

MEDIA RELEASE

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STRIP SEARCHING – THE FIRST STEP ON THE LONG ROAD TO REFORM

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Leanne McLean said today the Tasmanian Government has accepted her eight recommendations with regard to the strip searching of children and young people in Tasmania.

“I welcome the introduction by the Attorney-General Elise Archer of legislation to end the routine practice of strip-searching children and young people in custody,” Ms McLean said.

“It responds to all eight recommendations I made to Government in 2019.”

Ms McLean said the Bill addresses four key issues, including:

- Ending the routine practice of strip searching
- Consolidates legislation into one piece of legislation
- Introduces a hierarchy of strip searching, ensuring the least intrusive method is employed in any given circumstance
- Embeds the principles that all children and young people are treated with dignity and respect

“But strip searching is only one part of our youth justice system. While this major shift in approach to searches is most welcome, much greater reform is desperately needed.

“Our youth justice system exists to support young people who are undertaking harmful or risky activities to change their lives, respect and restore those impacted by their behaviour, and in turn, keep our communities safer.

“This system should harness a young person’s inherent capacity to change, as their body and brain develops, in response to positive and therapeutic influences.”

Ms McLean said the Government has recognised Tasmania’s youth justice system is not fit for purpose.

“In committing to reform, the Government intends to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and transition to a therapeutic model of youth justice where therapeutic detention is used only as a last resort.

“This will require complex systemic reform across an array of services impacting children and young people, their families and communities.



This week, I have provided my view on what is required to achieve this in my submission to the Government's Youth Justice Blueprint.

"My focus begins in the first 1000 days of a child's life, which is where we can have the greatest effect, including on factors that influence the likelihood of future contact with the justice system.

"My submission is guided by three overarching principles - calling for child-centred reform, acknowledge the right of Aboriginal people to determine and lead the appropriate response for their children and recognise the influence of families, communities, and broader society on the wellbeing of children."

Commissioner for Children and Young People Submission to the Government's Youth Justice Blueprint:

<https://bit.ly/YJsubmission22>