

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 431

Topic: Alice Springs Correctional Centre

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Boyce asked:

What is the response by the Department of Health and Ageing and FaHCSIA that the Alice Springs Correctional Centre in the Northern Territory is currently detaining a young Indigenous man with significant cognitive impairments and behaviours of concern including head banging which can render him with a serious injury and that the intervention by the ASCC to stop the head banging is to belt this young man in a restraint chair and then inject him with a tranquiliser to render him unconscious? This practice has now occurred four times the most recently on October the 6th 2012.

Answer:

Responsibility for correctional services in the Northern Territory rests with the Northern Territory Minister for Correctional Services.

The Australian Government is working with state and territory counterparts to develop a whole of government approach to supporting people with cognitive disability who are in contact with the criminal justice system. At the 30 March 2012 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments Standing Council on Community, Housing and Disability Services, Ministers agreed that officials progress a number of areas for future action in relation to people with cognitive impairment who come into contact with the criminal justice system as offenders, at an individual jurisdictional level or through national collaborative activities, recognising that some elements will require joint activity across disability and law and justice agencies.

Additionally, recognising that State and Territory Governments are responsible for the provision of specialist disability services under the National Disability Agreement (2009), the development of a national strategy to reduce the use of restrictive practices in disability services was discussed by Ministers at the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services on 23 November 2012. The Communique from this meeting is at:
<http://juliecollins.fahcsia.gov.au/node/281>

One of the central outcomes of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is to ensure that people with disability have their rights promoted, upheld and protected, and includes the priority area of supporting people with disability with heightened vulnerabilities in any contacts with the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on early identification, diversion and support.