

Question on Notice

No. 1058

Asked on 26 November 2020

MR D LAST ASKED MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH JUSTICE AND MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS (HON L LINARD)

QUESTION

With reference to the Townsville Bulletin on 18 November 2020 revealing that staff at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre feared a riot similar to the one in 2016 that resulted in four guards being injured; the response from the department being that all 83 recommendations of the Independent Review of Youth Detention Centres have been implemented; and given the incident on 25 November this year that saw detainees access the roof of the centre again—

Will the Minister advise what steps are being taken to address this risk and prevent injuries to staff?

ANSWER

The safety of the community, staff and young people at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC) has always been a priority, which is why the government has invested more than \$177 million in infrastructure upgrades and new detention centre beds and facilities. This funding increases detention centre capacity by 33 per cent by early 2021, ensuring better and safer conditions for staff and young people. Our record investment of over half a billion dollars in new beds and new early intervention programs has also meant a 30 per cent reduction in the number of young offenders in Queensland since 2010.

The CYDC opened 20 years ago. The government has consistently invested in infrastructure and security upgrades at the centre, and the Palaszczuk Government continues to invest in non-infrastructure developments such as programs, training and resources to support young people and staff within our youth detention centres.

Every incident at a youth detention centre is reviewed by the department to ensure changes to policy, processes, and infrastructure are made where necessary or desirable, and to guide future youth detention centre builds and upgrade programs.

Capital improvements such as roof access prevention upgrades that were developed and designed in 2014 have been implemented. Other improvements have occurred over time, including \$949,000, approved in February 2019, to improve anti-climb measures. These capital improvement measures have been combined with non-infrastructure measures to ensure security.

In 2019-20, Youth Justice committed \$6.735 million for the continued implementation of the Independent Review of Youth Detention recommendations. All 83 recommendations have now been implemented resulting in significant practice, safety and security enhancements and improvements to service provision to young people in youth detention centres.

51 full-time equivalent staff have been funded through the Independent Review of Youth Detention and appointed in both youth detention centres and programs within youth justice to support the implementation and delivery of new services.

During the incident on 25 November 2020, CYDC remained secure and controlled during the incident, which was resolved with the young people voluntarily coming down from the roof. No staff or young people were injured, and minimal damage was sustained to property. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is investigating the damage. QPS provided support to CYDC staff as needed, to ensure the incident was resolved as quickly as possible. The decision to access QPS support is consistent with management procedures for these types of circumstances.

In collaboration with QPS, the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs has been undertaking a review of de-escalation actions and techniques to ensure staff have all the skills they need to manage violent and aggressive behaviour.

In November 2020, a working group was established at CYDC with representation from CYDC and unions. The role of the working group is to review current practices, processes and strategies, including strengthening safety and security, particularly relating to identified high-risk young people. The group has conducted a detailed review of the safety measures used when dealing with the most traumatised young people, with immediate changes occurring as a result. In the past two weeks an action plan to address recent incidents and improve practices on the ground has been agreed by staff and unions.

While it is not appropriate to detail operational processes and changes, for security reasons, we will continue to work with staff and experts to ensure youth detention centres are as safe for staff and children as is practicable, while delivering essential programs designed to reduce recidivism.

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs also relies on strong, collegial partnerships with education, health providers, and a number of government and non-government agencies to provide a range of services that evidence shows are important in reducing recidivism and anti-social behaviour, including violence.

Positive role models, the use of intelligence, and implementation of a restorative practice approach aim to assist young people to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions, for example, repairing damage, including graffiti. Other activities with young people include delivering anger management programs; helping them to understand the damaging impacts of domestic and family violence; working with speech therapists to assist young people to communicate better and learn to read and write; and building their capacity to undertake and practice basic life skills.

Youth detention centres are monitored by the Queensland Ombudsman, the Office of the Public Guardian, and an internal independent Youth Detention Inspectorate. The Queensland Ombudsman's 2019 report, *The Brisbane Youth Detention Centre report: An Investigation into the management of young people at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre between November 2016 and February 2017* focused on key areas for improvement, including management of high-risk young people, training, communication, and the complaints management processes. 12 of the 17 recommendations are closed or completed, with the remaining five partially completed. As a result of the recommendations, investments were made for improvements, including enhanced CCTV infrastructure to maximise coverage of the BYDC and implementation of body-worn cameras.

Youth Detention Inspectorate Reviews are conducted quarterly by Principal Inspectors under the *Youth Justice Act 1992*, and an executive summary of findings is published online. Inspections focus on security and management of youth detention centres and safe custody, wellbeing and enhanced outcomes for young people.

Youth detention centres are challenging and unpredictable environments. Where appropriate, incidents involving assault or the damage to property, are referred to QPS for investigation. Staff involved in incidents are provided with support, including from on-centre medical teams, staff wellbeing officers and access to external professional debriefing services.