



Office of the  
**Custodial  
Inspector**  
Tasmania



# Children in Tasmania's prisons

## Review report 2025

## Easy Read version



# Acknowledgments



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.

## Thank you



We would like to thank the children and adults in custody who shared their experiences with us.

We greatly value your contributions.

Also, staff from Department for Education, Children and Young People, Department for Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Justice.

Your cooperation with the process is very positive.

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# About this information



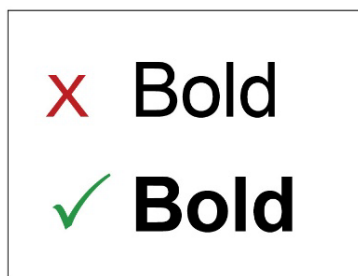
The Custodial Inspector wrote this.

When you see the words 'we' or 'us' it means the Office of the Custodial Inspector.



We wrote this information in a way that is easy to read.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



Some hard words are written in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker. We explain what the hard words mean.



You can ask for help to read this paper.

You could ask a friend, family member, support person or advocate.

# About this report



This report is about children in Tasmanian prisons.



Tasmania is trying to make things better for children in prison

We want to change how children are treated in Tasmanian prisons.

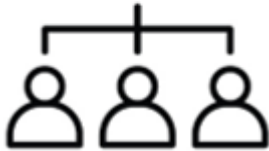


In 2023 the Tasmanian Parliament made a new law to keep children safe.

This law is called the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act.



Standard

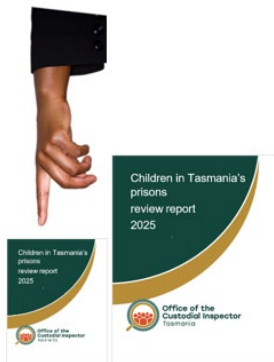


The rules in the new law are called Child and Youth Safe Standards.

All government agencies, like **prison watch-houses**, must follow these rules.



A **prison watch-house** is part of a prison where people are held after they have been processed by the police



This is a short version of a bigger report.



You can get the big report at:

[www.custodialinspector.tas.gov.au](http://www.custodialinspector.tas.gov.au)

# From the Custodial Inspector



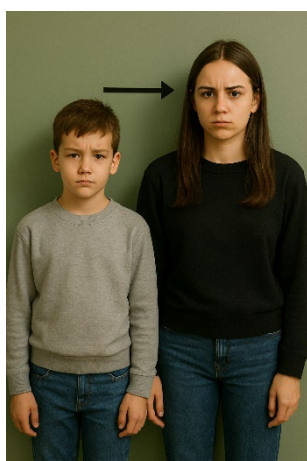
Children should not be in prison.

There was a big inquiry into child sexual abuse in care in 2023.



Since then, there has been a lot of work to improve things in **youth justice**.

**youth justice** means laws, policies and how we work with children who might have broken the law.



These children are aged between 10 and 18 years.



We think the issue of children in **prison watch-houses** has not been addressed in the big inquiry.



We hope this report helps people think about what happens in **prison watch-houses**.



The community is worried about youth crime.

Many think children who commit crimes should be treated like adults and be sent to prison.





This report says:

- Prison is not the place for children.



- The Tasmanian government should keep working on making youth justice more caring and supportive for all children.

We call this a therapeutic approach.



We are asking the government to follow our recommendations in this report, to do its duty to keep children safe.

# Recommendations:



We made 12 **recommendations** for children in Tasmania's prisons.

**Recommendations** are things that we think need to happen to make things better.

## Recommendation 1



The Tasmanian Government is working to make youth justice better.

This work needs to include thinking about why we are using prison watch-houses for children.

The people who do this work should first:

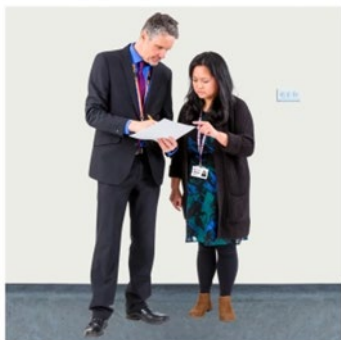


- visit **prison watch-houses** when children are there.
- Talk to children in prison watch-houses.
- Look at how staff work with children in prison.



The government should work to keep children in prison safe.

## Recommendation 2



The Tasmania Government should collect and study information about children in **prison watch-houses**.



They should share this information with everyone.



## Recommendation 3



The Tasmania Government should make a plan to stop children from being put in **prison watch-houses**.



The plan should:

- Be clear.
- Have a time frame.
- Have a space just for young people.

## Recommendation 4



The Tasmania Parliament should make sure that children are treated the same in **prison watch-houses** and youth detentions centres.



They should set a minimum age for when young people can be held.

**Prison watch-houses** should have the same minimum ages as detentions centres.

This is 16 years old.

## Recommendation 5



We call the **Tasmanian Prison Service** **TPS** for short.

The TPS should make a plan for prison watch-houses.



This plan should help make **prison watch-houses** better.

The plan should:

- Help children feel safe.
- Support cultural needs.
- Make sure children are only in **prison watch-houses** for a very short time.



## Recommendation 6



The TPS should make sure that all information about children in **prison watch-houses** is:

- Correct
- Up to date
- Easy to find.

## Recommendation 7



The TPS should make sure that girls are treated fairly.

When girls are searched in custody this should be done by a female worker.



Girls should be safe when in custody.

## Recommendation 8

When working with children, TPS workers should:



- Be trained in **trauma-informed care**.

**trauma-informed care** means being kind and careful with people who have been hurt in the past.

It is about making them feel safe, respected, and in control.



- Be trained to work with children.
- Have **gender and cultural training**.



**gender and cultural training** is learning how to respect people who may be different from you.



## Recommendation 9



The Tasmanian Government want to build a new place for children who have or may have committed a crime.



They should make sure that:

- The new place runs well
- Workers are trained
- No children are moved from this new place into prisons.
- Children are safe when in prison.



## Recommendation 10

The Tasmania Parliament change the law so:



- a) a court, not the **Secretary**, decides to put a child in a prison.

The **Secretary** is the top boss of their government department.

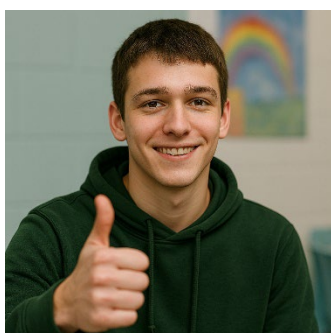
They help the government by giving advice and making plans.



- b) Young adults just a bit older than 18 who need extra help should stay in youth justice facilities.



They should not be sent to prison.



This will keep them safe.

## Recommendation 11



Transfers from youth detention facilities to prison follow a **memorandum of understanding**.



A **memorandum of understanding** is an agreement between groups about how they will work together.



This is not enough.

It should follow a law, which is much clearer.

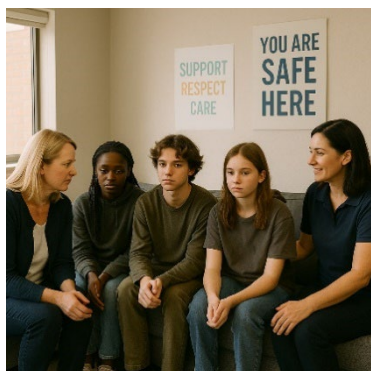
The law should say a court decides if a child is sent to prison or not.

## Recommendation 12



The Tasmanian Government needs to follow recommendation 12.25.

This is from the big inquiry into child sexual abuse in care in 2023.



It recommends making transfers from youth detention facilities to prison better.

It is about keeping children safe and free from harm.



The government must work to finish this before July 2026.

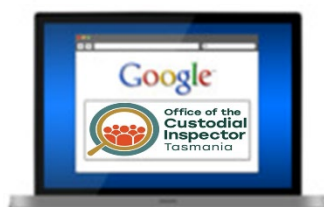
# More information



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