

24 November 2025

Mr Iain Anderson
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Australian NPM Coordinator
Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman
5/14 Childers St
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: npmcoordinator@ombudsman.gov.au

Dear Mr Anderson

2025 Annual Report

I am pleased to submit my first annual report as Tasmanian NPM, and the office's fourth following its creation in 2022. In accordance with my obligations under the *OPCAT Implementation Act 2021* (Tas), this letter describes my activities for the year ending 30 June 2024. This is a reporting period during which my predecessor, Mr Richard Connock, was the responsible officer, having retired from office in July this year. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Mr Connock's lasting contribution as Tasmania's inaugural NPM and the comprehensive analysis he completed to set up this office, and I thank you for your ongoing support as Australia's NPM Coordinator.

I note that Mr Connock and I have also reported on the Tasmanian NPM in this year's Tasmanian Ombudsman Annual Report, which is available at:
<https://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>

This was a year of mixed fortunes for the office. The year began and ended with notable milestones, but overall progress to operationalise was slowed by resourcing and planning delays. While the Custodial Inspector office continued to carry out important work, these delays meant that reportable activities within the Tasmanian NPM office were limited. Accordingly for this year I have decided to present my annual report as a summarising letter and I have enclosed this year's Custodial Inspector Annual Report, which was tabled in the Tasmanian Parliament on 4 November 2025.

Milestones

The reporting period began with the completion of Mr Connock's second and final report under his project to scope the implementation of this new office and provide recommendations to Government: *'Preventing torture and ill-treatment in Tasmania: Supplementary report to the Tasmanian Government focusing on health and social care and update on the implementation of the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism under the OPCAT Implementation Act 2021'* (the Supplementary Report). This milestone report,

and the preceding year's Implementation Report, were both tabled in the Tasmanian Parliament on 26 November 2024.¹

Accompanying the publication and tabling of this Supplementary Report, a briefing to Parliament was provided by Mr Connock; my office Director, Mr Mark Huber; risk expert engaged with the implementation project, Ms Ari Magalhaes; and Mr Ben Buckland, Senior Adviser at the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT). I am told that the event was well attended and that Parliamentarians engaged actively with the presenters to better understand the report's findings and recommendations. Following the implementation project's completion, Mr Connock engaged with the Attorney-General and the Department of Justice in relation to the recommendations. Within the reporting period, the Government did not provide a formal response to the recommendations.

With the implementation project complete, attention turned to exercising statutory functions. In relation to custodial centres and youth justice facilities, several inspections were carried out by the Custodial Inspector office, who now perform their functions as NPM representatives and use updated expectations materials designed to meet OPCAT requirements. These activities are detailed in the enclosed Annual Report.

With respect to non-custodial settings, because of resource constraints the NPM office was unable commence examinations on its own initiative. This is principally because over the reporting period only one staff member, Mr Huber, was able to be employed and at least two staff are required for an examination to occur.

I am pleased to report that, in January 2025, the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) agreed to provide expert assistance on an inaugural examination of police and court custody in Tasmania. Between May and June 2025, Mr Buckland joined Mr Huber on visits to police stations, watch houses and court buildings around the state. On these visits, Mr Buckland and Mr Huber applied, for the first time, my *Expectations on the treatment of people deprived on their liberty in police and court custody*. I am informed that visit interactions with Tasmania Police, the Tasmania Prison Service, and the Supreme and Magistrates Courts were positive and cooperative. Alongside this being an important internal milestone for the office, it is also a milestone for the state, as the first examination of its kind to be conducted by an independent statutory body.

In addition to police and court custody, I also intend to include coverage of Spirit of Tasmania brig facilities in the report. The Spirit of Tasmania is a unique feature of Tasmania being an island state, effectively connecting the National Highway with Victoria. The Spirit of Tasmania vessels feature secure cells and people may be detained by security mid-voyage under state criminal law and maritime-specific legislation, such as the *Navigation Act 2012* (Cth) and the *Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act 2003* (Cth). People detained by security during a voyage will be transferred to police upon arrival at either Devonport or Geelong. This component of the report will incorporate the results of a physical visit to the new Spirit of Tasmania IV vessel, and review of parent company TT-Line's related policies and procedures. I look forward to releasing a report detailing my findings and recommendations in due course.

In addition to this visit, on 30 May 2025 Mr Buckland joined the office at a Civil Society Advisory Council meeting. Advisory Council members were able to ask Mr Buckland questions about the APT, its work, and NPM activities globally, strengthening their understanding of the OPCAT system. The APT has been a valuable resource for this office, and I understand the wider Australian NPM.

¹ Parliament of Tasmania, Legislative Council - Tabled Papers 2024, available online: <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/tailed-papers/2024>

Office operationalisation

With the implementation project complete, work began in earnest to operationalise the office with a view to exercising statutory functions. Consistent with implementation reporting, Mr Connock commenced planning to bring together the Tasmanian NPM and Custodial Inspector offices. This reform reflects that the Custodial Inspector now undertakes inspections of custodial centres and youth detention facilities on behalf of the Tasmanian NPM. This notably included finalising a design for a new joint-office website, as the 'Office of the Tasmanian NPM and Custodial Inspector', which I anticipate will go live in late 2025. The new website has been designed with the intention of improving reporting accessibility, to raise public visibility of key office outputs and recommendations, and to improve general awareness of OPCAT and the NPM mandate.

With respect to funding, under the 2024 – 25 State Budget, the Tasmanian NPM was resourced \$300,000 to fulfil its functions. This is less than what was analysed and recommended in implementation reporting and subsequently requested from Government as part of the State Budget submission process.

At State Budget Estimates on 23 September 2024, Mr Connock outlined in response to Legislative Council Committee questioning that with the resourcing provided, exercising his NPM functions would be difficult, and that not many – if any – visits would be possible because they required a minimum of two staff,² but that the Office Director position could be made permanent because this funding was recurrent. With APT support the office was able to undertake an examination of police and court cell custody. I am also pleased to report that the office Director was classified as a permanent position, with Mr Huber's employment in that role accordingly promoted from fixed-term to ongoing in June.

On 24 December 2024, Mr Connock submitted advice in response to the Commission for Children and Young People Bill 2024 (Tas).³ The draft Bill forms part of ongoing reforms designed to establish a new Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), in response to recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (COI). COI recommendations for the new CCYP relevantly include reform proposals related to the Custodial Inspector and Tasmanian NPM jurisdictions.⁴ These reform proposals were analysed in depth as part of the implementation project, with Mr Connock making specific recommendations concerning their implementation and that of the Tasmanian NPM.⁵ Mr Connock's advice addressed these recommendations within the context of the draft Bill, and identified additional matters for the Government's consideration prior to it being tabled in Parliament. I look forward to continuing to engage with Government in relation to these important reforms as they progress.

Forward planning

For the 2025 – 26 financial year, a State Budget was not passed within the reporting period due to a State election being called in mid-June. Instead, a Supply Bill was passed by the Tasmanian Parliament that maintained funding at existing levels, meaning the Tasmanian NPM continued to receive funding at the \$300,000 per annum rate. This meant that planning for future activities did not progress before the end of the reporting period. I note

² Not including Custodial Centre inspections, which are fulfilled by the Custodial Inspector.

³ Available to download at <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/community-consultation/updated-projects/commission-for-children-and-young-people-bill-2024>.

⁴ Recommendations 12.38 and 12.39.

⁵ See Tasmanian NPM, *Preventing Torture and Ill-treatment in Tasmania*: Report to the Tasmanian Government on the Implementation of the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism under the OPCAT Implementation Act 2021 (2023), Parts 5.2 – 5.3.

that the proposed State Budget had included a modest increase in resourcing, to \$550,000 per annum, until 2027.

If this increase or a comparable increase in resourcing is ultimately approved, I will be able to prioritise additional staff recruitment and commence operations without being wholly reliant on external support. I remain optimistic that in future years further resource increases will enable me to staff the office to exercise my mandate in greater alignment with the requirements of OPCAT and consistent with UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture guidance.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the support you provided Richard as Australian NPM Coordinator, and I thank you for your ongoing work advocating for the fulfilment of Australia's OPCAT ratification. I look forward to continuing this valuable relationship with you and my Australian NPM colleagues and exploring opportunities to fulfil our shared mandate.

Should you have any queries in relation to this report, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Huber on (03) 6166 4566, or by email at mark.huber@npm.tas.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Grant Davies
Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism



Office of the
**Custodial
Inspector**
Tasmania

Annual Report 2024-25



The Office of the Custodial Inspector acknowledges Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We recognise their continuing connection to Land, Sea, Waterways, Sky, and Culture and pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

Content warning

This report includes discussion of suicide and self-harm. Some people may find this content distressing.



About this report

This annual report describes the functions and operations of the Custodial Inspector for the year ending 30 June 2025.

The report is available in printed or electronic format for ease of accessibility. We can also provide the report in alternative formats to meet specific accessibility requirements.

If you have a question about this report or would like to receive it in an alternative format, please contact us. Our contact details are:

Office address: Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania
Level 6, 86 Collins Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000

If you are in custody, mail to us is free and private. Custodial centres can only read mail to and from people in custody with their permission.

Telephone: 1800 001 170 or (03) 6165 9454

From Tasmanian prisons, log in to the Unity phone using your account number, press 2 'CADL' (common auto dial list) and then press 11 'Custodial Inspector' and # to speak to one of our inspection team members.

From Ashley Youth Detention Centre, log in to the Unity phone using your account number, press 2 'CADL' and then press 4 'Custodial Inspector' and #.

Calls to us are private and confidential.

Email: ci@custodialinspector.tas.gov.au

You can find more information about the Custodial Inspector on our website, www.custodialinspector.tas.gov.au. We can send relevant printed excerpts to people in custody on request.

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Cover photo credit: Ben Buckland – photo of a door handle in a Tasmanian prison.

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1. From the Custodial Inspector

Richard Connock, Tasmania's inaugural Custodial Inspector, retired on 11 July 2025. The Ombudsman Tasmania Annual Report 2024-2025 contains his farewell.

Mr Connock and his team established the Office of the Custodial Inspector in 2017. His 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'.¹

The 2024-25 reporting year was a particularly active one for the Office. It published seven review and inspection reports with tangible outcomes. These included 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.

As in previous years, we have outlined key observations and activities from the reporting year in this annual report. Notably, this report highlights the ongoing issue within Tasmanian custodial centres of inadequate time out of cells. In recent years we have published time out of cell data in adult and youth custodial centres to demonstrate the extent of this issue. This reporting year has been the worst for adults since we started that practice.

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 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.

Lockdowns ultimately only make the community less safe. Less time out of cell means that people in custody are not accessing important rehabilitative services prior to their release and contact with family and friends is reduced. Lockdowns negatively impact on people in custody's mental and physical health – issues which will affect health services in the community. Less time out of cell also contributes to heightened emotions within prison yards when people do get time out, making the environment less safe for staff and people in custody.

¹ Sessional Committee Government Administration B 2025, [Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Targeted Inquiry Final Report](#), Legislative Council of Tasmania, (9) pg.7.

1. From the Custodial Inspector

This annual report explores several other issues of note from the reporting year. In particular, monitoring activities at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) increased significantly. We received temporary funding to recruit an Assistant Principal Inspection Officer which has enabled us to increase our visits to AYDC from several times a year to twice a month. Some of the work arising from this increased presence is discussed in this report. Unfortunately, the isolation of young people due to low staffing at AYDC is ongoing. We have outlined our work that will continue into 2025-26 to focus on this issue.

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.

Dr Grant Davies
Custodial Inspector

October 2025

2. Key observations and activities

We have listed below a range of matters from the reporting year that have arisen from monitoring and inspections of custodial centres. An overview of the role of the Office of the Custodial Inspector can be found at Section 3.

2.1 Adult custodial centres

2.1.1 Lockdowns are likely to continue being the worst in Australia

It is important that people in custody can have time out of their cells. This allows them to access rehabilitation programs, participate in work, maintain contact with family and community, access lawyers, and take part in recreational activities. Without these various activities, the correctional system only serves to warehouse people during their sentence. These individuals are then released back into the community with little to no rehabilitation or reintegration planning, and are essentially being set up to fail.

As reported in previous years, lockdowns continue to have a significant impact on people in custody in Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) facilities. Since 2022-23 Tasmania has had the lowest average out of cell time in Australia, according to Productivity Commission data.² A summary of the Productivity Commission data can be seen below. Prior to this, available data shows that Tasmania has consistently been one of the worst states when it comes to time out of cell.³ This financial year, the average time out of cell for most Tasmanian facilities was lower than the last two previous financial years. This will bring down the overall average time out of cell for Tasmania.

Table 1. Average time out of cell in Australian prisons by State/Territory.

Time out of cell is the average hours per day people in custody can spend out of their cells.

	NSW ⁴	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
2023-24	8.3	10.1	8.1	9.8	9.1	7.5	10.2	11.5
2022-23	7.6	10.0	8.4	9.6	8.9	7.3	9.5	11.3
2021-22	7.3	9.6	8.4	10.0	8.4	7.7	9.3	11.7
2020-21	8.6	10.1	9.0	10.6	8.8	8.0	8.9	11.8

² Productivity Commission 2025, *Report on Government Services 2025: Corrective Services*, part C, section 8, table 8A.13 [data set], accessed 19 August 2025.

³ Ibid.

⁴ According to the Report on Government Services, NSW data for 2021-22 has been revised. See the original dataset for more details: www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2025/justice/corrective-services

2. Key observations and activities

The Productivity Commission has not yet released data to allow us to compare this average to other states and territories, however it seems likely that Tasmania will continue to be the worst in Australia. This is a disturbing trend.

The average time out of cell for the year per facility, the decrease compared to last year, and a comparison to the planned out of cell hours⁵ for that facility are illustrated in the below figure.

Figure 1. Average time of out cell per facility in the 24-25 financial year, the difference in out of cell time compared to last financial year, and the difference in out of cell time this financial year and the planned out of cell hours.

	Average time out of cell each day	Change since last financial year	Difference from planned out of cell hours
Risdon Prison maximum units	2.8 hours	↓ 36 minutes	↓ 5.5 hours
Risdon Prison medium units	3.4 hours	↓ 1.5 hours	↓ 4.9 hours
Southern Remand Centre	3.9 hours	↓ 36 minutes	↓ 5.1 hours
Ron Barwick Prison	14.8 hours	↓ 36 minutes	↓ 42 minutes
Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison	7.2 hours	↓ 48 minutes	↓ 2.1 hours ⁶

⁵ Planned out of cell hours refers to the number of hours a person in custody would spend out of their cell if there were no lockdowns or late unlocks.

⁶ The planned out of cell hours used for this calculation are those for the maximum security precinct (9.3 hours). The medium and minimum security areas have an average of 9.4 and 10.4 hours out of cell per day respectively.

Lockdowns are the issue most frequently raised with us by people in custody during our visits. This is unsurprising, given the low average time out of cell particularly across the Risdon Prison Complex, which contains maximum units, medium units and the Southern Remand Centre. The TPS routinely supplies us with data on planned half and full day lockdowns for its facilities. Although this data is not completely reliable and may not capture all lockdowns or nuances of the day, it provides an indication of the number and types of lockdowns across the Risdon Prison Complex. This helps to illustrate the amount of time people in custody spend in lockdown. People spend multiple days in their cell without any access to the outside, in contravention of s29 of the *Corrections Act 1997* and the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (the Nelson Mandel Rules). This data can be viewed in Appendix 1.

We heard reports during the financial year of lawyers using time out of cell data when representing their clients. When making submissions to judges or magistrates on sentencing decisions, data on time out of cell could be a relevant factor in determining a term or length of imprisonment. This appears reasonable given the sustained infringement occurring in Tasmanian prisons as a result of lockdowns of rules 23, 43 and 45 of the Nelson Mandela Rules and s29 of the *Corrections Act 1997*.⁷

2.1.2 The population of men in prison remains stable but the number of women has increased

Prison population data can be viewed in Appendix 2. The average population of men in custody has remained reasonably stable over the last financial year. The average population of women in custody has increased, particularly over the last two financial years. Data indicates that the average daily number of women in custody for June 2025 was 13.8% higher than that of July 2024 and 43.1% higher than that of July 2023.

This significant increase has been reflected at Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison which has been experiencing accommodation shortages. This has led to some women being double bunked and formerly decommissioned units being brought back online. Some women have been temporarily housed at Hobart Reception Prison, separate from men, but within eyeline and hearing.

We have observed over the last year that the more therapeutic and trauma-informed approach of Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison is eroding. Stakeholders have also contacted us directly raising concerns. This change appears to be due

⁷ UN General Assembly [United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners \(the Nelson Mandela rules\)](#): resolution/adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/70/175, 8 January 2016, pp. 7, 13-14.

in part to the impacts of the population pressures on the facility, which can affect people's safety and access to services.

We have heard reports of a more punitive approach to applying punishments in disciplinary processes. These reports included less consideration of the drivers of the behaviour, including needs related to disability, mental health and trauma history. We have also witnessed incidents that appear to be group punishments. These include removal of a DVD player from a unit for 3 weeks after one woman took the DVD player to her cell, and all woman from the Hartz unit being locked out of the basketball court for a morning because one woman had yelled at someone in the Wellington unit.

We have raised the reduction in therapeutic and trauma-informed approach with the TPS, as have other stakeholders. We were advised that steps are being taken to address the issue, including providing refresher training on trauma informed practice as this had not been offered in some time.

2.1.3 Suicide and self-harm

During the reporting year, a member of our Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism Advisory Council raised concerns with us about the number of attempted suicides in Tasmanian prisons.

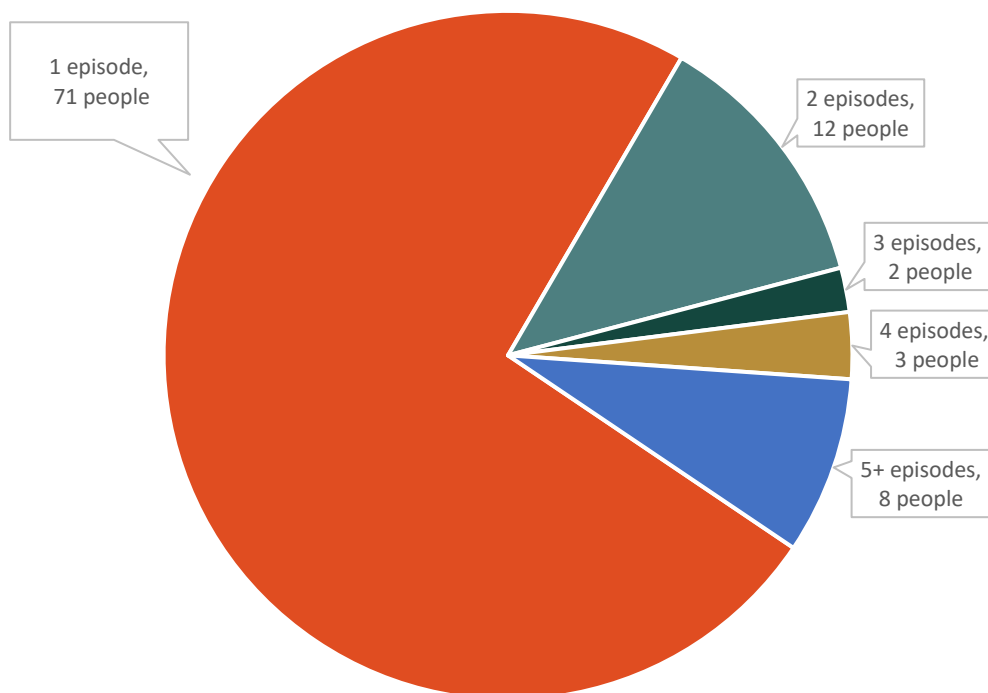
We requested data from the Tasmania Prison Service on the number of attempted suicides and self-harm incidents. Over the 2024-25 period there were 211 incidents of self-harm, involving 96 individuals in custody. These figures do not capture the full extent of the work of TPS on this issue, including conducting risk assessments and monitoring of people at risk who have not attempted to harm themselves. The TPS provided context to this data, stating:

Self-harm data is collated by the TPS from staff incident reports in instances where a staff member has reported through the internal reporting framework that a prisoner has engaged in self-harm. Self-harm data is not classified by severity and does not differentiate incidents that may constitute suicide attempts. Additionally, the data is not reflective of whether a physical injury occurred, as not all self-harm incidents result in physical harm to the individual.

The below chart illustrates the number of incidents per individual over the reporting period.

2. Key observations and activities

Figure 2. Number of suicide and self-harm (SASH) episodes per person in custody 2024-25



We released our *Adult health care inspection report 2023*, which considered mental health care, in the reporting year. It included recommendations such as adopting early intervention models of mental health care and the development of a designated mental health inpatient unit. The main unit option currently within the Tasmanian prison system is the Crisis Support Unit (CSU). This four-bed unit is a short-term accommodation option for managing people in custody with an acute risk of suicide and self-harm. Dr Edward Petch, our consultant psychiatrist, stated in our *Adult health care inspection report 2023*

*The Crisis Support Unit (used to house prisoners at risk of self-harm) in RPC [Risdon Prison Complex] was physically grim and is the most untherapeutic space I have encountered in many years. It would be a difficult task indeed to support or care for anybody in those circumstances. The prison superintendent told us this was their least liked area of the prison. It is easy to see why. TPS needs to change it.*⁸

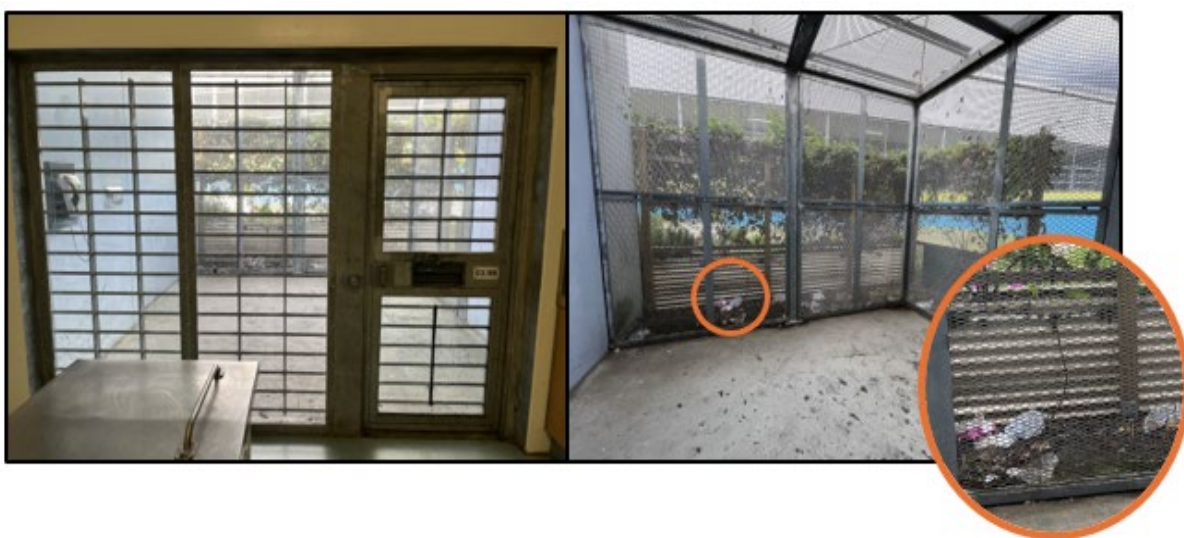
⁸ Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2024, [Adult health care inspection report 2023](#), Hobart, pp. 238-239.

2. Key observations and activities

Staff also flagged with us that the CSU has insufficient cells for the current mental health needs of people in custody.

We recommended that the use, function and infrastructure of CSU be reviewed to ensure it is a therapeutic space. Nothing has been done to improve this space during the reporting year and the Department of Justice recently indicated that it does not have the budget resources to address this recommendation. The CSU nonetheless continues to be used regularly.

Figure 3. The CSU day yard where people in custody receive the daily hour of time in fresh air they are entitled to by the Corrections Act 1997 (Tas). There is no exercise equipment. Focused in the second photo is some of the rubbish that has collected outside the wire fence.



Positive progress nonetheless has been made in relation to mental health care. We reported in our last annual report on the progress of the establishment of the Prisoner Mental Health team within the Correctional Primary Health Service. This is a significant step in the right direction to increase mental health care and is in line with the recommendation in our *Care and wellbeing inspection report 2017*.⁹

It is our view that focus should also be applied to infrastructure improvements to assist in addressing the number of suicide and self-harm events in prison. The CSU needs to be improved, and other unit options made available to address the diverse mental health needs of people in custody, not only those at acute risk.

⁹ Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2018, [Care and Wellbeing Inspection Report 2017](#), Hobart, pp. 81-82, 163-182.

2.1.4 People in custody had multiple opportunities to vote

We published our *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison - review report 2025* in the lead up to the federal election in April 2025. We highlighted several barriers to people in custody voting; one of the most significant is not being able to vote in person. The low levels of literacy in prison make the only other means of voting, via post, inaccessible for some due to the amount of paperwork and not having independent assistance from electoral staff.

Building on the success of facilitating voting in prisons for the 2023 referendum, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) provided a mobile polling service in Tasmanian prisons for the 2025 federal election. This is the first time mobile polling has been facilitated in Tasmanian prisons for an election for over a decade.

We visited Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison and Risdon Prison Complex to observe the voting. The level of engagement from TPS and people in custody was positive. Many people were aware that those serving a sentence of three years or more are ineligible to vote. This was likely due to notices about upcoming voting that TPS published in the prison newsletter along with a summary we provided of our voting report. This contrasts with our observations from speaking with people in custody prior to the publication of our report when unfamiliarity with voting rights was very common.

The AEC provided the following statistics on the number of votes:

194 people voted in the 2025 Federal Election

16 people voted from Launceston Reception Prison

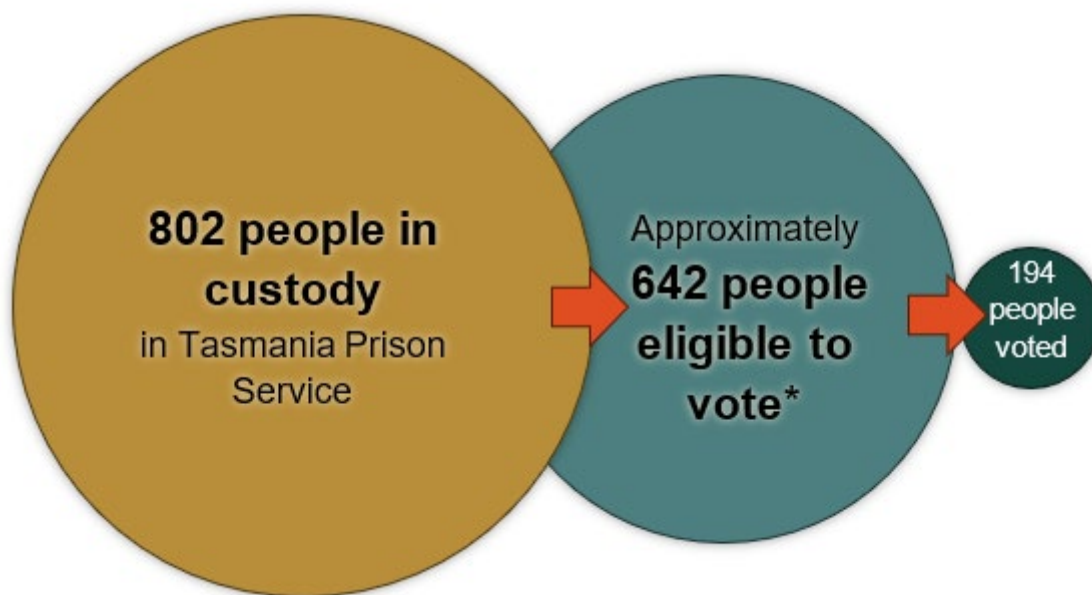
8 people voted from Hobart Reception Prison

170 people voted from the Risdon Prison Complex (which includes the Southern Remand Centre), Ron Barwick Prison and Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison

2. Key observations and activities

This data indicates that 30.2% of the approximately 642 people in Tasmania Prison Service custody eligible to vote participated in the May 2025 Federal Election although staff would have cast some of the votes. Approximately 366 of the 642 people eligible to vote would have been enrolled to vote, based on data we considered in our *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison - review report 2025*.

Figure 4. Number of votes lodged from Tasmania Prison Service facilities during the 2025 Federal Election via mobile polling services.



*the estimated number of people to vote was based on 2025 data from the Tasmania Prison Service which indicated that approximately 80% of the population of adults in custody in Tasmania are eligible to vote.

On a national level, *About Time*, a national prison newspaper, reported that over 9700 people in custody voted in the federal election.¹⁰ In contrast, it stated that in the 2022 federal election only 274 people in prison cast their vote.

When providing data on the 2025 federal election, the Australian Electoral Commission advised us that the total votes issued in prisons in the 2023 referendum was in fact 25 votes higher than was reported in our *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison review report 2025*, with a total of 201 votes issued in the referendum, rather than 176. While we provided our report to the AEC for review prior to publication, this discrepancy was not identified.

¹⁰ Sadler D 2025, *Prison voting sees dramatic rise across Australia* (August 2025), *About Time*, (13) pg. 7.

2. Key observations and activities

The Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) observed the AEC's mobile polling service to assist with its work reintroducing mobile polling in Tasmania's prisons. The TEC subsequently provided mobile polling services for the Legislative Council elections in May 2025 and the House of Assembly elections in July 2025. The voting numbers for the Legislative Council were low at 21 votes but this is not surprising given there appeared to be a lack of awareness about the Legislative Council election, which are often quite localised. A number of these votes would have also been from staff.

In contrast, for the House of Assembly election in July 2025 there were 179 votes. This is an excellent outcome. As noted above, roughly 80% of the Tasmanian prison population, around 642, would be eligible to vote and only about 57% of people in custody are enrolled to vote.¹¹

179 people voted in the Tasmanian House of Assembly election

14 people voted from maximum security in Risdon Prison Complex

71 people voted from medium security in Risdon Prison Complex

31 people voted from Ron Barwick Prison

26 people voted from the Southern Remand Centre

14 people voted from Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison

23 people voted from Hobart Reception Prison

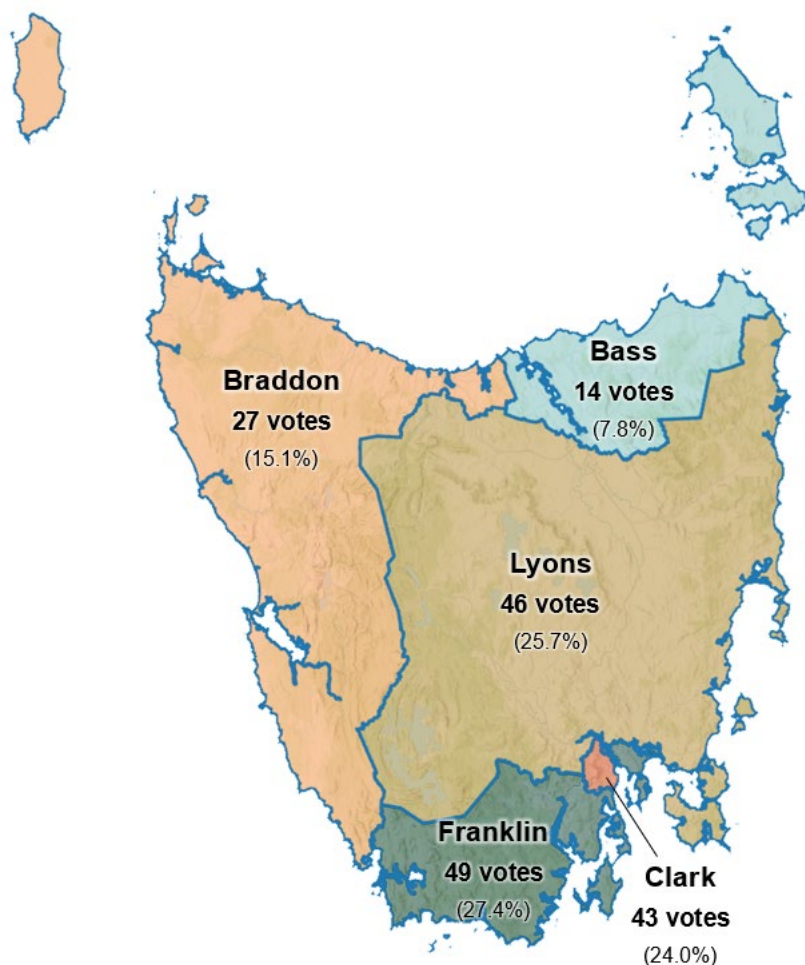
The number of votes from each electorate is illustrated in the image below.

¹¹ Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2025, [Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025](#), Hobart, pp. 21, 26.

2. Key observations and activities

Figure 5. Map of Tasmania showing the number of votes received for each electorate

Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (<https://maps.abs.gov.au/>)



This result contrasts with the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly 2024 election, for example, where all people in custody can vote and mobile polling has been a regular occurrence for many years: 43 of just under 400 people voted.

During a briefing to members of parliament on our voting report we were invited to provide a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. We forwarded to the Committee a copy of our report and offered to appear before it to discuss the report and share our observations of mobile polling services. One key issue for consideration is the opportunity for greater engagement from members of parliament with people in custody, including providing electoral materials such as how to vote cards.

Considerable work still needs to be done to increase engagement and the rate of enrolment. Our voting report highlighted that of people eligible to vote in prison, only approximately 57% were enrolled. This compares with the broader Australian community that has an enrolment rate of 97%. Nonetheless, it has been heartening to see the barriers to voting in prison coming down.

2.1.5 The Common Auto Dial List on prison phone accounts has improved

We previously reported on telephone access for people in custody in our 2022-2023 annual report.¹² All people in custody have access to Unity telephones, which allow restricted outgoing calls. To access the phone, people have a login and can call pre-approved family, friends and up to three nominated legal and professional service providers. There is also a common auto dial list (CADL), on all Unity accounts which allows people in custody to call several pre-programmed organisations, including our Office. We previously suggested that the CADL needs to be reviewed to ensure people in custody have access to all appropriate oversight bodies and relevant legal services.

We subsequently recommended in our *Adult wellbeing inspection report 2024* that the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner be added to the CADL. Positively, that has occurred. In our *Custody: reception to release inspection report 2025* we recommended that the Integrity Commission be added; this has not yet occurred as the Integrity Commission is in the process of establishing a new process for receiving external calls. Allowing telephone access to these oversight bodies is important, especially given low rates of literacy in prisons make written requests or complaints challenging.

In the reporting year we took a more proactive approach to address the lack of other external service providers available on the CADL. We engaged with the following organisations to ask if they were aware of the CADL and how to request to be added to it:

- Homes Tasmania;
- Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service;
- Public Trustee;
- Tasmania Legal Aid;
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service;
- Services Australia (Centrelink), including Child Support;
- Working It Out, Tasmania's gender, sexuality and intersex support, education and advocacy service; and
- Veterans Hub, a team that coordinates the delivery of core wellbeing and compensation supports within the Tasmanian Veteran community.

Those agencies interested were then able to engage with the TPS directly to arrange connection. Almost all the above agencies are now available on CADL. TPS had already been working with Services Australia (Centrelink) to be connected but we actively engaged with TPS to seek updates as it had been

¹² Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2023, [Annual Report 2022-23](#), Hobart, pg. 32.

2. Key observations and activities

taking some time. Services Australia has provided direct telephone access for people in custody around Australia for both income support and child support matters for a number of years. Most other states and territories in Australia allowed people in custody to call Services Australia using their CADL equivalents. Previously in Tasmania, if a person in custody wanted to speak with Services Australia the only way was to request a TPS staff member to facilitate it.

Figure 6. Phone in a maximum unit yard in the Risdon Prison Complex for use by people in custody



Providing direct access to these service providers, as people have in the community, gives people in custody increased agency. Being deprived of your liberty does not mean that you should not be able to seek housing, resolve outstanding fines, organise social security, ensure your financial affairs are being managed appropriately or seek support from organisations like Working It Out or the Veterans Hub.

Importantly for people in custody, these calls are free. Calling from prison can be expensive. Whilst it is free to make a call from a payphone in the community, in prison, the call costs are:

- to a mobile phone, 36 cents a minute;
- to a Tasmanian landline, 25 cents a call; and
- to a mainland Australian landline, 15 cents a minute.

For some people in custody, these costs can be prohibitive. We will be considering call costs in more detail in our upcoming report on our rehabilitation, reintegration and community contact inspection.

We appreciate TPS's work facilitating increased access to service providers on the CADL.

2.1.6 Ron Barwick Prison facilities

Work commenced during the reporting year on construction of a new kitchen facility for the Ron Barwick Prison. This will be an improvement on the current outdated kitchen facilities. The kitchen is a place of employment in the prison and the source of almost all prison meals. Hopefully the new facility will allow increased training opportunities.

During the reporting year we heard concerns from people in custody about heating at Ron Barwick. Official Visitors have also relayed concerns about people being cold in the facility. Some people have taken dangerous steps to address the issue, including rewiring heaters in their cells to bypass timers that otherwise turn the heating off during a period of the night. Our *Environmental health and hygiene inspection report 2021* measured temperatures as low as 7.5°C in one cell.¹³ Our *Adult wellbeing inspection report 2024* recommended that TPS provide two sets of thermals to people in custody on entry into prison to provide increased warmth.¹⁴ This recommendation was supported in part by the Department of Justice and it noted that people can request pyjamas or thermals as needed. However, we have also been told by people in custody that requests for thermals have not always been fulfilled.

The sub-standard conditions in this facility are set to continue, despite temporary solutions such as the above, unless significant work is undertaken to make it fit for purpose or a replacement facility is built.

One issue of concern is the portable showers in some of the accommodation divisions in Ron Barwick Prison. These were introduced as a temporary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic while people were locked down and not able to access the main shower block. They appear to have now become a permanent fixture. They also seem to be the preferred showers to the communal shower block as they have some degree of privacy and are safer. However, people in custody have also told us that the showers are extremely cold in winter, being located in an outdoor area.

We have previously raised the state of the portable showers with TPS staff and received advice that the matter was going to be addressed. We were advised in February 2025 that works to install new showers will be put out to tender in May 2025.

¹³ Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2022, [Environmental health and hygiene inspection report 2021](#), Hobart, pg. 30.

¹⁴ Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania 2024, [Adult wellbeing inspection report 2024](#), Hobart pp. 27-28

2. Key observations and activities

Near the end of the reporting year, we contacted Clarence City Council to express concerns about the environmental hygiene as there appeared to be greywater gathering on the bitumen around the showers. People also raised concerns about the wooden framing underneath the portable showers rotting.

Council conducted a visit and confirmed that the plumbing was appropriate and there was no imminent risk to public health. However, Council has advised that TPS must provide plans that indicate when the showers will be brought up to standard. Council also made some recommendations in the meantime to address the pooling water and the maintenance of the structural integrity of the wooden bases.

At the time of reporting, the works have not commenced. We received an update in October 2025, further assessment works were being conducted prior to the work going out to tender.

Figure 7. Portable showers in Ron Barwick Prison

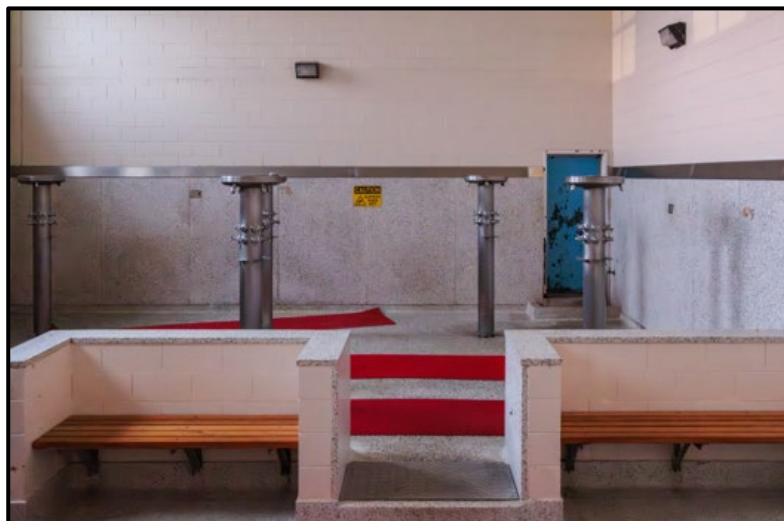


2. Key observations and activities

Figure 8. Portable showers in Ron Barwick Prison



Figure 9. Communal showers in Ron Barwick Prison



2.1.7 Hostile Management Regime review is underway

Last year in our annual report we encouraged people with knowledge of the Hostile Management Regime to contact us. This was an unsanctioned regime within the Tamar and Franklin units, which are high security maximum units within the Risdon Prison Complex. We were contacted by several people as a result. During the reporting year we commenced a review of this regime. This has initially involved interviewing multiple people in custody and engaging with legal professionals. This review will continue in the 2025-2026 reporting year.

2.1.8 The practice of searching foreskins stopped

During a monitoring visit we heard multiple reports from people in custody that they had been instructed during strip searches to roll back their foreskin. Some people disclosed that they had experienced sexual abuse and found this direction upsetting.

We raised this issue the same day with the TPS, and it responded the following morning. We were forwarded an email to all TPS general managers advising them that this practice was not in line with TPS' search procedures and, if it was occurring, was to cease immediately. Daily reminders were made for the next three weeks during morning briefings for correctional officers.

Later in the reporting year TPS internal policy was also revised to make this requirement explicit. *Director's Standing Order 1.10 Searching* was updated in March 2025 to state, 'Persons being searched must not be asked to squat, cough or pull back their foreskin during the personal search process.'

Some people do seek to traffic contraband, such as buprenorphine strips, under their foreskins. However, TPS confirmed that if there is a reasonable suspicion that this is occurring and the person has denied it, then normal existing procedures are to be followed to address the situation.

2.1.9 Publication of new expectations for adults in custody

During the reporting year we published our *Expectations on the treatment of people deprived of their liberty in adult custodial centres*.¹⁵ This work, undertaken with the Office of the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism, provides a new framework to guide our mandatory inspections of Tasmanian prisons. It is a comprehensive list of our expectations relating to the treatment of people in Tasmanian prisons.

We have also finalised an accessible version of the expectations in collaboration with the Australian Human Rights Commission. This booklet summarises the 143 pages of expectations and provides a means for people in custody, their family and friends, and staff to better understand the expectations for the treatment of people in custody. We considered it an important means for people to increase their agency and ability to self-advocate on issues impacting their treatment whilst in custody. We will be making this booklet available in the 2025-26 reporting year on our website and in Tasmanian prisons.

¹⁵ A copy can be found on the Custodial Inspector's website - <https://www.custodialinspector.tas.gov.au/inspection-expectations>

2.2 Ashley Youth Detention Centre

2.2.1 New role at the Office of the Custodial Inspector

We received funding in 2024 to increase our inspection and monitoring functions at AYDC. This allowed us to appoint an Assistant Principal Inspection Officer in November 2024. As a result, our Office now visits AYDC approximately twice each month and has increased capacity to proactively monitor and report on conditions there. However, we are aware both that AYDC is due to close in coming years and that government departments are working on extensive youth justice reform projects. This reduces the effectiveness of conducting in-depth inspections based on our *Expectations on the treatment of children and young people deprived of their liberty*. Given the current rate of change in youth detention, our recommendations could quickly become redundant.

We consider that we can have the most impact in this changing landscape by identifying and working on the most pressing concerns at AYDC – the conditions affecting young people who are in detention right now. We have focused on addressing these via proactive monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and thematic reviews.

2.2.2 Proactive monitoring

During our visits to AYDC we spend time speaking with young people as well as staff. Often this enables us to identify and address concerns immediately via speaking to staff about solutions or following up with more formal communications with Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP). We are becoming better known to both staff and young people at AYDC, and they often ask us to make enquiries about issues of concern. For example, recently a young person asked us to look into an incident where he had felt unsafe while being restrained by a Youth Worker. He did not want to make a formal complaint but wanted the issue to be addressed. We were able to identify a potentially unsafe practice that had not been previously considered by AYDC; we discussed this with leaders who agreed it should be included in training and communications to staff. Similarly, staff have raised issues with us related to staff wellbeing, and we have been able to discuss these directly with AYDC leaders and DECYP in order to address them quickly.

Our visits to AYDC also enable us to observe positive practices. For example, we have frequently seen the supportive relationships many staff form with young people and their genuine commitment to providing them with positive experiences to support their growth and wellbeing. This year, Ashley School has found ways to offer subjects such as music and woodwork that have great benefit to young

people but have not always occurred due to low staffing. Similarly, we visited during the school holidays and observed young people participating in varied programs and activities that staff had worked hard to organise. We have also observed staff going out of their way to enable young people to have time out of rooms and units despite low staffing.

2.2.3 Ashley Youth Detention Centre Oversight Network

One of the issues we have been made aware of during our monitoring visits is the increase in oversight of AYDC. Following the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*, which released its report in 2023, oversight of AYDC has changed considerably. This includes increased scrutiny by DECYP as well as other government departments, and independent bodies including the Custodial Inspector, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ombudsman, and Independent Regulator.

Independent oversight of custodial settings is essential. External scrutiny ensures that the human rights of people deprived of their liberty are promoted. However, we know that this scrutiny can place a burden on the staff in custodial settings as well as on the government departments responsible. AYDC leaders have told us that providing responses to external enquiries has become onerous. This reduces their ability to focus on creating positive change within AYDC. We learned that AYDC is sometimes contacted by multiple bodies about the same issues or incidents – but that these bodies are not always communicating with one another.

In response, we met with other independent bodies to discuss these issues and propose solutions. During the reporting year we established the Ashley Youth Detention Centre Oversight Network which comprises the Custodial Inspector, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Independent Regulator, and Ombudsman. The Oversight Network has met twice in 2025 and is establishing improved means of communication and information-sharing between oversight bodies, as well as discussing current issues at AYDC and how they may be addressed either collectively or by individual bodies, with a focus on reducing duplication. The Oversight Network also provides a forum for DECYP to provide briefings and discuss issues of concern. Feedback has so far been positive, and the Oversight Network will continue to develop processes to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of oversight at AYDC.

2.2.4 Thematic reviews

Rather than conducting full inspections at AYDC, we are conducting reviews into issues where our input has the potential to enhance the care of young people currently in detention. We are working on two reviews. The first is related to the external security service engaged by DECYP to escort young people to and from AYDC. This review was prompted by Custodial Inspector staff seeing camera footage of a concerning incident during a monitoring visit in late 2024.

The second is a review into staffing at AYDC. During visits, we have consistently heard about the difficulties to adequately staff AYDC. Leaders have told us about the positive changes they would like to make at AYDC – but improvements are almost impossible without sufficient staff.

Low staffing has a direct impact on young people. They have told us that they hate it when staff numbers are low: they are frequently confined to their units rather than attending school and other programs, and they spend less time with Youth Workers and other young people. At times they are in ‘rolling unlock’, where they take it in turns being isolated in their rooms or in the main part of the unit. These practices tangibly affect young people’s wellbeing.

Low staffing also has a significant impact on staff, including fatigue, burnout, and safety risks. Staff have shared with us that they do not want young people to miss out on activities due to low staffing, and that this also makes their shifts harder as young people are unhappy and more likely to engage in challenging behaviours. They are further aware of public pressure to ensure young people have sufficient time out of rooms.

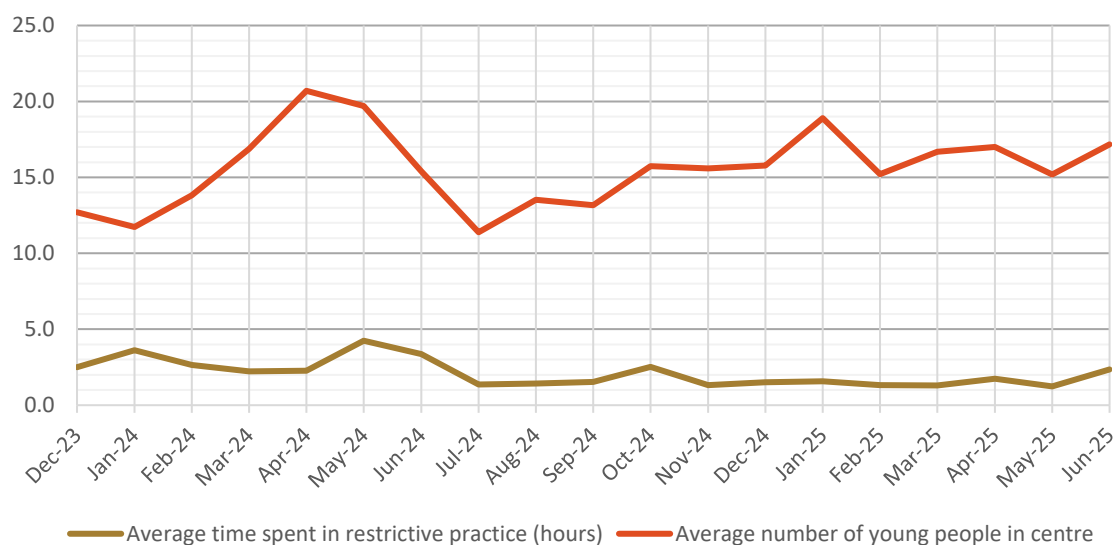
There are many contributing factors to low staffing at AYDC. The aim of our review is to identify these factors and find solutions that can be implemented in the short-term to benefit staff as well as young people at AYDC. A key issue placing pressure on staff is the complaints management framework. This includes how incidents involving use of force or isolation are reported and reviewed, and the process for investigating concerns about staff conduct. We reported on the lengthy timeframes for investigations of staff in our 2024-2025 Annual Report. While some investigations have progressed, many investigation timeframes are still too long. This affects staff involved and their families, young people, and the overall wellbeing of staff at AYDC. We are continuing to monitor and seek information about these issues, some of which have recently been the subject of an independent review.

2.2.5 Time out of room

This issue of isolation has repeatedly been raised with us during our visits to AYDC by both staff and young people. Isolation fluctuates depending on staffing levels. It is difficult to ascertain overall time out of rooms due to different terminology being used for similar restrictive practices. For example, under the behavioural development scheme, young people are given different bedtimes based on their behaviour. Those on the lowest classification 'red' have a 7:30 PM bedtime, while those on yellow or green have an 8:30 PM or 9:00 PM bedtime respectively. The centre does not consider these earlier bedtimes to fall under restrictive practice, however, some young people are essentially being isolated for an hour and a half every night on the basis of their behaviour.

Additionally, young people are placed in their rooms for approximately 45 minutes over lunchtime for a period known as 'quiet time'. This time gives youth workers a chance to have their own lunch, take a break or catch up on paperwork. While this time is essential for youth workers who might otherwise go without a break over their shift in the current rostering system, whether this period of isolation should be considered restrictive practice has previously been the subject of some discussion.

Figure 10. Monthly average time spent in restrictive practice and number of young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (December 2023 to June 2025)¹⁶



¹⁶ **Note on the accuracy of the data:** the data in Figure 10 was obtained from data manually entered into Excel spreadsheets by DECYP staff. Accuracy of the data may be affected by manual data entry methods, insufficient staffing resources and staffing pressures. This Office manually manipulated and cleaned the data to create Figure 10. Additionally, the supplied data was compared to the AYDC Daily Rolls, and the number of young people was adjusted in some circumstances from the original data set to reflect the information in the roll with the aim to increase the accuracy of the data. Although due care was taken during these processes, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data.

We have recently become aware that there are some issues with the completion of isolation paperwork. Anecdotally, these issues are the result of a lack of time to complete paperwork, a lack of understanding of the importance of complete and accurate records of incidents and an onerous system of recording information. Some of these issues may be resolved with the introduction of a new incident recording system, YJ Plus, early in the 2024-25 financial year. We will be actively monitoring past and present incident and isolation paperwork to get a fuller understanding of issues surrounding the completion of this paperwork and make recommendations for improvement.

2.2.6 Escapes from AYDC

In last year's annual report, we referred to the issue of escapes from AYDC and related data. The Tasmanian Government does not always release the number of escapes from youth detention in the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (RoGS) if there were less than five during the reporting year. We have been advised this is to protect the privacy of young people. Positively, we saw improved transparency in the 2023-2024 RoGS, released in January 2025. The Tasmanian Government reported that there were three escapes from AYDC itself. It did not release the number of escapes occurring during escorted movements between AYDC and other locations.

Nonetheless, there was sufficient data to demonstrate Tasmania had the highest escape rate from youth detention in Australia in 2023-24.¹⁷ It is unclear if this was the case in 2022-2023 as the Tasmanian Government did not release the number of escapes from youth detention and the rate of escape from detention in the ROGS. There were, however, four escapes during escorted movements in the 2022-23 financial year and Tasmania had the highest rate of escapes during escorted movements in Australia.

As we did in our last annual report, we encourage the Tasmanian Government to publish data on any escapes during the 2024-2025 financial year. A fundamental function of a custodial centre is keeping people lawfully detained in custody and the number of escapes are an effective measure of performance.

In addition to these data issues, we have also raised other issues related to escapes with DECYP. We became concerned by the relative ease with which young people were able to climb onto roofs at AYDC, given the significant risk of physical harm. We were also concerned about the psychological and physical harm risks to staff. DECYP Secretary Ginna Webster advised us that a security assessment was undertaken in 2024 which made recommendations aimed at

¹⁷ Productivity Commission 2025, [Report on Government Services 2025: youth justice services](#), part F, section 17, table 17A.23 [data set], accessed 23 September 2025.

reducing the likelihood of young people climbing fences and buildings. Several measures were installed including anti-climb rollers. While we understand this has reduced instances of young people climbing onto the roofs, it has not entirely prevented this risk. For example, one young person climbed onto a roof in early 2025 and fell, sustaining injuries.

A related issue is how AYDC, DECYP and Tasmania Police manage escapes. We became aware that in 2024 young people had climbed over the AYDC boundary fence and were immediately detained and charged by Tasmania Police and housed overnight at Launceston Reception Prison. This prompted us to enquire as to why the young people were not returned to AYDC immediately to avoid them spending time in an adult prison. Our report, *Children in Tasmania's prison – review report 2025* highlighted the inappropriateness of this environment for children.

We also asked whether it is necessary to charge young people with offences related to escape, given the importance of diverting young people from the criminal justice system wherever possible. This principle is enshrined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.¹⁸ Under the *Youth Justice Act 1997*, the Secretary has discretion to consider how a detention offence, which includes an escape, should be dealt with.¹⁹

Ms Webster advised us that the current (2017) Memorandum of Understanding with Tasmania Police states that '[a] decision will be made in consultation between Ashley and Police in relation to appropriate legal proceeding to be implemented against the escapee'. However, the Secretary's right to deal with a detention offence is not directly addressed. In practice, once a young person has breached the perimeter of AYDC, Tasmania Police has employed its standard practices for arrest. Ms Webster noted that a new Memorandum of Understanding is required and was drafted in 2024, but that it dealt with other matters. Ms Webster stated that DECYP 'accepts that these issues need to be resolved' and will undertake further work to do so.

We will be closely monitoring this issue as it appears likely DECYP has not been applying the *Youth Justice Act 1997* when dealing with escapes from custody.

We also flag one concerning aspect of s140 of the *Youth Justice Act 1997* that we consider should never be utilised and ought to be removed. After considering the nature and circumstances of a detention offence to which a young person admits committing, the Secretary may extend their time in detention by up to three days. This would seem to be a situation where a public servant, as part of the executive arm of government, is exercising a judicial power. Extending the deprivation of a

¹⁸ Convention on the rights of the child (1989) Treaty no. 27531, Article 40.3(b).

¹⁹ *Youth Justice Act 1997* (Tas), section 140.

2. Key observations and activities

young person's liberty as punishment for a detention offence is a punitive action that should rest with a court.

The Secretary, or their delegate, may extend the period of detention in addition to causing a complaint to be filed. This may result in a young person potentially receiving a subsequent detention order from a court.

3. Overview of the Office of the Custodial Inspector

3.1 Background

The Custodial Inspector is an independent statutory officer who is appointed by the Governor. The Inspector must act independently, impartially and in the public interest.

The Custodial Inspector provides oversight of all aspects of prison and youth detention centre services in Tasmania. We do this through proactive inspections, reporting on those inspections to Parliament and regular monitoring of custodial centre systems and records. Our focus is on the care and welfare of people in custody and the management, control and security of the State's prisons and youth detention centre.

The *Custodial Inspector Act 2016* provides that each custodial centre must be inspected at least once every three years.

3.2 Values and vision

3.2.1 Vision

The vision for the Office of the Custodial Inspector is that:

Tasmanians trust that the human rights of people deprived of their liberty will be fully respected.

Our vision reflects the goals of our work. We know that achieving our vision must be a collaborative effort. The wording of our vision links to the text of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), which outlines the obligation of members to uphold full respect for human rights. We chose the word 'trust' in our vision to show that we are accountable to the public. We recognise that trust requires transparency, active listening, education, and awareness. Our vision is also aspirational; to end ill treatment and embed prevention in custodial centres.

Importantly, places of detention are closed environments. We can help Tasmanians trust that people held in them have their human rights respected. We do this by maintaining our independence and performing our various functions effectively. These include regular visits to places of detention, producing public reports, and making recommendations for positive change.

3.2.2 Values

Our values represent the shared principles and beliefs underpinning all of our Office's activities including how we work with each other and our stakeholders.

Independence

We strive to maintain our effectiveness as a proactive oversight body.

Inclusion

We believe having multiple perspectives makes us stronger.

Leadership

We inspire our community to promote and protect human rights.

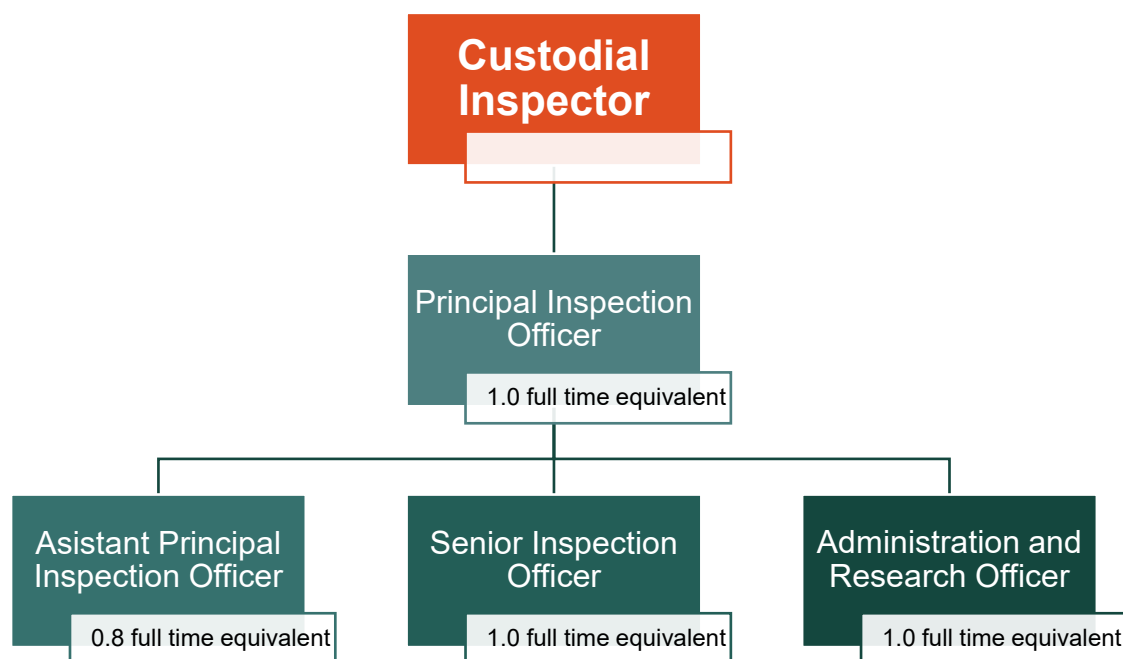
Collaboration

We work with stakeholders to find robust solutions.

3.3 Staffing and resources

3.3.1 Staffing

The office is made up of the following positions:



The Custodial Inspector also holds a number of other statutory appointments including:

- Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism;
- Ombudsman;
- Health Complaints Commissioner;
- Principal Mental Health Official Visitor; and
- Coordinator of the Prison Official Visitors Scheme.

Given this workload, the Inspector can only dedicate a portion of their time to the Custodial Inspector role. The Inspector has delegated all of their functions and powers under sections 6 and 8 of the Act to the above officers.

3.3.2 Budget

Budget reporting is contained in the *Ombudsman Tasmania Annual Report*. The Tasmanian Audit Office audits the financial reports.

3.3.3 Consultants

The use of consultants is vital to provide independent expert advice and opinion to assist with and support inspections. This financial year we engaged a consultant to assist with a review of staffing at AYDC.

We detail the consultants who have assisted us in the relevant inspection report. Sometimes they may provide a separate report that we append to our own report, or we incorporate their work into our reports. We are grateful for the expertise they provide.

Fees associated with consultancies are a major but necessary expense for the office given the broad range of expertise required to inspect against all expectations.

3.4 Functions and powers

3.4.1 Jurisdiction of the Inspector

The Custodial Inspector has jurisdiction over all custodial centres in Tasmania. A custodial centre is defined as a prison within the meaning of the *Corrections Act 1997*, and a detention centre within the meaning of the *Youth Justice Act 1997*.

The adult custodial centres included in our jurisdiction are:

- Risdon Prison Complex (RPC), which includes:
 - maximum units;
 - medium units; and
 - the Southern Remand Centre;
- Ron Barwick Prison;
- Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison;
- Hobart Reception Prison; and
- Launceston Reception Prison.

The TPS operates these centres.

AYDC is Tasmania's only youth custodial centre although all the adult custodial centres above are also gazetted as youth detention facilities. DECYP operates AYDC and it is planning to build a new Tasmanian youth detention facility.

All transport vehicles for people in the custody of DECYP and TPS are also within the jurisdiction of the Custodial Inspector.

The Custodial Inspector does not respond to individual complaints but can refer complaints received to relevant agencies and/or oversight bodies for resolution.

3.4.2 Functions of the Inspector

The functions of the Custodial Inspector are set out in section 6 of the *Custodial Inspector Act 2016* as follows:

6. Functions

(1) The inspector has the following functions:

- (a) to carry out a mandatory inspection of each custodial centre at least once every 3 years;
- (b) to carry out an occasional inspection and review of any custodial centre at any time, of his or her own accord or as requested by the responsible Minister;
- (c) to prepare and publish guidelines and standards in relation to the conduct of inspections;
- (d) to report to the responsible Minister or Parliament on the various inspections carried out by the Inspector;
- (e) to report to the responsible Minister or Parliament on any particular issue or general matter relating to the functions of the Inspector, if in his or her opinion, it is in the interest of any person or in the public interest to do so;
- (f) to report to Parliament on any particular issue or general matter relating to the functions of the Inspector is requested to do so by either House of Parliament or a Committee of either House of Parliament;
- (g) to provide an annual report to Parliament;
- (h) to include in any report such advice or recommendations as the Inspector thinks appropriate including, but not limited to –
 - (i) advice or recommendations relating to the safety, custody, care, wellbeing and rehabilitation of prisoners and detainees; and
 - (ii) information relating to education and programs to assist in the rehabilitation of prisoners and detainees;
- (i) such other functions as may be conferred or imposed on the Inspector under this or any other Act.

(2) The Inspector may from time to time amend the guidelines and standards prepared and published under subsection (1).

3.4.3 Powers of the Inspector

The powers of the Custodial Inspector are set out in section 8 of the *Custodial Inspector Act 2016* as follows:

8. Powers

The Inspector has the following powers:

- (a) to visit and examine any custodial centre, and any vehicle, equipment, container or other thing in a custodial centre, at any time the Inspector thinks fit;
- (b) to obtain full access to all documents, including health records, that -
 - (i) are in the possession of a Department, public authority or any other body or person prescribed by the regulations; and
 - (ii) relate to any custodial centre or persons in custody or detained, or residing, at a custodial centre –and to make copies of, or take extracts from, those documents or records and to remove and retain those copies or extracts;
- (c) to require, in any reasonable manner that the Inspector considers appropriate, a person whose work is concerned with the operation of a custodial centre to provide any information that is relevant to the performance or exercise of the Inspector's functions or powers under this Act;
- (d) to enter and examine any equipment or container outside a custodial centre which is used in connection with the custodial centre, and any vehicle used to transport prisoners or detainees, at any time the Inspector thinks fit and with any assistance or equipment that the Inspector thinks is reasonably necessary;
- (e) to require any member of the staff of the custodial centre or other person who provides services to prisoners or detainees to –
 - (i) supply information or produce documents or other things relating to any matter, or class of matters, concerning the custodial centre's operations; and
 - (ii) attend before the Inspector to answer questions or produce documents or other things relating to a custodial centre's operations;
- (f) to refer matters relating to a custodial centre to an appropriate agency for consideration or action;

(g) to obtain access to, and communicate with, persons in custody or detained or residing at a custodial centre;

(h) to do all things necessary or convenient to be done in connection with the performance and exercise of his or her functions and powers under this Act.

3.5 Relationships

3.5.1 Places of detention

We maintain regular communication with the Department of Justice, DECYP and the Department of Health. We also liaise closely with appropriate officers in these agencies when planning and undertaking inspections.

Regular meetings to support the functions of the office are held with:

- the Assistant Director of Prisons – Engagement, Communications and Policy from TPS; and
- the Director Custodial Youth Justice Services from DECYP.

We also meet with people in custody and custodial centre staff, both individually and in groups, as and when required. This occurs during and outside the inspection process.

3.5.2 Parliament

We provided briefings to members of parliament on a number of reports published during the reporting year. This included our *Inhumane treatment in dry cells – review report 2024* and *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*.

Providing these briefings is a new initiative for the Office and allows members of Parliament to receive a summary of the report, engage with inspection staff and discuss the issues raised in the report.

During the reporting year the Custodial Inspector and Principal Inspection Officer also appeared before the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity, a parliamentary committee responsible for the oversight of integrity entities, and the Commission of Inquiry Recommendations Scrutiny Committee.

3.5.3 Civil Society and other stakeholders

During the year we engaged with multiple civil society organisations as part of our inspections or through the course of our work. These groups included:

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service;
- Women's Legal Service;
- Prisoner Legal Service;
- Equality Tasmania;
- Working It Out;
- Veteran Hub; and
- Association for the Prevention of Torture.

We also engaged with the following public authority stakeholders as and when required:

- Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Tasmania;
- University of Tasmania;
- Tasmania Legal Aid;
- Tasmania Police;
- Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Interim Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- Australian Human Rights Commission, including the National Children's Commissioner and the Human Rights Commissioner;
- Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner;
- Prison Official Visitors Program;
- Tasmanian Audit Office;
- Ombudsman Tasmania;
- Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner;
- Integrity Commission; and
- inter-jurisdictional counterparts.

We attend quarterly meetings, along with the Director of the Office of the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), with the Australian NPM Network. This group is made up of all the nominated NPMs around Australia and is an opportunity to discuss common issue in places where people are deprived of their liberty.

The Custodial Inspector attended quarterly meetings of Inspectors around Australia. During the reporting year an online working group was also established for Deputy Inspectors and Principal Inspection Officers. These meetings are an important opportunity to discuss common issues across jurisdictions.

Our Principal Inspection Officer presented to the Australian NPM Network, NSW Ombudsman, Victorian Ombudsman and Queensland Inspector on our *Inhumane treatment in dry cells – review report 2024*.

During the reporting year we strengthened our relationship with the University of Tasmania. This included participating in a panel discussion and presenting to a law unit on the work of the Custodial Inspector. We were also fortunate to benefit from having three students participate in placements with our Office. This included a research student completing a Master of Social Work degree and two students from the Legal Professional Experience unit at the University of Tasmania's Law School.

Three staff attended Working it Out's International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism & Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) annual breakfast. This provided us with an opportunity to engage with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer, and Asexual + (LGBTIQA+) community.

3.6 Training and professional development

Our staff attended a range of training and professional development activities during the reporting year.

- The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that NPMs ensure that their staff are trained in engaging with people with disability. As part of our ongoing commitment to implementing this recommendation we:
 - engaged Speak Out Advocacy Tasmania to provide bespoke training on engaging with people with disability in detention settings. We were fortunate to learn from the Speak Out members.
 - organised an informal training session with Dr Yvette Maker, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Tasmania, on the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the criminal justice system. We were grateful for the opportunity to learn from Dr Maker given her expertise in the areas of human rights and disability law.
- Two staff attended interview training, facilitated by the Integrity Commission. This was a valuable opportunity to improve interview skills, a critical skill for inspection officers.
- Three staff enrolled in a Cert IV in Government Investigations. This course will continue into the 2025-2026 financial year. On completion, all Custodial Inspector staff will have this certification.
- All staff attended a defensive driving course. With our increased visits to AYDC, this was particularly important training from a work health and safety perspective.

3. Overview of the Office of the Custodial Inspector

- During the reporting year our Principal Inspection Officer visited Don Dale Youth Detention Centre and the Holtze Youth Detention Centre during a period of annual leave in the Northern Territory. We were grateful to the Office of the Children's Commissioner, a member of the Australian NPM Network, and the Northern Territory's Department of Corrections for facilitating the visit. It was a valuable opportunity, particularly to see the Holtze Youth Detention Centre prior to its commissioning given the work here in Tasmania to build a new youth detention facility.
- The Australian Capital Territory Custodial Inspector invited our Principal Inspection Officer to assist with their Healthy Prison Review. This was an excellent professional development opportunity and was made possible through the ACT Inspector covering the cost of travel and accommodation. Learning from interstate colleagues is a fantastic means to improve skills and develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of custodial environments.

4. Inspections and reports

4.1 Current work in progress

4.1.1 Rehabilitation, reintegration and community contact inspection

This mandatory inspection occurred onsite at the Risdon Prison Complex, Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison, Hobart Reception Prison and Ron Barwick Prison from 26 May to 3 June 2025. Further engagement with external service providers will occur during the report writing stage. We will potentially combine this report with our education inspection, which occurred in the 2023-24 reporting year.

4.1.2 Finalisation of youth education and transition to adulthood inspections

Two mandatory inspections from 2023-24 reporting year relating to education expectations in youth detention and expectations for young people in adult custodial centres will be finalised in 2024-25.

4.1.3 Three occasional inspection and reviews

As indicated in Section 1, *Key observations and activities*, we are currently undertaking three reviews:

- review of the Hostile Management Regime in the Risdon Prison Complex
- review of an external security service engaged by DECYP to escort young people to and from AYDC; and
- review of staffing at AYDC.

4.2 The Office prepared eight reports for publication

We published five mandatory inspection reports and three discretionary review reports during the reporting year:

1. [Children in Tasmania's prisons – review report 2025](#) – published June 2025.
2. [Overcoming barriers to voting in prison - review report 2025](#) - published April 2025.
3. [Adult wellbeing inspection report 2024](#) - published December 2024.
4. [Inhumane treatment in dry cells - review report 2024](#) - published August 2024.

5. [Youth wellbeing inspection report 2024](#) - published July 2024.
6. [Youth health care inspection report 2023](#) - published July 2024.
7. [Adult health care inspection report 2023](#) - published July 2024.

An eighth report, a mandatory inspection report relating to custody inspection standards, was provided to the then Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation in May 2025 and was due to be published in June 2024. Publication was delayed due to the House of Assembly election and will be published in the 2025-26 reporting year after the new Minister has had the legislated 30 days to review it.

4.3 Visits to custodial centres

As well as announced inspections we also conduct occasional inspections, or visits, to Tasmanian custodial centres. These are generally unannounced. Unannounced visits are a valuable way to prevent ill treatment.

The visits can be in response to particular issues being raised with us, to assist with a future or past inspection or as part of general monitoring. For example, we:

- attended Incident Review Committee meetings at AYDC, where a panel of staff at AYDC review use of force and isolation incidents;
- spent time with young people at AYDC, including on weekends and during school holidays;
- monitored the delivery of multiple mobile polling services;
- attended a health expo event for people in custody in Ron Barwick Prison;
- spoke with new correctional officer and youth worker recruits about the role of the Custodial Inspector; and
- consulted with people in custody on our draft expectations booklet, which summarises our larger expectations document.

As discussed in Section 1, *Key observations and activities*, our visits to AYDC increased significantly during the reporting year as a result of a temporary increase in funding. This has improved our ability to undertake proactive monitoring.

5. Evaluation of responses to Inspector's recommendations

During the reporting year concerns were raised with us regarding multiple health care issues, including matters relating to prescription of medication to people in custody, and continued issues relating to the treatment of people in dry cells. Consequently, we wrote to the Department of Justice and the Department of Health seeking updates on recommendations from the following two reports:

- *Adult health care inspection report 2023*; and
- *Inhumane treatment in dry cells – review report 2024*.

Their updates and our analysis will be published on our website in the 2025-2026 financial year.

Our inspection reports published during the 2024-2025 reporting year considered a range of inspection standards, which we now call expectations. As part of these mandatory inspections, we considered the status of previous Custodial Inspector recommendations concerning the same standards. This analysis can be found in the appendices of each inspection report.

6. Recommendations for change

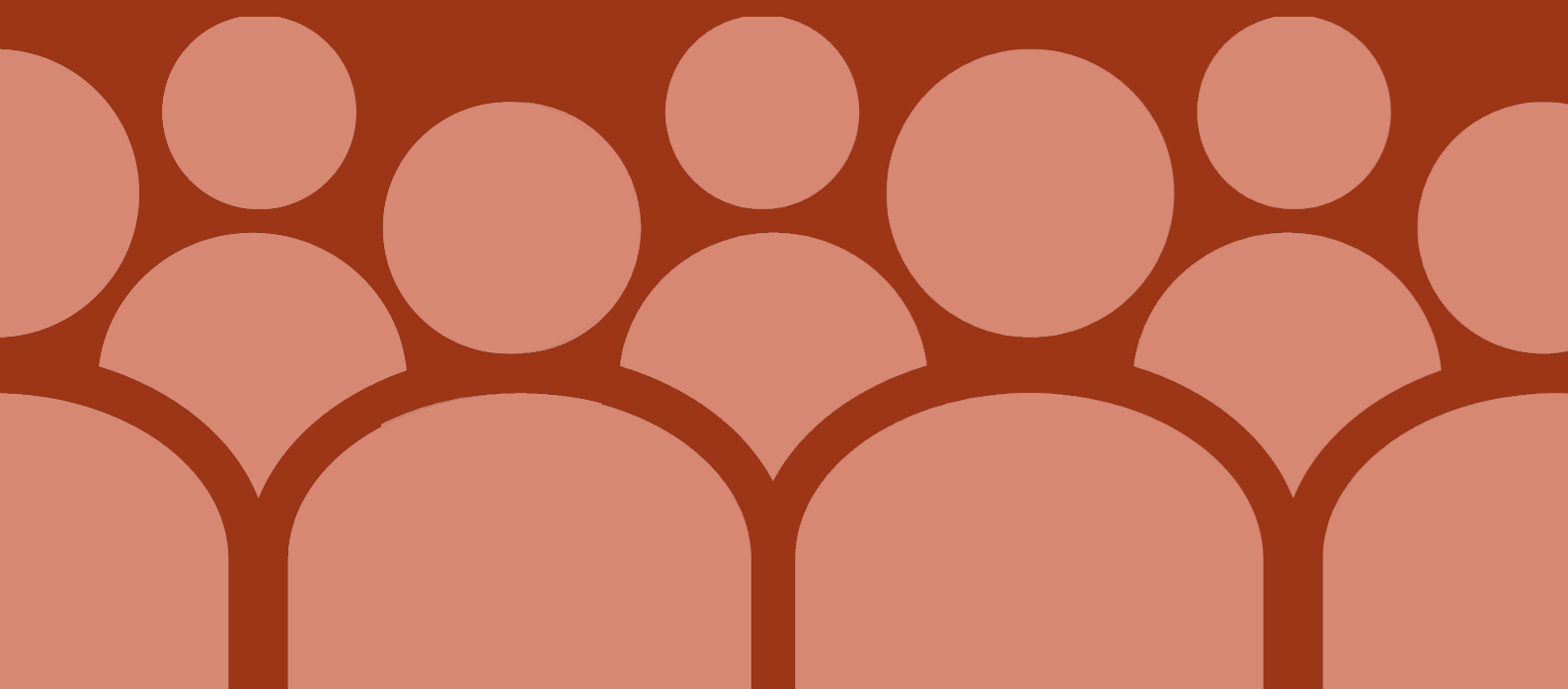
Section 26(2)(c) of the *Custodial Inspector Act 2016* (the Act) provides that the Inspector must include in their annual report:

any recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administration action, that the Inspector considers should be made as a result of the performance of the Inspector's functions.

The *Custodial Inspector Amendment (Protection from Reprisal) Bill 2025* to amend the Act was passed in the House of Assembly in 2025. This Bill sought to implement all recommendations we made regarding the Act in past annual reports. However, the House of Assembly was dissolved prior to the Legislative Council considering the Bill. It was again introduced to the House of Assembly on 19 August 2025 in the 52nd Parliament.

We have no further recommendations at this time but do draw attention to the issue discussed above under *Escapes from AYDC* regarding s140 of the *Youth Justices Act 1997*.

Appendix 1: Out of cell hours and lockdowns at Tasmania Prison Service facilities

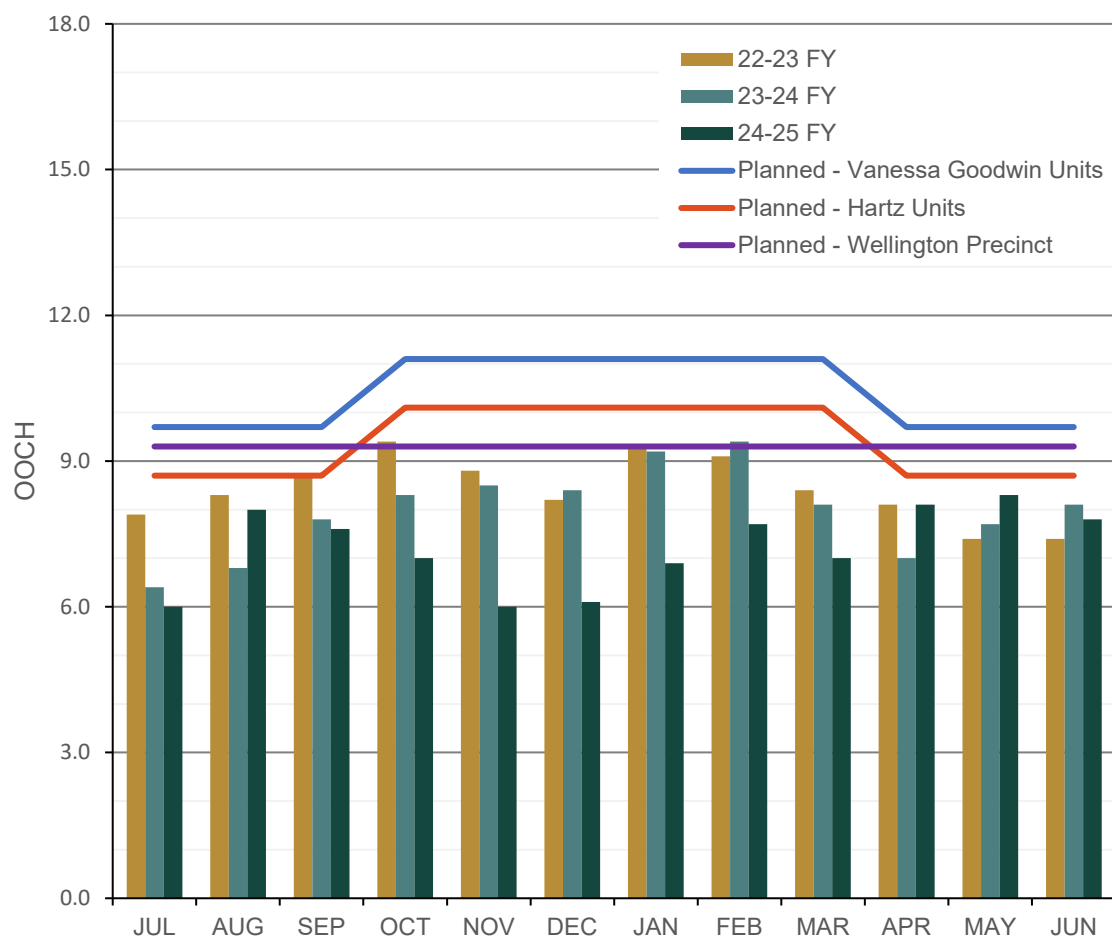


Appendix 1:

Out of cell hours and lockdowns at Tasmania Prison Service facilities

The below graphs show the number of hours on average a person in custody spends out of their cell each day per month. The graphs contain data for the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years. A line on each graph also displays the planned out of cell hours for each area. These hours are those that people in custody would spend out of their cell if there were no lockdowns, late unlocks or early lock-ins.

Figure 11. Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison average monthly effective and planned out of cell hours (OOCH) for 2022-23 to 2024-25



The data in the below graph is the average across mainstream maximum units. It does not include people accommodated in behaviour management, crisis support or inpatient units.

Figure 12. Risdon Prison Complex - Maximum Precinct average monthly effective and planned out of cell hours (OOCH) for 2022-23 and 2023-24

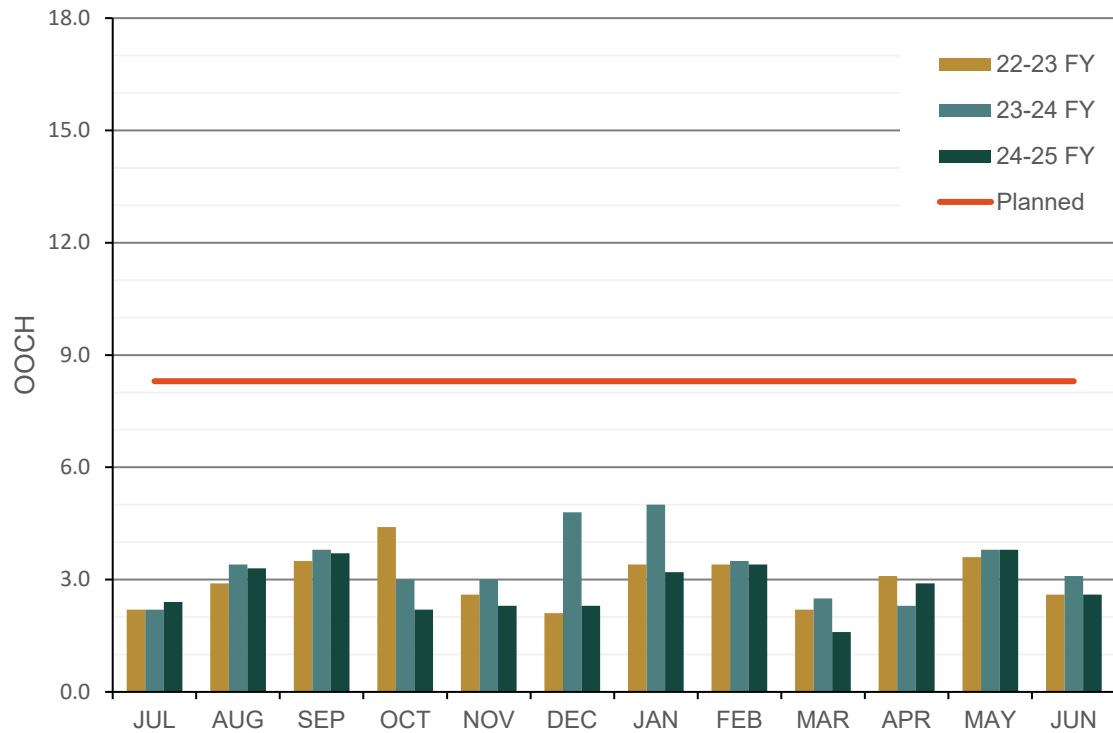
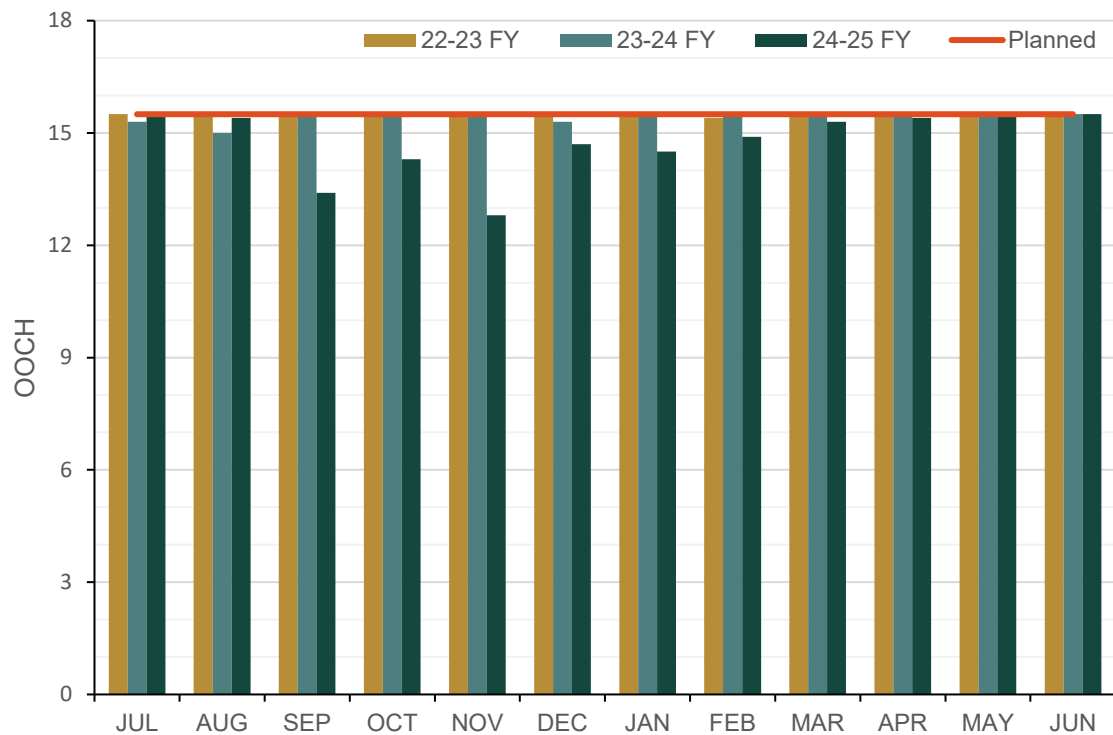
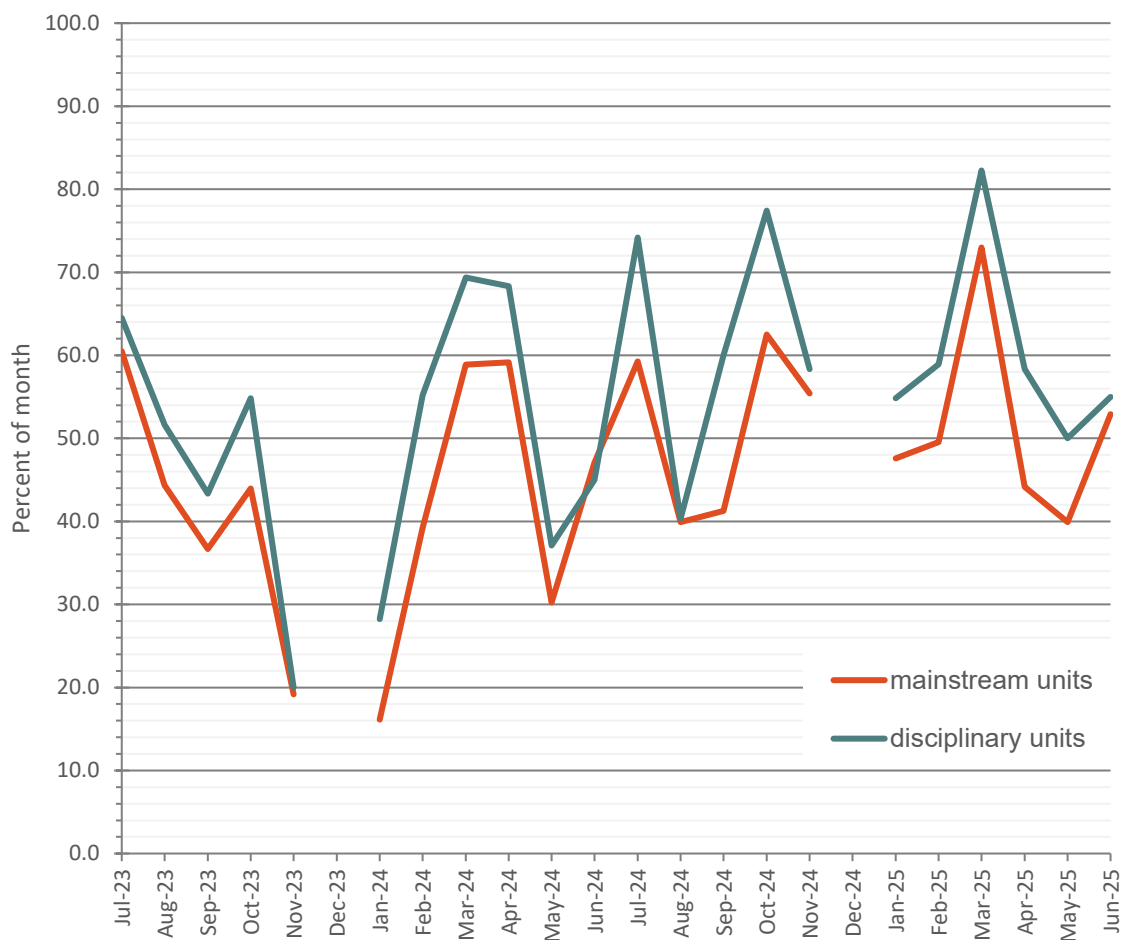


Figure 13. Ron Barwick Prison (Divisions 1 - 7) average monthly effective and planned out of cell hours (OOCH) for 2022-23 and 2023-24



The below graphs are based on lockdown data supplied by Tasmania Prison Service. As discussed in the body of the report, this data is not completely reliable as it may not capture all lockdowns, late unlocks or early lockups. It does, however, provide an indication of the number and types of lockdowns across the Risdon Prison Complex and Southern Remand Centre. It should also be noted that data is missing for December 2023 and December 2024 as we did not receive a complete set of data for these months.

Figure 14. Average percent of month spent in lockdown in Risdon Prison Complex maximum units July 2023 to June 2025²⁰



²⁰ Mainstream maximum units include Derwent Alpha, Derwent Bravo, Apsley and Huon. Disciplinary maximum units include Franklin and Tamar. People are accommodated in these units as a result of disciplinary action or administrative separation and have reduced contact with others and minimal privileges.

Figure 15. Number of full and half days spent in lockdown in Risdon Prison Complex medium precinct

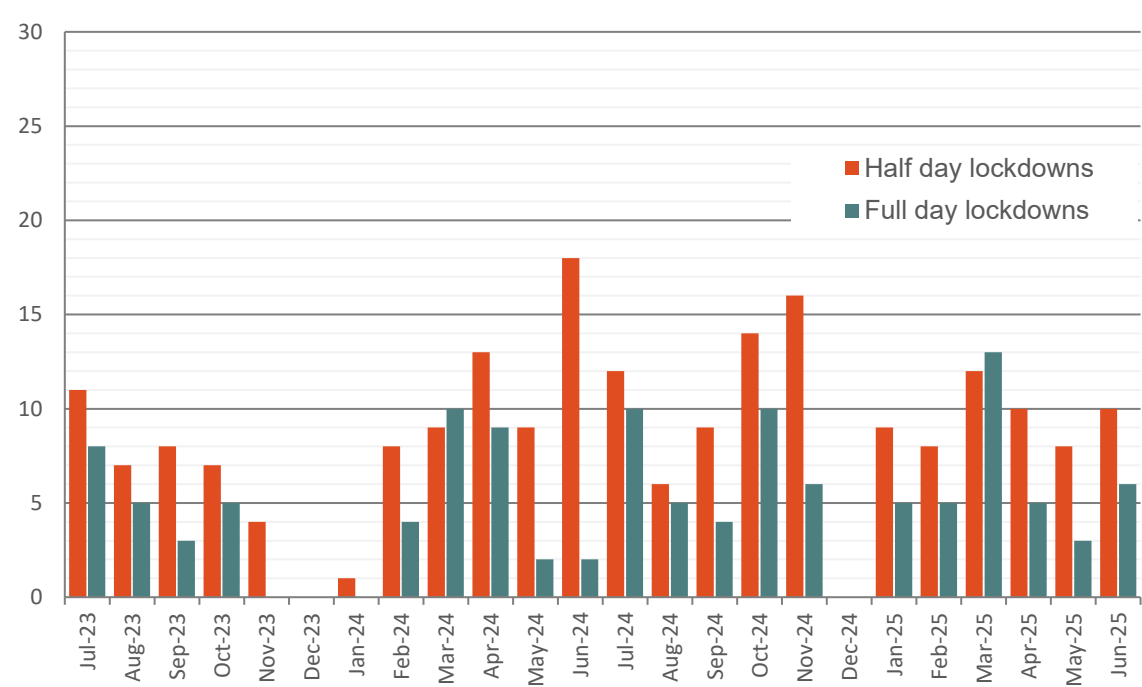
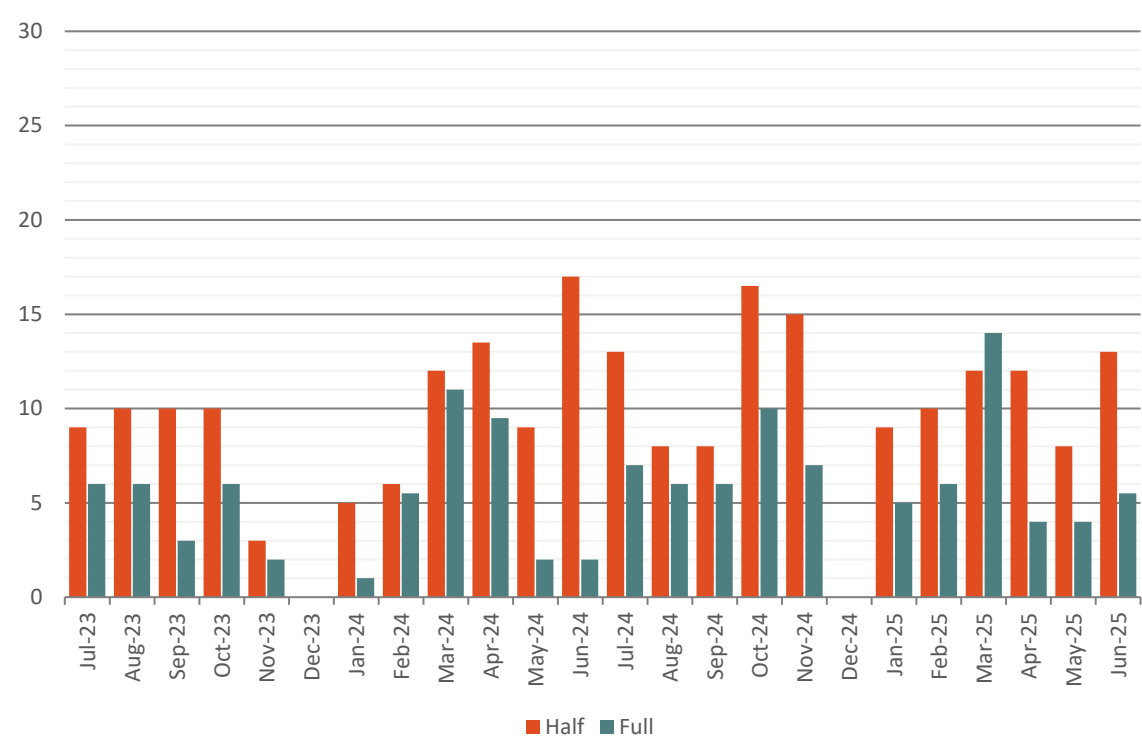
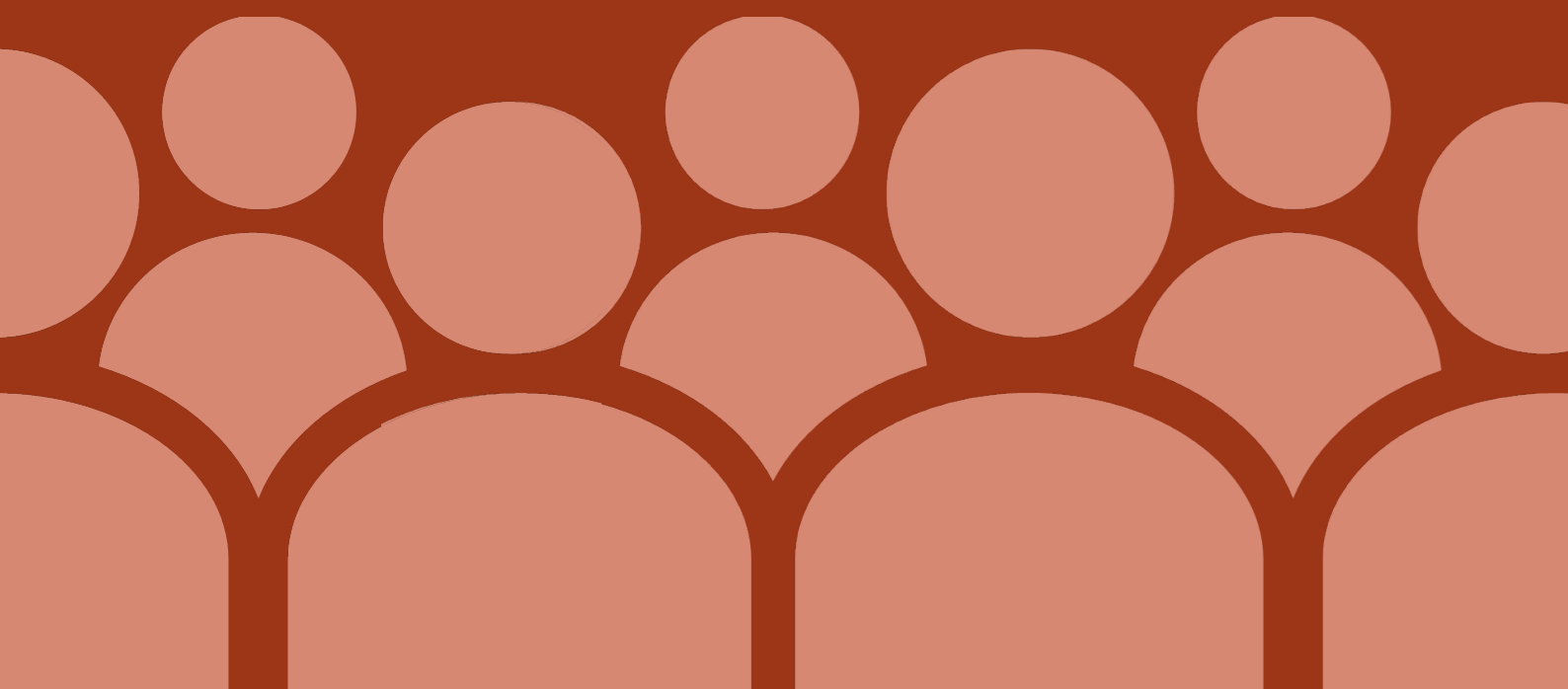


Figure 16. Number of full and half days spent in lockdown in the Southern Remand Centre



Appendix 2: Number of people in Tasmania Prison Service custody - 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2025



Appendix 2: Number of people in Tasmania Prison Service custody - 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2025

Figure . Average monthly population of people in Tasmania Prison Service custody

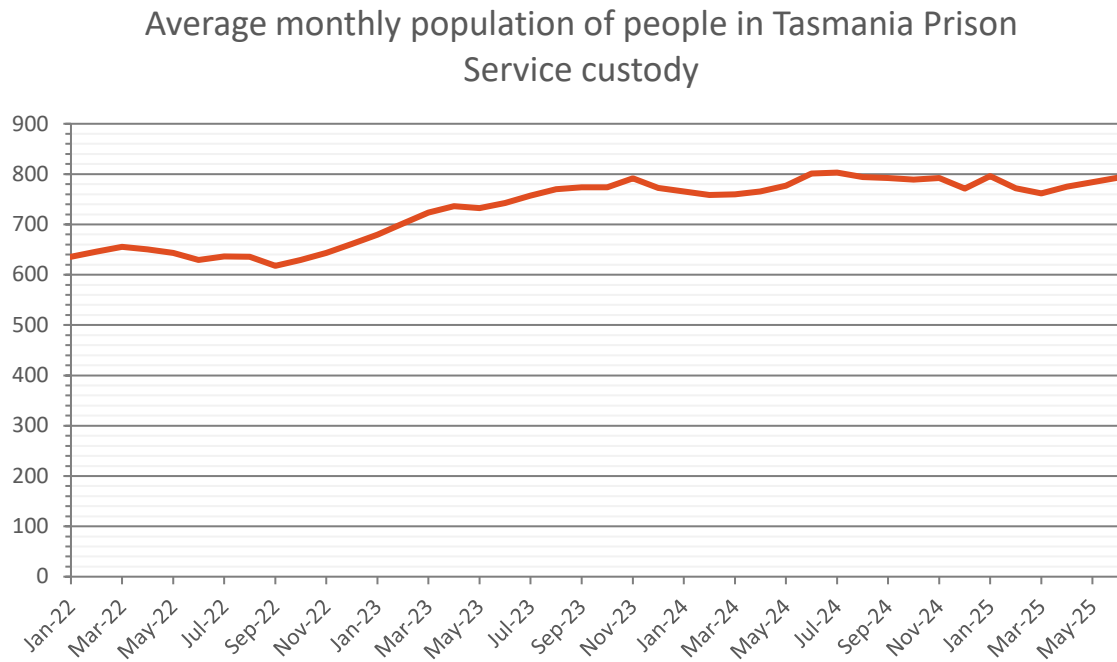


Figure 17. Average monthly population of men in Tasmania Prison Service custody

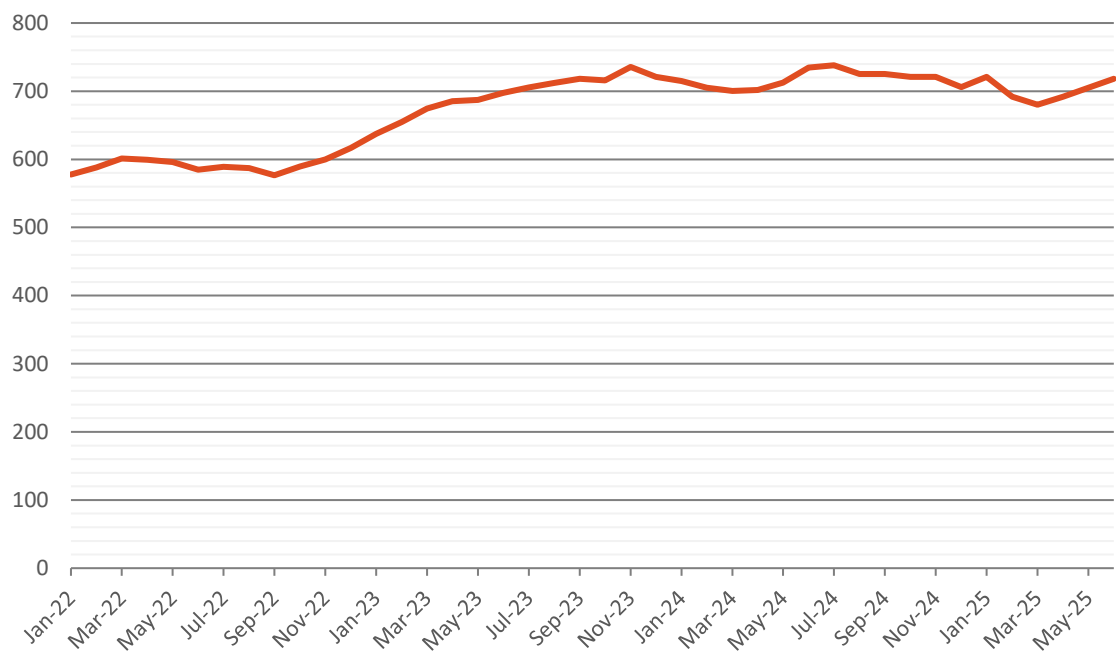
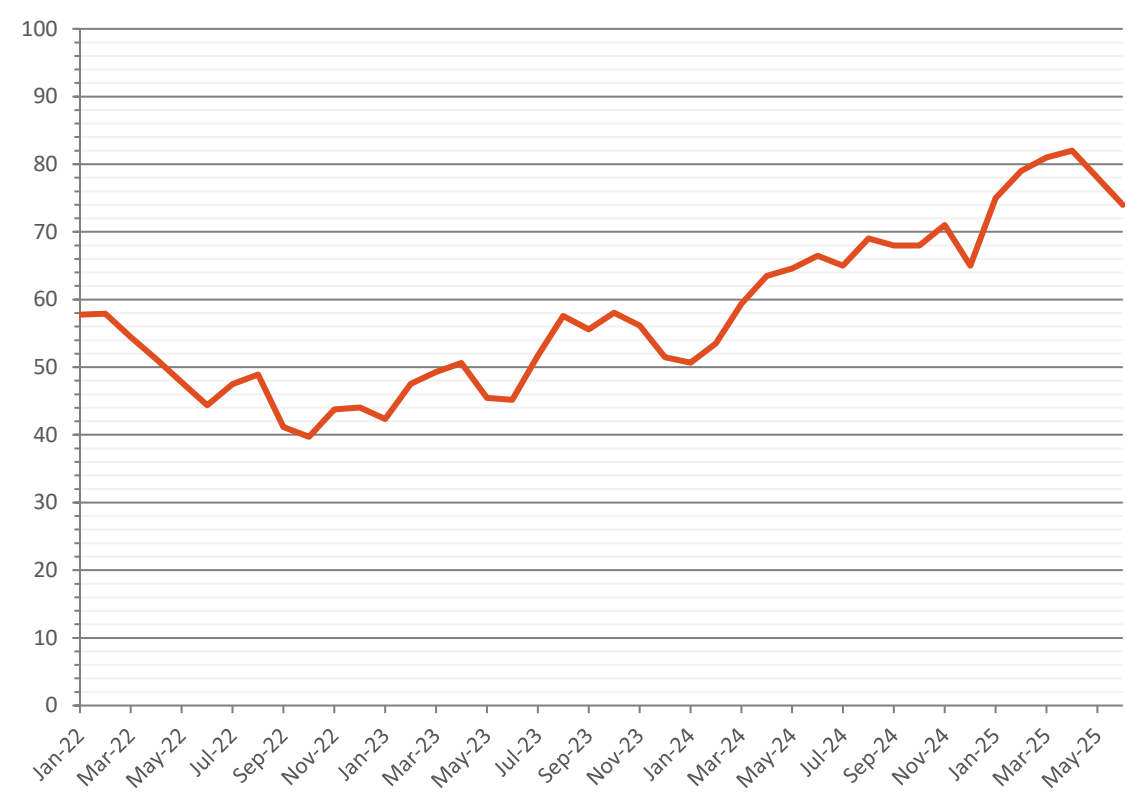


Figure 18. Average monthly population of women in Tasmania Prison Service custody





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