



OICS ref ER/EF/0815

17 December 2025

Ms Monika Sheppard
Acting Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Sheppard

Submission – Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system

Thank you for your letter dated 12 November 2025 providing an opportunity to update our original October 2024 submission to the Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system.

Our original submission drew information from a point in time to October 2024, and much has transpired since then in youth detention in Western Australia. Obviously, it is open to the Department of Justice or the Western Australian Government to provide detailed information about the progress of reforms in youth justice in Western Australia. But I do, however, wish to provide additional information to be read in conjunction with the relevant contents of our original submission to the Inquiry.

As previously advised, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services is an independent statutory agency reporting directly to the Western Australian parliament. Our remit, among other things, includes conducting regular inspections and thematic reviews of prisons and detention facilities to provide oversight over the way people in custody in Western Australia are managed.

The additional information provided in this letter has been informed by our knowledge within the Western Australian context, and more specifically our recent work within the custodial environments of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Unit 18 at Casuarina Prison.

It is important to note that the views expressed in this letter and in our original submission do not represent the position of the Western Australian Government.

Additional Information:

General Information and Background

- Our original submission referred to follow-up review work we were undertaking at that time which has now been published. This report is available on our website - *Review of youth custody: Follow-up to 2023 Inspection (Part Two)*, 19 December 2024, www.oics.wa.gov.au (OICS, 2024).
 - The Review recorded improvements in both Banksia Hill and Unit 18, particularly in the areas of health and mental health services, cultural engagement and support, education programs, and implementing a new model of care.
 - The Review also cautioned that the progress of reforms needed to be sustained and resourced over the long term.

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- By November 2025, the average daily number of young people held in detention in Western Australia remained low (76), despite a small increased compared to the time of our original submission (63). The number of young people identified as First Nations remained disproportionately high at 65%, compared to 60% in October 2024.
- Figure 1 below shows this updated data broken down by facility.

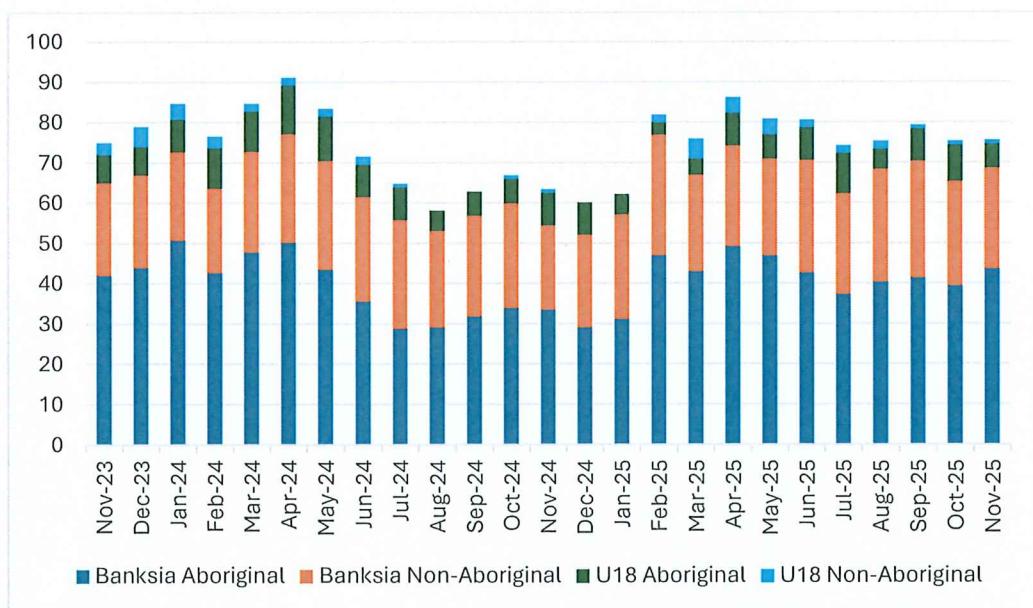


Figure 1: The daily average youth detention population in Western Australia, by facility and Aboriginality

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Summary of Review findings

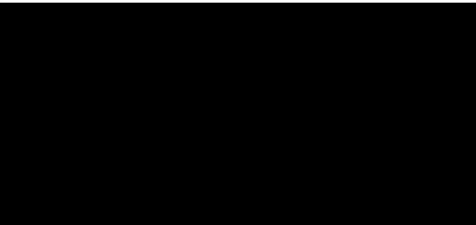
As noted above, in December 2024 we released a follow-up review of both Banksia Hill and Unit 18 (OJCS, 2024). We found improvements at both facilities, including an increased number of custodial staff which in turn increased young people's time out of cell and improved their access to a variety of support services. We observed that these initial improvements would require significant and sustained systemic reform to ensure meaningful outcomes for young people in detention.

- Cultural, rehabilitative and health services were improving under a renewed workforce
 - Better staffing, achieved through initiatives such as: increased recruitment and retention, implementation of the Model of Care at Banksia Hill, and introduction of a pilot program to reduce workers' compensation claims, was having flow on effects for young people in detention. Out of cell hours and prosocial activities had increased and there was an Aboriginal Services Unit on site providing culturally based support services. An in-house neuropsychology and mental health team had been established. But, at the same time continued vacancies in clinical psychological positions, coupled with high caseloads, had limited psychologists' focus to risk management as opposed to offence specific counselling or case management.
- Infrastructure upgrades aimed at providing heightened security and trauma informed care in the future
 - Construction had begun on a dedicated Crisis Care Unit within Banksia Hill - which is now almost completed – and announcements at that time of a new youth detention facility estimated to open in 2028 to replace Unit 18. While there have been some significant upgrades to the built environments of Banksia Hill and Unit 18, most of the works centred on physical security enhancements such as cell hardening, fence replacements, roof treatments, and CCTV upgrades.
- Systemic reform is required to support early improvements
 - We have consistently recommended significant changes to the management of youth custodial services moving to trauma-informed, child-centred care. While the Department has commenced and is progressing these reforms, sustained system level reform will be required.
 - Our Review contained nine recommendations for improvements to Banksia Hill and Unit 18, all but two of which were supported or supported in principle.

On 8 December 2025 the Western Australian Coroner delivered his findings following an inquest into the death on 19 October 2023 of a young detainee, Cleveland Dodd, following a self-harm incident while he was detained in Unit 18. The extensive findings contained 19 recommendations for improvements to youth detention in Western Australia, several of which were along similar lines to the recommendations contained in our Review.

I would be happy to provide additional information or clarification should that be required.

Yours sincerely


Eamon Ryan
Inspector of Custodial Services