



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility

*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Mr Harris (Deputy Chair) until 2 May 2026
Mr Hiscutt from 26 May 2026
Ms Rattray (Deputy Chair from 11 May 2026)

House of Assembly

Ms Butler (Chair)
Ms Burnet
Mr Shelton

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2	BACKGROUND.....	3
4	EVIDENCE.....	8
5	DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE	49
6	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	51
7	DIVISIONS.....	54
8	DISSENTING STATEMENTS.....	55

1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* (the Act).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve the construction of a new Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility at 466, Brighton Road, Pontville, to replace the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC).
- 2.2 The Tasmanian Government announced its decision to close AYDC and replace it with a new fit-for-purpose facility in September 2021. This decision aligned with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (Commission of Inquiry). The proposed works are also a key element of the Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034.
- 2.3 The proposed works are underpinned by the legislative context of youth justice in Australia and Tasmania, as well as international conventions that apply to children and young people deprived of their liberty. Relevant legislation, conventions and rules include:-
 - *Youth Justice Act 1997* (Tas);
 - *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023* (Tas);
 - *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024* (Tas);
 - Charter for Rights for Children in Care in Tasmania;
 - Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034;
 - Tasmanian Youth Justice Model of Care;
 - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations;
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT);
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
 - United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty;
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ('Beijing Rules');
 - United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency ('Riyadh Guidelines'); and
 - United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty ('Havana Rules').¹
- 2.4 The current Youth Justice System in Tasmania responds to children and young people, aged 10 to 17, who have committed, or allegedly committed, an offence. The system includes both community-based and custodial services. AYDC is the only custodial facility for children and young people in Tasmania, located near Deloraine in Northern Tasmania. It accommodates children and young people aged 10 to 17 who are detained or remanded by the courts.
- 2.5 In Tasmania, Custodial Youth Justice is reserved for cases where community-based interventions are deemed insufficient to ensure safety or accountability. Children and young people in a custodial setting often present with histories of trauma, mental health challenges, disability, and disrupted education.
- 2.6 During the 2024-2025 financial year, there was an average of 14 children and young people detained at any one time. In the same period, there were 70 distinct children and young people in detention. Of this cohort, 80 per cent were on remand; seven were aged between 10 and 13 years old; 34 per cent identified as Indigenous; and 22 per cent were female.
- 2.7 The Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP)'s submission listed the following limitations of the current infrastructure at AYDC:
- *The physical environment and layout contribute to operational inefficiencies, including oversized accommodation units with long wings and shared open day rooms with poor acoustics.*
 - *Despite significant investment over many years, the facility continues to fall short of contemporary standards expected of a purpose-built youth justice facility.*
 - *Additional surveillance tools such as fixed cameras, body-worn cameras and scanning equipment have been introduced; however, structural limitations prevent the site from achieving a modern, fit-for-purpose operating environment.*
 - *The facility's design is tied to an outdated custodial model, limiting the implementation of a modern, therapeutic approach to youth justice.*
 - *Multiple inquiries and reviews confirm that the existing infrastructure, including perimeter layout and physical-hardening measures, is not appropriate for secure youth detention.*²

¹ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 9-10.

² *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 11.

- 2.8 The Commission of Inquiry found that “For decades, some children and young people detained at Ashley Youth Detention Centre experienced systematic harm and abuse”.³ As well as recommending that the Tasmanian Government close AYDC as soon as possible, Recommendation 12.16 of the Commission specified the features to be included in a new replacement facility:

The Tasmanian Government should ensure its proposed new detention facility (and any future detention facilities) are small and homelike and incorporate design features that reflect best practice international youth detention facilities. This includes features that:

- a. promote the development of trusting and therapeutic relationships between staff and children and young people*
- b. facilitate and enhance trauma-informed, therapeutic interventions for children and young people*
- c. minimise stigma to children and young people*
- d. facilitate and promote connections between children and young people, and their families and communities*
- e. protect children and young people against the risks of child sexual abuse (including harmful sexual behaviours) – for example, by enabling line-of-sight supervision as far as possible, without infringing on children and young people’s privacy.*⁴

- 2.9 Following the Tasmanian Government’s announcement that AYDC would be closed and replaced with a new facility, DECYP began its site selection process for the proposed works. The following criterion were initially used as part of this process:

- The size of the site ideally should be greater than two hectares;
- The topography should be relatively flat, ideally five degrees or below;
- The site should ideally be at least one kilometre from residential zones and schools;
- The site should be in the Hobart region, including Hobart, Glenorchy, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Sorell, Brighton and Southern Midlands;
- Ideally the site should be within a 35-minute drive of the Hobart central business district, near a second-tier activity centre, such as Brighton or Glenorchy, and close to an arterial road, such as the Midland Highway or Brooker Highway;
- It would be preferred for the site to be on government-owned land;
- The site would need to be zoned Rural under the relevant Tasmanian Planning Scheme;
- The site should not be visible from surrounding properties; and

³ Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Response to Child Sexual Abuse Report, August 2023, p. 196, https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf [accessed 22 July 2026].

⁴ Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Response to Child Sexual Abuse Report, August 2023, p. 123, https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf [accessed 22 July 2026].

- The site should be outside of protected and conservation areas.⁵
- 2.10 The Department were unable to find a site that met all the above criterion. After relaxing the criteria, a second search identified 21 sites, while a third search identified over 200. Out of the 200 sites identified in the third search, four sites were chosen for review. Three sites were shortlisted and presented during the public consultation process: 466 Brighton Road, Pontville; 972 East Derwent Highway, Risdon; and 2B Goodwood Road, Dowsing Point. In September 2024, the Government announced that the Pontville site was the preferred site for the proposed works.
- 2.11 The site of the proposed work has generated significant community concern relating to safety, amenity, and perceived impacts on surrounding land uses. Two nearby land uses have been raised by the community and identified by DECYP as constraints to the proposed works. There is a nearby medical cannabis farm that produces odours that are discernible at the site of the proposed works, as well as two gun clubs located approximately 500 metres from the site.
- 2.12 The proposed works will provide 16 beds across five houses, with an additional four beds for short stay, orientation and health accommodation. The proposed works consist of the following buildings and outdoor spaces:-
- Entry building and secure vehicle sallyport;
 - Maintenance and storage shed;
 - Admissions building and health centre;
 - Visitor building and café;
 - Administration building;
 - Education building;
 - Recreation building and swimming pool;
 - Houses;
 - Landscaped entrance forecourt, sports courts, a bouldering area, pump track, oval, basketball courts, and internal roads/pathways and landscaping, including productive gardens inside the secure area.⁶

⁵ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 23-24.

⁶ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 32.

3 PROJECT COSTS

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$150 million.

The following table⁷ details the current cost estimates for the project:-

CATEGORY	ESTIMATE
Construction (including early works and Rifle Range Road upgrade)	\$117,406,374
Tasmanian Government Art Site Scheme	\$80,000
Furniture, fittings and equipment	\$5,270,000
Project costs including management	\$4,749,162
Consultancy costs	\$11,381,715
Statutory fees	\$1,393,508
Project estimate (excluding contingency)	\$140,280,759
Remaining headroom within total budget envelope	\$15,019,241

⁷ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 69.

4 EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on 31 March 2026, with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

Proponent

- Peter Whitcombe, Deputy Secretary, Child Safety and Youth Justice Operations, Department for Education, Children and Young People;
- Bryce Taplin, Project Manager, Youth Justice Facilities Reform, Department for Education, Children and Young People; and
- Sarah Paddick, Senior Associate, Grieve Gillett Architects.

Public

- Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor;
- Ross Tudor and Rebecca Wilkie;
- Jamie Nye and Elena Nye; and
- Robert and Kerrie Goudsouzian.

The following Committee Members were present:-

- Ms Jen Butler MP (Chair);
- Hon. Dean Harris MLC (Deputy Chair);
- Ms Helen Burnet MP;
- Hon. Tania Rattray MLC; and
- Mr Mark Shelton MP.

Overview

- 4.2 Mr Peter Whitcombe, Deputy Secretary, Child Safety and Youth Justice Operations, provided an overview of the need for the proposed works:

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... Youth justice and child protection exists within the context of empowering children and young people and families, of self-determination, of helping see children and families heal and recover. Over generations, at times, it has not lived up to that endeavour. However, what I would say is that this project, this new facility gives an opportunity to provide a type of care that deeply respects the children who it's there to care for, recognising that 34 per cent of children over the course of the last year were Aboriginal, and we hold responsibilities to reduce that disparity and provide different pathways for them.

I want to begin with an overview of why we're here and what this project will deliver... I want you to turn your eyes to the screen. This project has been born out of children and young people's voices, their experiences, what has happened over the decades at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the calls for change, and what we heard from victim-survivors through the Commission of Inquiry.

...

On the screen, we've got a picture from a young person that has recently been created, and within the picture you can see tattooed on the arms, 'out of sight, out of mind'. It is important as we embark upon a conversation about a build, a facility, that we recognise that it is the children, it's the young people and it's their care experience that is really important, and we need to see them in the context of their lives and who they are, and actually the huge opportunity that lives before them in terms of their lives. As I've said, this is about children and young people. They are children and young people who have faced significant challenges in their lives. Many have been victims of serious harm, and many have needs that have fallen through the gaps over the years.

Alongside that, we have responsibilities to the community to be as effective as we possibly can be in reducing the numbers of victims of crime. What we do, both in the facility and in terms of our response as services, as a government, needs to drive towards creating less victims of crime and providing the things that children need to have a good life. The development of this facility sits at the centre of Tasmania's broader youth justice reform agenda. These reforms are designed to establish a safer, more therapeutic, child-centred system, one that genuinely meets the needs of children and young people. Right now, we don't have all of the things in place that young people need.

Root causes of offending include poverty, homelessness, trauma, disability, mental health challenges, and alcohol and drug issues that too often have been left unaddressed. As I opened with, we cannot ignore the Aboriginal children and young people who remain significantly over-represented. The Commission of Inquiry was clear: the Ashley Youth Detention Centre must be closed, but Ashley Youth Detention Centre can't be closed without an alternative, one that provides for the safety of the community while also ensuring the safety, rights and wellbeing of the children and young people in our care.

To achieve better outcomes for children and young people, we must build a system-wide response that prioritises preventative, early intervention and community-based supports. Evidence shows that therapeutic environments staffed by compassionate, skilled professionals deliver far safer and more effective outcomes than traditional custodial models. These environments reduce reoffending, enhance life opportunities, and strengthen community safety.

I want to also acknowledge that we sit in a context of a highly regulated legal environment. Youth detention facilities, rightly so, are amongst the most highly regulated environments in Australia. Any new facility must comply with relevant legislation, industry and international obligations to ensure the rights, safety, wellbeing, security and meaningful engagement of children, young people, staff and all others who access those environments.

It includes compliance with youth justice legislation, international frameworks such as the UN Beijing Rules and OPCAT [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture], and alignment with the Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024. Together, these frameworks set the minimum requirements for humane treatment, therapeutic support, accountability, and safe operation. The regulatory bodies play a critical role in monitoring, investigation and accountability for our services and they ensure the lawful treatment, safeguards and the risks and wellbeing

of detained children and young people, and as well as that, uphold community expectations for safety, transparency and standards of care...⁸

- 4.3 Mr Bryce Tablin, Project Manager, Youth Justice Facilities Reform, continued by describing the features of the proposed works included in a fly-through presentation:

Mr TAPLIN - ... What you can see on the screen here is an overview of the overall facility that's proposed...

It's showing the various buildings that are incorporated into the facility, including the car parking, the secure perimeter for the site. Overall, the proposal is for a 16-bed facility, 16 residential beds, with an additional two beds in the health and an additional two beds in the admissions component of the facility. The facility includes an entry building. Running up the centre of the site, we have a visits building, administrative building, education building and then on the end is a recreational building. Around the outside of the site is the health and admissions building, which I mentioned. We have two four-bed and two three-bed accommodation units and we have a single two-bed unit, which is also flexible to be configured as two single-bed studios.

Also shown on the plan in the bottom-left-hand corner is an additional four-bed unit, which was included in the development application and that was put forward for future expansion capacity, but it's not currently part of our funding. The surrounding areas of the buildings contain a variety of outdoor recreational areas, including a bouldering course, a pump track, a kitchen garden and basketball courts on either side of the central spine. There are also an outdoor cultural garden and a cultural facility, which is the round building on the bottom right-hand side. We will now take you through a short video fly-through, and I will talk you through the views that we're seeing as we're going through that.

This is an overview looking from the end of the site that has the entry building, the entry building being the closest. We're now just coming down to the pedestrian entry to the entry building. This is the reception area, waiting area, and then up on the top right is the screening area, security screening. Once you've passed through that security screening, you will enter this courtyard, which is the visits building directly in front. Inside the visits building, we have two aspects: this is one side of the visits building which is a more informal dining space. Further down the central spine is the education building. This is one of the multipurpose rooms within the education building, one of three.

These are the houses. This is going into the entrance - the front door of one of the four-bedroom houses. This is the open-plan kitchen, dining and living space with the four doors for the bedrooms for the children and young people in the back wall. The next shot is of an outdoor - secure outdoor yard, so each house has one of these secure outdoor yards attached to it. This is one of the bedrooms. We're looking at the recreation building now, which includes a half-court gym; and then finally, this is the cultural garden looking back on the cultural building, and this is a view from inside the cultural building looking out to the cultural garden.

In closing from myself, the project is seeking consideration by the Committee at this time to support the timely progression of the project. The design process is in the final stages of completion and the project is working through the finalisation of planning

⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 2-3.

approvals, and is seeking the consideration, prior to commencement of procurement, for the works.⁹

Closure of AYDC

- 4.5 Mr Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, gave evidence on the importance of closing AYDC:

CHAIR - ... In your submission, you state that this year will be the fifth anniversary of former Premier Gutwein's announcement and determination. Then you go on to state:

This issue continues to play out in the headlines, and the United Nations Human Rights Council has again recently highlighted AYDC as a site of particular concern.

I think that was how it ran.

...

Can you just outlay, for the record, some of the concerns that have been raised on that international level in relation to AYDC, and why it's so important, from your perspective, that this proposed project proceeds?

...

Mr BENJAMIN - What I can say is that it and other reports show a large body of evidence showing closed institutions such as Ashley carry heightened risk of child sexual abuse. The Royal Commission and the Commission of Inquiry both talked about the design and features of a facility that can minimise or reduce the risk of child sex abuse. And when I'm saying that I'm talking about an open institution, but not one you can walk into and walk out of, but one which is far more open. It is small, home-like and enables the building of trusted relationships.

The detention centre should not be seen on its own. It must be seen as part of a significant and complex change in the way Tasmania treats children, both in out-of-home care and in youth and child detention. And the whole design is predicated on reducing the number of children and young people who end up in a detention centre, and provide other and better facilities for them, such as bail facilities, better out-of-home care, and diversionary frameworks. But the centre is a necessary part of it.¹⁰

- 4.6 The Committee sought evidence from the proponent on the limitations of the AYDC site that require a new facility, on a greenfield site, to be built:

Ms RATTRAY - ...I note in the information that was provided that it talks about 'the Ashley Youth Detention Centre is limited by its age and design, and the benefit of any further infrastructure development on this site is restricted'. Yet it's a 39-hectare piece of land that includes a working farm.

Can I have some understanding of why it's considered that you couldn't have any further development at that site and repurpose what is already there - setting aside Commission of Inquiry recommendations - because I don't quite understand why the site would be restricted? I mean, yes, you might take a paddock out that's currently used for growing grass, but why is it restricted in size?...

⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, pp. 39-40.

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... Ultimately, the current location of AYDC remains an issue. It is away from a population base, away from support services. And when we were looking at criteria - and this is before I arrived - those criteria against a new site, it would not have stacked up well in terms of some of those key issues.

In terms of the site as it stands, the facility itself is old and it does require continual upgrading and maintenance, but you cannot get around the design that exists of some of the units, of the way that it groups larger cohorts of young people together, of the institutional feel of the place. And it would be a significant cost to redevelop a new site there.

In terms of a long-term, sustainable future for the workforce, for access to services, all of those things that I've talked about, Pontville remains a better alternative.

Ms RATTRAY - Even though it's currently staffed 24 hours a day and it is permanently funded for the maximum of 24 children and young people, noting that AYDC has not averaged that maximum number of young people for many years? And again, it's supported by professional services staff, as well as health staff, trained youth officers and an Ashley school. I mean, it's got all the services. Are we just saying they're no longer appropriate services for the young people who will be in a new facility?

Mr WHITCOMBE - No. I am responsible for children and young people's care right now, and we have to be ambitious for the care that we have right now, and a huge amount of my days and my time is spent on firming up and responding to firming up the quality of care that we have at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. And I want to acknowledge the leadership and the staff who work every single day with those young people in really difficult circumstances at times there. They are doing a great job.

However, if I'm to look across that staff cohort, by and large it is an inexperienced staffing cohort. We've just had a discussion about the numbers that we've needed to recruit to keep the site at safe staffing levels. We've had to look well beyond the state to be able to recruit people into the facility, and we're continuing to do that, because we are committed to care. But we are having to go above and beyond, with some significant challenges given its location, on a day-by-day level.

...

We have, as I've said, amazing people who are turning up to work every day in hard circumstances, doing a great job. Absolutely we want to acknowledge those staff.

You also asked a question in relation to their future and the new model of care. We absolutely want there to be staff who are experienced at working at Ashley Youth Detention Centre who come to the new facility as part of our staff and cohort. That must be based on merit, and on fit, skills and capabilities. We are active in wanting to work with the staff at Ashley, for those who do want to be a part of the future, to get them in the best possible position to be successful and being a part of the new facility.

...

Ms PADDICK - ... There are some significant practical reasons as well, from a design perspective, that make that quite challenging. The overall layout and design of the facilities is not, sort of, the current standards of a world's best-practice youth detention centre.

Similarly, undertaking works either in or adjacent to an existing facility, and then recombining the two to create one larger facility, is an inherently difficult process for

*a number of reasons - practically, but also in terms of disruption to the existing facility. And the final outcome is never as good, I suppose, as a purpose-built facility, and I think with the model of care that is based on world's best practice, it would be very difficult to come up with a solution that really fitted that very well, if we were to modify an existing facility, particularly one of Ashley's age.*¹¹

Timeline

- 4.4 The proponent provided evidence on the timeline of the project, acknowledging that the closure of AYDC was announced in 2021:

CHAIR - *With all due respect, it was in September 2021 that it was announced the Ashley Youth Detention Centre would close and be replaced with... new fit-for-purpose facilities. That's four-and-a-half-years ago. Why is it taking so long to get it from the announcement to where we are today? It's four-and-a-half-years. It was asked to happen immediately, I believe, in the Commission of Inquiry.*

Mr WHITCOMBE - *September 2021, you are right, and fast-forwarding two years, the Commission of Inquiry report came down in September 2023, and as well called for the closure. It's at that point that the Youth Justice Reform team was established in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. There's been a significant process of determining what appropriate site, that met a range of criteria, would be suitable. I believe around 200 sites were assessed, through a desktop process, around particular criteria.*

From that time, we've had a project team established. We've had a design team, architectural team pulled together. We've needed to work through what the true cost of establishing this facility is and work through business case approaches around that true cost. We've done that in the course of the last year.

We've needed to establish actually what the experience and outcomes need to look like for children and young people, and therefore what is the model of care that we will be working to that needs to work in parallel and inform the design process. So, recently, we've established what that model of care is, and we're out for consultation currently with that.

We've wanted to engage widely with community organisations, with children and young people, with our own staff, to inform this work, and we are now well progressed with the design of this facility.

*I appreciate and acknowledge that it has been a long time, and too long for the children and young people who we're there to care for, but I am comfortable and confident with the progress that is now being made with the facility.*¹²

Youth Justice System in Tasmania

- 4.9 The Committee heard evidence from the proponent on aspects of the youth justice system in Tasmania, both how it operates currently, and how the proposed works aim to improve the system.
- 4.10 The proponent provided an overview of the cohort of children and young people in custodial youth justice settings in Tasmania:

¹¹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 14-16.

¹² Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 6-7.

Mr SHELTON - ... For the benefit of the Committee and anybody listening, could you just run through what the cohort, the age bracket and how many people have gone through the Ashley facility over the recent history, and what you predict this facility might need to cater for?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Sure. The graph that I believe you're referring to is the one that shows the numbers, on average, of children and young people in the facility year on year since, I think, 2015 through to 2024-25. It's peaked, on average, at around 16 young people. The size of the facility, as you're aware, has 16 bedrooms, and the work that we have undertaken to understand the capacity has involved overlaying some of the policy that is stated within the Commission of Inquiry and blueprint, like the recommendations to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility and the minimum age of detention, and introduce appropriate other care options for young people and diversionary services.

When we do an analysis of the young people in the facility, knowing what we know about them, their needs and an overlay of those policy initiatives, it takes what we predict in terms of the numbers of children who would ultimately be in a facility like that significantly lower than that 16 mark. We do need to plan for peaks and for changes in policy. That is why the planning application has actually applied for a 24-maximum limit, and we have come into this work with the analysis that we've done now confident that the facility is right sized for the population.¹³

- 4.11 The proponent provided further evidence on managing those in detention, having noted that the age of children and young people can range from 10 to 17 years old:

Ms BURNET - ... It says here, that seven of the cohort in 2024-25 at Ashley were aged between 10 and 13 years old. How do you deal with that kind of age differential in a facility?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I think it's one of the reasons why it's important to see the age of criminal responsibility, age of detention, lifted. 10- to 13-year-olds - a 12-year-old mixing with 17- and 18-year-olds, they're at a completely different stage of development. At the moment, there are limitations in how we can cohort and keep groups separate from each other, in terms of the current facility.

In the new facility, I think we've been really creative: there are two four-bedroom homes, there are two three-bedroom homes, and then there is a multipurpose two-bedroom home, essentially, that can actually be configured to two one-bedroom homes, or units. This is just going to allow for us to think really carefully about who we have mixing.

In the new facility, it has not been designed around 10- to 13-year-olds, and that's because of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations that talk to raising the age of criminal responsibility.¹⁴

- 4.12 The Committee also heard evidence on the number of children and young people who return to detention, and how the proposed works aim to reduce these occurrences:

CHAIR - ... Anne Hollonds, AO, is a former National Children's Commissioner and spokesperson for the Justice Reform Initiative, and she says:

¹³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p.20.

Governments are pouring record funding into a system that increases harm and fails to reduce crime.

and I quote, she states:

We are spending record amounts on a system that almost all children come back to. Around 85 per cent of children released from detention return to sentenced supervision within 12 months.

How many children in Tasmania return to detention under this current model we're using in Tasmania, and what are your projections in improving that with the building of the proposed site?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I would need to take the question, in terms of the exact percentage of children, on notice. We do know that it is high. Conversely to that, we also know that for many young people who are a part of the youth justice system, most of them don't go to Ashley Youth Detention Centre or don't go to a custodial environment, and a very significant proportion of them don't go on to reoffend. I say that because this facility is not a facility that is being set up in isolation of the wider youth justice reform. The youth justice reform, in terms of the recommendations through the Commission of Inquiry and the Youth Justice Blueprint, is based on international and contemporary best evidence, which talks to how you do everything you can to support change and support the things that young people need within their communities earlier.

We know that, obviously, their home environment and the work that we do with families, with communities, keeping them in education, those things in the long term are hugely preventative and safeguard our children from a pathway of offending. We want to have those services in place to the right levels that meet the need, and we want to minimise the numbers of children going into a facility like this. Facilities around the world can expose young people to peer influences, and it's often the peer influences that are much greater than the adult influences. It is why this facility has specifically been designed to keep cohorts of children within the facility small, at either three- or four-bedroom homes within the facility. It is why the facility is not a large-scale facility and why, as I've said, it sits in the context of legislative and service-based reforms that we believe will be effective in reducing offending into the future.

...

I do want to come back to a question that was made earlier around the return rate: the figures that I have in front of me across the 2021-2022 financial year had a 50 per cent return rate for young people within 12 months to the facility.¹⁵

- 4.13 The Committee asked the proponent whether the proposed works would accommodate children and young people currently detained in remand centres:

CHAIR - ... will the Pontville site accommodate young people currently in the Hobart Remand Centre and the Launceston Remand Centre watchhouses? Because we had that issue. Will that go to trying to alleviate that major issue for us at the moment?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Our Department is committed to working with Police and Justice in finding solutions to those current issues, in terms of placing children and young people within the reception prisons within watchhouses. This facility is not designed

¹⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 9-10.

to respond to that need, and, from a professional perspective, I think it's appropriate that it's designed not to respond to that. The moment that you have an entry of a young person into a facility like this, you sort of break that moment in terms of their perception about what it might be like, and I certainly don't want to expose any more young people to the population there than is absolutely necessary.

At the moment, we work within legislation that wouldn't allow young people to go to a custodial environment like that at that point in their justice journey. It would require legislative change.¹⁶

- 4.14 The Committee also sought evidence on how community and industry partnerships that support education and vocational training would be facilitated in the new facility:

Ms RATTRAY - ... I'm well aware that there's been a number of, over the years, Ashley Youth Detention Centre clients who have gone out into the Deloraine and Meander Valley community and worked on farms and have done various jobs. I'm just interested in how that type of community and industry partnership is going to be progressed in the Pontville area... [Your submission] talks about partnerships that may support education, vocational training and transition to employment pathways for young people and will also strengthen local capability and service integration. I'm just interested in how that's going to transfer from what we've already seen as being quite a positive outcome up in the Meander Valley community to the Southern Midlands community.

Mr WHITCOMBE - I think when it comes to vocational options or employment options, those things need to be available ideally in the communities that the young people are coming from. I know our Community Youth Justice Team, which has the responsibility for throughcare for young people who go to Ashley Youth Detention Centre, actively do work in this space, in terms of working to bridge or broker opportunities for young people, whether it be getting them back into education, training or employment.

As a service we are going through some change whereby we're establishing what we call regional care teams. The service, between child safety and youth justice, has come together in the last year. It doesn't mean that they provide the same functions and that there aren't different people working in those spaces, but we are in the process of establishing what we call regional care teams, where we bring together other government agencies and community agencies to work to be able to better broker and bridge supports and services for children and young people and families.

In the same way, we have an intent and have already started to do that in terms of engagement with the local community in the Pontville area. There's a new school at Brighton, a high school at Brighton, that not so long ago I've gone and visited and I've met the principal. I know that there is a network - in the space of vocational training and opportunities that do exist out in that community - that we would want to be able to be a part of and tap into. So I think the location close to that school, from an educational perspective in particular, does provide some opportunities for flexible options for young people in their learning.

Ms RATTRAY - ...do you envisage that some of those clients, if that's the right terminology, who might be at a new centre would go across to the new Brighton High

¹⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 13-14.

School and participate in some of their vocational and education classes that would be happening there? Is that what you're telling me there?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Look, I think that if that were to be the case, that would be a fantastic outcome for young people. It would have to be based around...their behaviour and risk to the community, but I do absolutely anticipate - and there are situations currently where young people do come outside of the facility for some vocational learning - that we would want to be able to facilitate that in the future. We haven't made any firm arrangements and put in concrete anything with the school. What schooling looks like for the new facility is still being worked through, but I would love that to be an outcome for young people.¹⁷

A New Model of Care

- 4.15 In its submission, DECYP provided an overview of the development of the model of care to be implemented in the new facility:

The new final Facility Model of Care will address Recommendation 12.18 of the Commission of Inquiry. It will describe the way youth justice services will be delivered for children and young people who are in detention as a last resort, from first point of contact with the facility through to exit from the facility.

The Facility Model of Care will outline the operating philosophy, service objectives and service standards for detention that are based on non-punitive, child-centred, trauma-informed, culturally safe practice and reflect international best practice in youth justice.

The Model of Care for the new facility will complement the Youth Justice Model of Care, released in December 2024, which provides the framework for therapeutic, trauma-informed, timely and culturally safe service delivery to reduce children and young people's involvement in the youth justice system.

The Facility Model of Care will contribute to the safety and wellbeing of the community as it enhances positive prosocial behaviour and protective factors through reparation, rehabilitation and the sustainable, safe return of children and young people to the community.

Consultation on the Facility Model of Care is ongoing. Input is being sought from stakeholders including children and young people, people with lived experience of detention, community sector organisations, Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and communities, and national and international experts.¹⁸

- 4.16 The Committee heard evidence from Mr Benjamin on his view of the model of care and design of the new facility, and how the proposed works sit within the broader reform recommended by the Commission of Inquiry:

CHAIR - Mr Benjamin, it was my understanding, through previous research, that you're part of a team of people who are tasked with the large job of putting together all the jigsaw puzzle pieces of the recommendations of the Inquiry, and feeding them all in to create a comprehensive, or complete jigsaw, I suppose. Can you talk to the importance of this detention centre in completing that jigsaw puzzle?...

¹⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 20.

Mr BENJAMIN - It does, and you're quite right. It is a complex and detailed approach. The detention centre is designed to properly accommodate those children and young people in a safe and secure way, in a trauma-informed way, which can hopefully alleviate some of the trauma which the young people and children would have already dealt with and tried to manage...

...

The detention centre, with the model of care that has been developed and will be developed, and with the staff whom models are being developed for, will offer a far better opportunity for the young people and children who are there to move back into society. It will do that through education, looking outwards, not inwards, developing the skills that they have, through addressing their health needs, their psychological health needs and their psychiatric health needs, in a far better way than we've seen at Ashley over the last 20 or 30 years.

...

It is specifically designed for that purpose. We know that many of the young people and children who are taken to Ashley will almost invariably end up in Risdon. It's for those at that very hard end that we're trying to look for ways to give them opportunities to not continue in youth detention and the difficulties that they're already facing.¹⁹

Design of the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility

4.17 The Committee sought evidence on how the design of the proposed works would ensure safety for both children and young people detained in the facility and the broader community:

Mr SHELTON - ...We mentioned out at the site - and from my perspective, the community could have an issue with the fact that this facility does not have a fence all the way around it, and that the buildings are part of the outer perimeter. I think it's worthy of a bit of a discussion about what's been put in place for protection of the community. These young people are there for their own good to try to rehabilitate them, but they're also being put behind a fence to protect the community as well.

...

Mr WHITCOMBE - ...building a new facility like this gives us the opportunity to get it right from a security perspective and to build a facility that is using the current best practice in this space to ensure that it is absolutely secure, and that has been our intent in the design, while achieving some of the small and homelike, less institutional feel to the facility. I know that we currently experience challenges at Ashley Youth Detention Centre about retrofitting some of those features to a site, so my opening remarks are about the opportunity that this gives us to be far stronger in this space.

Ms PADDICK - In terms of the philosophy of adopting the building as perimeter, it was an early decision by the design team, and we looked at both options, what would be traditionally the campus-type model, which, as you say, has a fence around all the buildings. We felt that the building-as-perimeter model, particularly on this site, opened up some wonderful opportunities to take advantage of the views to landscape and we know, through the literature and through research, that long-range

¹⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, p. 40.

views, being able to see the movement of the sun and the clouds, et cetera, looking out to landscape, it can be an extremely therapeutic situation for someone who's suffered trauma, so we thought that that was a great opportunity.

In terms of being confident that those buildings and the fenceline itself provided us with the most achievable level of security as possible, we had some robust conversations with our security team, our electronic security team. We have a combination of physical security measures, so the height of the fence, the material that the fence is made from. Similarly, the buildings that do sit on the perimeter have the highest level of security, so a level 1 security rating in terms of how they are constructed, and that is the wall, the window, the ceiling, the floor, et cetera. Those buildings have been designed in such a way as would withstand a high-level attack over an extended period of time.

In terms of those buildings, in our detailing, we've also gone to great lengths to ensure that they are not climbable, so simple little details that eliminate climbing points, step points, hold points on the building; but again, we have a layer of electronic security that reinforces that as well. As with our secure perimeter, we have early detection and warning, electronic security on the secure perimeter. So too on the houses and the buildings that sit on the perimeter, we have an electronic security system that gives us early warning of anyone trying to scale those buildings.

Then there's the operational response component that also fits into the overall security on the site. As Peter said, we have high ratios of staff to young people. If you look at all those things in conjunction, we're confident that we've designed the facility that, as much as is possible - and there will always be potentially an Olympic-level parkour athlete who might exist - but we are very confident that we've done everything we can to balance those two objectives: our broader objectives remaining small and homelike and also maintaining the security of the perimeter.²⁰

4.18 The proponent also provided evidence on the design and materials in the proposed works to mitigate damage caused by internal fires and flooding:

CHAIR - ... The understanding from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre site is that it's been subject to a number of internal fires and, therefore, sprinklers being activated and flooding. How are you going to mitigate those issues in the proposed project?

...

Mr TAPLIN - ... We've had some really good engagement with the Tasmania Fire Service in recent months around fire sprinkler coverage of certain areas of the site. We're well aware, and they've brought to bear their significant experience in sort of responding to incidents at Ashley. We've been able to adopt a system that, while I haven't officially signed off on it, we've still got to do the paperwork around that, we got an in-principle agreement to a system.

Ultimately that system - it is in place in some of the areas of Ashley and it does reduce the risk of unintended activations of sprinklers. So that's where the water damage issues have come from, where fire sprinklers may have been damaged onsite and then they release water. The intended system and its operation that we would have onsite would avoid that. It's called a dry-pipe system, so it requires two levels of detection to actually trigger a sprinkler to go off. So, it requires both smoke and heat to be

²⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 26-28.

detected. That, as one of the measures which, as I said, TFS have endorsed in principle, will be adopted in to try to mitigate the risk of unintended water damage...

CHAIR - And if we could also talk about how the design incorporates intended internal fires and sprinkler activation as well? Just from conversations with staff and so forth - there has been a number of incidents, because that could be unsafe, but also very expensive as well to try to fix.

Ms PADDICK - ... So certainly to the point of the materials, what we can do to help reduce the risk of a fire event within a bedroom - that's the most critical area. We've looked very carefully at the fire load within a room. The materials that have been chosen for the bedrooms are all a group 1 fire rating, which is the highest level of criteria that is required to provide protection against fire.

In terms of the sprinkler, I suppose the sprinkler heads are one of the more important things: their ability to be tampered with, their ability to be damaged and unintentionally set off. We've done a lot of looking at the systems that are available on the market to choose the ones that are the most robust and the least likely to be able to be tampered with, but, as Bryce mentioned, the dry-pipe system provides a bit of a second chance, in terms of if someone's trying to tamper with the system. In terms of the advice that we got back from the young people: they were equally frustrated by the use of sprinklers on site. We did look at the options of not having sprinklers, but we've decided that the best option, from a safety perspective and in conjunction with Tas Fire, is that we need to have them.²¹

4.19 Ms Sarah Paddick, Senior Associate, Grieve Gillett Architects, provided further evidence on the design of the visitor centre:

Ms RATTRAY - ... I'm just interested to get an understanding - this is a significant amount of money, and I don't really understand why you would put round circle windows and holes, which are going to cost a lot more money, than just having a good old square or rectangular window. I know it looks lovely, but you know, for the practical aspect, that it costs more. So, probably a question to you, Sarah. It does, it looks lovely, but we don't have endless amounts of money.

Ms PADDICK - I understand exactly where you're coming from. The circular window that you can see in that elevation there, the one on the right, is actually looking into a specific child's playroom area. So, when young people are at the centre, if they have siblings, we've got a specific area in the visits rooms that is to cater for a young person...

the benefits of including whimsy in design, including beauty in design, including colour and things. Often things cost more, but the value of them is still quite high. We have worked very hard with this design and with this project to take away the institutional nature of it. Wherever possible, we've tried to make decisions that lessen the institutional feel. It's very difficult when you've got a big fence and it clearly is a detention centre, so even the smallest little things that we can do, and in the scheme of the overall project, we have also worked very hard on value management over the course of this project. We have taken a lot of things out, but we have also opted to keep some elements so that we do not lose that core principle that we are trying to create a facility that does not appear institutional as much as we possibly can. I would

²¹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, p. 29.

say that that particular example of a circular window, and there would be other things that we could point to, I think they actually really help in that overall impression that we're trying to create.²²

4.20 The Committee also raised the inclusion of a café and training kitchen as part of the design:

Ms BURNET - There was, in one of the submissions, a concern about the use of a cafe and kitchen as a training facility; could you just explain why that was chosen?

Mr TAPLIN - Sorry, just in terms of clarification, the central kitchen? Because there are two kitchens onsite - well, there are multiple kitchens, actually - but there are two main kitchens onsite. There's the central kitchen, which is in the visits building, but then there is a dedicated training kitchen, which is in the education facility.

Ms BURNET - The training kitchen.

...

Mr WHITCOMBE - ...Look, we're working with young people who are often transitioning to independence. They've actually often been living at times independently, or have been homeless. All that we can do to build into them the skills and capabilities around food preparation is where we want to be. There's an opportunity for them to gain credits, and, look, I don't have the right language in the Tasmanian system, but from a vocational learning perspective it's really valuable.

CHAIR - ...will the young people also be participating in the cleaning of the site, as well as the cooking and food preparation?

Mr WHITCOMBE - We would want - and as much as possible, the daily routines to reflect normal life; and it is why we do have kitchen facilities in the units. Certainly, as a practitioner for me, I started my life working in facilities like this, in terms of my professional work, and we did as much as we could alongside young people, in terms of cleaning, in terms of chores, in terms of food preparation, as we possibly could. There are some limitations with that around risk, and at times who we're working with and helping them get to a place where we can do some of those activities, but we want to normalise this living experience as much as possible.²³

4.21 The proponent then provided further evidence on the kitchen facilities included in the accommodation spaces of the proposed works:

Mr SHELTON - ...in the flyover, it was mentioned - you were in the accommodation section... I think you indicated there was a kitchen in those facilities. There are the two kitchens we're just talking about. Having a kitchen, you need your utensils. You've got utensils and three or four people in the one facility. How are you managing the risk around -

Mr WHITCOMBE - ...In the units, yes, there is some open kitchen and it will be limited in the open space actually what is available, and then there is a back part of the kitchen which is in a separate room, off to the back and side, which would hold some of the other things like a stove top, et cetera, for that particular kitchen facility. For the facility as a whole, it is important that we have an industrial kitchen. Not all young people are going to be able to come to the facility and be involved in their own food

²² Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 29-30.

²³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 30-31.

preparation. We need to be able to have that service onsite and that's the purpose of the industrial kitchen. If there are further comments you want to add?

Ms PADDICK - In the houses in particular, having the two types of kitchens - the more open kitchen, which as you acknowledge, there might be scenarios where you would want to restrict use of that. We've designed the storage and the joinery such that it can be locked down, or it can be left open, depending on the cohort you have. What we didn't want to do was design a facility where you were always pitching at the most extreme-risk scenario, but have options across each house to allow for different groups to use it in different ways. If the group was able to, you could have a very normalised situation where they would be able to cook a meal, but if you had a higher-risk group, you can lock things away and have much more levels of control over how it's used. Hence, the different types of food preparation and kitchen facilities within the houses. We didn't want to just be locked down to the highest-risk scenario.

Mr SHELTON - Security-wise, there is an issue locking it down... just how are you managing the risk? I don't disagree with the fact that you need to take these young people through life skills, but then there's the risk associated with whatever you do.

Mr WHITCOMBE - ...I think the design of the facility and the security around it will really strike that balance between being very robust and being as homelike as possible, and allowing for flexibility, as Sarah has talked about. The biggest thing that we can do around safety and security is the staff who are there in the facility alongside the young people, having relationships with them, not being hands off, but being alongside them, and I wouldn't foresee a moment where there would be the time and space for young people to smash down a door without staff being there.²⁴

4.22 The Committee sought evidence on the environmentally and socially sustainable design features of the proposed works:

CHAIR - ... Can you quickly run me through... environmental and socially sustainable design? It says, 'opportunities for water harvesting and reuse, particularly for external landscaping'. Can you run me through what that means? Excuse my ignorance there, and also 'the use of thermal massing and principles of thermal inertia'.

Ms PADDICK - We have a couple of large rainwater tanks on site that are collecting water from building B. It's always challenging on a secure site to incorporate things like rainwater tanks simply because they become a climbing risk. Within the site landscape itself, we've managed the overland flows across the site to best service the landscape throughout the site. The site itself will be partially irrigated because we acknowledge the importance of the landscape, but we haven't adopted what you would consider to be a full stormwater collection option on this site for the security reason. Wherever possible we have, and that's the building outside the line of the perimeter where we're collecting rainwater.

In terms of the thermal mass, by nature of the types of buildings that we have, we have very high thermal mass in the walls and wherever possible we've tried to orient the buildings to best accommodate that. Again, in a secure facility like this, you're limited in how you can do that because of the nature of the way the buildings are positioned on the site. We do have a high level of insulation within the building walls

²⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 31-32.

that will allow them to keep a stable temperature and make the best use of the air conditioning that we have within the buildings as well.

Ms RATTRAY - Are there going to be solar panels, and will they heat the swimming pool?

Ms PADDICK - No, there are not; and again this is a security concern that is often the case. We don't like to have anything on the roofs in secure facilities. That was a discussion that we had quite early on because, yes, ideally, it would be a sensible solution, and we also looked at options for panels outside the fence. Ultimately it wasn't adopted for a number of different reasons.²⁵

4.23 The Committee then heard evidence on the cost of building and maintaining a pool at new facility:

Ms RATTRAY - I did ask at an earlier time for the pool costings. Also, what is envisaged will be the ongoing cost of maintenance for a swimming pool to service 19, 18, 16 young people at a particular time of the year?...

Mr WHITCOMBE - ...I am going to open that conversation by saying that, from a professional perspective, having a pool in these situations isn't just a luxury recreational tool for young people.

...

I have worked with young people who are aged 14, 15, 16 who have not had the opportunity to develop and to play in ways that certainly I was able to, or my children were able to. I've seen them playing, and I don't say this lightly in this context, but I've seen them playing with dolls. I've seen them playing in sandpits and experiencing and growing and developing at a different developmental rate than we would expect. Having a pool where children and young people can interact, where they can learn new skills, where it is in a place where they are contained, they don't get to go out and have the liberties that other young people do, is an important part of their care within a facility like this. I'm making those opening remarks to say this is not just a nice to have, this is about age-appropriate development and skill-building for children and young people...

Ms RATTRAY - And I do acknowledge that there is a swimming pool at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre...

Mr WHITCOMBE - Yes. And it is a normal part of all youth justice centres, you know, throughout New Zealand and Australia...

...

Mr TAPLIN - ...in regard to the costs for the pool: the pool infrastructure itself is in the build cost of the pool. The pool itself is approximately \$200,000 for the pool. There's \$300,000 for the pool equipment, so that would be the pumping and the filtration and all those types of things, then about \$150,000 for what we would call sundry items, so sundry building expenses, so that might be handrails and the flooring and those types of things around the outside of the pool, so about \$650,000 for the pool itself.

In terms of a maintenance cost, we don't have an exact estimate of what the new pool will cost to maintain, but the experience with maintaining the existing pool at Ashley, it's estimated to be around \$10,000 per year, which excludes the electricity

²⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Grieve Gillett Architects, p. 32.

cost. Obviously, that's not necessarily able to be split up. We would expect the maintenance costs for the pool at the new facility to be less than that. It's a similar-sized pool, but it's new infrastructure and more efficient pumps and all those types of things. We also have improved access to the services that would be providing for the pool, so better plant access and those types of things as well onsite.²⁶

Site Selection and Construction

4.24 The proponent outlined the site selection process for the proposed works:

Ms BURNET - ... If we're talking about sites, and you talked about your desktop study, Mr Whitcombe, of around 200 sites; I'm just curious to know why this was the pick of the bunch?

Mr TAPLIN - It was outlined in the submission from the Department. There were a number of rounds of those desktop reviews undertaken. As you mentioned, depending on the variety of criteria that were used, up to about 200 sites were identified as suitable. The Pontville site was selected as one of a handful to be looked at in further detail. As part of that process, they looked at further desktop information, which included: the topography of the land and the steepness of the site, which talks to how developable it is; the extent of native vegetation coverage, the extent of potential environmental impact that there might be; the proximity of the site to residences and other sensitive uses around that site; the visibility of the site, both in consideration of its amenity impact, as well as overlooking of the facility itself; and then also its proximity to townships and highways and the like.

After going through that, a number of those 200 sites were ruled out because of incompatibility, I guess, with those criteria. It was also determined that, while privately owned sites were considered, a government-owned piece of land was preferable, because it simplified the process of development in terms of not requiring acquisitions. Out of that, the 200 sites were narrowed down, and the Pontville site was then one of the ones taken forward for those further investigations and ultimately chosen.²⁷

4.25 The Committee then sought evidence on how the proponent will approach the tender process:

Mr SHELTON - Is it anticipated that the tender would go out to one major contractor and then sub it out, or because of the design - in a very large building like we normally look at, it's one big contractor, but this actually lends itself to segregation of different parts and different tendering processes to allow the smaller contractor to actually have a go at them. Is that a possibility?

...

Mr TAPLIN - We will be going to market as part of an open approach for a main works contractor, which will be delivering all of the works with their subcontractors, as you note, other than the security work. While it's conducive to a number of work fronts - the individual nature of each of the buildings - there still is an obligation from an overall site-management perspective, the logistics, all those types of things, and we really only have one entrance to the site, so there are a number of risks that, if we were to break it down into smaller contracts, that the state would take, and probably not in a position to be able to take and manage those types of risks. It's much better

²⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 32-33.

²⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 16.

for us to be able to pass that on to the contracting market. They can manage traffic management consistently. That helps with communicating with stakeholders as well; safety, security, all of those aspects get managed under one contract with all the subcontractors working under that same plan.

Mr HARRISS - Do we know how many Tasmanian builders would be capable of building something like this?

Mr TAPLIN - We have looked at - the project, because of its size, ticks into the national prequalification scheme and there is obviously a requirement for both Treasury, local prequalification, but also for national prequalification.

Ms RATTRAY - There are not that many of that level, are there?

Mr TAPLIN - All of - I won't say all of, but most of the larger state contractors, so the ones that are Tasmanian-based, would be capable of delivering this. It may well attract some interest from the mainland potentially.²⁸

Workforce and Recruitment

4.7 DECYP's submission included a summary on the workforce and recruitment requirements for the new facility:

The Commission of Inquiry's final report underscores that sustainable improvement in youth justice outcomes requires a professional, well-resourced and culturally responsive workforce, supported by strong leadership.

The Commission of Inquiry's recommendations included that staff must have appropriate attributes, attitudes, skills and qualifications to build positive relationships and work therapeutically with children and young people in detention (Recommendation 12.18), that all current AYDC youth workers should be required to reapply for their positions (Recommendation 12.9), and that staffing numbers must be sufficient to avoid lockdowns, enable line-of-sight supervision and enable coverage of leave and training. In line with Recommendation 12.9, there will not be a direct transfer of staff from AYDC to the new facility; however, some AYDC staff may transfer to the new facility where they meet suitability requirements.

The therapeutic model requires specialised, multidisciplinary teams that include professionals from a range of disciplines. The project team is currently developing the Workforce Plan for the new facility, to be delivered in 2026, which will outline staffing requirements across all functional areas, including operational staff, youth-focused roles, education and health professionals, cultural support roles, and administrative personnel.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (2024) has found that many challenges in the child justice system nationally stem from an under-resourced workforce reliant on inexperienced and casualised staff. Improving workforce conditions is expected to enhance safety for children, young people and staff, improve retention, and lower costs associated with recruitment and training.

Recruitment processes and assessment criteria for recruitment of staff at the new facility will be designed in line with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. This will ensure staff have appropriate attributes, attitudes, skills and

²⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 18-19.

qualifications to build positive relationships and work therapeutically with children and young people in detention.²⁹

4.8 The Committee sought evidence at the public hearing on the current recruitment at ADYC and the projection of staffing requirements for the proposed works:

CHAIR - ... How many staff do you anticipate will be required to facilitate the proposed project? How many staff do you currently have at Ashley Youth Detention Centre? What's your staff-to-incarcerated person ratio? I think each state has, I suppose, their 'in a perfect world', like 3:1 or 2:1. What's your current ratio? What is your anticipated ratio? How are you going to recruit efficiently to be able to meet that demand?...

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... I will embark on answering some of those things, and if you bring me back to the ones that I haven't covered: in terms of the current numbers at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, we have an FTE footprint of in the mid-80s in total who support the children and young people there. On a day-by-day basis, within a shift we work to having 15 care workers, or youth workers, what we would term 'on the floor' with the young people. Typically, we would have between 16 and 20 or 16 and 21 young people there at any one time. So that says something about the ratio in the here and now.

CHAIR - Are you understaffed at the moment? You can't meet that ratio demand at the moment. Is that correct?

Mr WHITCOMBE - We have, I would say, over the last six to 12 months at times been very challenged with our staffing numbers. In recent times we've had very successful recruitment campaigns where we've gone far broader and wider in our recruitment for staff into the facility. We've had many hundreds of applications for Ashley Youth Detention Centre, and we've had over the last probably four months - and I'm talking in approximations to the Committee - but over 20 new staff start at the site. In terms of the project team, behind me are key members of the project team. I will pass to Bryce for the specific number within the team. It's not a large team and it's made up of a couple of key leads when it comes to establishing the operations of the site - a key lead when it comes to the practice and model of care that will be determined, and those two professionals, who are deep professionals in their field, work alongside the design team, some of which is a core project management team and then some of which is the other specialists we work with.

CHAIR - I'm more interested in the day-to-day running of the site itself, so what's currently happening and whether or not you're going to be able to recruit enough staff to meet the new demands, and what your ratio is of people who will be working within that new proposed site.

Mr WHITCOMBE - What we have modelled - and it is subject to decisions - is that with a maximum of 16 young people at the site, we would have a 1:1 ratio, so that we would have 16 workers onsite working with young people alongside them in the facility. That is a significant ratio.

We would also be changing the shift roster that we work to, which currently is a 12-hour shift roster, to an eight-hour roster, which we think is far more conducive to

²⁹ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 21.

better care. We ultimately have modelled, against the model of care, a staffing cohort and totality of around 170 FTE.

That is subject to decisions, it's subject to resourcing, but it is the work that we have done to date.³⁰

Aboriginal Heritage

- 4.26 The proponent provided the Committee with evidence on the identification of Aboriginal heritage at the site of the proposed works as well as the adjacent Rifle Range Road:

Ms BURNET - ... there was some work to identify Aboriginal heritage. Can you tell the Committee what was located? And obviously there's some sensitivities towards this, but how would that impact how you might develop the site?

Mr TAPLIN - Yes. The site has an Aboriginal heritage site overlaid over it. It's only a very - well, a slither of the site, I would probably call it - but also Rifle Range Road is included in that site.

We undertook a range of both desktop, initially, and then in-field investigations, to explore the extent of that site. We were able to determine, through a range of test-pitting work, so shallow test pits that were undertaken across the site, a high degree of confidence around the extent of that particular site. That informed the initial planning for the location of the facility. The main facility itself, where it's located onsite is outside of that heritage site, and it's within what our consultants have called the low-risk area. So we're not expecting there to be any impacts to any heritage values as a result of the development in that particular location.

We will obviously have things like unanticipated finds, processes in place that will be required for the contractor to adhere to. We have sought, which is outlined in the submission, an Aboriginal Heritage permit. Because we are doing work within that heritage site, we do need to seek that approval. That is mostly related, but not exclusively, but mostly related to the works that will happen in Rifle Range Road.

As you can probably imagine, though, we did have a study of Rifle Range Road, and it is a highly disturbed environment, having already been a road corridor. So, we did receive that permit, and that gives us the permissions for those works in Rifle Range Road as well.

Ms BURNET - Any sort of other European heritage factors as well?

Mr TAPLIN - Not on our site, no.³¹

Bushfire Risk

- 4.27 The proponent provided an overview of how the design of the proposed works respond to the risk of bushfire:

CHAIR - ... Could you run us through the strategy in case of the site having to be evacuated in the case of a bushfire, and where you would put the clients in the case of a bushfire?

Mr TAPLIN - ... because of the bushfire zone, we are required to have an onsite refuge... it's very dry, it's a grassy area, so one of the main sources of a fire-generating

³⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 11-12.

³¹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 8-9.

event onsite is a fast-moving grass fire. In that instance, we might not necessarily have the time for an evacuation. The facility is being designed such that the education building and part of the administration building will actually be an onsite refuge... that would be the primary refuge for the site.

There is also a bushfire hazard management plan, or strategy rather, that's developed as part of the initial design and planning process. That will need to be developed into a proper bushfire hazard management plan. There will be a number of triggers for different types of events; some of those might trigger evacuation, some of them might trigger refuge on site. It might also be that there's early evacuation of nonessential staff and then refuge onsite, or a combination of those things...

Ms PADDICK - Just further to that, what that means is that the education building and... part of the administration building is designed to maintain a tenable environment for a period of time - I think off the top of my head, it's four hours - that allows the number of people who are on site to take refuge in those areas. We deliberately chose the education building because it gave us some flexibility in keeping groups separate. We had originally thought the gym, but then went to the education building. Additionally, the master control room is a refuge environment as well, acknowledging that that part of the site needs to stay occupied during a bushfire event. Externally, there are considerations within the landscape - so the type of planting that is close to the building is a particular type of planting: bushfire-resistant-type plants. So, there has been a number of design solutions that we've adopted to manage that particular scenario.

Mr WHITCOMBE - We have an operational lead as part of the project team who would be working from a business continuity planning perspective with DPFEM [Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management], and establishment of broader business continuity arrangements as well.³²

Public Transport

4.28 The Committee sought evidence on the accessibility of the site of the proposed works via public transport:

CHAIR - ... I did have a question based on public transport options to the site and what that would look like for families that were trying to access their family members who are in that centre, knowing that there are no buses to Brighton on a Sunday. Apparently, they're meant to start in May this year, but there hasn't been, and sometimes it's a service of maybe one a day that might be anywhere near there. That is limiting transport options for a lot of families, who I understand don't drive cars and might not have access to vehicles to visit their family within the site. Can you run through some of the options that may be provided for those families, if it's all about connection and improving those relationships between people but there's very limited public transport?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Look, it's a challenge that we face right now, and our service does provide a small amount of financial assistance for families to be able to travel to see their young people, absolutely. And the reason is to those points that you made about connection and building those relationships. We want to see an increase in families and those people who are involved in those young people's lives visiting the facility,

³² Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 24-25.

and that goes to some of the ways that we've thought about the area where visits can take place, in the cultural centre and things like that.

We don't know what the future will hold in terms of a bus service and about the demand for that. As you've alluded to in terms of the future prospect, we do hope that eventuates, but we will be a service that continually commits to supporting families to be able to meet with their young people in the ways that we're committed to right now.

CHAIR - Okay, so it's not a strength of the proposed project - accessibility through public transport is a bit of a weakness, you could say.

Mr WHITCOMBE - There is more work to be done. I don't think it's a weakness. I think it's actually stated really strongly in the model of care, in terms of the underlying principles and what is intended to build connection to community, connection to family, connection to culture and who they are and their identity. The operationalisation of that, you know, we are still a couple of years off. There is a lot of planning to be done, and I think that we're demonstrating right now that commitment in terms of the way that we support families to be able to visit Ashley Youth Detention Centre.³³

Statutory Approvals and Appeals

- 4.29 DECYP's submission outlined the process undertaken to obtain statutory approvals for the proposed works. The proposed works required a discretionary planning approval from the Southern Midlands Council under the provisions of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Southern Midlands. The application was approved with conditions; however, the planning permit was subsequently appealed:

Following the issue of the Planning Permit, two appeals were lodged with the Tasmanian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT) and a preliminary conference was held in January 2026; however, a hearing date has not been set.

Project-specific legislation (Youth Justice Facility Development Bill 2025) to address appeal risk and provide timeline certainty was not passed through Parliament; consequently, the appeals process introduces significant schedule uncertainty that may delay the project completion and closure of AYDC by up to 12 months (or indefinitely if the permit is ultimately denied).³⁴

- 4.30 The submission further stated:

While the planning appeal is underway, DECYP is continuing preparatory planning, procurement activities and some early works, in line with standard project delivery practices. Construction is unable to commence until the appeal is resolved, which is expected to impact the completion of construction by up to 12 months (or indefinitely if the permit is ultimately denied).³⁵

³³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 36-37.

³⁴ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 55.

³⁵ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 71.

4.31 The Committee sought further evidence from the proponent regarding the appeals during the public hearing:

CHAIR - ... we understand, from the submission, that a planning permit was issued by the Southern Midlands Council on 11 December 2025 and that two appeals have been lodged with the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT). Can you please talk us through what those appeals are about, and the risks associated with those appeals and the proposed project?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Sure. I will pass to Bryce shortly to talk through that process. Obviously, we are still proceeding with some of the works around the landscaping at the site and with the planning process, but we also recognise that there are delays and there is a process that we're working through. I will pass to Bryce to talk through that.

Mr TAPLIN - So, obviously we are going through that appeals process at the moment. We're partway through the development of evidence, as it's called. We are waiting for that process to be complete, for all of the parties to provide their evidence. Then we expect the tribunal will schedule the hearing, which is probably the key component of that appeals process.

I guess while we are going through an appeals process, we're limited in the information that we can share about that, just to maintain the integrity of that process. We have provided an overview of some of the issues that have been discussed within the appeals process from a planning perspective in our submission. So if there are any questions about that, we can consider what we can share at this time...

CHAIR - How long do you think this appeals process could potentially take? I know no-one has a crystal ball, but we know that these things can often be very time-consuming. Also, they're two distinct appeals, is that correct?

Mr TAPLIN - TASCAT has an ability to hear the appeals effectively as one, which when we first met with them, that was effectively the agreement. So, while they are two distinct appeals, they'll be heard as one matter together.

CHAIR - Okay - and how long do you expect?

Mr WHITCOMBE - We expect it to be a three- to 12-month delay.³⁶

4.32 The proponent also provided evidence on the cost of legal fees associated with the appeals:

Mr TAPLIN - ... I do have some information, because I think the costs from the tribunal perspective is one of the questions.

... we've split our costs into two components. We have obviously a range of witnesses who we will be putting forward that we will be presenting to the tribunal as part of the hearing. We've currently made allowances, based on fees and those types of things that have been provided, for \$65,000 for that.

From a legal fees perspective, it's a little bit more complex. We are being represented through the Office of the State Litigator. We're not necessarily going to see costs from them to the project, but they are also obtaining some external legal advice, so we're in the process of formalising what those numbers are. We do have

³⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 5.

contingencies available to that, but we haven't specifically allocated an amount for that.

CHAIR - And that is inclusive of both appeals, not just the one?

Mr TAPLIN - Yes.³⁷

- 4.33 The Committee then asked why the decision was made to bring the proposed works before the Committee before the appeals process was concluded:

CHAIR - ... It's unusual for us, as a committee, to hear a proposed project when there are significant legal impediments already in place. Why was the decision taken to bring it to the Public Works Committee before this was potentially remedied?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I'll lead off from a children and young persons' perspective and the commitments that have been made through the Commission of Inquiry, which is to close Ashley Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible. In order for that to occur, we know we need a new facility.

In terms of the care that we wish to provide young people every day, we know that we're doing things right now to improve the quality of care at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. But we are inhibited by the infrastructure, by some of the challenges that we've had through the workforce - and there is an imperative for us to do what we can with the time that we have to create the shortest possible pathway to opening a new facility, so that we can see the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. So it's with that principle in mind, and then there are obviously risks and responsibilities that we have to the process...

Mr TAPLIN - ...while the appeal process is underway there are certainly plenty of things that we can be doing.

There's a lot of planning work, as in design work, finalisation, preparing for procurements, all of those aspects of a project that still need to occur. While we're seeking or waiting for the outcome of the appeals, we will be delivering those aspects of the project so that we are as ready as we can be, should we get a favourable outcome from the appeal. Again, as Peter outlined, that's to minimise the amount of delay that we experience from it. We can't commence construction and we wouldn't make commitments until we do have the outcome from the appeal, so it is just preparatory work that we would be doing up until that point.

In terms of the referral to the Committee at this stage, while the appeal process is a little bit unusual, it is just one avenue of us needing to seek approvals for the project. And doing so for a complex project like this, and continuing our work and seeking that recommendation, just gives us that surety that once we do have those things in place, we're ready to go and ready to move.³⁸

- 4.34 The Committee heard further evidence on the early works that have commenced despite the appeals to the planning permit:

Ms RATTRAY - ... I'm interested to understand how much, and how far, are the early works going to be before there's an actual decision from the appeals process as well, because if that doesn't seek the project's favour, then effectively there's been a lot of

³⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 36.

³⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 6.

money spent with no outcome. Just to have some idea of how much of that work is going to be undertaken before you say we will have to wait.

Mr TAPLIN - Yep. So, the early works that we've currently got underway, as you said, is the perimeter landscaping. So that landscaping, we've taken a view of developing that as early as we can so that it provides the trees and the vegetation that's been planted time to establish and form a screen and buffer around the site. That work is the only work that we're currently undertaking on site. Any other work on the actual property is subject to the planning permit, which is out for appeal.

We have proposed to do early works in Rifle Range Road, which is in the Brighton municipality, and the intent for us with those works is to bring services to the site. The site is currently un-serviced. It doesn't have water, power, communications or sewerage. We plan to bring, as part of the early works, a power supply to the site, communication conduit to the site, and a water supply to the site.

...

Ms RATTRAY - ...And that will be it - you won't put any roads in, you won't do any upgrades to roads, until there is a result from the appeals process?

Mr TAPLIN - That's right, yes. We can't do any work onsite until we have a valid permit. The works in Rifle Range Road, other than what I mentioned, so the upgrade of the road that we've discussed, we wouldn't be doing that until towards the end of the construction period prior to operation.

Mr WHITCOMBE - The costs of the project to date are \$7.88 million.

Ms RATTRAY - Does that include any of the providing the utility services to the site?

Mr TAPLIN - It includes some of the landscaping costs to date, but we'll get a number for the actual estimate of those early works for you.³⁹

4.35 The proponent followed up with the Committee to provide a further cost breakdown of the early works:

Mr TAPLIN - ...just in relation to the earlier question about the costs for the early works. I think the question was about the split of the costs for the early works.

...

It's \$7.88 million spent on the project in total to date. But in relation to the estimates for the early works that we would be undertaking, we have - and I won't give you the full breakdown because some of these are not let contracts, they're ones that we're still yet to take to market. In terms of the split between landscaping, that's approximately \$1.1 million, and in terms of the services, which combines all of the other services that I mentioned, that's also approximately \$1.1 million.

Ms RATTRAY - That includes TasNetworks, TasWater?

Mr TAPLIN - Yes. I'll just be clear with that, though. That's the work that I mentioned that would be early works, which is only the work on Rifle Range Road, so not the component that's onsite, which wouldn't be early works.⁴⁰

³⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 35.

- 4.36 The proponent provided evidence on how the timeline and budget had been rephased due to the appeals:

CHAIR - ... At the moment, because we're expecting that the project will be delayed, the completion and closure, and that will delay the completion and closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre up to 12 months, you're estimating. When are you expecting this particular project to be completed? That's if, for example, if we are adding the additional 12 months, what's your expected completion date, if this is signed off?

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... In terms of the anticipated budget, we have submitted a re-phased budget, subject to budget announcements, whereby it takes into account the potential three- to 12-month delay in the delivery of the facility. We are still aiming for a 2028 delivery timeframe for the facility, but we will need to obviously adjust depending on the time that it takes to appropriately work through these processes.

CHAIR - So, 2028 completion?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Yes, so the project has been on track to deliver by the end of 2027. If we ended up with that full 12-month delay, we would anticipate the back end of 2028.

CHAIR - Okay. So, the contingency's just for Ashley to remain open until the completion of that? That's the strategy, I anticipate? There's not really any other option, is there?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Well, we need to continue to grow the quality of care at Ashley, both in terms of the program and supports for children and young people, and the way that we grow and support our staff there. There are some opportunities with the model of care that's currently out for consultation for us not to sit on our hands and think about that just in relation to the new facility, but start to implement aspects of that as we can at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. That's what we intend to do.⁴¹

Opposition to the Proposed Works

- 4.37 The proponent responded to evidence received by the Committee that opposed the proposed works:

Ms RATTRAY - ... we've also received some evidence about a joint statement backed by 15 community organisations, groups, legal, Aboriginal, allied health consultancy and domestic family and sexual violence services, saying, and I'll use their words:

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

I won't list all of those. I think it's probably readily available, but would you just like to comment on the fact that there were a lot of submissions against the site of this proposed site and facility, and very few - I think it was about 11 or something in favour, and there are 15 who have put their name to a document saying this won't work, this won't do what it set out to achieve. I'd be really pleased if you could comment on that.

Mr WHITCOMBE - This facility and this model of care, if we implement what we have said we wish to implement, will be, I believe, the most evidence-based and effective model that we can provide for Tasmania's children and young people in the youth

⁴¹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 35-36.

justice arena. The placement of the site, of the location, in terms of it being near Tasmania's largest population, means that many more young people will not have to travel far or be significantly separated from their community, from their family in terms of the location of that particular site.

The site provides us with a real opportunity to work with other community organisations, with other government organisations and for children and young people to have access to the services that they need in a much greater way, and we've integrated some of that service need into the facility design. I equally recognise that it does not service all of the young people in the north, north west of the state...

We have obligations to those children and young people as well. This conversation is about this facility and the design and build and the investment into this. I think there are other conversations, certainly that we're having within the service that I lead, about how we can make sure the right care options and alternatives are in the north of the state, but we've got work to do to establish those.⁴²

- 4.38 The Committee sought further evidence on the stated benefit of locating the proposed works in southern Tasmania, acknowledging that this will disbenefit those residing in the north of the state:

Ms RATTRAY - Do you have some up-to-date figures of the split between north and south of the current residents of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre?

Mr WHITCOMBE - It does fluctuate a bit... What I do know is that around 60 to 70 per cent have come from the south of the state. So, it's that sort of 70:30 or 65:35-type split. We can get more up-to-date figures on notice.

Ms RATTRAY - Because the advantage to families of residents in a southern facility is going to then in turn disadvantage the residents who are northern based in a southern facility. We're virtually going to just swap it around.

Mr WHITCOMBE - Yes. I agree, except we are going to be serving a greater proportion of our young people in terms of keeping them closer to their communities, and allowing their families and those who support them to be closer to them and be able to visit more frequently. How we support those families in the north who would need to travel down, or those people who are close to them, as part of the operational planning and decision-making that we need to think about, we have a role and a responsibility to build their connection to their families and to their communities in this work, and so we need to consider that.⁴³

- 4.39 The proponent followed up with the Committee on the current cohort of children and young people in AYDC:

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... Of the cohort that we have in Ashley today, we have 18 young people. Twelve of those young people are from the south. Six are from across the north or north west. I do have the breakdown of the six in terms of north and north west, but we don't offer numbers below five. The split is 12 to the south and six to the north and north west.⁴⁴

⁴² Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 10-11.

⁴³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 16.

4.40 The Committee heard evidence on how the proponent was managing, addressing and responding to community concern through consultation and engagement:

Ms RATTRAY - ...there's a significant amount of interest from the community, I'd suggest, in not only the submissions that the Committee received, but it's acknowledged here as well. I'm just interested in having on the record how that concern is being managed with the community, setting aside that there is the process going on at TASCAT as well. Just talk me through what sort of engagement there is with the broader community around the community concern.

Mr WHITCOMBE - ... In terms of stakeholder and community consultation, the master plan community consultation period ran from 5 May to 25 May last year. We really welcomed feedback from the wider community at that time. The project team coordinated a mailbox drop to notify residents and landowners within a 2-kilometre radius of the site of the master plan's release, as well as upcoming community drop-in sessions for that. We've been a part of those community drop-in sessions. There were some concerns that were raised from adjacent landowners and businesses, and there were varying perspectives across that. Some were anxious about the development and the impact on their safety, whereas others were very interested and wanted more details.

Ms RATTRAY - I'd be interested to know whether there have been any changes to the design of the facility to accommodate some of those - probably leaving out the landscaping buffer zone. Obviously, it's significant, but it's not a key issue, I don't think.

Mr TAPLIN - I will just say in regard to the landscaping buffer zone, we had intended on delivering that in any case, but we did make modifications to its positioning and layout, which was a direct result of the feedback that we did receive.

Ms RATTRAY - More of a buffer zone?

Mr TAPLIN - We had some requests to move it away from some property boundaries, so we didn't have overshadowing issues and those types of things. We absolutely worked through that with stakeholders - that process.

Obviously with undertaking work on a site, we've been doing a variety of investigations. We're doing the landscape works now; we've had a variety of activities that we've been undertaking on the site, and we've been keeping the nearby landowners and other stakeholders that are in proximity to the site up to date as those processes have been undertaken. We've tried to keep them informed of key milestones around, for instance, when the development application was lodged.

We need to be careful, obviously, particularly around that, in that's a council-run engagement process. We provided some high-level information about the submission, but we needed to leave council to run the open process that they run through that. But overall, we've tried to communicate through the project and hold those information sessions as we can, and provide information as we can, as we've gone through the design to date.

Ms RATTRAY - What about the operational controls? It talks about that. Is that something that was addressed through that community engagement?...

Ms PADDICK - ... There were some concerns - valid concerns - about sounds that might be generated from a facility like this: sirens or alarms going off, lights being extremely bright. We were able to - and certainly during the design process - make sure that our consultant team was aware of the sensitivity of those types of things, and we've come

up with solutions and operational practices that will mean that doesn't happen. Without going into micro details, there are ways that you can go to one or the other of the extremes, and we've very much chosen to be very mindful of -

Ms RATTRAY - The bells don't ring for dinner, is that what you're telling me?

Ms PADDICK - Yes, and the amplification of some of the communications equipment on the site has been designed in a way to make sure that it's quite specific. Similarly, the perimeter lighting - to give you another more detailed example - the selection of light fittings that really cast lighting downwards that operate at very low light levels until there is a potential event, at which point they're able to be controlled as required. That's probably just a couple of quick examples.

From a broader design perspective, we heard from some of the community concerns about the mass of the site, you know, a facility like this - the overall massing and its impression in what is a large rural landscape. You'll see - and you might've noticed when we did the fly-through - there's a lot of variety within the roof shapes. It's not just one large, massive building. You could design something like that as a very significant large structure. We chose to really break it down and try to get a more of a village feel to it with the roof forms and the roof angles. I suppose, as a design team, we tried to take as much of the feedback as possible and, where practical, bring that through into the design.⁴⁵

- 4.41 The Committee then sought evidence specific to the issue raised of the discernible odour produced by the nearby medicinal cannabis farm:

CHAIR - Can we run through the two main issues that the community has raised, and that's the medicinal cannabis farm and the closeness of that farm to the proposed site? It's pretty much straight across the Midland Highway from the proposed site. Reading through correspondence that's been provided to us, and I know definitely through my office, I've received countless reports of odour. I've smelt that quite strongly myself and not just, where it says here, 'around harvest times'. I'm talking all year round. I believe that is potentially expanding even further in their operations.

Can you talk us through the concerns that have been raised by the community about that odour, and whether it is appropriate to have that - and it can be a significant odour, I have smelt that myself - for young people within a detention centre, of sorts? Also whether they may have - and I don't want to stigmatise or generalise too much about the upbringings young people in the facility may have - but whether it would - one could assume that many of those younger people would have been exposed to that odour and smell in environments as they were growing up, and that could be part of a re-traumatising problem?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I'm happy to make some initial comments in relation to that, and I would just agree with your comments. We don't want to have a smell that is triggering; that is strong or overpowering. It wouldn't be conducive to the kind of care that we want to provide. In saying that, there is limited additional information that I'm able to provide beyond what is already in the submission. The primary odour source is understood to be incineration, and Tasmanian Botanics has commenced the process to transition away from incineration to mulching, and it is believed that that

⁴⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 20-21.

will significantly reduce the odour issue and environmental nuisance. So, we're really positive about the potential solution in that space.

CHAIR - Would you consider relocating the whole site if that doesn't prove to be correct? If you're wrong? That it's not just mulching, that it's a consistent complaint that comes from the community? I can say, through my office, I have constituents in Bridgewater that can smell it. I have residents that complain to me that their washing smells like the odour when they've hung it out on their clothesline. It is a strong odour, it can't be ignored, and I don't know whether it's just mulching. What happens if you're wrong and it's not a good fit because it is too close? What happens? Do they close up the business across the road, or do you choose another site, if it is too traumatic for people that are within that facility? It is a big risk. I'm still not quite sure why that site was chosen when there is such a strong odour really close to the facility. I don't think it would be, what, 50 metres?

Mr WHITCOMBE - Yes, so we were at the site this morning and none of us could smell that odour and yet, as you say, there are times when the odour is there and there are times that I've driven through the area and the odour is there. We would be exploring every possible option to minimise the impact of that odour, both operationally and in terms of any other options that we would have, would be my response.⁴⁶

4.42 The proponent then provided evidence on the concerns regarding the close proximity of the two gun clubs:

CHAIR - ... you have the gun clubs that are nearby, and we understand that, I think they're open seven days a week, but there are peak times when there's more firing than other times... [Your submission] talks about sufficient acoustic treatments to protect indoor spaces from noisy intrusion, but I thought part of the whole appeal of having this lovely landscaped area, outdoor spaces, a swimming pool, those kind of additions was so people, clients can spend more time outdoors. So how would you minimise the impact of two rifle ranges in quite close proximity to the clients? Give them earphones, or how do you minimise that? I don't mean that in a facetious way. I'm trying to look at this from a practical perspective.

Mr WHITCOMBE - I think, firstly, the design of the buildings and the acoustic nature of the facilities and what's being thought about, these facilities do need to be robust. I think when you're inside, the impact of noise will be significantly, if not completely, reduced. I will just refer to my notes. As part of the development application, the project team submitted a report prepared by an acoustic engineer and it included noise monitoring, modelling and a comparison with other jurisdictional standards. It included several daytime visits to the site during 2024-25 and March and April 2025 to monitor noise levels at the site.

During those visits, the ambient soundscape was found to be dominated by road traffic noise. However, gunshot noise was audible above traffic noise whilst the shooting was occurring. The monitoring found that the level of noise hazard to outdoor areas of the proposed facility is within, but at the upper bound of, the acceptable range for amenity based on comparison to shooting noise and noise guidelines from other Australian jurisdictions. Other jurisdictions' guidelines have been referenced, as Tasmania doesn't have established criteria or guidance for noise from outdoor shooting ranges.

⁴⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 22-23.

These measurements showed that noise is most audible from the clay target club, which operates, the clay target club, every Wednesday and Sundays, so Wednesday afternoon and Sundays all day, and there are other days during the year that it sometimes operates. The noise modelling and associated report found that the noise from the nearby shooting ranges does not pose an unacceptable noise hazard for the facility, finding that the facility will be moderately impacted by shooting noise from the Hobart Clay Target Club. So that was moderate, but the noise impacts from the other club, the Tasmanian Pistol and Rifle Club, will be insignificant... We believe that through operational strategies, through practice during those times, we will be able to manage the impact of the gun clubs.

Ms BURNET - ...that might be the noise that you hear, but from a professional perspective, what sort of impact does that have on young people, and likely to have - the concerns that have been raised publicly and that you'd be well aware of, so the noise from gunshots, is it likely to be triggering for younger people who have gone through trauma?

Mr WHITCOMBE - From a professional perspective, I think that's a really fair question. What I would hope is that, obviously, when we're at the site, when it's operational, we will have a range of things in place, in terms of the activities and the structures and routines of the day, that may not mean that, if it was a really significant impact, young people are outside during that time. There may be particular young people that it impacts more than others, and we would want to have, as we do with young people, a specific care plan that is unique to them that understands some of those things from a trauma-based perspective and how we can best be informed in our practice and responsive.

Ms BURNET - So in essence, you can identify when the clubs are in action, and you could mitigate behaviour or have indoor behaviour or whatever, distracting behaviour at those times; is that what you're saying?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I think that's a fair summary, but I also think that there is a uniqueness to how young people may or may not respond or be impacted, and we would respond in a unique way if there was a particular issue for a young person.⁴⁷

4.43 The Committee sought Mr Benjamin's perspective on the concerns of the medicinal cannabis farm and gun clubs:

Ms BURNET - ...I'm curious to know: if we have this site, which we are considering, and the expenditure around this site, I'm curious to know what your opinion is around the impacts of the Tas Botanics facility across the road, as well as the rifle range and impacts there might be in relation to young people and children.

...

Mr BENJAMIN - ... I asked those very questions when I was chairing the independent expert committee. I was told, in terms of the rifle range, that the Department had acoustic experts look at the impact of the sound and the extent of the sound, and I was informed that the sound was such that it often didn't come above the ambient level and that the design of the building was such that with trees it would be rarely, if ever, noted. But that's more a matter for DECYP, rather than me. But I certainly looked at that.

⁴⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 23-24.

In terms of the cannabis plantation, which I think is about 500 metres from the proposed site, I understood, again from DECYP, that steps have been taken to change the way they collected the stubble at the end of each planting season, and instead of burning it off they used other methods, which would either reduce or prevent any smell and odour coming from that work.

Ms BURNET - Sorry, my question really was: in your opinion, what would be the impacts of the sound from a rifle range. Yes, I've been to that site on a Saturday when you can clearly hear the sound. I've also been past the site, and at the site, when the smell from the cannabis, Tas Botanics, has been quite evident. I'm just curious to know what the impact on children and young people would be, not what you've been told by the Department.

Mr BENJAMIN - Well, they were questions I asked and I thought you'd want the answer, so I provided it to you. There are various young people suffering from various issues. For some, the sound may have some impact. I'm not a psychologist, I can't tell; but in every area that you picked, there will be sounds. There will be sounds of trucks moving up and down, perhaps sounds of car accidents, it's near the corner there; but that's part of the ambient noise that's there. I don't know. I don't think it will be as marked as some who catastrophise it. I don't think it will be wholly insignificant, but I am told and I accept that it is likely to be relatively insignificant.⁴⁸

- 4.44 The Committee received a total of 14 submissions for this inquiry. Twelve out of the 14 expressed concern for the proposed work if not out-right opposition. The key issues of the medicinal cannabis farm and gun clubs were consistently raised, as well as concerns over the impact to amenity.
- 4.45 During the public hearing, the Committee heard evidence from individuals who currently reside close to the site of the proposed works. They shared their experiences of living close to the medicinal cannabis farm and gun clubs, as well as the engagement and consultation processes they were engaged in with DECYP.
- 4.46 In his opening statement to the Committee, Mr Ross Tudor outlined his position on the proposed works:

Mr TUDOR - ... apologies for the 25 people in this room that we're even discussing a youth detention centre that is literally next to a marijuana plantation, a gun club, on the most heritage roads in Tasmania. It just seems crazy that they're even talking about this. We will jump straight into the odour impacts from Tas Botanics. Basically, there's a report from Brighton Council to EPA that states, and again I quote:

There will be major financial and political implications if legitimate nuisance can be established and legal action becomes necessary.

There is actually a site map that actually shows the actual odour area. Now, there is actually complaints of odour smells exactly like we said earlier on, up to 12 kilometres away from the site, yet we're talking about an attenuation site that is literally less than 500 metres away. Again, odours on clothing, all those things. It basically says

⁴⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, pp. 41-42.

scientific research shows that emissions from cannabis facilities can cause, and again, I quote, 'burning eyes and throat, problems sleeping, nausea and headaches'.

This facility is very much needed. There is no backing down, the youth detention centre is definitely needed. I feel in every way, shape and form that this is definitely the wrong site, whether or not we talk about the odours, the headaches, the proximity, the gun club, again there's been - well, actually going back on to the Tas Botanics, there's a lot of talk about all these changes technically taking place. We've actually been in touch with Tas Botanics and actually been asked to actually keep a survey for the last few weeks on odours. Currently we are one day out of the last 14 where there hasn't been an odour smell. It is literally 90 per cent of the time that there's the odour. We're only in one direction from that site. Obviously the actual youth detention centre is literally half the distance away from where we are.

If we then jump over to the gun club, in particular, there has been a thing over the last few years where the site has been undertaken in terms of the noise sort of side of things, but very unsurprisingly, there's not actually either a new noise sound check because the actual checks on when it was actually originally done was on wet, windy days where noise is obviously impacted. If you had days like today or days that you've had, you can hear gunshots clear as day. There is road traffic, yes, there is obviously noise in the area, but being a rural area, a gunshot is very clear, very distinctive...

...

Going on to the third point that we submitted, we were talking about the road earlier on the Rifle Range Road. Brighton Council road approvals are actually not currently in place for that road. They have not been approved, so the works that they're talking about haven't actually been authorised. Lack of accessibility - one of the things that we actually heard a lot of was the word hope, we hope that there will be public transport. The nearest public transport spot from the actual site itself is about three kilometres away in the centre of Brighton. As you said, there are no buses at certain days of the week. The timings of the buses is very irregular. The idea that there will be a bus going to Pontville anytime soon is unbelievably low. Again, accessibility is just not something that's there.

Part of the site as well has to have proximity to local services. Yes, there is a medical facility and everything on site, but the actual nearest hospital to the site is actually in the centre of Hobart, which is about 30 minutes' drive away. Again, the medical facilities that are currently in Brighton, there is regional doctors and things like that, they're literally only open nine to five and can't deal with emergency situations.⁴⁹

4.47 Ms Rebecca Wilkie raised the visual impacts to the surrounding area should the proposed works proceed:

Ms WILKIE - ... This proposal is for 8200 square metres of facility. Our home, directly across the road, is 210 square metres. We're a pimple on this giant behemoth that's getting built across the road. The fences are six metres high; the buildings are up to 11.8 metres high. Despite them talking about it being like a rural village, it's an intense

⁴⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Ross Tudor, pp. 44-45.

use of this site compared to what's there at the moment. Our houses are tiny. This is going to dwarf us. It is going to have a massive institutional feel to the community.⁵⁰

- 4.48 Mr Jamie Nye, another community member, further discussed the risk of the discernible odour of the medicinal cannabis farm:

Mr NYE - After that, all I can really add on is what the others have said: the reek of marijuana - one point that the other gentleman alluded to, could go to the High Court. Yes, it could also go to the High Court that someone that is under the care of the state is now suffering from being impounded in prison, held, confined, where they are regularly subjected to that stench. It is causing them a problem under Australia's signed agreement with the UN Rights of the Child, we're putting them in harm's way. They've got an open avenue straight to the High Court to make an appeal. What happens if they win? What happens to the \$150 million centre then? You have a centre you can't put kids in because they're getting hurt by marijuana. Or do you close down the marijuana farm, a really big local employer which wants to double in size? Will this thing be able to say to the marijuana farm, sorry, you can't make yourselves any bigger, you're already enough of a problem on us; but hang on, they were there first.

⁵¹

- 4.49 Ms Elena Nye shared her experience living in the area, where she can hear gunshots and smell the marijuana odour:

Ms NYE - ... one of the things I'm not sure if I put in my submission is related to gunshot noises. I don't think that the kids inside won't be able to hear from indoors the gunshots when they're going off. When I'm at home inside, with headphones on listening to music, I'm still able to hear the gunshots, and it is quite distressing, even though I know that the shooting range is nearby and that is most likely just people practising. You don't know, and that can be really distressing for me as a young person and also especially for kids inside, especially for kids who might have trauma associated with that kind of noise. Yes, there's always going to be noise, like the cars and the trucks, but that does become ambient eventually. For as long as I've been living in our house, which I have since I was 12, those gunshots have never been ambient noise. You always notice them, and it's never been something that you can just move past easily.

The marijuana smell, I think, is also quite distressing, but we've talked about that a lot...⁵²

- 4.50 Mr Robert Goudsouzian raised similar concerns:

Mr GOUDSOUZIAN - ... These guys have said, and their argument is that if the marijuana facility is more than 100 metres away from our boundary, we don't have to care. That is the end of their argument. They have not done any tests; they have not done anything. They say no action is required because the cannabis facility is more than 100 metres away. That's it. They've just drawn a line and said that's it, nothing. The cannabis fumes - we live 2.5 kilometres away - we can't be outdoors when the cannabis fumes come over, which is for weeks at a time. That's the cannabis facility

⁵⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Ms Rebecca Wilkie, p. 46.

⁵¹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Jamie Nye, p. 50.

⁵² Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Ms Elena Nye, p. 51.

thing. I wouldn't say they've lied. I would just say that they've used a phrase, saying it's 100 metres away, we don't have to care.

With the gun clubs, they did an audio test. They did the audio test during winter over six days. It rained on five of the six days they did the test. The wind was up to 80 kilometres an hour during that time: nobody was shooting. There are certain days at the gun clubs when you have rallies, competitions, all sorts. They have the training days for TAFE - the TAFE training for gun licences is done there. You have 20 people at a time shooting. Do you know how much noise that makes? When you have a rally or a competition, 20 people at a time shooting high-powered weapons. They managed to take the test when nobody was shooting...⁵³

- 4.51 Another concern raised by individuals was that the proposed works, if approved, would devalue their nearby properties. Mr Tudor and Ms Wilkie expanded on this point:

CHAIR - Do you believe that if the project proceeded it would cause the valuation of your properties to be diminished?

Mr TUDOR - Without a doubt: 100 per cent.

Ms WILKIE - 100 per cent.

TUDOR - Without a doubt. Like I said, it's on a heritage highway. Myself and a couple of the people at the back are literally on the land side of things. They're stone properties. The password for here is 'sandstone1869'. Our house was built in 1810. It's one of the oldest houses in Tasmania and we're going to put a youth detention centre literally on the other side of the road. On the other side of the road which actually borders it, so we will have a six-metre fence, is another sandstone property that was built in early 1800s. So absolutely will it not only devalue our properties, it actually will devalue the whole heritage area.⁵⁴

- 4.52 The Committee then sought evidence from Mr Tudor and Ms Wilkie on their perspective of the consultation undertaken by DECYP:

Ms RATTRAY - I asked about the engagement with the community when we had our previous witnesses before us. Can you give me a bit of a feel for what part of that community engagement that you actually undertook?

Ms WILKIE - We went to all of it. We went to the meetings at Brighton. We had the ERA Planning people come to our house. We met them on site. It was one directional. We were never - none of our issues were ever resolved, as you can see. They're still outstanding.

Mr TUDOR - With that, just to escalate it, we would have people come to our house and go through the plans, or the most up-to-date plans. What was actually brilliant is they actually held an event that was, as always, in the middle of the day. Obviously we work, taking time off is very difficult. We took time off and went to this event. It was the most perfect day: it reeked of weed. It was funny. We were talking to a lot of the architects and it stank. We were all there talking about this. What was interesting is, the night before, they were actually at our house with the plans. Then we go to the

⁵³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Robert Goudsouzian, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Ross Tudor and Ms Rebecca Wilkie, pp. 47-48.

site, to the - whatever it's called, the Brighton Oval - and all the images were there, with different images.

Ms WILKIE - They were different.

Mr TUDOR - They were different plans. They had different outbuildings. They had 16 rooms, 'Oh, actually it looks like there might be 24', so there was room for growth. All this information -

Ms WILKIE - None of the ones we saw the day before.

Mr TUDOR - what we were provided and what was actually at that event were two very different things. Now, I should point out that Bec is also an architect. She reads plans every single day, so to spot differences was not particularly challenging for her at all.⁵⁵

- 4.53 The Committee called the proponents back to respond to the evidence provided by members of the community. On behalf of Mr Tudor and Ms Wilkie, the Committee sought to confirm whether an odour assessment had been undertaken:

CHAIR - ...I suppose the first question that I have, in relation to the additional information provided to us from other submissions, was around the odour assessment - has there been an odour assessment conducted? Who was it conducted by, when was it conducted, and what was the outcome of that odour assessment of the site in relation to the cannabis plantation?

Mr WHITCOMBE - This matter is going through an appeals process, and we're limited in what we can say in relation to it, and everything that we can say we have said previously to the Committee in relation to the odour assessment. I want to check -

CHAIR - We don't want to compromise any legal proceedings as well.

Mr WHITCOMBE - From a planning perspective, we weren't required to provide one.

CHAIR - Am I allowed to ask if one was conducted, or is that going to prejudice potential proceedings?

Mr WHITCOMBE - I would like not to comment further on that.⁵⁶

- 4.54 The proponent confirmed that the proposed upgrades to Rifle Range Road would not require land acquisition:

Mr TAPLIN - We've been working through the design of the upgrades to Rifle Range Road with Brighton Council. We did an extensive survey through that area to understand the constraints of that intersection.

...

... hence all the markers and the survey markers that would be out on site. In working through that with Brighton Council, in looking at our own traffic engineering that was done to support that work, we have developed a design, which we will be putting forward to Brighton councillors as foreshadowed for the upgrade of that intersection, but it won't require additional lanes and it doesn't require any acquisitions or cutting down of those trees along Brighton Road. We are widening

⁵⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Mr Ross Tudor and Ms Rebecca Wilkie, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, pp. 54-55.

Rifle Range Road itself, and we will be sealing it, and we will be putting proper stormwater in. As I mentioned earlier, as part of the early works, we will be bringing some utility services down that corridor as well, as part of that work. But the intersection will remain functionally, in terms of its current layout, there's no plans for, from our perspective, for a roundabout or additional lanes or those types of things.⁵⁷

- 4.55 The proponent then addressed the concerns that nearby properties would be devalued by the new facility:

Ms RATTRAY - And the potential devaluation of property prices in the area, is that something that you addressed your mind to at the time of this proposal?

Mr WHITCOMBE - My understanding, and I can defer to my colleagues as well, is that when we look at the establishment of facilities like this, is that they haven't had adverse impacts on property prices and other areas, so we have turned our mind to that and tried to understand what that looks like in other areas. It is hard to find the right place for these types of facilities, and this is an option that we have that in many regards provides a pathway forward for a facility that will have the right kind of care, that will have access to the right kind of staff.⁵⁸

- 4.56 The Committee heard evidence from the proponent more broadly about their response to the community's concern and opposition:

CHAIR - I think the community has popularly shown a genuine dissatisfaction with the proposed site or proposed project. They've largely attended a lot of meetings. They've done a petition, they're taking action... Has any of their objection to any of these project's progress made any difference at all? Has anything been listened to or were they just told this is what's going to happen and this is this is how it is because that's not consultation, that's just delivering a message? Has there been any consideration of the community's concern? This is, for us as a Public Works Committee, a lot of submissions with community members - and it's not a large community as well, it's a small area. Has that potentially made the decision makers from your Department think, 'Well, maybe this isn't a good fit. It's right next door to a marijuana plantation; it's near a rifle range. The community are really unhappy about it. I haven't heard any advocates for it'. Has that swayed at all the decision that's been made? It sounded like it was a close decision from the Southern Midlands Council as well. Has that - and the delay because of TASCAT, has that made the Department consider whether this was a good option? Was there a potential to go back to the initial having small places in different parts around the state as an option? Can you talk us through whether or not the community's concerns and the negative parts of this project have given you reason to pause?

Mr WHITCOMBE - The decision for this site was made in September 2024, as I understand it, and as we have talked about, went through a longlist process and a shortlist process to determine where it was best sited. This was the decision that was made by government and we are in the role of implementing, to the very best of our abilities, a safe and therapeutic model of care and facility at this site -

CHAIR - Which we need.

⁵⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People, p. 57.

Mr WHITCOMBE - which we absolutely need. Now, that's not to say we don't have opportunities to listen and to engage and to work alongside, and so I will defer to my colleagues in terms of some of the design considerations for the area that we've been thinking about, in terms of materials, and potentially to put to right any sort of misunderstandings about the design, but absolutely we're here to listen. We've also been talking with wider stakeholders, with the Aboriginal community, there's been some rich feedback that we've had from them, but I will pause and pass to the others in terms of how that feedback is useful. I do have to say: we are here to move forward and implement at a point in time where a decision has been made.

Mr TAPLIN - ... we've absolutely been listening to the feedback that's been given. We are balancing a range of factors in terms of the development of the design, the development of this facility. We have security to consider; we have the local neighbours and their issues that they've raised with us. We need to adopt all of those in the design as we bring the design together. Where we have listened to those and where we have been able to take on board some of that feedback, we talked a little bit about that before, and I think Sarah also covered off on some of those factors that we've been able to bring into the design.

One other one that we didn't talk about earlier, just to raise it as an example, I guess, when we were in the master-planning phase we had identified, that there was a potential for an Aboriginal heritage walk on site to try and tie in with, and it was a suggestion through some engagement with some ACCOs that we did on the site and the facility earlier on before the master-planning, to try and build that connection and engagement, and that's driven the location of the cultural building on site and the cultural garden.

There were some concerns raised around that in terms of it was very close to a number of those properties that back on to the facility. So, we took that feedback on board, and we've moved away from having that heritage walk due to those, I guess, safety and security-type concerns. We'd still really like, from an operational perspective, for those types of activities to occur in the future; but to understand that that was going to cause some potential issues, it was an item that we were able to adopt into the design and make a meaningful change...

Ms PADDICK - What I'm hearing and what I've heard today, as an architect, the responses that I can give to say what we've done, I know that's not going to give the people who've spoken today any solace at all. Yet I would like to say that I believe, as designers, we've tried to do everything we possibly can to create a facility that is not intrusive to the landscape, or as least intrusive to the environment of Pontville. I could list off the types of things we've done, and I know Bec would completely understand, being an architect herself, but I know that that's not going to give these people any solace...⁵⁹

- 4.57 The proponent provided further responses to the evidence provided by community members, in their response to questions taken on notice on 4 May 2026. The proponent provided further evidence on the noise assessments undertaken by DECYP:

⁵⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, pp. 57-59.

The Department wish for the Committee to be aware that noise monitoring was undertaken during daytime visits to the project site on 10 and 15 September 2024, 26 March 2025 and 30 April 2025.

The conditions during those times are outlined in the table below from the Bureau of Meteorology data.

Date	Rainfall ²	Wind ³
10 September 2024	0 mm	N/A – data not available
15 September 2024	3.4 mm	N/A – data not available
26 March 2025	1.0 mm	9am WNW 7 km/h 3pm NW 17km/h
30 April 2025	0 mm	9am NNE 11km/h 3pm SSE 13km/h

¹ <https://www.medtecpharma.com.au/cultivation/>

² Daily Rainfall Total from the Bureau of Meteorology, Brighton station (1.4km from Pontville)

³ Wind Direction and Speed from the Bureau of Meteorology, Campania Station (12.7km from Pontville)

It should be noted that an unattended noise logger was installed at the site near to the position of the proposed facility during the period from 10 to 15 September 2024, to measure background noise levels.

Noise measurements were performed at various locations within the site and off-site close to the shooting range while general shooting activity was underway at the shooting ranges on Sunday 15 September 2024.

Supplementary shooting noise measurements were also performed under controlled conditions with the cooperation of each shooting club individually on the following dates:

- Wednesday 26 March 2025 – Hobart Clay Target Club
- Wednesday 30 April 2025 – Tasmanian Pistol and Rifle Club

Noise levels from over 250 gunshot noise events were analysed in total, clearly demonstrating that shooting was occurring during the noise monitoring period.⁶⁰

4.58 The proponent also responded to the evidence heard from Mr Goudsouzian regarding the source of the odour from the medicinal cannabis farm:

Mr Goudsouzian said the following with regard to the Tasmania Botanics operation:

“the fumes do not come from the incineration. That’s got nothing to do with it. The incineration puts out a bit of smoke. The fumes come from the outdoor crop. It’s the blooming and the harvesting of the crop, which happens for weeks at a time, all through the year. It’s an outdoor crop. The incineration has got nothing to do with it. You can mulch it, you can do anything; that’s completely separate. The fumes come from the crop, from the blooming and the harvesting and the processing of the crop.”

⁶⁰ New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, Response to Questions on Notice, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 4 May 2026, pp. 3-4.

There are likely three sources of odour from the facility, the incineration of waste, the grouping of the crop and the on-site processing/manufacturing of the product.

Recent odour assessment conducted on behalf of the Department indicates that the farthest reaching odour is the incineration, with the odour from growing and harvesting the outdoor crop being the smallest and contained mostly to the eastern side of the Midlands Highway.

It was claimed that harvesting "... happens for weeks at a time, all through the year..." when in fact the harvest period for the outdoor crop occurs around March across several weeks and only on an annual basis.⁶¹

- 4.59 As well as providing their response to questions taken on notice, the proponent advised the Committee that while they were unable to answer some questions during the public hearing due to the appeal before TASCAT, they could now share additional information. The proponent provided a document titled 'New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, Operational Assessment of Potential External Impacts' which was taken into evidence and published on the Committee's webpage.⁶²

Does the Project Meet the Requirements of the Public Works Committee Act?

- 4.60 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks an assurance that each project meets the criteria detailed in Clause 15(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914. Broadly, and in simple terms, these relate to the purpose of the works, the need for and advisability of undertaking the works, and whether the works are a good use of public funds and provide value for money to the community. The Committee questioned the witnesses who provided the following confirmation:

CHAIR - ...Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

WITNESSES - Yes.

⁶¹ New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, Response to Questions on Notice, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 4 May 2026, p. 4.

⁶² New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, Response to Questions on Notice – Attachment 1 – New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, Operational Assessment of Potential External Impacts, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 4 May 2026, pp. 7-29, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/105606/New-Tasmanian-Youth-Justice-Facility-DECYP-Response-to-Matters-Taken-on-Notice-dated-4-May-2026-to-PUBLISH.pdf [accessed 23 July 2026].

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?*

WITNESSES - Yes.⁶³

⁶³ Transcript of Evidence, 31 March 2026, Department for Education, Children and Young People and Grieve Gillett Architects, p. 63.

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 16 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Robert Benjamin AM KC, Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, 20 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Ross Tuor and Rebecca Wilkie, 22 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Sandy Nye, 22 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Jamie Nye, 22 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Annette Nichols, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Karen McDiarmid and Graeme Young, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Robert and Kerrie Goudsouzian, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Jack Davenport, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Greg Jones, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Tricia Beard, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Grace Fisher, 23 March 2026;
- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Elena Nye, 23 March 2026;

- *Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to the proposed New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Sarah Carter, 23 March 2026; and
- *Response to Questions on Notice – New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 4 May 2026.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee carefully considered all evidence presented during the inquiry. While the arguments and propositions advanced were well articulated, the Committee ultimately returned to its statutory obligations in reaching its conclusions. The *Public Works Committee Act 1914* states that when considering and reporting on any public work, the Committee must have regard: to the stated purpose of the works (clause 15(2)(a)); the necessity or advisability of carrying out the works (clause 15(2)(b)); and the present and prospective public value of the work (clause 15(2)(c)).

Stated Purpose

- 6.2 The Committee is satisfied, based on the evidence received, that the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility will fulfil its intended purpose of providing a modern, fit-for-purpose replacement for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). The facility will support the delivery of a new model of care centred on therapeutic and trauma-informed practices, with the aim of reducing young people's involvement in the youth justice system and improving long-term outcomes.
- 6.3 The Committee notes the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility will achieve its stated purpose by providing:
- an environment where children and young people are supported to address their offending behaviour and successfully return to the community as positive, contributing members of society;
 - a safe, secure and rehabilitative facility for children and young people;
 - a facility where healing and wellbeing is the primary focus;
 - an environment where children, young people, staff and visitors feel safe and supported; and
 - the community with confidence that children and young people in detention are in a safe, purpose-built facility that provides a high standard of care and rehabilitation support.

Necessity or Advisability of Carrying out the Works

- 6.4 The Committee is satisfied there is a clear and identified need for a New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility. The evidence provided to this Committee and to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (Commission of Inquiry) overwhelmingly supports the position that AYDC is not supporting the needs of young people or the broader community.
- 6.5 The decision to close AYDC and construct a new facility is consistent with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The Commission found that Tasmania's youth justice approach was harmful, outdated and ineffective in

delivering either safety or rehabilitation. Its recommendations, supported by the broader evidence base, emphasise therapeutic interventions that reduce reoffending and improve community safety.

Present and Prospective Public Value of the Work

- 6.6 The Committee is satisfied the New Tasmanian Youth Justice facility will deliver significant public value by providing “an environment where children and young people experience the highest standards of child-centred, rights-based, therapeutic care and education, services and opportunities, supporting them to enhance connections, return and remain successfully in the community”.⁶⁴
- 6.7 The Committee acknowledges the significant cost of the facility. However, it considers that the benefits to young people and the broader community, on balance, outweigh this cost. The new facility will support a youth justice approach that moves beyond the traditional custodial model to one that is underpinned by a therapeutic model of care, promoting better outcomes for young people and the community.

Recommendation

- 6.8 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. The Committee acknowledges the recommendation from the Commission of Inquiry to close AYDC as soon as possible, as well as the Government’s commitment to doing so in 2021. Once completed, the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility will provide a fit-for-purpose, safe, secure and rehabilitative facility for Tasmanian children and young people in detention.
- 6.9 According to the proponent, the design and model of care adopted at the new facility will achieve better outcomes for children and young people. The proponent’s approach to prioritising preventative, early intervention and community-based supports, as well as creating a therapeutic custodial environment staffed by compassionate, skilled professionals, will deliver far safer and more effective outcomes than traditional custodial models.
- 6.10 The Committee notes the views shared in the evidence received from public submissions and community members who appeared before the Committee at its public hearing. The Committee acknowledges their concerns relating to safety, amenity, and the potential impact of surrounding land uses, in particular the nearby medicinal cannabis farm and gun clubs.
- 6.11 While acknowledging the community’s concern, the Committee accept the proponent’s assurances that the identified risks have been, and will continue to be, mitigated and addressed appropriately.

⁶⁴ *New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department for Education, Children and Young People, 16 March 2026, Attachment 3, p. 9

- 6.12 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility, at an estimated cost of \$150 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "J. A. Butler", is displayed within a rectangular border.

**Parliament House
Hobart
4 August 2026**

**Jen Butler MP
Chair**

7 DIVISIONS

7.1 In accordance with section 8(2) of the Act, the following Divisions were recorded:-

7.2 On the question being proposed – That the Committee approves the New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility reference in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted. (*Ms Burnet*)

The Committee divided.

AYES (3)

Ms Burnet

Mr Hiscutt

Mr Shelton

NOES (2)

Ms Butler

Ms Rattray

7.3 On the Question being proposed – That Chapter 6, ‘Conclusion and Recommendation,’ stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided.

AYES (3)

Ms Burnet

Mr Hiscutt

Mr Shelton

NOES (2)

Ms Butler

Ms Rattray

8 DISSENTING STATEMENTS

- 8.1 The Honourable Member for McIntyre, Ms Rattray, voted against the inclusion of the 'Conclusion and Recommendation' in the Committee's report.
- 8.2 Ms Rattray provided the following Dissenting Statement:

Public Works Committee

Dissenting Statement - New Tasmanian Youth Justice Facility

Tania Rattray MLC

Relating to Matters the Public Works Committee must have regard to: Section 15(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914 lists the matters the Committee must have regard to when considering a public work

(2) In considering and reporting on any work, the Committee shall have regard to

- (a) the stated purpose thereof;*
- (b) the necessity or advisability of carrying it out; and where the work purports to be of a reproductive or revenue producing character, the amount of revenue which it may reasonably be expected to produce; and*
- (c) the present and prospective public value of the work –*

and generally the Committee shall in all cases take such measures and procure such information as may enable them to inform or satisfy Parliament as to the expedience of carrying out the work.

From the Act there are a set of questions based on clause 15(2) and in particular – Do the proposed works provide value for money? and; Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

The lists of questions proposed to the proponent relating to these 2 important factors I believe as a Member of the Committee need to be carefully considered, assessed and ultimately determine to provide support or otherwise to a reference before the committee.

The Project estimate, excluding contingency, as referred to on Page 7 of the Committee Report is \$140,280,759 with a remaining headroom within the total budget envelope of \$15,019,241.

As a Member of the Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration B (GAB) Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention targeted inquiry with the final report being tabled 24 March 2025, I believe I have a level of knowledge and understanding

relating to youth detention. The proposed project cost of a facility to accommodate a maximum of 16 beds across 5 houses, with an additional four beds for short stay, orientation and health accommodation, in my view with the way in which this project has been designed has contributed to the excessive cost of this facility.

Additionally, the GAB report finding 89 states – *The Tasmanian Government has committed \$50m to the new youth justice facility in Pontville*, the current estimated cost is effectively three times the cost of the project from when the committee reported in 2025.

The Youth Detention area of the GAB report referred that the evidence gathered through that inquiry clearly identified and subsequently recommendations 35 through to 39 highlighted the need for increased investment in coordinated wrap around services to support disengaged young people to minimise contact with the youth justice system. The best outcome should always be to have services to support young people in contact with the justice system outside of any youth detention facility. In addition, Recommendation 40-42 focussed on training, support and initiatives for youth detention staff with a level of training to implement the therapeutic model. These initiatives are centred on a therapeutic model of rehabilitation, support, and connectiveness within a community environment rather than a bricks and mortar detention centre.

Local community acceptance is an important consideration around the establishment and location of any facility and in regard to this facility there was a clear lack of broad community support to accept a youth detention facility as a close neighbour. As the Member for McIntyre my electorate encompasses the current Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). This community, in particular adjoining and close neighbours have accepted this facility and have made it well known that they were prepared to continue that acceptance as many of the people who work at that facility are members of their community.

SUMMARY

Concerns relate to the project's value for money including the estimated current cost of approximately \$150 million compared to the previously committed amount of \$50 million as reported in 2025. The design of this facility accommodates a smaller number of detainees than originally proposed. Despite this reduced capacity, the cost appears excessive relative to the number of detainee places provided.

Drawing on findings from the Government Administration B Committee's 2025 inquiry into adult imprisonment and youth detention, greater investment should be directed towards early intervention, coordinated wrap-around support services, and therapeutic rehabilitation programs to reduce young peoples' contact with the justice system. The Government's focus should be on investing in therapeutic care and support programs rather than prioritising expenditure on infrastructure.

There is a recognised lack of local community support for the identified location in contrast to the community surrounding the existing Ashley Youth Detention Centre where local residents have long accepted the facility and importantly many staff are members of their local community and may well be displaced from their current community when this facility is no longer operational.

In conclusion, the proposed facility does not, in my view, represent value for money. It places too great an emphasis on infrastructure rather than addressing the underlying causes of youth offending. There is a view that greater investment in therapeutic, community-based youth justice services and support would provide more effective outcomes.

In providing this dissenting statement, I sincerely thank everyone who took the time to make submissions, appear at public hearings, or make direct contact. I greatly appreciate their willingness to share their perspectives and to seek consideration of their views as members of our community who are directly affected by the proposed new youth detention facility and the potential future use of the current youth detention facility in Tasmania. Their contributions have been valuable in informing my consideration of this important matter.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr Peter Whitcombe, Deputy Secretary, Child Safety and Youth Justice Operations and his support team for their advocacy and determination to deliver on recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Governments Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

Regardless of my position on this proposal, I wish the project well and trust that the construction costs will remain within the substantial budget allocated for the facility. Given the significant public investment involved, it is important that the project is delivered responsibly and represents value for the people of Tasmania.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Tania Rattray' in a cursive script.

The Honourable Tania Rattray MLC

Member Public Works Committee

6 August 2026