



Minister for Education
Minister for Youth Justice

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Our Ref: 03922/23

08 January 2024

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Email: tableoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2023 regarding Petition No. 3963-23 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 29 November 2023, about locating a youth detention centre in Edmonton. I note the petition is the same as Petitions No. 3968-23 and 3934-23, from the same Principal Petitioner, although with a different number of signatories.

The petition calls for recognition that residents of Edmonton, surrounding suburbs and Cairns as a whole are concerned about locating a youth detention centre at Edmonton. The government has listened to the community and we are putting community safety first. There is nothing more important than keeping the community safe and we know we need additional youth detention capacity. That's why we have committed to building two new youth detention centres – one at Woodford and one in or near Cairns.

Site investigations are still underway for a youth detention centre located in or near Cairns that supports the government's goal to provide more regional youth detention services, facilitating connection to family, community, Country and support services during detention and when transitioning back into community.

The government is doing more than ever to break the cycle of offending. A youth detention centre in or near Cairns would be a small, culturally responsive centre that addresses the individual needs of young people. It would be a place where young people are provided with access to the therapeutic programs and services they need to turn their lives around as well as opportunities for education, vocation and job readiness skills to help prepare them to live productively in the community.

Youth detention services in or near Cairns would be provided in addition to the programs and services provided by my department and its partners in the region including:

- Co-Responder: a Youth Justice and police team operating 24/7 focused on reducing and preventing antisocial behaviour from occurring in the first place
- bail support services provided by Youth Empowered Toward Independence to assist young people on bail to meet their bail conditions
- cultural mentoring and Family-led Decision Making services delivered by Wuchopperen Health Service, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families to address offending behaviours
- the Cairns Safer Streets initiative, a whole of government approach to improve community safety

- a Stronger Communities Early Action Group, bringing together Police and other key government representatives to provide intensive coordination of services to young people aged 8-16 years who are at risk of falling into a cycle of crime
- an On Country program to provide culture-based rehabilitation, delivered by the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation
- a multiagency collaborative panel to support a more intensive case management model for repeat offenders
- Community Partnership Innovation Grant recipients Selectability - for an after hours outreach and monitoring program in Earlville and Edmonton, and Youth Into Work - for work readiness courses and skill building.

The petition also calls on the government to investigate more suitable sites to be identified and to locate a new youth detention centre away from the homes, schools and businesses of Edmonton. Finding a suitable site for a youth detention centre involves considering several important factors. For example, a suitable site would be:

- located sufficiently distant from high density residential neighbourhoods to limit the impacts on residential communities
- in a location most appropriate to meet expected demand
- sufficiently close to families, community members and support services who will visit the centre regularly
- in close proximity to an available workforce
- proximate to court, police, health and other youth justice services.

A number of sites are being investigated and work to identify a suitable site in or near Cairns for a new youth detention centre is continuing. A final decision has not been made.

The petition also call on the government to genuinely consult with the local community and residents before advancing this project any further. We are in the planning stages of the new youth detention centre project. Formal engagement with stakeholders including the local Council and Traditional Owners is planned and views will be carefully considered.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me, and I trust this information has been of assistance.

Yours sincerely



DI FARMER MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Youth Justice