

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing to express our objection to the government's proposed Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility located at 466 Brighton Road, Pontville.

The Southern Midlands Council we were led to believe prides itself in promoting the unique heritage values of our region.

We note that the Southern Midland Council's website under General Information for Lodging a Planning Application states:

*"This process allows Council to assess a proposal against current regulations to ensure that development fits within the **desired character of the area**; that neighbour's rights such as privacy are protected; and no environmental harm is caused to the environment.*

We do not believe that under any circumstances this proposed detention centre fitted within the "desired character of the area". We are extremely disappointed the council approved, by a narrow vote, this development.

Pontville is described in Wikipedia as:

...a historic township just 28 kilometres north of Hobart Tasmania, offers a unique blend of heritage and modern charm. Known for its colonial architecture and scenic surroundings, it is an ideal stop for travellers seeking a peaceful yet enriching experience. A quick 30-minute drive along the Midland Highway takes you to this serene locale that holds stories of Tasmania's early days.

Community and Culture

Today, Pontville retains its charm as a small rural community with a population of around 623 residents. The town host various seasonal events that attract visitors. Local inns and distilleries such as the Lark Distillery, offer a taste of Tasmania's culinary and beverage culture.

Discover Tasmania website writes:

Heritage-rich Pontville, one of Tasmania's oldest settlements, is a place of fine Georgian cottages.

Given the nation-wide recognition of Pontville as a significant historical site, to suggest this location as a proposed site for a detention centre is at odds with the government's support of our unique historical heritage as a tourist draw card. A youth justice facility would be out of context with the surrounding environment. The look and feel of Pontville, would be lost forever.

It would appear the State government has no interest in preserving this historical and unique cultural precinct or any interest in mitigating the impact it will have on the immediate adjoining properties and surroundings. To build a youth detention centre within this context is unconscionable.

This development will have long term negative implications for the local Pontville community, the Brighton community and the wider Southern Midland community. The Brighton Council is working hard to promote this region as a vibrant residential region which is well suited to the needs of young families. The region currently has a positive feel. However, negativity is growing with residents concerned about how this youth goal will impact their wellbeing, sense of security and their house prices.

Placing a youth detention centre near an enormous cannabis factory is inappropriate. Residents are subjected to pungent fumes on a regular basis which is unpleasant and unhealthy. It is totally inappropriate anyone including detainees be subjected to these fumes. It also has the potential to encourage detainees to breakout, as a dare to obtain the drug. We understand the complex will be increasing production into the future.

A nearby gun and pistol club has regular competitions and practice events. The noise of the pistols and guns being fired are extremely loud and persistent. The location also has the potential to encourage detainees to breakout to obtain fire arms. Our properties are approximately 500 metres from the club and despite this distance the sound is intense and often unsettling. This is not conducive to what has been described as a therapeutic, healing environment for detainees.

Apart from the proposal being at an inappropriate site, the model is also flawed. Experts in criminology and youth justice have repeatedly publicly voiced their disapproval at the building of a large centralised detention centre. Professor of Criminology at UTAS, Rob White in an article published in The Mercury November 26 2025 stated that a centralised detention centre does not work well in preventing future offending.

Think small to have big impact on youth justice

Smaller, local facilities a better option than a central prison for kids, write **Pat Burton** and **Rob White**

Decades of experience and extensive research have shown that when it comes to responding to youth crime, what happens at the local level is what really matters – as does size.

Large, centralised detention centres or prisons for children do not work well when it comes to preventing future offending. They may temporarily incapacitate offenders and protect communities, but overall they tend towards containment and warehousing rather than rehabilitation and opportunity generation.

The net result, as the track record of Ashley Youth Detention Centre demonstrates, is that young people universally graduate to adult prison. This is a consequence which no one really wants or needs.

International examples, backed up by robust evaluation of best practice, demonstrate that building large, centralised facilities, like the proposed Pontville youth prison, is basically planning for failure.

Indeed, the evidence is that the community will be safer, and children better cared for, if there is not a centralised "detention" centre, especially one that is far from families and communities.

A dispersed model of four or five separate smaller facilities, established throughout Tasmania, is a much better option.

We know that in countries where juvenile repeat offending is low, there



Rob White is a Professor of Criminology at UTAS

is a rehabilitative, therapeutic approach to the detention of children.

A custodial-oriented physical environment such as that inevitably exhibited by a centralised centre (since it deals with serious as well as less serious offenders) does not accord with this approach. The evidence shows that it is possible to detain children who have committed serious crimes in a selected, secure place within one or more of the dispersed therapeutic facilities.

Ultimately, the fundamental questions are how can we prevent

serious offending by understanding and dealing with its causes, and how can we respond in a non-punitive but rehabilitative manner if it occurs.

The evidence shows that small, regionally based secure facilities, closer to family and community, achieve the best outcomes for young people, their families and the community.

It is a truism that "we have to live with those we punish". This applies to children and young people just as it does to adults. It makes sense, therefore, to focus on rehabilitation and restorative justice, as well as educational and therapeutic measures, especially when dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in our state. After all, they will be returning to our communities, usually after a fairly short time away.

Children and young people 'act out' in ways that are harmful to themselves, their friends, their families and their communities. Repairing the harm, building

“The evidence shows that small, regionally based secure facilities, closer to family and community, achieve the best outcomes for young people, their families and the community”



Similarly, 15 reputable Tasmanian organisations who have expertise in child welfare stated the following in their recent report:

[Proposed Youth Justice Facility at Pontville will harm Tasmanian children](#)

The proposed Pontville Youth Justice Facility is the wrong model in the wrong place and will not make Tasmania's children or communities safer.

[A joint statement](#) released today and backed by 15 community organisations, groups, legal, Aboriginal, allied health, consultancy and domestic, family, and sexual violence services and peak bodies calls on Tasmania's government to revise their approach to its new youth justice facility, stating the level of harm posed to our children by the current proposal is unacceptable...

The proposed facility does not make children safer, and the chosen location is deeply problematic. It will actively put Tasmania's most vulnerable children at risk of further harm. It can't continue in the face of overwhelming community opposition."

Objections to the location were raised in Parliament earlier this year. One of the many issues with the approach and location includes that the proposed facility neighbours multiple rifle ranges exposing children in the care of the State Government to active gunshot sounds. Research shows this can result in anxiety, depression, hyperarousal, flashbacks, dissociation, and PTSD, especially for those with historical exposure to violence.

Another objection raised by parliamentarians and expanded on in the joint statement are the marijuana odours from the adjacent medical marijuana production facility. Evidence says such smells pose triggers which undermine recovery for young people recovering from

substance use or those with lived experience of familial substance misuse and places these young people at risk of relapse, re-traumatisation, and further harm.

Ms Fordyce said: "As much as we all want the COI recommendations realised, it is essential that we don't just 'get them done' by placing speed and convenience ahead of care."

Signatories to the joint statement:

1. *Anglicare Tasmania*
2. *Australian Lawyers Alliance*
3. *Engender Equality*
4. *Grass Roots Action Network Tasmania*
5. *Jesuit Social Services*
6. *Jordan River Service Inc*
7. *Knightlamp Psychology and Consulting*
8. *Laurel House*
9. *Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service*
10. *Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (TFSVA)*
11. *Tasmanian Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment Network*
12. *Women's Health Tasmania*
13. *Women's Legal Service Tasmania*
14. *Yemaya*
15. *Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)*

"We must work diligently to ensure each step represents progress and is based on expertise, evidence of best practice, and appropriate consultation. In our view, this has not been the case – the voices of children and young people and Tasmanian communities have been consistently ignored in the consultation process: the Government received 100 submissions against the development compared to just 10 in favour of the new facility and yet are still going ahead. The bottom line is that we know what best practice looks like, and this proposed facility is not it."

At a personal level we have spent considerable time and money working on our historical properties (Woodburn 1822 and Woodburn Park) to provide heritage accommodation which fits within the Southern Midlands Council's strategy to promote heritage tourism. This project is now in jeopardy due to the proximity of the proposed detention centre. The social stigma associated with a nearby detention centre will surely deter potential guests.

In Summary:

The proposed development raises serious issues for the local community and the surrounding district concerning:

- inappropriate development in a unique and valued historical environment
- neighbouring resident's health, wellbeing and sense of security are compromised
- inappropriate proximity to schools
- negative impact on house values, already evident
- negative impact on peoples' perceptions of Pontville and surrounds (note Risdon Vale)
- proximity to the enormous cannabis centre's pungent fumes
- proximity to the local pistol and gun club does not promote a therapeutic model of care
- inappropriate proximity to tourist ventures like Lark and its bond stores
- negative visual impact from the northern end of the Midlands Highway -the gateway to the Southern Midlands and the historic Heritage Mile precinct.
- lighting, (day and night), traffic and fencing will be a scar on the landscape and impact the wellbeing of the residents immediately surrounding the complex

In conclusion,

A fairly typical Pontville Google search says:

Pontville is a unique blend of history, architecture, and natural beauty, making it a worthwhile destination for those exploring Tasmania. Its rich heritage and tranquil environment provide a glimpse into the island's colonial past while offering modern amenities for visitors to enjoy. Whether you're interested in history, architecture, or simply enjoying the outdoors, Pontville has something to offer everyone.

How might Pontville and the Southern Midlands be written about in the future if the detention centre is approved?

A sense of place, history and our wonderful heritage should never be compromised through inappropriate development. This development's location is not appropriate. The local residents will be forced to endure a range of negative consequences (both real and potential) as a result of living in close proximity to the facility. This appears to be a short-term cheap solution which neither benefits youth offenders or the local residents and its community.

Yours sincerely,

Karen McDiarmid and Graeme Young

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Heritage Highway

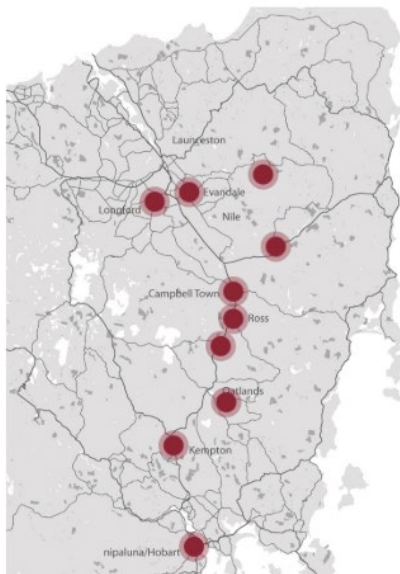
Discover Tasmania's historic Midland Highway

Ross Bakery and Ross Bakery Inn. Image credit: Alastair Bett

Embark on a leisurely journey along Tasmania's Heritage Highway, the picturesque stretch between Hobart and Launceston that beckons travelers to slow down and savor the delights of this historically rich region. The Midland Highway may span a mere couple of hours' drive, but within this short distance lies an extraordinary wealth of heritage and culture waiting to be discovered.

Discover Tasmania's Heritage Highway, linking Hobart to Launceston. With dozens of historic attractions and charming towns along the way.

[Home](#) » [Explore Southern Tasmania](#) » Heritage Highway



Welcome to Tasmania's

Heritage Highway

Take your time, and let the tranquil pace of the journey allow for unexpected discoveries, Historic Bridges, Sandstone Towns, Antiques, Distilleries, Convict Sites and more.

Delight your taste buds at renowned bakeries offering artisanal treats and indulge in the exquisite flavours of world-class distilleries. Each stop presents an opportunity to savour the essence of Tasmania's Midlands.

Tag [@midlandtasmania](#) on Instagram to allow us to share your photos.