

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

### Reintegrating young people into the community after detention

Juvenile Justice prepares and assists young people to reintegrate into the community reasonably well, given the complex needs of young people in detention, according to a report released today by the NSW Auditor-General, Margaret Crawford.

Juvenile Justice has many processes and programs to identify and address young people's needs while in detention and links them to relevant support services in the community. It still faces some significant barriers which make reintegration difficult. Some are within its control to fix, such as improving training and recreational activities available to young people in detention. Others relate to external factors, such as the capacity of other organisations to address their reintegration needs like housing, education and employment, and a young person's period of detention.

Australian and international research has shown that programs to reintegrate young people into the community can reduce the risk that young people will enter the adult criminal justice system. This in turn helps reduce the cost of crime and makes our community safer.

Based on this broad premise, this audit examined how well Juvenile Justice prepares and assists young people to reintegrate into the community after they are released from detention.

#### Young people's needs are identified promptly

Juvenile Justice has sound processes to identify the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of young people in detention. Staff assess key factors that affect young people's offending behaviour. This includes their family circumstances, education and employment, substance abuse, peer relations, behaviour and attitudes. Each young person has a case plan to address these needs, although the quality of the plans varied.

#### Many programs and activities are in place but access and completion rates vary

Young people can access programs to help address their offending behaviours, however, completion rates vary. In addition, the range and type of recreation activities and vocational training varies between detention centres. Juvenile Justice is reviewing these programs to ensure they are delivered in ways that engage young people and are evidence-based.

#### Discharge planning occurs but there can be delays

Juvenile Justice starts preparing young people for release as soon as they enter detention. Staff involve the young person, their family, and people from other agencies that will support them in the community. However, there can be delays in the discharge process and engagement from other government agencies was not always timely.

#### Young offenders have somewhere to live but they are less likely to have a job or be at school

Nine in ten young people leaving Juvenile Justice's care have somewhere to live but less than half are working, training or going to school. Only a third participate in community activities.

#### More young people are referred to services after release but access is difficult

The proportion of young people being referred to services in the community after release has increased over the last five years but access to services can be difficult to arrange, particularly mental health, drug and alcohol, and housing. This is partly due to the complex needs of these young people and the limited capacity of other organisations in the community.

#### Further Information

For further information, please refer the report's Executive Summary or full report on the Audit Office website.

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