

## Question on Notice

No. 774

Asked on 16 August 2022

**MR M BERKMAN** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (HON L LINARD)—

### QUESTION

With reference to the use of separation in youth detention centres in Queensland—

Will the Minister advise (a) how many times in the past 12 months has a child been kept in separation for the following consecutive lengths of time, excluding overnight rest periods (i) 6-8 hours, (ii) 8-16 hours, (iii) 16-24 hours, (iv) more than 24 hours, (b) how many, if any, of these instances related to a child threatening self-harm, (c) in how many of these instances was the child under 14 years of age and (d) in how many of these instances was the child Indigenous?

### ANSWER

Separations are an essential response option to ensure the safety, security and good order of youth detention centres (YDCs) and ensure the welfare of staff, young people and visitors.

Separations are subject to strict approvals, supervision protocols, time limits and record keeping, ensuring they are reasonable and justified, in keeping with the legislative requirements of the Youth Justice Regulation 2016 and the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the operations of the YDCs. They were declared a high risk setting by the Chief Health Officer, resulting in impacts on staffing and the requirements for isolation due to COVID-19.

In response to part (a), the 'separation duration' periods imposed on young people reported in the 2021-22 financial year were:

- (i) 30,255 between 6 and 12 hours;
- (ii) 519 between 12 and 24 hours; and
- (iii) 83 lasting over 24 hours.

Data has been broken down into these three categories as they align with the legislative approval requirements for separations. Based on the youth detention population and total bed nights occupied, this equates to approximately one separation episode for every three young person bed nights.

In response to part (b), 50 of the above separation instances were due to a young person threatening self-harm. YDCs have dedicated multidisciplinary teams who monitor and respond to suicide and self-harm risks. These teams work in close consultation with mental health experts from Queensland Health to develop comprehensive care and management plans for young people. Separation is used as a last resort for young people who threaten self-harm when the risk of harm to themselves cannot be mitigated by any other response or supports.

Separation is only one response utilised as part of these plans, noting other strategies include constant observations, high levels of therapeutic staff support and increased engagement with young people to reduce the risk of self-harm and the need for safety-oriented responses such as separation.

In response to part (c), there were 2,863 separations involving young people under 14 years of age.

In response to part (d), there were 25,801 separations involving Indigenous young people.