

SRWA STATEMENT ON 2023 OICS REPORT ON BANKSIA HILL

Damning report on WA's child prison highlights urgency of change

8 June 2023

- The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has tabled a report into conditions at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.
- The Report found Banksia Hill was in crisis and 'failing at every level.'
- Excessive lockdowns and staff shortages have rendered the facility unsafe.
- Inspectors discovered rat faeces on cooking implements and soiled clothing in cells.
- Experts have called on the new Premier and Minister for Corrective Services to urgently act by bringing in community services to improve conditions.

Today's report has again exposed the horrific and traumatising conditions in our children's prison. No child should be in an environment like this. Banksia Hill Detention Centre has a responsibility to rehabilitate children and provide care. This is not rehabilitation. This is not care.

Children who have disabilities, children who have had the toughest starts to life, need trauma informed and culturally appropriate responses. Not to be locked in cells for inhumane periods of time in state run institutions.

If we want safer communities, and better futures for these young people, we need to prioritise cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing. We urge the government to work with us to consider how we can support younger children and girls to be managed in the community.

We commend the Inspector of Custodial Services for clearly bringing these issues out into the public to be addressed. These conditions are damning and must not be tolerated.

This is an opportunity for the new Premier look at Banksia with the latest information, and a fresh set of eyes. We urge them to engage the experts, community services, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the way forward. We have written to them already offering our support and advice.

Our Path to resolving the Youth Detention Crisis since July 2022:

- End the ongoing and unlawful solitary confinement of children and adhere to the WA Supreme Court's ruling on minimum out-of-cell hours. This necessitates resolving staffing shortages.
- Introduce a trauma-informed, therapeutic, collaborative model-of-care with community experts and Aboriginal leaders, to treat the needs of young people incarcerated.
- Close Unit 18 immediately, with a clear transition plan to end the imprisonment of children in maximum-security adult prison which has resulted in an alarming number of distressing self-harm incidents.
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years old to keep primary school kids out of detention, and in community support systems.

- Create a whole-of-government youth justice strategy to support children and families in the community, respond to the underlying causes of offending, and build safer communities.
- Create an independent inquiry into the issues in our current youth justice system, that enables ongoing accountability and transparency

About Social Reinvestment WA:

Social Reinvestment WA is a coalition of 32 non-profit organisations campaigning since 2014 to end the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in WA. They lead development of justice reinvestment solutions in partnership with communities, and run the Raise the Age campaign in WA.

www.socialreinvestmentwa.org.au/raise-the-age

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