

STATEMENT FROM SOCIAL REINVESTMENT WA IN RESPONSE TO CRITICAL INCIDENT AT BANSKIA HILL

10 May 2023

The crisis in Banksia Hill has been continuing for over a year now, with no sign of improvement. The system is not working for anyone. **This punitive approach to detention for children has failed. It is time we do things differently before another incident puts children and staff at risk.**

Social Reinvestment WA (SRWA) has limited information about what sparked the still unfolding unrest at Banksia Hill youth detention centre. With repeated incidents occurring in detention, we hope for improved transparency on conditions inside Banksia Hill.

Our number one concern is the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and staff within the centre. Thankfully, on this occasion it appears no one has been hurt.

Evidence shows prison riots are usually caused when conditions have become unbearable for the detainees inside, and/or grievances have not been addressed or seen to be heard by authorities. The prisons inspector has found poor conditions and quality of care contributed to a similar riot in 2013.

We know the conditions inside Banksia Hill have been unbearable for a significant amount of time.

Despite the WA Supreme Court ruling them unlawful, 'rolling lockdowns' have been continuing for over a year, with staff shortages continuing to see **children spending up to 20 hours a day in solitary confinement in their cells**, denied usual programs and basic services such as adequate education.

Premier McGowan's views on FASD are not in line with medical professionals, academics, community service providers or his federal government colleagues. Young people with neurodevelopmental **disabilities require expert care and specialised treatment.**

We need to keep the community safe, but the methods used for fully-capable adults have been demonstrated not to work for these young people time and time again. The children and young people inside Banksia do not have fully developed adult brains, some are still primary school aged, and most have had lives characterised by poverty and trauma. Perhaps Premier McGowan's views about FASD explain some of the decisions made by the state government to date, which have repeatedly failed to address the core issues.

The evidence is clear – providing effective, rehabilitative care will improve conditions, safety and long-term outcomes for all.

As a coalition representing 32 non-profit organisations with significant experience, **SRWA has proposed a clear path forward to stabilising Banksia Hill informed by experts.**

SRWA has repeatedly **offered our coalition's wealth of knowledge, expertise, and resources to the McGowan Government to end the crisis in youth detention.** We remain committed to partnering on a way forward to resolve this situation as soon as possible.

ENDS.

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's justice systems. 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

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.

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