

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 251

Asked on Tuesday, 19 March 2024

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**MRS L GERBER** ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR YOUTH JUSTICE (HON D FARMER)

### QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide (reported separately by unit (de-identified), youth detention centre and month) for the last two years, the total hours spent in separation?

### ANSWER:

Separations are an essential response option to ensure the safety, security of youth detention centres and ensure the welfare of staff, young people and visitors. Separation may only be used when people or property require protection, or to restore order in a youth detention centre. Separation can only occur if less restrictive options are not available, and only for as long as the risk remains.

Separations are subject to strict approvals, monitoring and supervision protocols, in line with legislative requirements (Youth Justice Regulation 2016 and *Human Rights Act 2019*) and departmental policies and procedures.

The Department records separations in line with the Youth Justice Regulation 2016, cumulatively counting both in and out of room time during an approved separation period to ensure appropriate approvals are sought.

During periods of separation, young people continue to have access to health and specialist services, education materials, caseworkers, cultural liaison officers, and phone contact with family, legal representatives and oversight bodies. During separations young people will still attend scheduled medical appointments, court appearances and/or professional, legal and personal visits. Young people subject to separation have access to drinking water, meals and food. Young people are permitted time outside their room while subject to separation, unless it is unsafe to facilitate this.

There are robust embedded safeguards for young people in detention, including CCTV, body worn cameras, incident review, confidential complaint mechanisms and internal and external oversight. The department works collaboratively with external oversight agencies to address recommendations about youth detention service delivery, including issues pertaining to separation. These oversight agencies include the Office of the Public Guardian, Queensland Family and Child Commission, Queensland Human Rights Commission, the Queensland Ombudsman and the recently established Inspector of Detention Services.

I am advised that information system constraints preclude the provision of the data as requested. Manual collation is also prohibitive due to the significant time and resource impost and is likely to be impacted by data quality issues, due to the manual process. The existing information system is a legacy system and reporting functionality is limited; however, system upgrades delivered in November 2023 capture more accurate reporting of separations, including duration, time in and out of room and supports provided. The system currently provides live operational monitoring of separations, which are routinely reviewed by the Department. Several review and oversight functions have direct access to this information, including the Inspector of Detention Services.

As part of the Department's youth detention infrastructure expansion projects, a replacement system is being scoped to ensure comprehensive, real time reporting capability for separation and other restrictive practices within youth detention centres.

Although the Department cannot answer this specific question, it has previously responded to other requests for separation information, including Question on Notice No. 774, 2022 which is available at <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/questionsanswers/2022/774-2022.pdf>