New future for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre site

Overview

On Tuesday 26 May 2026, the Tasmanian Government announced its intention to repurpose the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) site into a minimum-security adult male prison and agriculture-based prisoner rehabilitation and training facility.

The Government has taken into account feedback received during the previous community consultation phase, which indicated that any future correctional use of the AYDC site should focus on minimum-security accommodation and operate under a rehabilitation focused model, similar to the former Hayes Prison Farm, with an emphasis on structured work, skills development, and reintegration.

The repurposed facility is expected to accommodate approximately 40-minimum-security prisoners and be contained within the current AYDC footprint, with the potential option to use the farmland attached to the site for farm and agriculture-based training.

Establishing an additional adult correctional facility in northern Tasmania will allow prisoners from the north of the State, who currently account for almost half of the total prisoner population to be accommodated closer to their families and support networks.

It will also broaden recruitment opportunities for the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS), help address current correctional officer workforce pressures and create new career pathways for staff already based in the north. Importantly, it would also provide staff currently employed by the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) at the AYDC site in a variety of roles, like health and administration, with potential alternative employment pathways following the closure of the current facility.

Repurposing the existing AYDC facilities presents a unique opportunity for the TPS to accommodate minimum-security prisoners in a setting focused on rehabilitation and education. This decision builds on the Government's ongoing commitment to greater rehabilitation opportunities for people in custody.

The Government has made significant investments to the AYDC facility and site in recent years. Repurposing the facility is a practical and responsible pathway to ensuring the investment already made continues to deliver value for Tasmanians, while strengthening our corrections system more broadly.

A new youth justice facility at Pontville is being designed to support a child-centred and therapeutic model of care that addresses the individual needs and risk factors of young people in detention, while maintaining community safety.

The AYDC site will not transfer to the Department of Justice (the Department) until the existing youth facility has closed and a project to repurpose the site's infrastructure can be delivered. Based on current planning timelines for the construction of the replacement facility at Pontville, a minimum-security correctional facility for adult prisoners at the AYDC site is therefore not expected to be operational before 2029.

Image above of the AYDC site

Have your say

The Department recognises that there will be a range of views across the community regarding this decision. That is why we are providing opportunity for all members of the community to engage and share their feedback on the intention to repurpose the AYDC site into a minimum security adult prison and agriculture-based prisoner rehabilitation and training facility.

How to submit your feedback

If you have questions or would like to provide feedback on this decision, you can:

1. Submit your feedback online by visiting www.justice.tas.gov.au/future-use-aydc

2. Mail your feedback to:

   Department of Justice
   Office of the Secretary
   GPO Box 825
   Hobart TAS 7001

Learn more

For further information and updates regarding the Government's proposed future use for the AYDC, please visit the Department's website via www.justice.tas.gov.au/future-use-aydc

Frequently Asked Questions

How many prisoners will the repurposed facility accommodate?

The repurposed facility is expected to accommodate approximately 40 minimum-security prisoners.

Why was the AYDC site chosen for this future use?

The Meander Valley area includes connectivity to major population centres in the north and north west, and proximity to services and transport routes.

The Department of Justice has previously conducted preliminary investigations of the AYDC site which indicated the site is well-suited as a location for an adult correctional facility in northern Tasmania, with a custodial facility a permitted use within the current zone for the site under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme for the Meander Valley.

How would the facility promote rehabilitation and reduce offending?

The facility would promote rehabilitation by providing low security prisoners with access to education, vocational training, work experience and targeted reintegration programs. The existing site may be particularly suited to rural training and employment initiatives, enabling prisoners to develop practical skills and positive work habits before release. These opportunities would improve prisoners' readiness for employment and community reintegration, helping to address factors associated with offending and reduce the risk of reoffending.

Why does the AYDC facility have to be closed as a custodial facility for youths?

The Government has accepted the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, which included the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as a facility that operates to manage children and young people in detention.

Will there be elevated crime rates due to this repurposed facility as an adult correctional facility?

The proposed facility would only accommodate minimum-security prisoners and would operate within the Tasmania Prison Service's established security, supervision and risk-management frameworks. Appropriate security arrangements, prisoner classification processes and operational controls would be incorporated into the facility's design and management.

Community safety will be a central consideration throughout the planning and delivery of the project. The Government would continue to engage with the local community and relevant stakeholders as the proposal develops, including in relation to security, emergency management, transport and other potential community impacts.

Does the Government intend to house maximum security rated offenders at this facility?

No. The repurposed facility will not accommodate maximum-security rated prisoners. The proposed facility is intended to only accommodate minimum-security rated prisoners.

Does the Government intend to increase the scale of this project/planned facility and include a future remand centre?

No. The Government's proposal is focused on repurposing existing infrastructure at the AYDC site, with modifications and upgrades required to support safe and appropriate operation. It does not involve the major redevelopment of the site and is very different to the previous Northern Correctional Facility Project.

Planning is based on only repurposing the existing AYDC infrastructure for approximately 40 minimum-security male prisoners. The project is not envisaged as a major redevelopment of the site, with the focus instead being on the upgrades required for safe and appropriate operation of the existing facility. Further detail will be developed through the planning and design process, with any proposed changes considered through the relevant assessment, approval and consultation processes.

How big will the repurposed facility be?

The Government's proposal is focused on reusing the existing AYDC site infrastructure and operational footprint contained within the existing perimeter fence, with any modifications or additional upgrades required to support safe and appropriate operation to be considered through detailed planning.

Detailed site planning, including defined operational areas, secure perimeters, access arrangements, internal movement areas and any proposed program or work areas, is still to be developed and will be developed through consultation with the local community.

The Department of Justice will undertake further planning work to define these matters. Where appropriate, and subject to operational and security considerations, further information will be shared with affected stakeholders as planning progresses.

What is the budget allocated to this project?

The Department of Justice is undertaking high level site planning, including operational areas, secure perimeters, access arrangements, internal movement areas, and proposed program and work areas. Once this work is complete, funding requirements will be considered through the appropriate budget processes.

Will the employees who currently work at the AYDC be able to gain employment at the new repurposed adult facility?

Establishing a state-wide Tasmania Prison Service would significantly broaden recruitment opportunities, including in the north of the State, which will assist in addressing current correctional officer workforce pressures and offer new career opportunities to Correctional staff based in the north. It would also provide staff currently employed by DECYP at the AYDC site in variety of roles, like health and administration, with potential alternative employment pathways following the closure of the current facility.

How would the facility fit with the Meander Valley ethos

The Government acknowledges the rural, agricultural and community character of the Meander Valley and understands the importance of ensuring that any future use of the AYDC site is sensitive to that context.

The current proposal is focused on prisoners who are suitably assessed for the operating model, with a focus on rehabilitation, reintegration and agriculture -based training. This reflects an intention to develop a model that is aligned with the existing rural setting and that may provide meaningful training and rehabilitation opportunities linked to agricultural industries.

When will the AYDC close?

The Tasmanian Government has committed to closing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible, in line with their commitment to the recommendations made through the Commission of Inquiry.

A new youth justice facility at Pontville is being designed to deliver a child-centred and therapeutic model of care that addresses the individual needs and risk factors of young offenders, while keeping the community safe. As such, a minimum security correctional facility for adult prisoners is not expected to be realised until 2029, based on current project planning timelines for the replacement Youth Detention Centre to be constructed at Pontville.

Will there be an impact to property values?

Potential impacts on property values is a common concern of communities in response to a proposal for a correctional facility.

This issue was considered in the independent Social Impact Assessment (SIA) with reference to the particular setting of the Meander Valley.

Based on the analysis within the SIA, a proposed minimum-security adult correctional facility is not anticipated to cause a reduction in housing prices.

This is consistent with past experience in places like New South Wales and Queensland where is has been shown that concerns about the potential reduction in value of properties as a result of the construction and operation of correctional facilities did not eventuate.

How will the Department assess which prisoners would be suitable for this repurposed facility?

Prisoner placement decisions would be made in accordance with established Tasmania Prison Service classification, minimum security and risk assessment processes. Prisoners would need to be assessed as suitable for the operating model at the AYDC site, having regard to their classification, behaviour, rehabilitation needs, risk profile, supervision requirements and suitability and motivation for training, reintegration and productive activity.

The Government remains committed to delivering on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry regarding AYDC, to establish a memorial in consultation with the victim-survivors, and ensuring that no former youth detainee would be detained in a prison facility at the AYDC site, other than with their consent and agreement.