
PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING 2026

Children and Young People in Reception Prisons

Current as at: 12-June-2026

KEY MESSAGES

- The Tasmanian Government is committed to the safety of children and young people who engage with corrective services as well as ensuring that all staff feel safe and supported at work when engaging with children and young people.
- As I've said before, ideally young people would not be in these facilities, and this is why the Government is working on alternatives.
- As responsible Minister, I take the matter of young people housed in watchhouses very seriously and I have asked my Department to make it their highest priority to ensure that children are safe in these facilities.
- Children and young people under 18 years of age may be accommodated in watch-houses after they have been taken into custody awaiting court or police interview or while they are waiting to be transferred to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.
- They may also be held in these facilities protectively when intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, to be bailed when they are sober.

Corrections and Rehabilitation

- The detention of young people in watch-houses is not a Tasmania-specific issue - all Australian jurisdictions use watch-house facilities for adults and young people for transitional periods during justice processes.
- The Tasmanian Government has invested **\$450,000** to develop a detailed business case for a new reception prison with contemporary prisoner accommodation and accompanying recreation, support and training spaces within the Launceston CBD.
- The Department is also actively looking at alternatives in regards to the Hobart watchhouse and options for more appropriate spaces for children and youth.
- The Minister for Children and Youth and I are very actively working on this issue and looking for solutions, noting the complexity of finding suitable youth-specific spaces.

ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS

- Tasmania's watch-houses are within Hobart Reception Prison (HRP) and Launceston Reception Prison (LRP), both of which are connected to the police station and Magistrates Court.
- This makes it very difficult to source an immediate and practical alternative, due to the necessary involvement of police and courts at the entry stage of the criminal justice system.
- In the absence of immediate and practical alternatives to remove young people from watch-houses, under my instruction, my Department has taken steps to improve the safety and wellbeing of young people in prison watch-houses.

Corrections and Rehabilitation

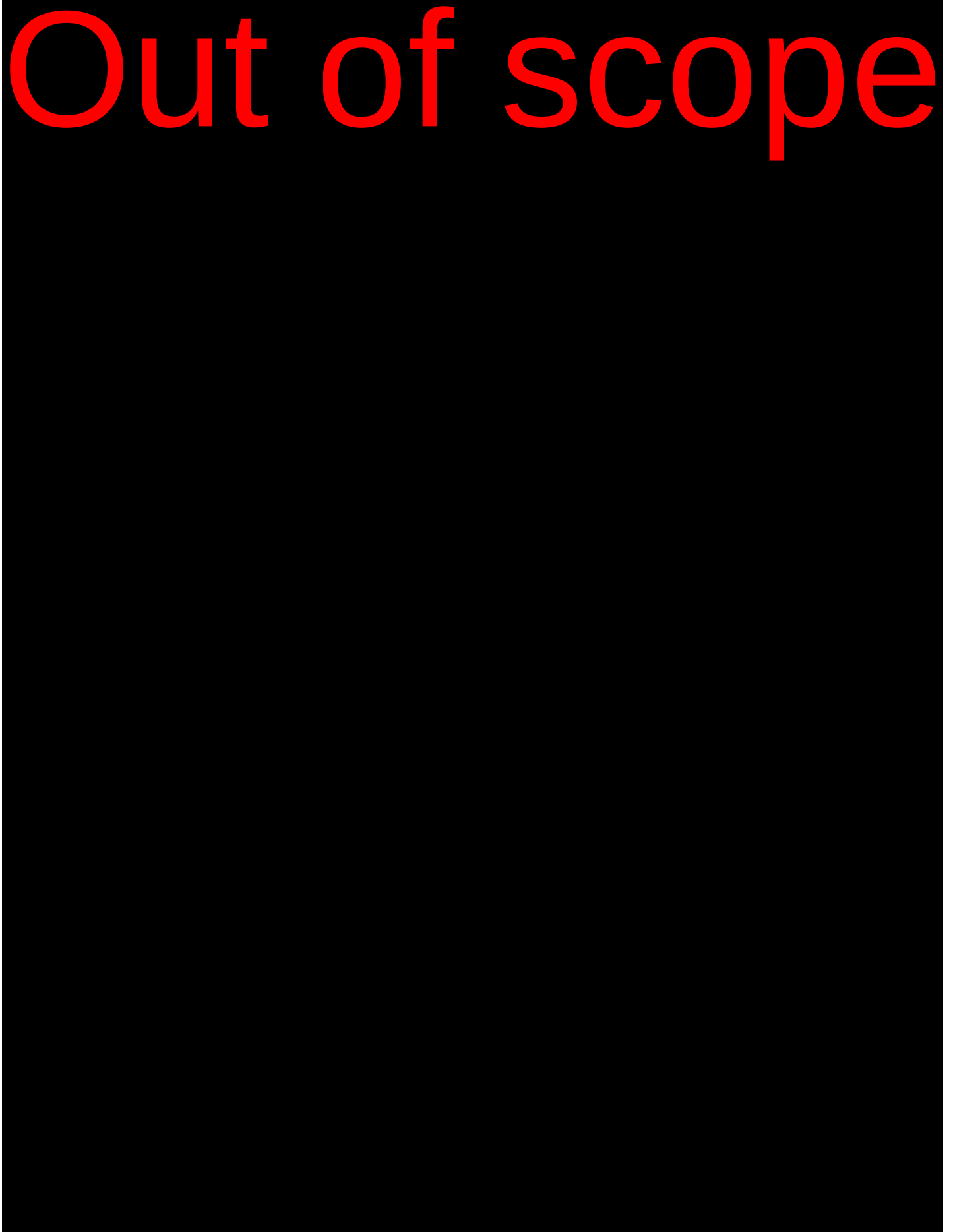
- Key initiatives to date include:
 - implementing the use of body-worn cameras for staff engaged with young people and implementing body-scanners across Tasmania Prison Service facilities
 - procuring the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop and deliver training for correctional officers and managers on trauma-informed engagement with children and young people in custodial settings
 - improving record-keeping processes
 - reviewing and amending key Director's Standing Orders to comply with the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*.

LENGTH OF STAY

- Young people detained in HRP and LRP are generally detained for brief periods, with the most common length of admission 0-3 hrs in HRP, and 6-12 hrs at LRP in 2025.
- The longest duration of detention of a child or young person in Hobart was 2.3 days, and in Launceston 1.1 days. Typically, children and young people remanded in Hobart are impacted by longer wait times for transfer to AYDC.

Out of scope

Out of scope



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Key Figures

Children and Young People in Watch-Houses

- Between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026, there were 258 admissions of children and young people to the HRP and LRP (206 in Hobart and 52 in Launceston).
- This is approximately 5 per week in Hobart and just over 1 per week in Launceston.
- Between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026, the TPS did not admit any children and young people under the age of 18 years to any prison facilities outside of watch-house cells.
- Around 85% of reception prison staff have completed the Australian Childhood Foundation's trauma informed training on Engaging Justice Involved Young People.
- Senior managers across the TPS have also completed the training, including managers of prison facilities, and members of review panels who may be required to make decisions about children and young people in custody.
- Watch-house staff have also attended components of the AYDC staff induction program, to build capability in understanding the needs of children and young people in custody.