

MEDIA RELEASE

REPORT NO 135 – 2020 INSPECTION OF BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 3:00PM ON TUESDAY 22 JUNE 2021

A permanent management team and ongoing low population numbers resulted in positive and optimistic findings from the Inspector of Custodial Services during the September 2020 inspection of Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre.

Having had many years of disruption, incidents and inconsistent management, Inspector Eamon Ryan said he had been pleased Banksia Hill had, at the time of our inspection, experienced a period of stability, development and progress.

However, since the inspection concerning signs had emerged that this progress had slipped, with increasing incidents of disruption, staff shortages and interruptions to the good services and regimes that had been developed for young people.

“In September we found many areas of Banksia Hill had taken advantage of the opportunity low population and stable leadership created. With only 77 young people in custody around the time of our inspection, the Centre had the opportunity to really work towards improvements,” Mr Ryan said.

Services that were found to have significantly improved included:

- Services available to girls in custody had increased.
- Banksia Hill's health services team were positive and cohesive, delivering a high standard of services.
- The quality of meals had improved markedly, and there had been positive feedback from young people.
- Education at Banksia Hill had strong leadership and undergone many positive changes.
- The appointment of a Principal Psychologist had been positive for psychological services, providing clear direction on practice and priorities.

Mr Ryan said given the progress that had been made it was disappointing that the first half of 2021 had seen several issues arise.

“Since the start of 2021, there has been increasing staff shortages, more critical incidents involving a number of different young people, and activities such as education being modified that have caused us some concern.”

As a result, Mr Ryan said his Office had recently commenced a series of structured visits to try and assess the extent of the issues and understand what contributing causes may be. This process is still in its early stages.

One of the issues noted during the inspection that may be a factor was the absence of a cohesive operational philosophy for Banksia Hill. This would ensure a consistent and unified approach from management and staff and create a sense of certainty for the young people there.

Establishing a philosophy would likely need a structured change process, that actively and meaningfully involves staff to ensure its success. Mr Ryan said getting everyone on the same page would help support better services and set clear expectations for staff and measures of operational success.

“While the recent incidents Banksia Hill have been experiencing are obviously more complex than simply not having a coherent operational philosophy, having one would contribute to staff engagement, better services, expectations of young people and a path forward for the Centre.”

Eamon Ryan
Inspector

For further media information:

The Inspector, Eamon Ryan, will be available for comment from 3:00pm on Tuesday 22 June 2021 and can be contacted on 0421 480 925.