

Future directions

This is the first *Views of Young People in Detention Centres, Queensland* report produced by the Commission. Earlier in 2008, two companion reports were released: the *Views of Children and Young People in Foster Care, Queensland, 2008*, and the *Views of Young People in Residential Care, Queensland, 2008*. These three reports comprise the Commission's "Views of children and young people" series.

The information underpinning this Views report is a source of rich primary data for further research and analysis. It will provide the Commission and other agencies with new insights into aspects of youth justice that can be used to improve the experiences of young people who need their services and the efficacy of programs. The Commission has an obligation to ensure that what young people have conveyed through the survey has a positive impact on their lives and the lives of others in, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system.

As foreshadowed in the *Child Guardian Report 2006*, the data collected through the Commission's Views surveys of children and young people will also help guide the future work and direction of the Child Guardian.

In particular, the information in this survey provides a strong evidence base from which the Commission has developed the scope and direction of the Child Guardian's Youth Justice Key Outcome Indicators. The indicators will represent an external accountability mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of the youth justice system from the perspective of the young people in the system. Incorporating the views of young people in detention centres with other monitoring data gathered by the Commission will allow us to act promptly to assist the youth justice system to address any issues.

The implementation and regular reporting of the indicators will:

- provide stakeholders with meaningful and unique information and data about youth justice service delivery successes, challenges and gaps
- help service providers build operational capacity
- provide evidence to inform policy and program development, and

- establish a common language that should facilitate meaningful discussion and collaboration between the Commission and other youth justice system stakeholders, particularly in relation to information exchange, systemic advocacy, review activities, and public reporting.

This Views report has provided the Commission with insight into the individual needs of young people in youth detention, processes that have successfully supported them and services that are meeting their needs. This insight will shape the redevelopment of the visiting framework of Community Visitors towards an enhanced model of advocacy and complaints resolution. The survey, along with the Key Outcome Indicators, will provide the Commission with an evidence-base to review Community Visitor engagement with, and reporting on, young people in detention and the services provided to them. This includes improving the Commission's:

- framework through which Community Visitors will advocate for individual young people and the organisations responsible for providing services to them
- understanding of the needs of young people over time and the issues that face vulnerable young people in youth detention, and
- ability to advocate effectively for improvements in the way government and non-government agencies respond to the needs of vulnerable young people across Queensland.

In addition, the survey of young people in detention centres is, and will continue in the future to be, one of the key platforms in the Commission's *Strategy for Engaging with Children and Young People*. This strategy includes a statement of commitment to engage with children and young people, a number of policy principles and a range of engagement activities. It also identifies that the Commission will tell children and young people what happened with the information given to the Commission. In respecting the latter, the Commission has produced a version of this report tailored for young people.

The "young person-friendly" report, entitled *Your Views*, is being presented to and discussed with each young person by the Community Visitors. This will allow the young people to see that their voices have been heard and their views and perspectives have been genuinely represented. It also demonstrates to them that they have a capacity to inform and influence the system by participating in these surveys.

Wherever possible, the Commission will pursue collaborative research around the identified issues. This will optimise the effect of this work by engaging the expertise and resources of the broad range of academic and other stakeholders committed to improving the life circumstances of vulnerable children and young people.

Appendix

This appendix presents all of the responses provided by young people to a number of open-ended questions that aimed to explore respondents' views in a qualitative sense. These comments have been thematically analysed where possible to enhance accessibility. In some cases, young people's responses have been duplicated across categories where multiple themes are evident.

If you feel safe in the detention centre, what makes you feel safe?

Question 20

Support, supervision, friendliness and/or care of detention centre staff

- *Youth workers.*
- *Youth workers look after.*
- *The staff treat you well and look after you and my brother and friends are in here too.*
- *The staff and their supervision.*
- *The rules and staff help me.*
- *That I know staff and kids in here.*
- *Staff.*
- *Staff keep you safe.*
- *People, staff.*
- *My relationship with youth workers, as I can talk to most of them about anything.*
- *My cousins, friends, staff.*
- *Knowing that help is there if needed.*
- *It's friendly.*
- *I think everyone.*
- *Got my own room, free food and good staff to look after me.*
- *Good teachers and staff.*
- *Found my friends here. They look after me and staff look after me. And I share a room with my friend from the same town.*
- *Female staff are easy to talk to about personal things.*
- *'Cause I know people in here.*
- *Being with friend and family and staff.*
- *Been safe because I am looked after.*
- *Because there are staff that help you.*

Having friends or family members in the centre

- *The staff treat you well and look after you and my brother and friends are in here too.*
- *That we stay in our own rooms at night and everything is locked down and I have friends in here [section].*
- *That I know staff and kids in here.*
- *Seem to get on with everyone.*
- *People, staff.*
- *My mates.*
- *My cousins, friends, staff.*
- *It's friendly.*
- *I think everyone.*
- *Having heaps of mates.*
- *Friendships amongst other boys.*
- *Friends keep me safe.*
- *Friends. (4 responses)*
- *Found my friends here. They look after me and staff look after me. And I share a room with my friend from the same town.*
- *'Cause I know people in here.*
- *Being with friend and family and staff.*

Security/privacy of room

- *The security of the centre and our rooms.*
- *That we stay in our own rooms at night and everything is locked down and I have friends in here [section].*
- *My room.*
- *My own room, TV, food and pumps [mates] to look after me.*
- *In my room.*
- *Got my own room, free food and good staff to look after me.*
- *Every thing 'cause there is enough security.*

Protection from self and/or from others outside the centre

- *That you know that you can't get hurt.*
- *That I'm not out there stealing.*
- *Staying away from girls I fight with back home.*
- *Nothing will happen to you.*
- *No police here.*
- *More learning – school safe.*
- *I'm able to stay out of trouble in here.*

Security of premises

- *The security of the centre and our rooms.*
- *The fence.*
- *That we stay in our own rooms at night and everything is locked down and I have friends in here [section].*
- *Every thing 'cause there is enough security.*

Don't know or nothing specific stated

- *Don't know.*
- *Don't know.*
- *Because I just do.*
- *Because I feel safe.*

If you don't feel safe in the detention centre, what makes you feel unsafe?

Question 20

- *Threats.*
- *The staff.*
- *So close to my mum – it's not my mum, it's my mum's boyfriends. I know they can't come here but.*
- *People try to bash me.*
- *People pick on me.*
- *I'm scared of my room, I see dead people.*
- *Don't want to stay.*
- *Don't trust other inmate.*
- *Bullying.*

Are you better or worse off since coming into detention? If BETTER, how?

Question 36

Personal growth

- *The understanding and knowledge since been sent to detention.*
- *Matured.*
- *Matured, responsible, no drugs or alcohol.*
- *Makes me think about stuff.*
- *I've learnt from my mistakes and I won't re-offend.*
- *I've learnt by being in here for my actions and behaviour.*
- *I've changed to be a better person.*

- *It's made me think before action.*
- *It's given me a wake-up call.*
- *I just have more confidence and stuff like that.*
- *I feel better knowing [I] have done good to help myself.*
- *Helps me start to think of what I'm doing.*
- *Helping me.*
- *Because we matured a lot and [have] grown up and I have more respect.*

Improved physical health

- *Off the drugs.*
- *Not doing drugs.*
- *Matured, responsible, no drugs or alcohol.*
- *I have not been drinking and smoking drugs.*
- *Healthier.*
- *Fit and no drugs.*

Skill and knowledge development

- *Learn to read, learn how to get a job.*
- *I done more schooling and I've talked to Mum.*
- *I am learning.*
- *By going school.*

Other

- *With my mates in here.*
- *No police.*
- *More support.*
- *I am kept busy.*
- *I am happy, play football.*
- *I am better to be here.*
- *Helps me to keep out of trouble.*
- *Because I know I'm going home soon.*

Are you better or worse off since coming into detention?

If WORSE, how?

Question 36

- *No drugs.*
- *Make me angry, want to bash snitches.*
- *Isolation has led me to be anti-social.*
- *Bit sad like.*
- *Rather be at home.*
- *Because being in detention.*
- *'Cause I've got to be in this place – I'm too close to my mum and I'm worried she'll bring her boyfriends.*
- *I don't know.*

