

GREAT RESPONSIBILITY:

Report on the 2019
Pilot Inspection of the Adelaide
Youth Training Centre (Kurlana
Tapa Youth Justice Centre)



CONTENTS

Glossary.....	4
Introductory Notes.....	6
Language and terminology.....	6
A caution.....	7
Preface.....	8
Executive Summary.....	12
Recommendations.....	16
Part A	
Formalities and Findings.....	19
1. Background – Statutory inspection.....	20
1.1 The Training Centre Visitor’s Role.....	20
1.2 Statutory Charter of Rights.....	22
1.3 The TCV oversight program.....	26
1.4 The AYTC detention model.....	28
2. Key findings/Recommendation.....	35
2.1 Standards and Indicators.....	35
2.2 Implications of the inspection for the future TCV Program.....	41
2.3 Recommendations.....	44
3. Designing and conducting the Pilot Inspection.....	48
3.1 Overview of detained children and young people.....	48
3.2 Methodology and reporting.....	48
3.3 Engagement with stakeholders.....	54
Part B	
Insiders.....	57
4. Children’s and young people’s views.....	58
5. Staff views.....	67
5.1 Staff input.....	67
5.2 Staffing and diversity.....	67
5.3 Staff training.....	68
5.4 Staff morale.....	71

Part C

Discussion	73
6. Children and Young People in Detention	74
6.1 Overview	74
6.2 Resources	75
6.3 Respect and dignity	78
6.4 Aboriginal children and young people and cultural support	87
6.5 Multicultural diversity	94
6.6 Girls and young women	94
6.7 Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression	96
6.8 Disability and related needs	99
6.9 Child detainees (ages 10 to 14)	101
6.10 Dual status: In care and in detention	102
6.11 Health and wellbeing	104
6.12 Education	115
6.13 Identifying and responding to individual need	123
6.14 TCV relationship with DHS/AYTC	126

Part D

Attachments	129
Attachment 1	130
Attachment 2	133
Attachment 3	147
Attachment 4	150
Attachment 5	152
Attachment 6	159

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Justice Principle	This Principle is established in the Act and outlined in Part 2 of the associated <i>Youth Justice Administration Regulations 2016</i> .
Act	'The Act' referred to throughout this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise, is the <i>Youth Justice Administration Act 2016 (SA)</i>
ARIG	The At Risk Intelligence Group is an internal AYTC multi-disciplinary forum that meets regularly to help coordinate detainee management.
BSF – Behaviour Support Framework	The BSF is the behaviour support and incentive program implemented at the AYTC. Its primary impact is the allocation of a detainee to one of three phase levels which have privileges attached.
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
Charter / Youth Justice Charter	The <i>Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres</i> (provided as Attachment 6 to this report)
Dual status/Dual involved	We use this term to refer to the status of children and young people who are clients of both the child protection and youth detention systems
DCP	Department for Child Protection
DHS	Department of Human Services
Dynamic Model	This term relates to the consolidation and undertaking of AYTC operations on the Goldsborough campus in 2019, given effect by the move from Jonal campus of female detainees (10-18 years) and younger males (10 to 14 years).
GCYP	Penny Wright holds the separate statutory appointment of Guardian for Children and Young People. The TCVU operates from the Office of the GCYP.
MAYBO	AYTC staff are trained in the MAYBO SAFER conflict management and physical intervention model.
MAYFS	Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth and Family Services
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Residential Care	This refers to the congregate living placement option within which many children and young people detained at the AYTC live when not in custody.

Restrictive Practices	This term is used in this report to indicate any management of a detainee that restricts their movement or limits physical freedom to a greater extent than simply holding them in custody (see Part 6.3.4).
Review(s) of RecordS	These are the quarterly reviews of requested DHS/AYTC documents undertaken by the TCVU as part of the TCV's oversight processes.
Routines	Restricted, Structured, Admissions – see footnotes in Part 1.2 of this report
TCVU	The Training Centre Visitor Unit supports Penny Wright, the TCV, to undertake her responsibilities under the Act.
Unit(s)	Children and young people live in several accommodation units at the AYTC. The current model is described in Part 1.1 of this report.
Visiting Program	Ongoing oversight of the AYTC is implemented through a visiting program undertaken in rolling three monthly cycles by the TCVU.
YEC	The Youth Education Centre is the on-site school maintained at the AYTC by the Education Department.
YJAAC	Youth Justice Aboriginal Advisory Committee
YJAIS	The Youth Justice Assessment and Intervention Service was a recent pilot multi-disciplinary process that has now been established as an ongoing effort.
Youth Justice State Plan	<i>Young People Connected, Communities Protected</i> is the SA Government's Youth Justice State Plan, 2020-2023 released in June 2020.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

This report was written by Alan Fairley, Belinda Lorek and Jessica Flynn. Critical commentary and other support for the report was provided by Inspection team members Travis Thomas, Conrad Morris, Sarah-Jane Meakin and Mardy McDonald from the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People. We benefitted also from a contribution from Brooke Washusen, an intern on placement from the University of Adelaide Law School.

The draft was edited by Penny Wright and Dr Michael Savvas – msavvas@hotmail.com

Dr Simone Deegan, a lecturer at Flinders University and the University of South Australia, was contracted to distil material and identify important themes arising from the interviews with young people. Dr Deegan's report is Attachment Two.

Artwork used in this report was produced by several young people during the inspection for this purpose. It is part of their message to you.

Penny Wright acknowledges in her preface the support we received from many people in the Department of Human Services, the Adelaide Youth Training Centre and from other agencies that was necessary to successfully complete the inspection. A specific thank you is extended to managers and other local staff at the AYTC who undertook many facilitative tasks before, during and after the on-site process.

Language and terminology

Kurlana Tapa

A process is underway to use the community approved title Kurlana Tapa as the principal name of the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (AYTC). Kurlana Tapa means New Path in the language of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. While the Training

Centre Visitor welcomes the imminent use of this community sanctioned name, we have retained the facility title which was current at the time of the pilot inspection in November 2019 as the appropriate 'point in time' terminology for the purpose of this report.

Aboriginal

Responding to community preference, this report maintains the TCV's standard usage of the term Aboriginal as inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in South Australia.

Describing the children and young people

In this report we have been challenged to find an appropriate word to refer to the detained children and young people in the AYTC. As a result, we have ended up using several terms interchangeably. The term used in the legislation is 'residents' but this is euphemistic. By suggesting they are 'residing' at the Training Centre, with implications of choice and permanence, it masks the reality of their detention. We have mainly opted to describe these children and young people as 'detainees' because this is strictly accurate and their detained status is the one thing they all have in common (whether they are in the Centre overnight or for years). However, we acknowledge that this does not reflect their individuality and unique personalities or remind us that they are young (with some as young as ten). Importantly, it also does not serve to remind us that most of them have not actually been convicted or sentenced for an offence at the time we meet them in the Centre and have the right to be regarded as being notionally innocent.

The inspection standards use the term resident, drawn from the legislation.

ATTACHMENT 2

The views of detained children and young people at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre: a thematic paper Dr. Simone Deegan

Dr Simone Deegan prepared this thematic paper to be an attachment to the Training Centre Visitor's (TCV) report on the November 2019 pilot inspection of the Adelaide Youth Training Centre. She drew on a working, and necessarily confidential, paper prepared by the TCV Unit that consolidated all 34 individual detainee interview texts and the write up of the Detainee Focus Group session.

We summarise Dr Deegan's thematic paper In Part 4 of the main inspection report. The intention of both of these accounts is to amplify the voices of the detained children and young people while protecting their privacy.

According to the *United Nations (1995) Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice*, Rule 26.1., "the objective of training and treatment of juveniles in institutions is to provide care, protection, education and vocational skills, with a view to assisting them to assume socially constructive and productive roles in society" (p. 14). More locally, the South Australian *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres* (s.22 Youth Justice Administration Act SA (2016)) clearly

sets out the rights of this uniquely vulnerable group, as well as training centres' obligations for their care and treatment.

On average, and on any given day, around 980 children and young people are detained in youth detention facilities around Australia (Australian Institution of Health and Welfare, 2018). Presently, around 2% of the population are Indigenous (i.e., identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) with the figure being around 6% for the 10-17 year age bracket. However, such persons, as a group, make up 54% of incarcerated young people nationally (Australian Institution of Health and Welfare, 2018).

In November 2019 the Training Centre Visitor (TCV) conducted an interview process to seek detainees' views at the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (AYTC), for the purpose of Inspection. A focus group of six young males and (on a separate occasion) a focus group of two young females were subsequently convened in December 2019 to further discuss issues raised during the November interviews. Conversations with these young people—their struggles and their views regarding what is working well and *not so well* for them in custody—form the basis of the current piece. Emerging as children's and young people's primary concerns were a strong sense of fatalism regarding their means for shaping their own destiny whilst in lock-up; loss of freedom; strictness of rules/bureaucracy; antagonism with youth workers; bullying; inadequate service provision; and a lack of meaningful contact with family and the outside world. Prior to examining these scenarios, however, it is important to offer some contextual information about the project from which the narratives are drawn.

Context

As at November 2019, 39 individuals were detained in the AYTC and approached about their potential participation in a semi-structured interview for the purpose of Inspection (lasting between 45 minutes and two hours). After receiving the explanation that participant responses would remain anonymous, all participants gave their verbal consent, and any specific safety concerns would be followed up by interview staff. It was also made clear to young people that they could refrain from answering questions or terminate their participation at any stage. In all, 34 young people (or 87% of detainees) elected to be interviewed for the project. At least 11 of these young people were known to be under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection. The actual number of young people under guardianship of the Chief Executive was unable to be provided by the Department for Human Services, despite request. Of particular relevance to this report, three quarters (n=79%) of participants were male. Six were female (18%), and one young person identified as gender questioning. As at the time of interview, participants were aged 13 to 18 years (13=4, 14=3, 15=8, 16=7, 17=9 and 18=3). The proportion of Aboriginal children and young people who participated (41% compared with 59% of non-Aboriginal children and young people interviewed) was *lower* than the proportion of Aboriginal children and young people admitted annually to AYTC.

Results

There are a number of major themes emerging from this Inspection which “touch, more or less directly, on the issue of agency and detainee/prisoner responsibility for their life course (where each has come from, where each is at and which path each ‘decides’ to walk in future)” (Halsey, 2008, p.97). These themes can be summed up as follows: understanding rights and responsibilities; equity and fairness; children’s and young people’s voices; health and wellbeing; access to education; relationships; and institutional culture.

Theme 1: Understanding rights and responsibilities

The first theme relates to detainees’ ability to understand what was happening to them and why. In spite of multiple admissions/frequent contact with the youth justice system, the young people at AYTC reported unfamiliarity with the *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres* (i.e., the Charter). Twenty-five children and young people (74%) were unable to recall any of the rights contained therein. Their lack of understanding appeared to be intensified by the alienating environments of the courtroom and training centre. Studies routinely demonstrate that being scared, humiliated and depersonalised on reaching custodial settings features prominently in the experiences of young offenders (Lyon, Dennison, & Wilson, 2000). It is also well established that those in secure care and prison are often living with cognitive and intellectual disorders (Dias et al., 2013; Kumwenda et al., 2017). In one recent Australian study, 89% of young people were identified with at least one neurodevelopmental impairment in the severe range, including 21% with impairment in cognition (Bower et al., 2018). At least one participant in the current project remarked that the Charter contained an overwhelming amount of information and that they would read it if it was presented in another format. Against this background, agencies need to take seriously the way critical information is delivered to children and young people—and the timing of such—to ensure that young people are supported and their wellbeing protected.

Two interviewees were new admissions and had not previously been in detention. When asked what their admission process was like, one young person said the following:

“It was alright—weird—the unclothed search made me uncomfortable because of my sexual abuse in the past.”

Another reported that having “learned about this place” in the community caused him to feel “shame” when subjected to a semi-naked search. The same young person said he was “scared” because “I don’t

like the rooms and can't sleep in there." Others described the admissions process in more positive terms:

"I thought it would be orange and shackles ... I thought 'What the fuck?' [but] in a good way. There was good food. I thought I would be jumped but they [i.e., the other young people] didn't."

One young person reflected that the Charter "doesn't ring a bell" but thought that it may have been mentioned in the video he saw when admitted in his first detention. Another said, "I've heard of it. I've seen it on a piece of paper [but] I don't know what it means." Three detainees specifically noted that the unit walls contained copies of the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*, not *detention*. Certainly, in this small cohort, there was a mix of declarative statements regarding the "upshot" of the Charter in more general terms:

"You're entitled to good food, but what's good food?! It's too vague."

"They say we have rights but when it comes to having rights, we don't ... it doesn't happen."

"[It is] the right 'to be safe and ok'."

"Good food, feel safe, culture, education— [but] it's very vague and you can't enforce it."

"It's basically all bullshit."

Running across the first-person accounts was detainees' sense of not knowing what they were supposed to do or what was happening in certain situations, particularly if they felt mistreated or provoked. Not understanding the consequences of their actions compounded the emotional and developmental difficulties that young people suffered and led to destructive ways to cope and learn. Like the participants in Talbot's (2010) study of juveniles in detention, there was a definite sense of young people trying to learn as they go, getting things wrong and being corrected by staff. A young person in that work was asked how he knew what the prison rules are. His response was as follows:

"That's easy. You know the rules when you break the rules" (p. 37). For those at AYTC, this resulted in a decrease in social interaction and increased feelings of helplessness. For example, certain of the young people remarked, "I withdraw to my cell" and "It would help to be able to chat to a friend and have a hug—but this does not happen as you are not allowed to hug here." When asked "If you are not happy in here, what can you do? Where can you go?" one young person said, "You just have to stay unhappy and wait for the next day." In response to being asked about being happy, one young person asked their own question: "Is that something you can do? Probably not."

Theme 2: Equity and fairness

A number of young people in detention expressed doubt about their ability to take responsibility and to be heard in relation to a range of matters affecting their self-efficacy and coping. For example, one detainee said that there was no significant difference between how staff saw and treated him on the unit in which he was detained and in the dysfunction of his life outside:

"Everybody ignores me in here; they think my reasons are pointless, [which] makes me feel like shit. It's how I've been treated my whole life, basically."

In some cases, young people expressed the view that there was a direct link between their lack of agency and the likelihood of poor behaviour and incidents on the units:

"We have no voice in here, [the staff] take over and this is why we go schizo ... acting up, swearing [and so on]. Injustice makes me act up."

Others indicated that they felt if they spoke up someone would hear and help:

"They are trying to help us in here to be good. I don't want to end up in the big jail. I want to get a job, get paid."

Concern for the treatment of other young people was expressed by many detainees, who reported

speaking up about how to treat other people in the unit (referring to respect for others). One respondent reported seeing people treated unfairly “every single day” and that from their perspective, there are “at least one or two” problematic staff in every team. Examples of perceived unfairness (as distinct from bullying/harassment) included, but were not limited to, favouritism/differential treatment; inconsistency of rules/punishment; and frustrations relating to the Phase privilege system. In particular, the perception of favouritism was reported to give rise to bullying and related behaviour:

“It seems unfair [i.e., that a person gets treated preferentially] and everyone hates the resident for it [especially when they get] different consequences.”

“Staff are humans: it’s obvious [they have favourites].”

“When I tried to complain about different treatment, they [i.e., staff] say it’s none of my business, and I want to say, ‘I am affected—it is my business!’”

Some young people interviewed showed compassion for other young people they perceived were struggling in the environment. It appeared there was interest in peer mentoring or support opportunities but not a system to formalise this.

A long-term detainee remarked that they “[felt] a bit attacked by staff” after being sent to Frangipani Unit (the Centre describe this as the protective actions unit, although young people recognise this as a punishment or regression unit) after staff did not believe his version of an incident. The expectation of children and young people that staff place the highest premium on fairness and equity was further challenged by the impact of detainees with severe and complex mental health issues. A situation was described where a seriously mentally unwell detainee was said to be “not safe” because they had access to “unfair” privileges denied to other young people. A practical solution, that “there should be a disabled

unit in here like they have in schools”, was offered by one respondent. Interestingly, detainees also noted that “some kids talk shit to staff” to test them when they are new. Someone else reflected that workers were “too lenient on naughty kids sometimes”. In such circumstances, it was possible for them to understand how youth workers ultimately felt it necessary to privilege the disciplinary aspects of their work over all other dimensions.

Theme 3: Children’s and young people’s voices

In relation to specific programs and processes, the overwhelming majority of detainees agreed that they felt empowered to speak up if they had a complaint. Nineteen of the 31 children and young people who responded to this question (61%) said they had made at least one complaint while detained at the AYTC.

“Yeah, you can say something if you are not being treated right.”

“Yeah, about how the unit runs, I go to the YAC [Youth Advisory Committee] meeting. The case conference only talks about school or what happens when I get out.”

“You’ve gotta let staff know—they’ll help you out. I’ve found them really good.”

This, however, stood in stark contrast to the belief or expectation that anything constructive would come from voicing their concerns.

“Well, I do speak up and raise issues, but they [i.e., staff] just say ‘Just worry about yourself.’”

“To an extent, they are pretty reasonable. If something is really unfair we get to speak up, but it doesn’t always change it.”

“I can talk to someone—sometimes staff... I have a voice but no-one listens.”

Young people in AYTC reported their interest and willingness to take on active roles in specific programs designed to promote a sense of agency and responsibility (i.e., YAC; case conferencing;

mediation; Resident Incident Forms (RIC)). The following outcomes were noted by children and young people:

"We wanted an Xbox—and that happened [through YAC]."

"[Case conferences] assume what is right for you without asking."

"[Case conferences] felt like I could talk up because I knew a few people in there."

"I went to a case conference and felt heard."

"[RICs] are useful; it depends."

"[Filling in a form] can't really stop those things from happening."

"They said I'm talking shit. No point writing my side of the story [on a RIC] if they're not going to consider it."

"I think some of the questions [in the RIC forms] should be easier to understand."

Most young people were critical of formal dispute resolution processes and frustrated by what they saw as petty rules and procedures:

"[There are too many] bureaucratic and inefficient processes to feel like we have a voice. The egos [of those in charge] get in the way."

"Nothing ever changes—if it does, it'll be down the track and we won't be here in the Centre."

Opportunities for problem solving and perspective taking were often seen to be overridden by management practices that were primarily concerned with conceptions of risk and danger:

"Everyone is about covering their arses."

"'We are looking into it,' ... but nothing happens [when responding to a complaint]."

"Have an interview—a face-to-face discussion—that would be better."

"They could just talk to us; it's important to talk."

"The residents are safe and secure, but they also view us as a lost cause. It's accepted in society that we will inevitably end up in Yatala. That reflects here on the residents whether they realise it or not."

It is positive to report that a clear majority of respondents did not indicate that they had been prevented from approaching the TCV/Guardian:

"Staff encourage it! And say, 'Talk to the TCV if you have a problem.'"

"No [I haven't been prevented], but there may be a long delay and the priority is low."

"The staff just say, 'Go dob me in to the Guardian then.'"

However, this has to be balanced against the issues raised by the minority of detainees who said that contact with the TCV/Guardian has been impeded or undermined by staff at AYTC:

"If I make a complaint about staff, they bring my scores down; this makes me angry."

"There's a culture in here that trickles down from staff and management that if you call the Guardian, they will look down on you. It makes me feel powerless."

"I've had hope taken away. I asked to ring you. They said, 'No point, mate—they can't do fuck all about it.'"

Theme 4: Health and wellbeing

For a particular group of young people, custody can present as offering better access to such basic things as food, health care, television, video games and recreational facilities (Halsey & Deegan, 2014, p. 6). Adolescents detained or confined in correctional care facilities have been shown to have numerous health problems, including mental health; disability (including foetal alcohol spectrum disorders); substance misuse; sexual health, including sexually

transmitted infections; and trauma (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Autism, ADHD, PTSD, schizophrenia, anxiety and depression were among the diagnosed conditions reported by young people in AYTC. Twenty of 31 (65%) respondents indicated that they believed their physical health had improved while in detention (subject to certain caveats). For young people at AYTC, custodial facilities were noted as providing regular opportunities to detox, sleep, gain weight and “catch-up” on aspects of their health care that were otherwise neglected in their lives outside the facility:

“We get treated and our needles up-to-date, and they care; we don’t get that on the outside.”

“Doctors helped me with my acne [and the] nurse organises my meds.”

“When I grew up there was no money, no food in the fridge or the cupboard—I broke into people’s houses for food.”

Some complained that their weight gain had been excessive due to oily and high-carbohydrate food (including white bread) and lack of exercise.

A number of detainees reported that access to health and social services amounted to the best “care” they had ever experienced—easily surpassing that available to them in the community. One young person contrasted being on anti-depressants “in here” with being “on a lot of stuff [i.e., illicit drugs] out there”. Another gave health services “eight out of 10”, saying he had seen the dentist, had been immunised and was happy about this (and pleased that his views were sought: “They asked which arm I wanted it in, and that was good.”) While speaking positively about the services offered and the “nice staff”, several detainees raised practical concerns about access to the health service, such as staffing issues and demand on resources that could prevent appointments (as well as the recent amalgamation under the Dynamic Model) from proceeding:

“I have asked to see the nurse and optometrist for months... I don’t know how it works; staff email a nurse, and the bureaucracy gets

in the way, and you end up in a vortex and nothing happens.”

“I don’t see doctors very often because of no mixes [of genders]. It’s too hard.”

In the case immediately above, the young person said that he had only just seen a doctor after requesting an appointment for six weeks. Several suggestions were made about accessibility and responsiveness: “Having a doctor come more often would make it better; so would a nurse visiting the units every day.” The case was repeatedly made that having a doctor present on the Goldsborough campus only one day per week is not enough. As a means of cutting through what was seen as excessive gatekeeping regarding the health service, one young person purported to make up alarming but “bullshit” reasons to be seen: “Last week I told them I needed to see a doctor because I was bleeding out of my arse.” As he opined, “It would be better if we could just ring them and ask to see them on Thursday—like an actual service.” Another area of serious concern is that “staff want to know why you want the nurse”, with the suggestion that this puts children and young people off making appointments. Similarly, when only male staff were rostered onto the female unit, young women reported “having to ask male staff for embarrassing, private stuff” over the intercom so that “everyone in the office hears you ask”. Clothes were another point of concern, which was found to have a particularly negative impact on young women. Crop tops were “ugly and uncomfortable” and “uncomfortable and unsupportive”, and it was perceived as “unfair” that boys and girls wear different colour tops. One interviewee simply wanted “better shoes”, while another complained, “My shoes ... the soles got ripped up.... I filled out a form on Saturday, I ordered my new shoes at least a month ago—I’m still waiting.”

Many young people advised that they had experienced worsening sleep disturbance, which they attributed to anxiety regarding the uncertainty of their current situation, together with pending court dates. Being on remand made it difficult for case workers and for the young person to set specific goals, which in turn, engendered frustration and sometimes found expression in disruptive

behaviour. Access to effective sleeping medication was a common issue to emerge. Young people also consistently emphasised the lack of quality support for dental and general hygiene. One detainee reported asking the doctor for mouthwash, which was refused on grounds it was too expensive. The young person commented, "I'm still angry about that." This extended to a broader critique about the quality of products provided: there is no dental floss; the toothpaste is "disgusting"; the shampoo and conditioner provided to young people on Phase One "smells disgusting". Other comments indicated "health" frustrations more broadly associated with living in the AYTC environment. Suggested improvements included

- ▶ support for healthy lifestyles, including regular access to the gym, irrespective of Phase level;
- ▶ more physical activity and less time spent "locked down" in rooms;
- ▶ an exercise program for learning;
- ▶ healthier meal options.

Theme 5: Access to education

Education is widely accepted to open up new horizons and pro-social networks for young people caught up in the criminal justice system. As previously observed by Halsey and Deegan (2015, p. 219), "although education is mandated in juvenile custodial settings, it is far from an ideal learning environment. Too often classes devoted to academic learning devolve into classes where management of difficult behaviour becomes the norm". All detainees were asked the question Do you get the education or training you want in here? While there was a broad mixture of positive and negative responses, most young people commented that educational and vocational services in AYTC increased their self-efficacy, sense of achievement and self-esteem, while breaking up the monotony of the day.

"You can get educated in here. I want to do TAFE."

"At least I'm doing something: getting educated in here rather than doing nothing."

As compared to mainstream school, smaller class sizes, SSOs (i.e., School Services Officers) and helpful teachers were identified as having a positive impact on their learning.

"The teachers are really good.... They'll try to help you do some work."

"It's good because you get one-on-one support."

"Staff do what they say they'll do."

However, young people were also vocal about the limitations of the current one-size-fits-all approach to their education:

"[I'm] learning things I learnt in Year 3 and 4, like adding up."

"The subjects are childish. Yesterday, they tried to give me baby work—like how to spell "and"... I can spell big words."

"Standards are low because of the other boys."

"We all get the same work."

"I've had a shitty education experience [no detail]."

The extent to which the training centre environment was directly at odds with meaningful education was particularly pronounced for high-achieving students:

"[Education in AYTC] hurts me a lot ... [it] causes depression and anxiety. Outside I loved ... learning new things.... I come in here and I'm wasting away."

Another detainee went further and explained that they would like to obtain a diploma, but this was impossible because the internet could not be accessed for study and no accommodations could/would be made. Other, more frequently cited, impediments to educational attainment included staff-related lockdowns and/or the disruptive behaviour of other students:

"Classrooms are loud and there is too much mucking up and then we all get sent back to the unit ... which is unfair for others who are not doing that."

"If one person acts up, we are all locked down. It doesn't matter which unit acts up: girls, boys or little boys."

"[Some teachers] just supervise. I have not been in any class where there is any teaching."

Some detainees disclosed that they had not attended school "on the outside" for several years: "When I was on the outside I got kicked out of school; I am not a big fan of school." This young man noted, with regret, that he strived to do well at school but struggled with the academic requirements and conceded that his behaviour was less than acceptable due to his own and other's negative expectations, including some teachers who viewed him as a troublemaker and destined for failure. He reported that he "kinda likes" school at AYTC and would appreciate more support with the work, but this is hard to get, as he does not know the teachers very well. Another young person observed the impact of bespoke, unresolved trauma as undermining student success at AYTC:

"Mainstream models of schooling don't work ... let alone us in here with PTSD, ADHD."

"These kids have learnt to fight to survive—it's all survivalist."

The excerpts relayed above offer a small but significant glimpse of the challenges faced by young people who try to resume their education in AYTC. As their comments demonstrate, "the most effective programmes in youth detention are those designed to meet the needs of individuals, based on the assessment of multiple possible contributing factors such as prior service involvement, previous assessments, school reports, and familial and social histories to identify ... stressors which may impair individual functioning" (Hamilton et al., 2019, p. 139).

"I don't want to learn at a desk. I want to learn about cars, mechanics ... learn about things I am interested in."

"I don't really like school [but I want to be a mechanic]."

"It'd be better if they ran more certificate courses so we could get jobs."

Theme 6: Relationships/Connections to the outside world

It is widely accepted that justice-involved youths are vulnerable before, during and after incarceration. At the same time, a growing body of research recognises imprisonment as a "family ordeal as opposed to an individual experience" (Halsey & Deegan, 2014, p. 2). During interview, young people consistently emphasised that relationships, particularly peer and family connections, can and do play centrally important roles in influencing their behaviour, feelings of coping, hope and the path each "decides" to walk in future. The reality of isolation from the community was highlighted by one young respondent, who said that she was "scared I will lose my nanna while I am in here" and that "I am not able to hold her hand." Another reflected, "My nanna's and [other family] once visited ... for my birthday. Eleven people came. It's a bit sad when they go—you want to go with them." For those in various justice settings, keeping in touch is fundamentally restricted to the devices of letter writing, (monitored) phone calls and visits.

Phone calls

Maintaining phone contact with friends allowed detainees to retain a sense of normality, without which, friendships are "different when you get out". Several participants responded that both visits and phone calls "work okay" and have "been pretty good" and that the contact "is enough".

"Phone calls are pretty good. I ring my dad and sister."

"I ring my nanna. They won't let me call friends. I can't get the numbers."

"When you come, they ask you who you want to contact: their phone numbers (my nanna's, my auntie's), their address. They ring them up and ask if they can get their number approved."

For young people with incarcerated parents, making arrangements for telephone contact proved particularly challenging and distressing. However, more common grievances at AYTC included delays and restrictions getting phone numbers added to approved call lists:

"I am in care [and] I cannot get my boyfriend approved because DCP [Department for Child Protection] won't do it."

"It should be one or two days [but it takes three working days to get a number placed on the phone list]."

The perception of undue delay added to the frustration, hardship and sense of despondency for those detainees who needed to speak to family and friends ahead of a scheduled court appearance:

"I want to know whether I can live with my mate.... I need to know by court on Friday, but I can't ring and ask him. My caseworkers need to be able to speed stuff up. You need to be able to contact the caseworker directly—not have to ask the staff every half an hour."

When asked what could be done to make phone calls "better", respondent suggestions included the following:

- ▶ Allocating more calls as necessary: "when I need to calm down or if I have a beef";
- ▶ Privacy: one child stated that he finds it difficult to talk to his mother when he knows people are listening;
- ▶ Allowing phone calls earlier in the morning and after 9.15pm (for older detainees);
- ▶ Allowing longer calls;
- ▶ Allowing calls to numbers awaiting approval while staff are in the room;
- ▶ Allowing calls to family in the morning (not afternoon only), so that visits can be organized

Visits

For some young people, visits do not really happen. Sometimes this is by choice, with at least three detainees making the decision to forgo all phone calls and visits while in detention.

"I told my family to stop coming."

"I don't get visits. I don't see my family when I'm in here."

"I don't feel the need to call people."

For others, geographic dislocation from significant others emerged as a major concern. One young person related that he had only received a single visit since admission, and two other young people said their only visits were from "my Home D worker!" For families residing interstate or in regional towns, visits were especially difficult without a means of reliable transport. One young person accounted thusly for his lack of visits: "They don't have a family car anymore." The latter also noted that he had the expectation that his DCP worker "is meant to come visit" every two weeks, but he has only seen him twice. For those receiving regular visits, family impressions of the Centre included a broad mix of commentary:

"[They] probably feel sad to see me behind bars."

"They think it's shit."

"[The AYTC] looks pretty but feels fucked."

"[It causes] a lot of stress to be here, especially for my Dad—the fact that it is a prison."

"They want to use the grounds for visits and are disappointed that they cannot."

Predictably, a great deal of discussion surrounded the dehumanising aspects of the visitation process. Issues identified by detainees included that

"[Staff] are watching: I sit here, they sit there [i.e., family visitors]."

"There is a strip search afterwards. I don't like that; you have to squat and cough."

"[There is a need for more privacy.] You can hear everyone's conversations."

Failure to advise families ahead of time that visits were cancelled added further stress to an already difficult situation. Insufficient information regarding visiting procedures and protocols similarly heightened the frustration and sense of disempowerment for young people and their visitors. Those with younger relatives observed that the family room and playground were only there to "trick you", as young children wanted to go outside and play on the equipment but were told that they could not (with the play equipment reportedly being out of bounds for years). Another young person mentioned that

“Nanna” comes weekly for an hour but that “it is too long!” and gets boring, so they would like to play games or show her their schoolwork and art. This is particularly important for young people with limited social or communication skills and needs who prefer to engage through playing or games. One detainee roundly captured this perspective:

“Make the visitor centre look less like a prison, more like a visit—have tea and coffee. Be able to take in schoolwork or art to show my parents or my laptop so I can play them music I’ve created. It’s hard to describe music—I would like to play it for them. If we had the option to play cards or something, Connect 4, instead of just looking at each other with 10-minute gaps. A friend came and said, ‘Is it an hour yet?’ It was only 25 minutes. It’s awkward just sitting there.”

Theme 7: Custodial climate—Safety and treatment

AYTC’s principal mission is to provide young people in custody with a “safe, secure environment which encourages inspirational change” (Department of Human Services, 2019). Thirty-one children and young people responded to the question Do you feel safe in here? Twenty (64%) said yes, three said no, eight indicated “sometimes” (26%) and one said, “I don’t know.” The situation for children and young people feeling unsafe was described in the following terms:

“I don’t feel safe. I have PTSD. It depends on staffing. If there are two female staff and one male, I feel like I will get jumped [by other residents] because there is not enough [male staff] in the unit.”

“Lockdowns make me feel nervous.”

“I’m not always emotionally safe.”

The young person who responded “I don’t know” elaborated:

“Some workers do help, some don’t. [They] ‘set the feel’ for if you feel safe. If good staff outweigh the ‘bad’ on shift, it will be a ‘good’ shift. ‘Bad’ workers are the minority. Good workers act ‘normal’ and just speak normal

to you, [whereas] some talk down to you as a boss and I want to punch them in the face.”

For those who said they did feel safe, they made the following observations:

“I know I won’t get bashed. Staff would do their job as they respond and know what is going on.”

“If there was a fight, the workers would break it up.”

“Staff help me feel safe.”

“There are some really good workers here who know how to handle situations.”

Accordingly, detainees drew distinction between feeling physically and emotionally safe. Young people who responded that they felt safe “sometimes” gave nuanced explanations, making the following observations:

“When a staff member is very rude and says things like, ‘No wonder no-one likes you.’”

“When I was 10, I was locked up. I’ve spent three birthdays over there [Jonah campus] and two in here [Goldsborough]. The first time, I was 10. It was scary... I was with 18- or 20-year-olds when I first came in.”

“Sometimes there’s fights and stuff... [I] just try and stay out of trouble.”

Comments from those who reported feeling safe were also nuanced and contingent on the awareness and ability of staff to respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

“When I first came in at 12 years old, I was in the games room and they [i.e., other residents] would threaten me. I was scared of them and I was too scared to tell staff—one [resident] was 17 years old.”

“I feel like there are ghosts in here [at night], tapping and knocking on windows and buddy doors in the rooms ... but I feel safe from staff and other residents.”

“Staff help me feel safe. If I’ve got a beef against someone, I have to do mediation with them so nothing happens and there is no

fighting. You talk, you say sorry, you become friends... Some people hurt themselves in here. I hurt myself in here when I was angry. Staff will help and talk about what we can do better."

Issues of safety aside, and regardless of the reasons for their detention, children and young people considered themselves to be "locked up" in "prison". Further comments were added here about the use of cameras as an infringement on children's and young people's personal privacy, reflecting an issue raised many times previously during the TCVU Visiting Program:

"I withdraw to my cell, which it is. The public don't want to know we are locking kids up; that is why it is called a training centre and not a jail."

"At the end of the day, it's a jail in here."

"The cameras are on all the time—they tell us the cameras are off, but when I put my mattress against it, the staff come in and tell us to take down the mattress. If it was off, they wouldn't see the mattress!"

Bullying

Bullying was a major feature of the training centre culture. For young people at AYTC, it was taken as an entrenched and inevitable part of the initiation and training centre hierarchy process:

"Of course there's gonna be bullying. I've been called heaps of names. Staff tell you to deal with it personally."

"Yeah, there's heaps of bullying, talking shit ... we're bored, or you just don't like [someone]."

"When you first come in [you have to establish] the pecking order."

"You can punch someone in the back of the head in the games room because neither camera can see from that angle."

Twenty-six respondents who answered the question about whether bullying occurred at AYTC indicated that it did, in a number of forms: "They [i.e., staff]

miss 70% of it because it's so subtle." A typical observation was that "I [got] bullied when I first came in, but everybody does." Factors such as race, ethnicity, crime committed, appearance and sexuality were oft-cited subjects of verbal taunts (e.g., "Some kids get picked on for acting gay.") In one example, a young person recalled an offensive "detailed discussion" between staff and detainees over dinner about homosexuals". Those who were "weak"—on account of age, immaturity, or "how they hold themselves"—made attractive targets for victimisation. When asked whether they felt if they *could really be yourself in here*, one young person responded, "You need to pretend to be tough so other kids won't target you. I feel pissed off; I want to take off my mask and just be who I am." On the other hand, in an anomaly in relation to these behaviours, young people also advised they had taken detainees who need help "under their wing" in an attempt to protect them from bullying or other predatory behaviours (i.e., "standovers"). Some compassion was shown for others, including in a situation where several detainees approached another to attack someone:

"I don't know why ... they look at me and want me to run him down. I don't. We're all humans; I have no beef with him."

Most children and young people were reluctant to approach staff openly about bullying for fear of being labelled a "dog" and subject to further victimisation (e.g., "I prefer to look after myself" and "[I always say] 'No comment' because I am not a snitch.") Coping strategies typically involved avoidance and social isolation. There was also perception that staff would only intervene if and when actual physical contact was made.

"Residents ask for help, but not in an appropriate manner (i.e., through incidents). A cry for help is taken as acting out."

"Staff don't stop no bullying; they don't give a fuck. They just wait for it to get physical!"

Respect

According to the experiences of the young people in this report, institutional disrespect, cultures of suspicion, isolated episodes of violence and authoritarian management styles permeate relations between youth workers and young incarcerated males (and females) at AYTC. According to detainees, it was vitally important that staff have a background in psychology or working with PTSD and other disorders. Instead, they thought most of them were former military, private security, or police service.

"Some staff speak to you like shit [but] I can't crack up because then I lose Phase."

"It's hard to separate the 'good' staff from the 'bad' staff—it's very blurred. The culture needs to change."

"Yeah, I've been restrained. It felt shit, but I put myself in it.... Heaps of staff restrained me."

Other examples of disrespect included "hitting you", "embarrassing you", "calling you names", "talking mean", "using sarcastic tone", "talking behind backs", "starting fights" and "swearing and yelling". As a concept, respect was characterised by reciprocity: if I get along with a person "and they respect me, I give it back". What is particularly apparent from interviews is that enhancing detainee wellbeing required considerable investment of time, energy and patience, especially in light of constraints within the facility environment:

"Angry feelings get a negative response in here but sometimes angry does not mean that, and it needs staff to ask you 'What is wrong?' [As opposed to imposing a collective punishment.] If one person does a wrong thing then we all get in a lockdown or sent back from school."

"[Staff] interacting good and having a laugh [make me feel like] I'm being good and trying to get respect."

"You've got to earn your respect with young people in here.... I'll give respect to everyone [but not] if they treat me like shit."

"[If staff] are having a bad day they shouldn't make us have a bad day."

Respect was described as—

"Being treated nice";

"People not thinking they are big";

"It is being believed and not made to be a liar";

"Interacting good and having a laugh."

Children and young people from across different units also provided positive examples of outcomes from some staff members with whom they worked:

"Staff are heaps good—they talk to you in good ways, help you out, care about you. They are trying to help us in here be good. I don't want to end up in the big jail. I want to get a job, get paid."

"Talk to a caseworker: then stuff gets done."

"I ask staff to email them—the psychologist or the CAMHS worker."

"I like all the staff really.... I feel respected by staff but not the other girls."

"Some (workers) really care about kids."

A particularly reflective response was provided by one long-term detainee for whom respect "is very important". He noted that staff "must recognise they have a lot more power than us" and manage this dynamic and responsibility appropriately.

Several young people also noted that any relationships they built up were often short-changed by their tendency to present as emotionally blocked, fearing labels from their peers and other staff:

"I go to my room to be on my own.... [Talking to staff] doesn't really help.... I think they think I'm a weird kid."

"[I] sit outside. I don't ... talk to anyone I don't trust."

"I could talk to someone if I wanted to [but I choose not to]."

Consequences

Children and young people were asked about the kinds of “consequences” that are applied to them at the AYTC. Most respondents identified the following:

- ▶ Early bed (25 reported this);
- ▶ Other room restrictions;
- ▶ Lockdowns;
- ▶ DRMPS (at least 11 young people used this specific term (Dynamic Risk Management Plan), which was perceived as a consequence);
- ▶ Being sent to Frangipani (regression) Unit (10 reported this);
- ▶ Chores;
- ▶ Loss of Phase and associated privileges;
- ▶ Missing out (on school, gym, pool, oval, games room);
- ▶ Warnings.

The vast majority of respondents, while understanding why there had to be consequences, “could not grasp how the conditions to which they were [punished] could any way assist them to become a [‘better person’]” (Halsey, 2007, p. 349). Comments about being restricted to bedrooms included the following:

“You can’t breathe in there... I feel lonely in my room.”

“I gave up as I got an early bed for picking a flower from the garden bed and having it in my room.”

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*Great Responsibility: Report on the 2019 Pilot Inspection of the
Adelaide Youth Training Centre (Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre)*



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