

## Media release - The Brisbane Youth Detention Centre report

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27 March 2019

### Ombudsman presents The Brisbane Youth Detention Centre report

The Queensland Ombudsman's 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*, was today tabled by the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament.

"I have decided to present this report to the Queensland Parliament because I consider it to be in the public interest. It is important that the youth justice system, and youth detention centres in particular, are transparent and accountable regarding their practices and in how young people are treated," Ombudsman Phil Clarke said.

The investigation examined a number of incidents which occurred at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC) between November 2016 and February 2017, which culminated in a violent and destructive riot on 31 January 2017.

It is clear that there was significant disruption and discontent among young people at BYDC during the relevant time period. There were a number of causes for the riot, but the integration of a number of young people transferred from Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC) into BYDC in the preceding months was a significant factor.

Despite concerns expressed by both staff and young people, there were no apparent strategies developed by BYDC management to respond and intervene to prevent further escalation.

The investigation also examined the aftermath of the BYDC riot, specifically the decision to separate the young people involved in the riot for a period of ten days. Some of these young people were accommodated in rooms that were intended to be temporary holding areas for young people newly admitted to the centre. These 'admission rooms' did not have beds, running water or bathroom facilities, and had inadequate temperature control and ventilation.

"I am of the view that accommodating young people in the admission rooms for extended periods of time without free access to bathroom facilities, clean drinking water and adequate temperature levels is unreasonable", said Mr Clarke.

The isolation and impact of separating a young person requires the highest care and rigour in decision-making, and BYDC's processes were found wanting in this regard.

The deficiencies identified in this report are particularly concerning given the continuing growth in the population of Queensland's two youth detention centres. The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women's projections show continuing growth in youth detention numbers in the years ahead, which will continue to offer challenges in managing young people in youth detention.

The report identifies opportunities for administrative practices to be strengthened to ensure that youth detention centres are a safe and secure environment for staff and young people.

The department did not raise any objections to the 17 recommendations made in the report.

## About the Ombudsman

The Queensland Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Parliament.

The Ombudsman ensures public agencies make fair and balanced decisions for Queenslanders by investigating complaints and conducting own-initiative investigations that tackle broader, systemic concerns.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about state government departments, local councils and publicly-funded universities.

The Ombudsman can make recommendations to rectify unfair or unjust decisions and improve administrative practice.

## The report

View the full 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.](#)

## Key facts

- The Queensland Ombudsman's 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*, was today tabled by the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament.
- The investigation examined a number of incidents which occurred at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre (BYDC) between November 2016 and February 2017, culminating in a violent and destructive riot on 31 January 2017.
- The investigation also examined the aftermath of the BYDC riot, specifically the decision to separate the young people involved in the riot for a period of ten days.
- Some of these young people were accommodated in rooms that were intended to be temporary holding areas for young people newly admitted to the centre. These 'admission rooms' did not have beds, running water or bathroom facilities, and had inadequate temperate control and ventilation.
- The report identifies opportunities for administrative practices to be strengthened to ensure that youth detention centres are a safe and secure environment for staff and young people.
- The deficiencies identified in this report are particularly concerning given the continuing growth in the population of Queensland's two youth detention centres.

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