clothing for searches at admission.

However, we found that regulatory issues prevented the centre from using body scanners during its first 8–9 months of operation, resulting in children still undergoing partially clothed searches at admission and readmission.

Dynamic security

While YDCOM Chapter Four does not provide a detailed definition of dynamic security beyond indicating it is staff-related, the importance of rapport building and engagement with young people is implicit across the department's broader policy framework. In feedback to this report, the department advised us that YDCOM Chapter Four includes an emphasis on staff supervision, professional judgement, risk-based decision-making and engagement to maintain safety and security. The department said these define dynamic security in the RDC environment.

Framing dynamic security as a relational approach is consistent with the definition provided in the United Nations *Handbook on Dynamic Security and Prison Intelligence* (2015).

This handbook states that to effectively deploy dynamic security, staff must build trust and rapport with detainees. It also says they must apply rules and respond to poor behaviour in a way that is consistent, firm and fair; encourage good behaviour; and be responsive to detainee needs and requests. These connections allow staff to have insight into the social climate of a secure facility and any associated risks.

In 2025, the Australian Human Rights Commission published *Evidence-based approaches to child justice. Supplementary paper to 'Help way earlier!': How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing*. The paper highlighted the importance of designing YDCs that promote relational security, which is the term it uses to describe the contribution effective interpersonal relationships between staff and children can make to providing safety and security. The paper cites a study that found staff need the time and space to communicate and engage in meaningful conversations and activities with children. This can be impeded by facility design that does not include calm and private spaces.

We have already noted our observations of detention youth workers engaging with children in a respectful and professional manner. These interactions appear to promote the development of professional relationships in line with the principles of dynamic and relational security described above. However, the centre's confined and restrictive design does not support the implementation of a relational security approach.

Routine partially clothed searches

Relevant standards

- 1** All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 57** Searching reduces risks to safety and security posed by contraband, weapons, alcohol and other drugs.
- 58** All searches of children are lawful, reasonable and proportionate to the risk posed. They are carried out in the least intrusive way and in a manner that is respectful of the inherent dignity of the child being searched.
- 85** Girls are subject to searches only when an assessment has been conducted and the search is deemed proportionate to the risk. Searches are conducted in the least intrusive way and search practices maintain the inherent dignity of girls.
- 120** There are robust and accountable recordkeeping, auditing and reporting systems for major aspects of the youth detention centre's activities.
- 124** All staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and authority to work in a youth detention centre and are trained to the highest standards of professional competence, integrity and honesty.

The department's *YD-2-1-Admission of a young person* policy states that, upon the admission of a young person, a risk assessment must take place to determine what type of search may be required.

YDCOM 'Chapter Two - Admission, external movement, transfer and release' further states that searches should never be automatic. It adds that risks must be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine if it is appropriate to conduct a search of the young person.

Children may be subject to a wand search using a hand-held detector, a clothed search using a pat-down technique, an imaging search involving a scanning machine, a body or cavity search, or a partially clothed search where either the upper or lower part of the child is unclothed.

Detention youth workers are authorised to conduct clothed pat-downs and wand searches for routine security purposes. This authority does not allow them to conduct other types of searches for routine security reasons. A shift supervisor must provide approval before an image or partially clothed search can be conducted.

Body (or cavity) searches must be approved by the senior executive director and can only be conducted by a doctor.

The centre has a body scanning device installed; however, as mentioned earlier, it was not used until late November 2025 due to regulatory staff certification requirements. This was to ensure it was used correctly.

In relation to searches generally, YDCOM Chapter Four directs operational staff to use their professional judgement to determine the level of risk and corresponding type of search.

Admission

Regarding admissions specifically, the manual states that, due to the level of risk, all children must undergo at least a pat-down and a wand search upon admission or readmission to a YDC. We found staff are provided with detailed guidance to assess risks and make a professional judgement of the appropriate type of search.

All partially clothed searches require proper justification, and the shift supervisor must document the reason for their decision in the Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS). This must include, for example, factors such as those listed below (considered high risk):

- a risk assessment indicates there are reasonable grounds to conduct the search
- staff have a belief or suspicion that the young person has concealed an item which places themselves or others at risk
- an item is missing
- staff conducting the search have considered all relevant factors and are satisfied that a partially clothed search is necessary for safety and security reasons.

During our onsite inspection, we spoke to staff who told us that partially clothed searches are done as a routine part of the admission process in south-east Queensland YDCs. We were told there are no circumstances that would lead to a child not being subject to a partially clothed search. When we reviewed search records, there was a consistent reference to partially clothed searches being 'routine', 'mandatory' and 'conducted as per policy'.

In practice, this means that every one of the 704 children admitted to the centre before the use of body scanners underwent a partially clothed search. Our review of records related to these searches revealed that most did not clearly establish a specific risk or suspicion justifying the partially clothed search. Nor was there any explanation for why a less intrusive search was deemed insufficient.

In addition, staff told us children were subjected to a partially clothed search when they returned to the centre following a leave of absence to attend a court appearance or medical appointment. This was despite remaining in the constant custody of either a police officer or detention youth worker.

Records of searches

We reviewed records of partially clothed searches conducted between 1 April and 23 November 2025, the day before the centre began using its body scanners. According to those records, the centre completed 745 partially clothed searches during this time. We were unable to determine from the records whether the searches were conducted during routine admission, readmission, or for a child who had already been admitted.

Based on DCOIS reports, the total admissions and readmissions during this period were 775. Since all children admitted or readmitted are subjected to a partially clothed search, we expected the number of searches to be equal to or greater than that figure, especially considering that the centre can conduct additional risk-based searches on children who are already admitted.

Therefore, we remain cautious about the accuracy of the centre's recordkeeping regarding partially clothed searches.

Our review found 4 instances where a partially clothed search located a prohibited article on a child. Of these 4 examples, only one occurred during a routine search as part of the admission process. The other 3 searches appear to have occurred based on an actual suspicion that the child was carrying a prohibited article on their person.

For each record, there is insufficient information to assess what risk factors justified the partially clothed search. These search outcomes translate to a detection rate of only 0.1% of the total searches undertaken.

Concerns with routine partially clothed searches

We acknowledge that staff have expertise in risk management in a secure environment. The department also carries the burden of responsibility for the safety and security of YDCs and for children's wellbeing. However, routine partially clothed searches risk traumatising children and should be based on individualised risk assessments. In our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres, we reviewed the use of searches across the state's 3 existing YDCs. In that report, we found that while searches play a role in maintaining safety and security, they have the potential to harm children, particularly if the search involves touching the child or asking the child to remove their clothes.

We found the practice of partially clothed searches to be of particular concern, as they have the potential to be demeaning and humiliating and may be retraumatising for children with previous experiences of physical or sexual abuse. The report further stated:

We believe that routine reliance on partially clothed searches prioritises security procedures over the dignity and wellbeing of children. We believe that greater weight needs to be placed on risk assessment processes when determining whether a partially clothed search is required (p. 76).

The report made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 20

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures:

- partially clothed searches are not conducted as routine practice when children are admitted to detention
- staff are prompted to make risk-based assessments when deciding to conduct a partially clothed search, and these assessments are recorded.

Recommendation 21

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support commits to installing body scanners in all new and existing youth detention centres to reduce the number of partially clothed searches conducted.

The department accepted recommendations 20 and 21. In its submission to the report it stated that:

The introduction of X-ray body scanners will further assist in minimising the occurrence of partially clothed searches. These scanners provide a less intrusive and more trauma-informed alternative, supporting the department's commitment to uphold the dignity and wellbeing of children in detention (p. 139).

And that:

The department will continue to reinforce expectations through training, supervision and operational guidance to ensure searches are conducted only when necessary, proportionate and in line with legislative and human rights obligations (p. 139).

YDCOM Chapter Four states that, wherever possible, other strategies that may reduce the need to conduct partially clothed searches should be considered first. It adds that imaging searches should be preferred to partially clothed searches.

The use of body scanners

At the beginning of November 2025, the number of staff accredited to use the centre's body scanners did not provide enough coverage for use of the scanner, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Children being admitted outside of staff availability to use the scanner underwent a partially clothed search. We were advised that, by the end of November 2025, the number of accredited staff had doubled.



Photo 15: The centre's body scanners

Section 24A of the Youth Justice Regulation states that any image produced by a body scanner can only be viewed by a detention centre employee of the same sex as a child or as otherwise requested by a child who is transgender or intersex.

We were informed that this requirement has occasionally led to male children receiving a partially clothed search on admission, as the only staff able to use the body scanner for the shift were female. At other times, staff have forgotten their PIN codes to the body scanners, resulting in more children being subject to partially clothed searches on admission.

Despite these initial teething problems, our review of search records on DCOIS shows the introduction of body scanners has led to a reduction in the number of children subjected to a partially clothed search. Unfortunately, our findings must be treated with caution, as we found instances where one search approval entered into DCOIS covered the approval for searching several children, but the record counted it as one search.

Table 6: Partially clothed searches conducted before and after the centre started using the body scanner

Month	Total partially clothed searches conducted	Total body scans conducted
April 2025	90	0
May 2025	77	0
June 2025	64	0
July 2025	84	0
August 2025	78	0
September 2025	128	0
October 2025	106	0
November 2025	144	2
December 2025	69	104
January 2026	29	102

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on DCOIS data accessed on 23 January 2026.

Table 6 demonstrates the impact that having an increased number of accredited staff has had on the number of partially clothed searches being conducted.

The centre's management team indicated that they expect the number of children undergoing partially clothed searches to continue to decline. We were told that it would be unrealistic to expect the number of partially clothed searches to ever get to zero, as there will always be circumstances where it might not be appropriate to use the body scanner.

They provided a recent example where a child refused to enter the scanner and threatened to jump on top of it. They considered this a justifiable reason to use a partially clothed search instead of the body scanner.

The decrease in partially clothed searches clearly reduces potential harm to children. It is unfortunate that regulatory approval (regarding staff training) was not obtained before the centre opened. This delay meant hundreds of children were subjected to partially clothed searches that could have been avoided with an operational body scanner.

In feedback to this report, we were provided with a draft version of the updated *YD-4-2 Search of a youth* policy. This draft outlines clear expectations on the use of the body scanner, the risk-based justification required for partially clothed searches and the documenting of such decision making. We will consider the finalisation of the policy and its impact on operations in future inspections.

8. Rehabilitation and preparation for release

The standards relating to rehabilitation and preparation for release cover issues such as case managing children, preparing for their release, and making education and programs available. We discuss these in this chapter.

We also consider inter-facility leaves of absence – to provide children with opportunities for outdoor recreational activity and to support their transition from the centre to a placement youth detention centre (YDC).

Relevant policy and frameworks

Case management of detained children is guided by the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support's *YD-1-1 Case work and case management of young people in custody* policy.

It states that when a child is detained in a youth detention centre, they will be allocated a caseworker from the YDC and a caseworker from a community-based Youth Justice Service Centre in the region where they typically reside. The Youth Justice Service Centre caseworker holds overall case management responsibility, and the YDC caseworker focuses on the day-to-day operational needs of children in custody.

The department's case management framework is change-oriented and aims to address children's offending behaviour and to strengthen protective factors such as family and community networks.

The case management provided to children is based on an internationally recognised framework – the Risk, Needs, Responsivity model. It aims to ensure the programs, services and support provided to children are delivered in the following ways:

- Risk: The level or volume of services provided to a child is proportionate to their overall risk of reoffending and the seriousness of their offending behaviour.
- Need: The types of programs and services provided to children are targeted to address the factors that relate specifically to offending behaviour.
- Responsivity: The service response is evidence informed and responsive to a child's individual characteristics.

In simple terms, children with the highest risk of serious reoffending should receive the highest level of services and engagement from the department.

The stated aim of the department's new *Detention with Purpose* framework is to hold children accountable for their actions and keep the community safe. It is also designed to help children build the skills and mindset they need to make better choices and lead positive lives.

The framework has 3 core pillars: compulsory education, staff safety, and behaviour management.

We discuss the centre's delivery of change-oriented programs and services to children in further detail below.

Case management and service delivery

Relevant standards

- 63 Each child has an individual youth detention centre caseworker who is available to provide support or assistance.
- 64 All children have an individual case plan that meets their assessed risks and needs. This case plan is implemented within a reasonable period after entering a youth detention centre.
- 65 Children are supported to achieve the goals of their individual case plan by staff across all disciplines within the youth detention centre.
- 66 The range of education and programs accommodate the disparate needs of children in the youth detention centre.
- 67 All children are engaged in education and personal development programs to meet their individual needs. The standard of education and programs is equivalent to that available within the community.
- 68 A range of evidence-based programs are available to address the assessed risks and needs of children in a youth detention centre.

The *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people' states that case work in youth detention consists of:

1. Intake (first steps), which starts within one business day of admission and includes an interview to gather information from the child, undertake risk assessments, source support, explain behavioural expectations, explain the legal situation and build rapport. The child is also referred to a Staying on Track provider through this process. (Staying on Track programs aim to provide tailored support for children transitioning from detention.)
2. Case planning, which involves assessment, service response planning and regular case review.
3. Engagement, which includes monitoring and delivering programs, activities and interventions.

As we have noted previously, children are usually transferred or released from the centre within a few days of arrival. This means there is not enough time to complete a new assessment or review one previously created for the child at a Youth Justice Service Centre.

However, we were informed that the centre's client services team begins discussions with children to gather information about their unique risks and needs. This information is provided to the new caseworker once the child is transferred to a YDC.

During our time onsite, we were informed that core therapeutic programs are not provided to children at the centre. We were told that this decision has been made because each child's length of stay at the centre is highly uncertain and ideally only for a short time. As a result, children must wait until they are transferred to a placement YDC or are released into the community before they can participate in programs aimed at addressing their offending behaviour.

In feedback to this report, the department clarified that there was no blanket exclusion on delivery of therapeutic programs but rather it was based on the cohort of children at the centre at the time and is considered on a case-by-case basis. This would be focused on children with extended stays and completed assessments and plans.

It was further noted by the department that at the time of the inspection, no child had been admitted to the centre with existing plans from another centre. As a result, no therapeutic programs had needed to be delivered. That has since changed

While we acknowledge the information provided by the department, we note Table 4 reflects only 2 therapeutic programs (animal and sound therapy) were delivered to children at the centre from January to March 2026.

Staff explained that the (usually) short stays do not allow enough time to develop a professional rapport with some children, which is the precursor to appropriately referring a child to targeted therapeutic programs.

The department's response to the initial concerns we raised with the centre affirms that placement YDCs remain the most appropriate environment for continuing core program delivery.

Even when children remain at the centre longer, it is still deemed unsuitable to begin a therapeutic or change-oriented program due to uncertainty about their transfer date to a placement centre. This is to give the child consistency. Having to work with different facilitators could affect the child's engagement with the program. Consequently, some children have been detained for over a month without participating in any therapeutic programs targeting their offending behaviour.

We accept the department's proposition that the average length of time most children spend at the centre is insufficient for the development of a therapeutic relationship. We are unsatisfied that this is a justifiable reason to not provide core programs to children who spend an extended period of time at the centre, but we understand the complexities caused by uncertainty as to when transfers will occur.

The centre's difficulties in providing children with therapeutic programs has contributed to our recommendation that the centre is not an appropriate facility to accommodate children for extended periods of time.

Education provided to children at the centre

Relevant standards

- 66** The range of education and programs accommodate the disparate needs of children in the youth detention centre.
- 67** All children are engaged in education and personal development programs to meet their individual needs. The standard of education and programs is equivalent to that available within the community.
- 70** The youth detention centre operates in partnership with both government and community organisations to ensure programs and activities offered by partner agencies are effective and evidence-based.

The *United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty*, also known as the Havana Rules, set clear expectations that every child has the 'right to education suited to his or her needs and abilities and designed to prepare him or her for return to society.' (Rule 38). Similarly, under the *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019*, every child has the right to have access to primary and secondary education appropriate to their needs.

To achieve these requirements, the Department of Education runs the Wacol Youth Remand Education Support Hub at the centre. The Department of Education provided us with a curriculum overview that states its 3 objectives are:

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Connectedness, which includes transition, culture and inclusion
3. Learner confidence (including curriculum, literacy and numeracy and consistent data collection).

Education at the centre is delivered through a more intensive model than at other YDCs, with a 1:2 teacher-to-student ratio. Education provided at the centre includes literacy, numeracy, reading, health and wellbeing and work readiness. We spoke to teachers onsite who told us they could provide children with very individualised education thanks to the low student ratios.

Data provided to us by the Department of Education showed the time children spent in education as an average daily attendance for the months of April to July 2025. This is reflected in Table 7.

Table 7: Average daily time spent in education

Month	Average daily attendance
April 2025	3 hours and 11 minutes
May 2025	3 hours and 35 minutes
June 2025	3 hours and 41 minutes
July 2025	3 hours and 40 minutes

Source: Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Education on 4 September 2025.

We compared the centre’s average daily attendance statistics to the attendance statistics provided to us for our 2024–25 inspections of Brisbane, West Moreton and Cleveland YDCs.

Based on these figures, and even allowing for the different time periods, children at the centre seem to be spending a lot more time on education than their counterparts in the other YDCs.

Table 8: Average attendance by youth detention centre

Youth detention centre	Average daily attendance
Brisbane YDC (Jan–Apr 2025)	1 hour and 28 minutes
West Moreton YDC (Oct–Dec 2024)	1 hour and 58 minutes
Cleveland YDC (Jan–Apr 2025)	57 minutes
Wacol Youth Remand Centre (Apr–June 2025)	3 hours and 29 minutes

Compiled by Inspector of Detention Services, based on data provided by the Department of Education on 4 September 2025.

The Department of Education told us it was focused on ensuring children at the centre are well prepared to continue learning when they are transferred to another centre or otherwise released to the community.

Education assessments

Children are assessed for their readiness to engage in education on entry to the centre, and once the child is ready, staff develop a learning plan to meet the child's learning needs.

Assessments to formally diagnose learning needs typically commence 5 days, if it is determined appropriate to do so, after the child is admitted to the centre. This is to allow the child to settle into the new environment and allow for more accurate assessment results.

As of 5 February 2026, 57% (533 out of 969) of children at the centre stayed a minimum of 5 days before their education assessment. The remaining 43% (416) were transferred more quickly. Of these 416 children, 65% (273 out of 416) were moved to another YDC for placement, where learning assessments were conducted by the placement YDC's education centre.

Based on the advice we received from Education staff, it is possible the remaining 143 children did not receive the formal assessment identifying learning needs before being released to the community. However, our onsite inspection identified that children were engaged in education activities from their first day at the centre.

Leave of absence

Relevant standards

73

Children have access to services and activities outside the youth detention centre to assist them to reintegrate into the community, develop and maintain relationships and prioritise their care and wellbeing.

According to s 269 of the Youth Justice Act, YDCs can facilitate a young person's access to services and activities external to a YDC or between YDCs. Temporary leave may be granted for the following purposes:

- a) to seek or engage in paid or unpaid employment; and
- b) to attend any place for educational or training purposes; and
- c) to visit the child's family, relatives or friends; and
- d) to take part in sport, recreation or entertainment in the community; and
- e) to attend any place for medical examination or treatment; and
- f) to attend a funeral; and
- g) any other purpose that the chief executive considers will assist in the child's reintegration into the community.

Due to the centre's purpose as a short-term remand centre with limited facilities, we have focused on leaves of absence between the YDCs. These allow children at the centre to engage in programs and spend time outdoors at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs.

The department's *YD-2-2 Youth detention – Leave of absence* policy states that a leave of absence may be used for temporary transfers between YDCs for the purpose of program delivery. It must be managed in a way that balances the needs of the child, their safety and the safety of the community.

Consistent with this policy, correspondence on 15 October 2025 from the department to oversight organisations indicated children can access programs and services at other YDCs within the Wacol precinct through a leave of absence if required. The department's response to initial concerns we raised with the centre also states that leaves of absence are available to address children's specific or identified needs.

When we attended the centre for our inspection in October 2025, centre managers informed us no children had been on a leave of absence to another YDC to access programs and outdoor recreation space. In ongoing consultation with the centre after our inspection, we were informed that one child had attended West Moreton YDC to participate in a program.

Our subsequent review of records on the Detention Centre Operational Information System (DCOIS), which we outlined in Case study 2, show the child went on 4 leaves of absence to West Moreton YDC during the period from December 2025 to January 2026. Based on our review of other records, it appears these were to support the child's reintegration to West Moreton YDC after they spent an extended period of time at the centre as a result of a risk-based transfer.

The centre's lack of fresh air, natural light and outdoor space is one of its most significant limitations. Many of the children we spoke to at the centre expressed their hope that they could touch grass or spend time in fresh air.

For children kept at the centre for extended periods of time, planned leaves of absence to access outdoor spaces at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs represent a practical way to address this issue.

Recommendation 11

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that children who have been accommodated at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for extended periods of time are prioritised for leaves of absence to access programs and facilities at the Brisbane and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres.

9. Equity and diversity

Children in youth detention centres (YDCs) come from diverse backgrounds and groups and can have distinctly different needs. No child should be unfairly treated or disadvantaged, and all children should be treated humanely, with dignity and respect. This includes having equitable access to services, education, activities and facilities.

Culturally and linguistically diverse children

Principle 4 of the department's *Philosophy of youth detention services* states that YDCs will be culturally safe environments for all young people and that children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds will be given opportunities to nurture their connections with identity, family, community, religion and culture.

Based on our review of centre records and our onsite engagement, we found children from a diverse range of CALD communities are often accommodated at the centre. During our inspection, the children, staff and community stakeholders we spoke to did not raise concerns with the treatment of children from CALD communities.

However, in Chapter 5 we noted that children from these communities do not have access to the same community organisations and supports while at the centre as those who are at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs. This finding has contributed to our overall recommendation that the centre is not an appropriate place to accommodate children for extended periods of time.

In feedback to this report, the department told us that since the inspection, the centre has increased its available programs to ensure it is culturally responsive. The pastoral support, engagement with community groups such as Pasifika and Samoan groups and the Villager program for African youth were all provided as examples of this.

Transgender, intersex and gender diverse children

The inspection standards acknowledge the unique needs of transgender, intersex and gender diverse children, who may face harassment and stigma in places of detention and may be vulnerable to harm. Based on our review of centre records and onsite engagement, we have not identified any transgender, intersex or gender diverse children accommodated at the centre during our inspection period.

We also found no evidence to suggest the department's policies for managing and supporting transgender and intersex children were insufficient. In 2024, the Youth Justice Regulations were updated to ensure that gendered search and medical provisions in YDCs are inclusive of gender-diverse children and align with contemporary, trauma-informed best practice for all children.

Our inspection standards also consider the treatment of young people over the age of 18, foreign national children, children with diverse sexual orientations, and children who are parents. We did not identify any children from these cohorts accommodated at the centre during our inspection period. Nor did we find evidence to suggest the department's policies for managing and supporting these children were insufficient.

Equity and diversity standards consider the treatment and services provided to the diverse population of children who may be detained in a YDC, including girls. We have not identified any concerns related to treatment of girls, but in this chapter, we will provide some context regarding how they are managed, due to their specific needs.

The management of girls at the centre

Relevant standards

- 79 Girls are accommodated separately from boys and in accommodation suitable to their needs.
- 80 Girls are held in conditions that are clean and dignified and are encouraged to maintain their own personal care and hygiene.
- 81 Health care services meet the needs of girls in a safe and dignified environment.
- 82 The specific mental health needs of girls are identified, treated and supported by services that are equivalent to those in the community.
- 85 Girls are subject to searches only when an assessment has been conducted and the search is deemed proportionate to the risk. Searches are conducted in the least intrusive way and search practices maintain the inherent dignity of girls.
- 86 Girls have equitable access to services and activities which are gender-specific and culturally appropriate.
- 87 There is sufficient staffing to enable the management of girls, and staff are trained in their specific needs.

In Queensland, girls form a small minority within the YDC population. Unlike Queensland's adult correctional centres, girls are housed within YDCs predominately occupied by boys, though the groups are separated most of the time.

Girls in YDCs present with different risks, needs and vulnerability compared to the boys.

The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce's *Hear her voice Report 2 Volume 2* (2022) states that girls in the youth justice system have been exposed to a greater level of maltreatment than boys, with sexual abuse and other types of maltreatment being more pronounced for girls.

The report also notes that there are no specific minimum standards for the management of girls in detention. However, the Youth Justice Act includes the Charter of youth justice principles which includes the following:

- Principle 3 – respect and dignity
- Principle 16 – access to legal and other support services
- Principle 20 – contact with community
- Principle 21 – safe and stable living environment.

The chief executive of Youth Justice must ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that the principles are complied with in relation to each child detained in a YDC.

The department's policy framework does not provide an overarching operational policy for the management of girls in a YDC. Instead, it refers to the gender-specific needs of girls in an ad hoc manner throughout the policy framework.

For example, the *Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual* (YDCOM) 'Chapter One – Care and management of young people' (YDCOM Chapter One) states that 'YDCs will provide programs designed and/or customised to the needs of young women' (p. 66) and 'In conjunction with Queensland Health, YDCs will ensure young people have access to health services catering to the needs of young men and young women' (p. 75).

Updated admissions data provided to us by the department shows gender details for children admitted from 1 January 2026 to 13 March 2026. Girls represented 18% of the total number of children admitted over the time period. As noted in the introduction to this report, the average length of stay for girls has fluctuated dramatically since the centre opened, and some girls have stayed at the centre for an excessive length of time.

We attended the centre in October 2025, and the number of girls at the centre ranged between zero and 4 on any given day. On the first day of the onsite inspection, the centre held 3 girls and 22 boys, who were accommodated in separate accommodation pods.

During our inspection, we engaged with girls accommodated at the centre and asked how their stay at the centre compared to their experience in a Queensland Police Service-run watch-house. They told us they preferred the centre's youth justice workforce and that they worked through education materials and activities instead of being stuck in their rooms.

They also told us they preferred the centre's smaller pods to the larger girls' units at placement YDCs. They said there tended to be fewer social problems and conflicts in the smaller pods. This feedback identifies that relationship conflicts can be stressful for girls and can make accommodation placement difficult.

They did, however, express their dislike for the centre's rudimentary incentive system and the lack of grass and air flow.

None of the children, staff members or stakeholders we spoke to during our inspection process identified concerns with activities and health services provided to girls at the centre, or with their treatment more generally. Girls can access the same recreational, cultural and educational activities available to boys.

However, we note the centre does not provide any of the programs for girls that are available at the YDCs. Lack of gender-specific programming for girls has contributed to our overall recommendation that the centre is not an appropriate place to accommodate children for extended periods of time.

New guidelines for working with girls in youth detention centres

Until recently, there were limited practice guidelines for staff who work with girls in YDCs. After we attended the centre, the department provided us with the new practice guidelines for working with girls – *Knowing her: Working with Girls and Young Women in Youth Detention Centres*.

These guidelines acknowledge that YDCs have been inadvertently designed with boys in mind, which has led to unintentional gaps in support for girls.

They outline key practice points that make the greatest difference for girls in a YDC and aim to ensure responses to girls are effective and support them in returning to their communities with dignity and strength. The guidelines are designed to work within the department's existing policy framework, and they make extensive reference to YDC policies and the YDCOM.

The new guidelines are an encouraging step towards improved treatment for girls detained in a YDC.

10. Governance

The safe, secure and humane management of children in youth detention centres (YDCs) is largely achieved through good governance. This involves comprehensive strategic planning; accountable and transparent systems; and sufficient, competent staffing to meet the objectives of detention and the diverse needs of the child population that is being managed.

During our inspection, we identified concerns with the centre's internal oversight mechanisms for use-of-force incidents, and risk-based transfers. We will discuss these in this chapter. Due to the centre's unique status, we will also consider the centre's operating model.

Youth detention centre operating model

Relevant standards

- 1 All youth detention centres must reflect a child-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate operational philosophy.
- 115 A strategic vision informs a comprehensive plan of the youth detention centre's general aims, principles, values and strategic actions.

The Child Death Review Board's *Annual Report 2022–23* found detention centres in Queensland operated under a myriad of laws, policies, procedures, frameworks and commitments and that there was:

... significant opportunity for Queensland to make advancements in its response to youth offending behaviours and crime if it were to define its operating model more holistically and transparently (p. 41).

It recommended the former Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training:

- 2.1 Takes immediate action to articulate Queensland's Detention Operating Model, and Government commits to publishing this model.
- 2.2 Produces a workforce strategy for Queensland youth detention centres for immediate effect, and for inclusion into the Detention Operating Model for Queensland's new detention centres (p. 42).

To date, in our inspections of the state's YDCs, we have also encountered a myriad set of policies, operational manuals and frameworks guiding centre operations.

Prior to our onsite inspection of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, we were given a document outlining the centre's operating model. It provides a rudimentary overview of the centre's purpose as a short-term facility, its facilities, staffing model, daily routine and available support services. At the time, there was no holistic operating model for all the state's YDCs (of the kind recommended by the Child Death Review Board).

However, on 9 March 2026, the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support provided us with *Queensland's Youth Detention Centre Operating Model* (The YDC Operating Model). It stated this was in response to recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 from the Child Death Review Board's annual report.

The YDC Operating Model's scope sets out how Queensland's YDCs deliver:

safe, structured, and rehabilitative services for youth in custody. It defines the operating environment, service delivery approach, and workforce structure, underpinned by trauma-informed, culturally safe, and human rights-aligned practice that is embedded across all aspects of service delivery (p. 4).

As the new YDC Operating Model was not in use during our inspection, we have not used it to inform our understanding of the centre's operations. Nor have we considered if the centre's daily operations are consistent with the new model.

The department also told us the Operating Model will continue to evolve as part of the broader YDC reform agenda, including the *Detention with Purpose* and *Staying on Track* programs. (The latter aims to provide tailored support for children transitioning from detention.)

Our ongoing inspection activities within the centre and the state's other YDCs will consider the department's implementation of the new YDC Operating Model as well as other reforms. Our future inspections will also consider the way the centre implements:

- the Child Safe Standards (a mandatory framework to ensure organisations create and maintain child safe environments)
- the Reportable Conduct Scheme (which aims to improve the way complaints about inappropriate behaviour towards children are managed).

Delays in the centre's review of incidents

Relevant standards

- 27** Force is used on a child as a last resort, for the shortest time required, and never as punishment. When used, force is lawful, necessary and proportionate. It is safely and humanely applied, and subject to rigorous governance.
- 120** There are robust and accountable recordkeeping, auditing and reporting systems for major aspects of the youth detention centre's activities.
- 122** Staffing meets the needs of the youth detention centre to manage children safely and meet the centre's operating philosophy.
- 123** Recruitment, supervision and retention strategies are in place to ensure there are sufficient staff with experience to meet the needs of the youth detention centre and the population of children at all times.
- 124** All staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and authority to work in a youth detention centre, and are trained to the highest standards of professional competence, integrity and honesty.

Our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres found there was limited central policy guidance or requirements for the review of use-of-force incidents in a YDC. The report identified different practices at each of the state's 3 YDCs.

Our report raised the following concerns consistently across all of them:

- The commencement of the incident review process at YDCs relies heavily on a single person's interpretation of policy, ability to identify unapproved techniques, and willingness to report how an incident was responded to. Such a process risks failing to identify when inappropriate practices are introduced and widely used.
- There is confusion among members of the Brisbane YDC and Cleveland YDC incident review panels regarding the appropriate level of incident severity required for a referral to the department's Ethical Standards unit.

To address our governance concerns, we made the following recommendation:

Recommendation 15

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support updates its policy in relation to the review of use-of-force incidents to include:

- a panel review of all such incidents
- an escalation pathway for serious incidents to be reviewed by a panel external to the youth detention centres.

While the department's formal response to our inspection accepted this recommendation, further commentary noted that the current policy and operational framework already provided for multi-layered oversight of use-of-force incidents. The commentary also stated that the expanded review function would require additional resourcing.

The department provided us with a local instruction document for 'Post-Incident Review and Escalation' for the centre. The local instruction states that all incidents involving the use of force on a young person are required to be tabled at the weekly Incident Oversight Committee (IOC) meeting. It adds that high-level incidents such as significant injury, repeated use of force or possible misconduct are discussed in detail.

During our inspection, we discovered that the IOC did not function effectively during the centre's first 3 months of operation. We were informed this was due to a delay in recruiting for a key management position responsible for quality assurance and oversight.

Due to this delay, the IOC was working through a significant backlog of incidents when we attended the centre for our inspection. We were informed that particularly high-profile or concerning incidents are triaged for immediate review by the IOC to mitigate the risk that a serious incident review is unreasonably delayed.

After our initial inspection, we returned to the centre on 19 November 2025 to observe the IOC again. While the review process we observed was thorough and focused on improving the standard of practice of operational staff, the panel was reviewing incidents from June. We are concerned that the benefit of providing constructive feedback is greatly diminished when delivered so long after the initial event.

We are satisfied that the IOC's practice of triaging serious incidents for immediate review reduces the possibility of an unreasonable delay in their review. However, this still leaves the remaining backlog of less serious, but still important, examples of poor practice by staff. Without timely, constructive feedback, there is a risk that staff members may continue to demonstrate poor practice, placing the wellbeing of children and the safety and good order of the centre at unnecessary risk.

We are also concerned that, as with other YDCs, decisions to escalate an incident to the IOC are made on the basis of a single staff member's judgment. While the local instruction states that all incidents involving the use of force are tabled at the weekly IOC meeting, subsequent meetings with centre management have led us to believe this is not the case. We were informed that the officer undertaking an initial review of footage refers incidents involving the use of force only when poor staff practice has been identified.

Our review indicates that the officer conducting the initial footage examination generally has adequate experience, seniority, and knowledge of the YDC policy framework to assess staff practice appropriately. However, concerns remain about a single staff member making such a serious and sensitive judgment without proper oversight. In our 2025 combined inspection report for youth detention centres, we stated that this practice:

... places a great deal of responsibility on one person. It may mean serious matters are not escalated when they should be. There is also a risk of unconscious bias and even corruption (p. 58).

Based on subsequent engagement with the centre, we understand that the IOC is making positive progress towards reducing the backlog of incidents for review. However, we remain concerned that the centre operated without an incident oversight mechanism for 3 months. In principle, this represents an unacceptable risk that serious incidents of staff misconduct or harm to a child could have remained unresolved for an unacceptable period of time.

In future, the department should ensure that from the first day of operation, any new YDC features a functional incident review mechanism. This is particularly relevant given that the Woodford Youth Detention Centre is being built now.

Recommendation 12

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that the incident review and oversight mechanism is in place when the Woodford Youth Detention Centre opens.

Governance of risk-based transfers to the centre

Relevant standards

- 24** Children who require support to manage their behaviours are identified and support plans are created by appropriately trained staff. They receive personal and consistent support to address their individual needs and have unhindered access to relevant services.
- 26** Behaviour management systems define fair and consistently applied rules for behaviour, where responses to misbehaviour are escalated.
- 120** There are robust and accountable recordkeeping, auditing and reporting systems for major aspects of the youth detention centre's activities.

In Chapter 4, we discussed the process of children being returned or moved from a placement YDC to the centre as part of a risk-based transfer.

Poor governance and insufficient planning at a statewide level has resulted in some of the transferred children staying at the centre for an extended period of time. For some children, this has gone beyond what could be justified as a reasonable response to their high-risk behaviours or a reasonable length of time to review their behaviour support plans.

Decisions to transfer a child from a placement YDC to a watch-house not designed to accommodate children should be made with a high level of oversight, risk assessment and justification. The department's current shared decision-making process at the executive director level is appropriate when children are transferred between placement YDCs of a similar standard.

However, when a child displaying serious or repeated high-risk behaviour is transferred from a placement YDC back to the centre (under a 'Tier 4 transfer' – see Chapter 4), their access to services and facilities is significantly reduced. As such, approval should sit with a senior delegate, such as a senior executive director.

Tier 4 transfers to the centre are not in the best interests of a child, as the centre does not have the resourcing, operational model or infrastructure to support complex children displaying high-risk behaviour. We are deeply concerned by what appears to be an emerging trend where the centre is now used as a secure behaviour support unit by proxy for children with complex needs and behaviour.

In its submission (Appendix A) to this report, the department advised us it accepted proposed Recommendation 13 (see below) in principle.

In October 2025, the department confirmed the RAMP framework had not been implemented. Since then, *Appendix 1-11: Management of High-Risk Youth* has been introduced to support the management of children under this framework.

The framework requires that the decision to transfer children between centres is informed by multidisciplinary risk assessments and a collective decision by the executive directors of the relevant centres. If an agreement cannot be reached or a child has been placed under the RAMP process for more than 14 days, decisions are then escalated to the senior executive director for approval.

The department advised that monitoring of the framework will continue through current governance mechanisms to support continuous improvement and ensure decisions are evidence-based, consistent and proportionate.

We acknowledge the implementation of the framework and will monitor the application of the RAMP process in our 2026 inspection of the centre.

Recommendation 13

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that only a senior executive director can approve the transfer of children from a placement youth detention centre to the Wacol Youth Remand Centre through the Risk Assessment and Management Plan process. The senior executive should consider:

- a risk assessment developed by a multidisciplinary team that explains the immediate risk the child poses to the placement youth detention centre's safety and security
- a clear justification why accommodation at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre is appropriate
- a plan documenting the support to be provided to the child to ensure their return to a placement youth detention centre.

12. Appendices

Appendix A: Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support submission

**DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND**



**Queensland
Government**

Department of
Youth Justice and Victim Support

Our ref: 04035-2026
Your ref: 2026-00231 (P1)

Mr Anthony Reilly
Queensland Ombudsman and
Inspector of Detention Services
Email: Inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Reilly

Thank you for your letter dated 1 June 2026 regarding your draft inspection report '*Wacol Youth Remand Centre inspection report*' (the report).

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (the department) welcomes the opportunity to review and respond to the report, draft recommendations, acknowledging the continued focus on strengthening outcomes for youth in detention. The department has also provided feedback and contextual information regarding data analysis directly within the report, with comments included alongside respective tables and graphs for consideration. Feedback about data validation findings is enclosed in a separate document.

The report highlights the unique challenges associated with operating the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) as a short-term reception facility, including its infrastructure limitations, operational constraints, and the need to ensure youth are accommodated in a safe, supportive and developmentally appropriate environment. WYRC is a Queensland Police Service (QPS) owned facility and is currently being utilised by the department to facilitate the timely transition of youth from police custody into a youth detention centre (YDC).

WYRC has played a critical role in reducing reliance on QPS watchhouses by providing a safer and more developmentally appropriate environment for youth awaiting placement in a YDC. Addressing the considerations outlined in the report remains a priority, with further detail provided below in response to the 13 recommendations.

In specific response to the 13 recommendations outlined in the report, I would like to provide the following detail, highlighting the department:

- is committed to ensuring that youth remain at WYRC for the shortest time possible. The department closely manages admissions, transfers, and system capacity to minimise delays in placement. While longer term placements are arranged, youth at WYRC continue to be supported through access to structured routines and essential services to safely manage both short-term stays and, where necessary, extended periods due to operational complexities or capacity pressures.

1 William Street
Brisbane Queensland 4000
GPO Box 7096
Brisbane Queensland 4001

ABN 22 579 084 055

- acknowledges overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in detention and continues to prioritise culturally safe and responsive practices to support positive outcomes for youth. This includes the work of dedicated Cultural Liaison Officers and the delivery of cultural programs and activities. Partnerships with Elders have been strengthened through invitations to onsite engagements, while outreach with First Nations communities supports greater participation in cultural activities and enables virtual connection for youth from regional and remote areas.
- recognises that youth maintaining access to phone communication with family members, personal supports, and oversight and advocacy bodies is an important safeguard for youth accommodated at the WYRC. While there are inherent limitations associated with the existing infrastructure, the department has taken steps to improve access and will continue working with partner agencies to identify opportunities to strengthen communication arrangements for youth within these constraints.
- has implemented strengthened governance and oversight for risk-based transfers to WYRC. The Risk Assessment and Management Panel provides a structured framework for managing high-risk youth, supported by behaviour support plans and clear reintegration pathways. The framework continues to be monitored and refined to ensure it is being implemented appropriately.
- continues to collaborate with QPS to explore infrastructure enhancements that soften the institutional environment at WYRC. Priority is also being given to facilitate leave of absence arrangements when operationally viable and safe to do so to support access to programs and outdoor facilities at other YDCs.

Furthermore, learnings gained from the establishment of WYRC have contributed to informing readiness planning for the Woodford YDC. The department has arrangements in place to ensure incident review and oversight mechanisms are embedded across all YDCs. This is supported by ongoing work to strengthen review processes, referral pathways, and staff capability in relation to reporting and escalation requirements.

I trust the attached information is of assistance. I acknowledge and appreciate the Inspector of Detention Services' ongoing engagement and constructive approach throughout this process. The department remains focused on addressing the draft recommendations and ensuring WYRC operates as a safe, rehabilitative and culturally responsive facility for youth. We would welcome the opportunity to review a further draft version of this report before publication.

Should you require any further information, please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support via email
at [REDACTED] or by telephone on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Michael Drane
Director-General

27 / 07 / 2026

Enc:
Attachment 1: IDS Wacol Youth Remand Centre inspection report 2026 consultation draft – (incl supporting docs 1 – 9)
Attachment 2: IDS 2026 report recommendation table and responses (incl supporting docs 1 – 9)
Attachment 3: YDO feedback on IDS data tables WYRC 2026 report

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

Rec	Wacol Youth Remand Centre	Lead Agency	Status: • Accepted • Accepted in Principle • Not Accepted	Comment
1	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures: - children only remain at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for as short as time as possible - Wacol Youth Remand Centre ceases to be used as a youth detention centre once Woodford Youth Detention Centre is operational.	YJVS	Accepted in principle	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (the department) supports the intent of this recommendation and reiterates that the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) is intended to operate as a short-term reception facility, with a clear focus on minimising the time youth spend at the centre. The WYRC is a Queensland Police Service (QPS)-owned facility and is being used by the department to facilitate the timely transition of youth from QPS custody into YDCs. This approach provides a safer and more developmentally appropriate environment than watchhouses while longer-term placements are arranged. The Admission Coordination Unit (ACU) plays a central role in minimising length of stay by coordinating admissions and transfers, prioritising placements, and managing system capacity across the state. Through assessment of individual risk, need and vulnerability, the ACU supports timely movement of youth into appropriate YDC placements. While the WYRC is intended for short-term stays, there are instances where onward transfers are impacted by system-wide capacity pressures. In such circumstances, the centre continues to provide structured routines, education and programs, health services, cultural and therapeutic supports to safely manage youth. The department undertook active advocacy during the design and construction of the WYRC, influencing improvements to the overall environment to better support a youth cohort. This included increased window installations, enhanced access to natural light, and broader amenity improvements contributing to safety and wellbeing. Collectively, these enhancements represent a significant improvement compared to many regional QPS watchhouses. During the interim period prior to the opening of Woodford YDC, the WYRC continues to play an important role in alleviating system-wide capacity pressures and reducing reliance on watchhouses. Decisions regarding the longer-term use of infrastructure such as WYRC sit within the broader context of whole-of-government policy, system capacity and investment considerations and are not solely matters within the department's control.
2	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support assists the Wacol Youth	YJVS	Accepted	The WYRC has two full-time Cultural Liaison Officers (CLOs) who provide culturally safe, daily support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. This includes regular physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing check-ins, court support,

				assistance during Sorry Business or Sad News, delivery of cultural programs and activities, and tailored support to promote and maintain cultural identity and connection. CLOs also engage with internal and external cultural support agencies and Elders to strengthen cultural capability and support meaningful connections. While the WYRC does not have a dedicated Cultural Unit Manager, CLOs are supported by Cultural Unit Managers at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs, who provide cultural support. The WYRC operates within a shared service delivery model across the precinct, with regular support from CLOs and other staff from neighbouring YDCs to ensure continuity of cultural and gender-responsive support. This includes periods where the WYRC has had access to male CLO support and ensures continuity for youth as they transition between centres. The WYRC delivers a range of cultural programs, including cultural art, cooking, and didgeridoo activities, alongside visits from external stakeholders supporting cultural engagement through activities such as cultural dance. These initiatives support identity, connection, and skill development, and provide continuity for youth as they transition to placement YDCs. The WYRC has facilitated cultural engagement opportunities by inviting Elders on site and encouraging meaningful engagement with youth beyond non-contact visit areas to support more meaningful cultural interactions. The physical environment at WYRC limits the capacity to host larger Elder gatherings and cultural celebrations that are more readily accommodated within YDCs. Notwithstanding these constraints, Elders continue to be invited and encouraged to attend. The WYRC staff have undertaken outreach to strengthen relationships with First Nations communities, including engagement with the Cherbourg community and local and regional Elder groups. Work is ongoing to build community confidence and increase participation in cultural activities. To support youth from regional and remote communities, the WYRC facilitates video calls with family and community supports. The centre also works collaboratively with Cultural Units across YDCs to provide culturally appropriate support during transfers, including engagement with external providers such as YETI, which supports Far North Queensland youth through ongoing virtual cultural connection. The department will continue to strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Elders to enhance cultural engagement at the WYRC, recognising the unique operational and infrastructure constraints of the centre.
--	--	--	--	--

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

3	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with Wacol Youth Remand Centre to ensure: • children have an opportunity to make a phone call to family, a guardian or another personal support person as soon as possible after admission • the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents attempts to make the phone call and the completion of the phone call • the Wacol Youth Remand Centre documents when a child declines an offer of a phone call.	YJVS	Accepted	The department is committed to ensuring that all youth admitted to the WYRC are provided with the opportunity to make a phone call to a family member, guardian, or other personal support as soon as possible after admission. The department also recognises the importance of consistently documenting these attempts, including where phone calls are declined, to support transparency and accountability. When youth are admitted after hours, parents and caregivers may be notified through QPS or Youth Justice After Hours (YJAH) processes. Where initial contact has not been successfully established, Youth Justice staff continue attempts to notify parents or carers as soon as practicable. Ensuring timely family contact is a priority. The WYRC staff facilitate phone calls as soon as it is operationally safe and appropriate to do so, with any unavoidable delays addressed promptly once staffing levels and information availability allow. To support timely access to phone contact, the WYRC utilises pre-admission processes where available to identify and verify approved contact numbers. These details are communicated to operational staff to enable early contact following admission. Requirements under the Youth Detention Centre Operations Manual (YDCOM) support this process, including the use of the Induction of a Youth form (Attachment 1) to record whether a phone call has been offered and made, with records maintained in DCOIS. It is acknowledged that, in some circumstances, particularly for late-night or early-morning admissions, immediate phone contact may not be feasible. This may occur where staff must prioritise safety, medical assessments, and suicide risk screening, or where contact details require verification, including confirmation of guardianship arrangements or any legal restrictions on contact. In these cases, phone calls are facilitated at the earliest opportunity once appropriate checks are completed. While phone calls can be recorded in DCOIS, the department acknowledges the need to strengthen consistency and standardisation of recording practices at the WYRC. Work will continue to improve documentation of phone call offers, attempts, outcomes, and any instances where a call is declined, to support improved data integrity.
4	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures inductions are conducted for all children entering Wacol Youth Remand	YJVS	Accepted	The department recognises the importance of timely and comprehensive inductions for all youth entering a YDC to ensure they are fully informed and supported during their time in detention. In accordance with the <i>YD-2-1 Youth Detention – Admission of a Young Person</i> policy (Attachment 2), the induction process is prioritised and, wherever possible, completed within the first 24 hours following an admission. This requirement applies

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

	Centre, within the required timeframes.		to all youth entering detention, including those admitted directly to, or transferred from, WYRC. To support consistent and accessible delivery of inductions, the department has developed Easy English Induction Booklets for YDCs, including a version tailored to WYRC (Attachment 3). The booklets provide youth with clear and accessible information about what to expect during their time in detention. Key topics include: • Accommodation arrangements and daily routines • Expected length of stay • Meals and management of personal belongings • How to contact family and friends • Roles of key staff members and centre rules • How to make a complaint or seek further assistance Following admission, youth are allocated a caseworker who undertakes an intake process called 'First Steps' as outlined in <i>Case management – first steps (intake)</i> (Attachment 4), which complements the induction process. This includes orienting youth to expectations, identifying immediate support needs, confirming key contact information, and providing an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns. The department acknowledges that, in a high-volume remand environment, inductions may at times be delivered in stages or impacted by operational factors, particularly for after-hours admissions. However, processes remain in place to ensure inductions are completed as soon as practicable. WYRC will continue to strengthen consistency in induction delivery and record-keeping practices to support compliance with policy requirements.
5	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with Wacol Youth Remand Centre to develop a process that ensures audits of mandatory observation requirements are conducted.	YJVS	The department's process for mandatory observations is outlined in <i>YD-1-1 Youth Detention – Observations policy (Attachment 5)</i>, supported by a local operating procedure tailored to the infrastructure and CCTV environment at WYRC (Attachment 6). These frameworks establish clear expectations for observation frequency, recording, and management of non-compliance. Due to its design as a watchhouse facility, the WYRC relies in part on CCTV-based observations, particularly during overnight periods. As identified in the report, the absence of physical bed check functionality and routine movement through accommodation pods presents challenges in independently verifying that observations have been consistently undertaken in practice. To address this, the WYRC has established regular observation audit processes. These include periodic (fortnightly) audits of operational pods, incorporating targeted

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

			review of CCTV footage to confirm staff are actively monitoring and recording observations, alongside cross-checking DCOIS entries and activity logs to verify compliance with required observation intervals. Where non-compliance is identified, matters are escalated through established performance management processes, including additional training and supervisory intervention. Referrals may also be made to the Incident Oversight Committee, Ethical Standards Group (ESG) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme as appropriate. The department is also progressing broader system improvements, including scoping a replacement for DCOIS. [REDACTED]
6	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim support ensures the phone facilities at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre allow for the selection of phone calls from an autodial list. This is available at other youth detention centres, to protect the confidentiality of calls.	YJVS	Accepted in principle <i>Consideration should be given to combining Recommendations 6, 9 and 10, given their interrelated focus on phone system functionality, access, and contact limitations.</i> The department recognises the importance of ensuring that youth have access to phone communication, including with oversight and advocacy bodies. At WYRC, phone services are delivered through infrastructure owned by the QPS and managed by an external provider (Securecom). As this system differs to YDCs, a tailored approach is required to support youth access. In response, WYRC-specific Easy English resources are currently being developed in collaboration with centre staff to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the cohort. These resources will support youth to access oversight and advocacy services and are being designed to align with the unique system and operational environment at the WYRC. In addition, the department engaged with Securecom to explore the feasibility of implementing an autodial function comparable to what is available in other YDCs. Advice received to date indicates that the existing system does not support autodial functionality or the creation of an approved contact list in the same manner as Unity YDC phone systems. There is also no viable pathway to retrofit these features given the embedded nature of the infrastructure within a QPS-owned environment. Notwithstanding these constraints, the department will continue to work with the WYRC, QPS and Securecom to identify opportunities to strengthen privacy and access to confidential communications for youth, noting that any modifications are subject to system capability and infrastructure feasibility.
7	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that when children are	YJVS	Accepted The Appendix 1-11 Management of High-Risk Youth (Attachment 7) was developed in October 2025 and outlines the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) process, which provides a structured framework for managing youth who present significant safety or behavioural risks. A decision to use a tier 4 interventions,

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

	transferred because of the Risk Assessment and Management Process: • behaviour support plans are developed or reviewed for all children transferred • reintegration plans are developed, with clear behavioural expectations, to ensure children stay at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for the shortest possible time • behaviour support and reintegration plans are communicated to the children.		including transfer to WYRC, are applied only where lower-level interventions are not appropriate or have been assessed as ineffective. Consistent with Appendix 1-11, all tier 4 transfers are required to be time-limited, subject to regular multidisciplinary review and supported by behaviour support plans and a clear reintegration pathway. These plans outline behavioural expectations, required supports, and the pathway for return to a placement YDC, and are intended to be communicated to youth to support understanding and engagement. The department acknowledges that the WYRC is not designed for long-term accommodation or the delivery of intensive therapeutic intervention. Accordingly, the focus of RAMP transfers to WYRC is short-term stabilisation, with a clear emphasis on timely reintegration to a placement YDC. The department continues to monitor and refine the implementation of RAMP to improve processes, including information sharing, and strengthen consistency in the development, documentation, and communication of behaviour support and reintegration plans. This includes reinforcing expectations for multidisciplinary input, regular review, and clear articulation of reintegration pathways to minimise time spent at the WYRC. Insights from recent case studies highlight key learnings, including the importance of timely and well documented RAMP decision making, strengthened use of behaviour support plans prior to and during transfers, and more consistent application of step down and reintegration planning. In addition, the department is progressing updates to the <i>YD-1-2 Youth Detention – Behaviour support policy (Attachment 8)</i> to strengthen guidance on behaviour management, including expectations relating to education engagement, incentives, and responses to non-engagement, to support greater consistency across centres. The department recognises the importance of ensuring that youth are accommodated in environments that are child-friendly, trauma-informed, and support wellbeing.
8	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support implements additional temporary infrastructure enhancements to further soften the Wacol Youth Remand Centre's harsh and institutional built environment.	YJVS	The WYRC operates within a QPS-owned facility which, as acknowledged in the report, presents inherent constraints on the extent of infrastructure modifications that can be undertaken. As such, large-scale or structural upgrades are not feasible. Notwithstanding these limitations, the WYRC has implemented, and continues to implement, a range of enhancements to improve the environment and support a more developmentally appropriate setting. These include cultural murals, the provision of soft furnishings, and the establishment of a dedicated classroom space to support education engagement.

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

				The WYRC staff have also taken a proactive and creative approach to softening the environment within existing constraints. Initiatives underway include planned school holiday activities where youth will contribute to painting sections of accommodation pods with blackboard paint to create interactive chalkboard spaces. The centre also implements seasonal activities and displays (e.g. Christmas and Easter), contributing to a more welcoming and youth-centred environment. Additional work is also in progress, including the use of murals to creatively display behavioural expectations and induction information, and the installation of additional telephones in accommodation pods. This is further supported through engagement with the department's Simplify Project, which focuses on delivering clear, engaging, and accessible messaging for youth in Easy English formats. While significant infrastructure modifications are not viable, the department will continue to identify and implement practical, low-impact improvements where appropriate. In parallel, learnings from the WYRC and other centres are informing the design of future youth detention infrastructure, including the integration of contemporary, trauma-informed and culturally responsive design principles informed by operational experience and engagement with youth and stakeholders. <i>Consideration should be given to combining Recommendations 6, 9 and 10, given their interrelated focus on phone system functionality, access, and contact limitations.</i>
9	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support collaborates with the Queensland Police Service to increase the number of authorised phone numbers that can be stored on the phone system.	YJVS	Accepted in principle	This recommendation is interrelated with Recommendations 6 and 10, which collectively address phone system functionality, access, and contact limitations at the WYRC. Further detail regarding system constraints, access to approved contacts, and improvement activities is outlined in the responses to Recommendations 6 and 10. <i>Consideration should be given to combining Recommendations 6, 9 and 10, given their interrelated focus on phone system functionality, access, and contact limitations.</i> The department recognises that maintaining regular and meaningful contact with family, carers, and community supports is critical to the wellbeing, emotional regulation, and successful reintegration of youth.
10	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and Wacol Youth Remand Centre ensure: - children receive a minimum of 120 minutes of weekly personal phone time - available phone contacts are not unreasonably restricted to immediate family members.	YJVS	Accepted in principle	The WYRC operates within a QPS-owned facility, with phone infrastructure designed for watchhouse operations. As a result, the system has functional limitations compared to those available in youth detention centres, including the absence of individualised phone lists, restricted capacity to support a broader range of approved contacts, and limited functionality to track call duration and frequency.

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

			In collaboration with QPS, the department has delivered improvements to phone access at the WYRC, including the installation of additional telephones within accommodation pods, targeted for completion by [REDACTED]. While this has increased physical access to phones, the underlying system remains constrained by its design, including limited ability to modify core functionality. These constraints impact both the duration of calls and the number of approved contacts available. It is not operationally feasible to consistently meet the 120-minute weekly target for all youth within the current infrastructure, structured day, and supervision requirements. Call access may vary depending on operational factors, including centre population levels and daily routines. Youth are supported to maintain contact with key supports, including family members, legal representatives, Youth Justice caseworkers and Child Safety Officers. Requests to include extended family members or other approved supports are considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances and safety considerations. The department will continue to work with the WYRC, QPS and system providers to improve access to phone services and expand contact options where feasible. Current improvement activities focus on increasing physical access (including additional phones), noting that broader system functionality remains constrained by the QPS-designed infrastructure.
11	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that children who have been accommodated at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for extended periods of time are prioritised for leaves of absence to access programs and facilities at the Brisbane and West Moreton Youth Detention Centres.	YJVS	The department recognises the report's findings regarding limited use of leaves of absence (LOAs) at the WYRC and the impact this can have on access to programs and outdoor facilities. LOAs are an important mechanism to facilitate access to education, rehabilitation programs and other approved activities outside of the WYRC, particularly for youth experiencing extended stays. LOAs also support access to other facilities, including at Brisbane and West Moreton YDCs where appropriate. The <i>YD-2-2 Youth Detention - Leave of absence</i> policy was updated in June 2026 (Attachment 9). The revised policy now includes enhanced clarity on LOA eligibility and criteria, strengthened risk assessment processes with multidisciplinary and cultural input, clearer identification of delegated decision-makers, improved documentation and record-keeping requirements, and strengthened review processes. The WYRC has facilitated planned reintegration LOAs to support youth in becoming familiar with placement environments and to enable engagement and mediation with peers in preparation for transfer. In addition, planned group LOAs have occurred to

Wacol Youth Remand Centre 2026 inspection report - CONSULTATION DRAFT - Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

				enable youth to attend West Moreton YDC to access education and vocational training opportunities. All LOAs are subject to appropriate risk assessment and require the availability of suitably trained staff to ensure the safety of youth, escorting officers, and the community. As LOAs are typically conducted under escorted conditions, workforce availability and operational requirements may impact the frequency with which they can be facilitated. Notwithstanding these constraints, the department will continue to work with YDCs in the Wacol precinct to increase opportunities for LOAs. When assessments have indicated it is operationally safe to do so, priority will be given to youth who have been accommodated at WYRC for extended periods to support access to program opportunities, rehabilitative activities and environments not available within the centre.
12	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that the incident review and oversight mechanism is in place when the Woodford Youth Detention Centre opens.	YJVS	Accepted	The department recognises the importance of establishing robust incident review and oversight mechanisms to support timely review, accountability, and continuous improvement. Learnings from the establishment of WYRC have informed the approach to Woodford YDC readiness. Incident review and oversight mechanisms will be established at Woodford YDC as part of staged workforce, infrastructure, and operational readiness activities, ensuring they are in place and fully operational from commencement. Across all existing YDCs, established incident review forums assess serious incidents against policy, training standards, and best-practice expectations. Outcomes of these reviews inform escalation pathways, including referral to the Ethical Standards Group (ESG), which determines whether matters are escalated or managed locally based on risk and severity. These arrangements are supported by ongoing work to strengthen incident review processes, referral pathways, and staff capability in relation to reporting and escalation requirements.
13	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that a Senior Executive Director approves the transfer of children from a placement youth detention centre to the Wacol Youth Remand Centre through the	YJVS	Accepted in principle	The department acknowledges the importance of ensuring that decisions to transfer youth to the WYRC are subject to appropriate oversight, are clearly justified, and are supported by robust risk assessment and planning. As noted in the report, at the time of the inspection in October 2025, the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) framework had not yet been implemented. The introduction of <i>Appendix 1-11 Management of High-Risk Youth (Attachment 7)</i> has since established a strengthened and more structured approach

Risk Assessment and Management Plan process. The Senior Executive Director should consider: • a risk assessment developed by a multidisciplinary team that explains the immediate risk the child poses to the placement youth detention centre's safety and security • a clear justification why accommodation at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre is appropriate • a plan documenting the support to be provided to the child to ensure their return to a placement youth detention centre.	to managing youth who present serious or ongoing risks to safety, security, or the good order of a centre. Under the RAMP framework, transfers of youth between centres are informed by multidisciplinary risk assessments and are subject to collective decision-making by Executive Directors across relevant centres. Where agreement cannot be reached, or where placements extend beyond 14 days, decisions are escalated to the Senior Executive Director (SED) for approval. RAMP supports safe, structured and defensible decision-making for youth who pose immediate and significant risks. Decisions are guided by dynamic risk assessments that are reviewed regularly and reflect the least restrictive response necessary to manage identified risks. Responses are trauma-informed and tailored to the individual needs of the youth, including consideration of age, culture, gender, developmental stage, mental health, and cognitive functioning. The department notes that decisions regarding transfer must also consider the safety and security of the originating centre. Where a youth poses a significant risk to other youth or staff, this may create broader operational impacts, including disruption to programs, services, and the safety of the wider cohort. The department does not propose amending the current approval arrangements to require SED approval for all initial transfer decisions. The current RAMP process is designed to be responsive and operationally effective, enabling timely, high-level decision-making at the Executive Director level while providing appropriate oversight and escalation to the SED where required. With the framework now embedded, RAMP is operating with strengthened governance, clearer expectations regarding behaviour support and reintegration planning, and ongoing dynamic risk assessment to support appropriate placement decisions and minimise time spent at WYRC. It is also noted that, in the context of current system capacity and operational settings, transfers to WYRC under the RAMP framework have been infrequent. The department will continue to monitor the application of the RAMP framework through established governance mechanisms, including review of data, case studies and operational feedback, to support continuous improvement and ensure decisions remain consistent, proportionate and well evidenced.
--	---

Appendix B: Queensland Police Service submission



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
200 ROMA STREET BRISBANE QLD 4000 AUSTRALIA
GPO BOX 1440 BRISBANE QLD 4001 AUSTRALIA
Email: commissioner@police.qld.gov.au



Our Ref:
Your Ref:

7 September 2026

Anthony Reilly
Inspector of Detention Services
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
Email: inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Reilly *Anthony,*

Thank you for considering the Queensland Police Service's (QPS) submissions and for addressing the matters raised in relation to the draft report on the inspection of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC).

The QPS has taken the opportunity to amend the original response table, withdrawing the issues that have already been addressed, and retaining commentary relating to the delivery of Recommendation 9.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the draft report and provide submissions on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

BRETT POINTING APM
ACTING COMMISSIONER

Encl. QPS Response to WYRC Inspector of Detention Services Report.

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

ATTACHMENT 1 - QPS RESPONSE

OFFICIAL

Response to Recommendations - WYRC Inspector of Detention Report

Rec#	Recommendation	QPS Response
9	The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support collaborates with the Queensland Police Service to increase the number of authorised phone numbers that can be stored on the phone system.	The QPS continues to work collaboratively on enhancing the operational effectiveness of the WYRC and have increased the number of telecommunication lines, addressing recommendation 9.

OFFICIAL

Appendix C: Office of the Health Ombudsman submission



13 July 2026

Mr Anthony Reilly
Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services
GPO Box 3314
BRISBANE QLD 4001

By email: Inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Reilly

Wacol Youth Remand Centre – Draft Inspection Report

Thank you for your correspondence dated 1 June 2026, providing the draft inspection report following your inspection of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) and inviting a submission in response to the report and the 13 recommendations.

The Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) has reviewed the draft inspection report and recommendations and is pleased to confirm that we are supportive of all 13 recommendations.

We would like to take this opportunity to provide specific feedback on areas within the report that align closely to the OHO's jurisdiction.

Recommendation 2

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support assists the Wacol Youth Remand Centre to build strong relationships with Australian First Nations Communities and Elder groups to boost engagement with children at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre

The OHO acknowledges the report's emphasis on fostering strong relationships between Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support (DYJVS), the WYRC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Elder groups. This is a critical step in enhancing engagement with children at the centre.

The report highlights that nursing staff are rostered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to conduct health assessments for children upon admission. These assessments include a brief primary assessment of the children to ensure they are medically fit to be left in police custody, followed by a more detailed assessment by the centre's health clinic. To ensure the highest standards of care it would be beneficial to clarify:

- whether the nurses conducting these assessments are Registered Nurses (Nurse Practitioner Endorsed, Division 1 or Enrolled nurses); and
- whether these nurses possess specific skills and professional qualifications to conduct health assessments with a focus on cultural safety and trauma informed practices and

Page 1

high-risk areas such as assessing suicide risk.

Additionally, we recommend incorporating cultural considerations into the induction process for children and young people. This should include clarifying the cultural components of the induction, identifying who is responsible for delivering the induction, and ensuring the process is informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

This aligns with the recommendation to build strong relationships with Australia's First Nations communities and Elder groups to boost engagement with children at WYRC. Once these relationships have been established, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives should be engaged in co-designing or reviewing the induction content and, where appropriate, support the delivery of the induction alongside staff.

This approach is consistent with the report's recognition of the importance of cultural support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths and reflects Relevant Standard 39, which states that children's connections to the community are strengthened by participation in interventions and activities involving relevant government, and non-government agencies, community organisations and Elders.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures inductions are conducted for all children entering Wacol Youth Remand Centre, within the required timeframes.

And

Recommendation 5

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support works with Wacol Youth Remand Centre to develop a process that ensures audits of mandatory observation requirements are conducted.

The OHO supports the recommendation to ensure all children entering the WYRC receive an induction within the required timeframe.

The report highlights the WYRC's duty of care to protect children from harm, particularly those identified as vulnerable, such as victims of abuse or trauma and those at risk of self-harm or suicide.

We share the concerns raised regarding the centre's unique infrastructure including the CCTV footage, the heavy doors that must be slammed shut, and that children must be observed during daily routine operations and physically or electronically via CCTV during overnight lockdown. We also share your concern that the only method used to ensure that staff comply with observation requirements is through audits of written records. The OHO supports the recommendation that a robust process should be developed to audit mandatory observation requirements, including the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to apply a cultural lens to these audits.

Recommendation 6

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures the phone facilities at the Wacol

Youth Remand Centre allow for the selection of phone calls from an autodial list. This is available at other youth detention centres to protect the confidentiality of calls.

The OHO strongly supports the recommendation to ensure phone facilities at the WYRC allow children to select contacts from an autodial list, as is available at other youth detention centres.

We note the absence of references to the importance of children being able to contact the OHO if they have concerns about their health or would like to make an enquiry or complaint about the health services they are receiving. We strongly recommend including detailed references to the OHO in this section of the report.

Recommendation 7

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that when children are transferred because of the Risk Assessment and Management Process:

- *behaviour support plans are developed or reviewed for all children transferred*
- *reintegration plans are developed, with clear behavioural expectations, to ensure children stay at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre for the shortest possible time*
- *behaviour support and reintegration plans are communicated to the children.*

The OHO supports the development and communication of behaviour support and reintegration plans for children transferred under the Risk Assessment and Management process. These plans should ensure children remain at WYRC for the shortest possible time. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths, it is critical that these plans are co-developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to ensure cultural safety and to address the unique or complex support needs of these children.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support implements additional temporary infrastructure enhancements to further soften the Wacol Youth Remand Centre's harsh and institutional built environment.

The OHO supports the recommendation to implement temporary infrastructure enhancements to create a more welcoming and culturally safe environment at WYRC. Engaging Elders and community members to provide cultural advice and co-design these enhancements will ensure the space is inclusive and culturally appropriate. This aligns with recommendation 2, which emphasises 'building strong relationships' with Australian First Nations communities and Elder groups to strengthen engagement with children and connections to their community.

Recommendation 10

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and Wacol Youth Remand Centre ensure:

- *children receive a minimum of 120 minutes of weekly personal phone time*
- *available phone contacts are not unreasonably restricted to immediate family members.*

The OHO endorses the recommendation to ensure children have access to a minimum of 120 minutes weekly personal phone time. We also recommend that specific consideration is given to adopting a broader definition of "immediate family members" for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people whose kinship systems typically include extended family and culturally connected individuals. A broader definition would align with culturally safe protocols, and would help reduce

potential frustrations and ensure culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths.

Recommendation 13

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support ensures that a senior executive director approves the transfer of children from a placement youth detention centre to the Wacol Youth Remand Centre through the Risk Assessment and Management Plan process. The senior executive should consider:

- *a risk assessment developed by a multidisciplinary team that explains the immediate risk the child poses to the placement youth detention centre's safety and security*
- *a clear justification why accommodation at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre is appropriate*
- *a plan documenting the support to be provided to the child to ensure their return to a placement youth detention centre.*

Given the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths at WYRC, it is essential to embed cultural support considerations into these plans to ensure that these youths' specific needs are addressed.

Health services at the centre:

The OHO acknowledges the positive steps taken to provide health services at the centre:

- The funding of West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (WMHHS) to deliver health care services for children at the centre through a 24/7 health clinic, including assessment, diagnostics, treatment services and referral to specialist services.
- The implementation of the HealthSPAN model, which focuses on proactive health management.
- The provision of mental health and drug and alcohol services by Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS).
- The delivery of culturally safe and capable health services.

Additional cultural considerations

- The OHO recommends incorporating trauma-informed and culturally safe practices into the centre's operations. Suggestions include involving youths in painting the admission area as a behaviour incentive, extending after-hours phone access to reduce stress and trauma triggers, and including Elders or community members in induction videos to highlight the centre's respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- The OHO supports innovative approaches to improve induction processes and record-keeping practices. For example, engaging young people in completing induction forms through culturally relevant incentives, such as partnerships with organisations like Deadly Choices, could enhance participation and compliance.
- The OHO recommends adding cultural concerns to the centre's duty of care standards, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth workers and Elders are contacted urgently to establish cultural connections within 12 hours of admission. This would strengthen cultural safety and support for children taken off Country.

- The OHO encourages forming formal partnerships with organisations like the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) to deliver culturally appropriate health assessments, such as the 715 Indigenous Health Check. This would ensure prioritised and comprehensive health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths.
- The OHO recommends including the OHO in the centre's policies and induction materials to ensure children are aware of how to raise concerns about health services. Engagement visits from the OHO could further support this process.
- The OHO supports enhancing recreational spaces with culturally relevant activities, such as introducing traditional Indigenous games like Yulunga and installing removable chalkboards for creative expression. Additionally, displaying inspirational quotes from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders along walkways could foster a sense of cultural pride and connection.

The OHO appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the draft inspection report and commends the ongoing efforts to improve experience and outcomes for children at WYRC. These inspections and the issues identified play a vital role in promoting the provision of safe and quality health services in Queensland.

If further information is required or there are questions arising from this correspondence, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Janet Anderson PSM
Health Ombudsman

Appendix D: Office of the Public Guardian submission



Brisbane Office

L16 State Law Building
50 Ann Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

PO Box 13554
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4003

Telephone 1300 653 187 • Fax 07 3738 9496

Email publicguardian@publicguardian.qld.gov.au

6 July 2026

Mr. Anthony Reilly
Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
Level 19, 53 Albert Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email: Inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr. Reilly

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft report of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre (WYRC) inspection. The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) has carefully reviewed the report and offers the following feedback for your consideration.

Page 34 – Complaints Mechanisms

The report states that communication boxes have been installed in every accommodation pod. However, it is important to clarify that there are only two communication boxes at the WYRC, located in the airlocks of the North Wing and South Wing.

Due to security concerns, communication boxes are not installed directly within the pods. Young people can only access these boxes during transitions to outdoor areas, visits, phone calls, or medical appointments. This limited accessibility contradicts the report's implication that young people have easy access to the boxes.

The lack of easy access to communication boxes partly informs OPG's decision to continue weekly visits at this time to the WYRC to ensure young people have a reliable avenue for raising concerns.

Page 63 – Centre's Visits and Phone Facilities

The report notes that young people are entitled to at least 120 minutes of personal telephone calls per week to approved contacts, as per YDCOM Chapter One. While efforts are being made to facilitate additional phone time, this entitlement is not consistently met.

Achieving the full entitlement would require significant changes to the centre's processes, such as installing phones within the pods. It is understood that fibreoptic cable installation is underway to facilitate this improvement.



CVA have raised a significant number of issues with the centre in relation to phone calls and contact, which has seen vast improvement, however frequent views and wishes continue to be shared with CVA in relation to the frequency of phone calls.

Page 26 – Centre Induction

The report highlights that only 4 out of 36 admission records reviewed for the period 1 April to 31 July 2025 included a completed induction form. This raises significant concerns about recordkeeping and the consistency of the induction process.

Page 68 – Food Quality and Portion Sizes

The report acknowledges improvements in food quality and portion sizes at the WYRC. These improvements include:

- Doubling lunch portions for older children.
- Increasing dinner portions by 20%.
- Providing two UP&GO drinks daily.
- Expanding snack options.

The report also notes ongoing engagement with the external caterer and the potential for collaboration with the West Moreton YDC kitchen to further enhance food services.

OPG appreciates the Inspector's recognition of the role played by Community Visitors in driving these positive changes. Their consistent advocacy, including raising individual concerns during visits, has been instrumental in achieving these outcomes.

Page 6 – Leave of Absence (LOA) for Recreational Activities

The report states that children can be granted leave of absence (LOA) to attend Brisbane YDC or West Moreton YDC for recreational activities or access to green space. However, OPG is not aware of any instances where LOA has been approved for these purposes.

While the LOA process has been utilised to facilitate transitions between detention centres, there is no evidence of its use for recreational activities or access to green space. As a result, children and young people at the WYRC remain without access to outdoor activities or grassed areas due to the centre's design and operational constraints. This is a significant concern, particularly for those detained at the WYRC for extended periods.

Conclusion

OPG appreciates the Inspector's efforts in preparing this comprehensive report and acknowledges the positive changes achieved at the WYRC.

Should you require further clarification or wish to discuss this feedback in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]





Yours sincerely

Kylie Phipps
Deputy Public Guardian
Executive Office
Office of the Public Guardian



Appendix E: Queensland Health submission



Queensland Health

Enquiries to:

Telephone: [REDACTED]
File Ref: C-ECTF-26/10174
Your ref: 2025-00952(P1)

Mr Anthony Reilly
Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
GPO Box 3314
BRISBANE OLD 4001

Email: inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Reilly

Thank you for your letter dated 1 June 2026, regarding the draft report on the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, under section 22 of the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022* (Old).

I appreciate you sharing a copy of this draft report with me and the opportunity for the department to provide a formal response. I note that both statutory Hospital and Health Services with direct operational responsibility for delivering health services in the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, have provided separate responses to your office.

I note the report outlines 13 recommendations primarily directed at the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support in its role as the lead agency for youth detention services. Queensland Health will continue to collaborate with partner agencies as a key stakeholder on recommendations that affect the health portfolio and the delivery of health services for this cohort.

Minor revisions are proposed for this report:

- **Pages 28, 43, and 70:** Identify Children's Health Queensland HHS as the responsible agency for the Forensic Child and Youth Mental Health Services (instead of Queensland Health). The Children's Health Queensland HHS deliver the mental health alcohol and other drug services in all three youth detention facilities in the West Moreton HHS. Identifying Children's Health Queensland HHS as the delivery agency in this report will also align with previous Inspection Reports.
- **Page 70, paragraph 3:** The formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support and the West Moreton and Children's Health Queensland HHSs for the delivery of health services in Youth Detention Centres in the Wacol precinct is still in effect despite its original term concluding, having been extended through letters of agreement between the agencies until a new agreement is finalised.

- **Page 70, paragraph 7:** HealthSPAN is the local name and adaptation of the Comprehensive Health Assessments in Youth Detention Centres pilot program (CHA program) rather than a separate health program or service. Embed information relating to CHA program under the 'The HealthSPAN model' heading.
- **Page 71, paragraph 3:** The System Policy Branch, System Policy and Planning Division, Queensland Health, is evaluating the CHA program's statewide impact, with the final evaluation report expected to be completed by September 2026. While detailed consideration of that program falls outside the scope of the current report, the report will be available for limited sharing upon request by the Ombudsman.

I can confirm that the two-year pilot of CHA program was finalised on 30 June 2026, with the Townsville and West Moreton HHSs currently considering the future state of comprehensive health assessments in detention and continuity of healthcare and support post release for this cohort.

Should you require further information, Queensland Health's contact is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] on telephone [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Dr David Rosengren
Director-General
8 July 2026

DELIVERING
FOR QUEENSLAND

 Queensland
Government

1 William Street Brisbane 4000
PO Box 15033 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7270
Email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au
arts@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Enc

Recommended changes to *The Centre's incentives model, and Education provided to children at the centre*

Navigation	Current wording	New suggested wording
Chapter 5, p37 - 38	The school at the centre does not operate an incentive system either. Instead, children can earn points for good behaviour, but they must wait until they are transferred to a placement YDC to spend them. Once transferred to a placement YDC, they can spend their banked education incentive points to purchase items from the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning scheme.	The Wacol Youth Remand Education Support Hub (WYRESH) utilises Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), which incorporates an incentive system. Children can earn points for good behaviour, but they must wait until they are transferred to the Education and Training Centre (ETC) at their placement YDC to spend them. Once transferred, the student can redeem their PBL points through purchasing from the PBL scheme at their placement ETC.
Chapter 9, p80-81	We spoke to Education staff at the centre who told us that teachers typically diagnose a child's learning needs 5 days after they are admitted. They explained that the delay allows children time to settle, thereby ensuring accurate diagnostic results.	Children are initially assessed on their readiness to engage in education upon entry to the WYRC. Once assessed as ready, children will have access to education, and Education staff will begin developing an individualised learning plan to align education to best meet their learning needs. Formal diagnostic assessment typically commences five days after admission, allowing the students to settle in and adjust physically, medically and mentally into the new environment, thereby ensuring accurate diagnostic results. Diagnostic assessment can be undertaken early if assessed as appropriate.
Chapter 9, p80- 81	As of 5 February 2026, 57% (533 out of 969) of children at the centre stayed a minimum of 5 days before their education assessment. The remaining 43% (416) were transferred more quickly. Of these 416 children, 65% (273 out of 416) were moved to another YDC for placement, where learning assessments were conducted by the placement YDCs schools. Based on the advice we received from Education staff, it is possible the remaining 143 children did not receive a learning assessment before being released to the community. As with children released to the community before education assessments occurred, we do not know what happened in terms of the education of these children.	As of 5 February 2026, 57% (533 out of 969) of children at the centre stayed a minimum of five days before their education assessment. The remaining 43% (416) were transferred more quickly. Of these 416 children, 65% (273 out of 416) were moved to another YDC for placement, where learning assessments were conducted by the placement ETC. Based on the advice we received from Education staff, it is possible the remaining 143 children (released earlier than five days) were not administered diagnostic assessment before being released to the community. Unlike their counterparts, these children would not have received a transition plan, and we may have less visibility of what happened in terms of the education of these children post release. However, these students would have had access to education during their remand period at the WYRESH and may have received other support from the Education Justice Initiative program in the region, which can include support from a Youth Transition Officer or Court Liaison Officer.

Appendix G: West Moreton Hospital and Health Service submission



West Moreton Health

Enquiries to: Office of the Chief Executive
Telephone: [REDACTED]
Our ref: MD092617771

29 June 2026

Mr Anthony Reilly
Inspector of Detention Services
GPO Box 3314
Brisbane QLD 4001

By email: inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Reilly,

Thank you for your letter dated 1 June 2026 in relation to your inspection of Wacol Youth Remand Centre conducted under s8(a)b of the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022*, and for providing a draft copy of your report. I also acknowledge your correspondence to the Honourable Timothy Nicholls, Minister for Health and Ambulance Services.

West Moreton Health (WMH) acknowledges your observations and recommendations concerning suicide risk and self-harm management. We note that clinical oversight of the Suicide Risk Assessment Team (SRAT) process falls outside the scope of the primary health care services delivered by WMH within Queensland Youth Detention Centres.

WMH is funded to provide Clinical Services Capability Framework (CSCF) Level 1 primary health care services at the Wacol Youth Remand Centre and other Youth Detention Centres in the region. As such, our involvement in the SRAT process should be limited to matters that align with this primary health care scope.

While WMH staff are not governed by Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support policies, we welcome the opportunity to review and provide feedback on any proposed policies, procedures, or governance documentation that interface with or impact the delivery of primary health care services.

This matter has been escalated to the Child Protection, Justice Health and Wellbeing Unit within the Department of Health. WMH remains committed to collaborating with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate governance, accountability, and clinical oversight arrangements are established for the SRAT process.

Thank you again for writing to me. Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, I have arranged for [REDACTED] Moreton Hospital and Health Service, on telephone [REDACTED] to be available to assist you.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Bloch
Health Service Chief Executive
West Moreton Hospital and Health Service



Caring Better Together

Address
Level 4 Hayden Centre
37 South Street Ipswich
QLD 4305
Postal address
PO Box 73
Ipswich QLD 4305
Phone: (07) 3810 1111
www.westmoreton.health.qld.gov.au



QUEENSLAND
OMBUDSMAN

Inspector of
Detention Services

