

MEDIA RELEASE

September 2021



Ashley Youth Detention Centre

Commissioner Children and Young People Leanne McLean has called for the State Government to build two smaller, purpose-built facilities in the North and the South of the State to replace the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Ms McLean said she has been deeply worried by the historical and contemporary concerns that continue to be raised about the safety and wellbeing of young people at Ashley.

“Allegations of historical abuse at Ashley continue to emerge,” Ms McLean said. “This, along with more recent concerns raised about the safety and wellbeing of young people at Ashley, as well as investigations relating to handling of a staff complaint, and multiple staff stand downs, results in ongoing concerns about the safety and wellbeing of young people at Ashley.”

Ms McLean said yesterday she sought information in relation to the claims recently made and initiated discussions with the Premier Peter Gutwein and the Minister for Children and Youth Sarah Courtney regarding her concerns.

“I have noted publicly the efforts to shift the operations of Ashley to a more therapeutic approach, particularly in recent years. However, despite the extremely hard work, dedication and commitment of staff and management at Ashley and in the Department of Communities Tasmania to embed this change, Ashley continues to be stigmatised and constrained by the circumstances I have mentioned.”

“I have therefore recommended to Government that it should reconsider the future of Ashley and again give consideration to implementing the preferred option of the 2016 Custodial Youth Justice Options Paper (the Noetic Report), which is to build two smaller, purpose-built facilities in the North and the South of the State.

“Implementing this option would provide an important opportunity to redefine Tasmania’s custodial youth justice model to align with a truly therapeutic and trauma-informed approach and to better promote the rights and wellbeing of young people in our youth justice system.”

Ms McLean said the authors of the Noetic Report noted:

Constructing new facilities will also provide an opportunity to redefine the custodial service delivery model and infrastructure. It would be based on a clearly understood philosophy and vision, underpinned by trauma-informed practice and a true therapeutic approach. The new model would ensure young people would have access to the right support at the right time, and are supported by effective coordination across government and with service providers. This includes a more robust through-care approach which offers more direct links for residents to their family, community and service providers in their respective locations during and after their period of detention.

“My position on Ashley to date has been influenced to a large extent by the Tasmanian Government’s decision to implement Option 1 of the Noetic Report, which was to maintain and upgrade the existing Ashley facility rather than the preferred option of two smaller purpose-built facilities.

“Despite my agreement with the conclusions of the Noetic Report, I adopted a pragmatic approach, given the Government decision to maintain and upgrade Ashley. In that context, I have strongly advocated for a more



therapeutic approach to youth justice, from prevention and early intervention to detention as a measure of last resort.

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