

Media release

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A STATEMENT FROM CUSTODIAL INSPECTOR TASMANIA DR GRANT DAVIES

The Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2024-25 Annual Report was tabled in State Parliament today. This report reflects the work of the former Custodial Inspector Mr Richard Connock, who retired on 11 July, and his team.

Mr Connock's tenure leaves a legacy of systemic improvements in Tasmanian custodial centres. A recent Legislative Council committee outlined the impact of the Office, stating it is 'vital in providing a level of oversight of both Tasmanian adult prisons and youth detention facilities'.

I look forward to building on Mr Connock's work and continuing to provide independent, proactive, preventative and systemic oversight of Tasmania's custodial centres.

In 2024-25, the Office published seven review and inspection reports covering improved treatment of people in dry cells, increased access to voting in prisons, greater scrutiny of the placement of children in adult prisons and the highlighting of systemic issues in the provision of health care while in custody with a range of recommendations for improvement.

In the coming year, we will continue to work with the State Government, in particular the Department of Justice / Tasmania Prison Service; and the Department for Education of Children and Young People / Ashley Youth Detention Centre to build on these improvements. We will also continue to monitor both adult and youth custodial centres across Tasmania and provide reports and recommendations regarding the care and welfare of people in custody and the management, control and security of these custodial centres.

Two items of particular note in the 2024-25 reporting year were:

The ongoing issue of inadequate time out of cells. In the 2023-24 Report on Government Services, Tasmania had the worst average time out of cell for adults in custody of any state or territory in Australia. This financial year, the average is likely to be worse. Lockdowns are consistently, and understandably, the issue most often raised with us during monitoring visits. With the recent appointment of a new Director of Prisons we will be closely monitoring any new initiatives to address this systemic problem that, due to its frequency, has become normalised.

The increase in monitoring activities at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) from several times a year to twice a month. This increased presence has identified some concerns, including isolation of young people due to low staffing and the impact of low staffing levels on those who work at AYDC. We will continue to focus on these issues in the 2025-26 financial year.

ENDS

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