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**New South Wales Auditor-General's Report**  
Performance Audit

**Reintegrating young offenders into the  
community after detention**

Department of Justice  
Juvenile Justice NSW

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In accordance with section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I present a report titled **Reintegrating young offenders into the community after detention: Department of Justice, Juvenile Justice NSW**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Crawford'.

**Margaret Crawford**  
Auditor-General  
28 April 2016

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# Executive summary

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On any given day there are around 280 young people in detention in New South Wales. They include some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community. Many are from unstable families, have poor education skills, use illicit drugs, and have suffered trauma.

In New South Wales, Juvenile Justice NSW (Juvenile Justice) is responsible for looking after young people in detention and supervising young offenders in the community. It provides a range of programs and services that are designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate young people in detention into the community.

Australian and international research has shown that programs to reintegrate young people into the community can have flow on effects for the community. They 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 communities 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. To help us answer this question we asked how well Juvenile Justice:

- prepares young people in detention for release back into the community
- links young people to programs and support services after they are released.

## Conclusion

**Given the complex needs of young people in detention, Juvenile Justice prepares and assists them to reintegrate into the community reasonably well. However, more can be done to strengthen discharge planning in detention centres, and to remove some of the barriers which make reintegration difficult.**

Juvenile Justice has many processes and programs in place to identify and address young people's needs while in detention and link them to support services in the community. However, it still faces significant challenges. Some of these 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. Short periods in detention make it more difficult for staff to plan discharge so that reintegration needs can be met.

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

Juvenile Justice has sound processes in place 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 and living circumstances, education and employment, substance abuse, peer relations, and behaviour and attitudes.

Juvenile Justice staff have a clear understanding of the reintegration outcomes they hope to achieve for young people in their care. Each young person in detention has a case plan which includes some or all of these outcomes, although the quality of the plans varies.

### **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. Juvenile Justice has reviewed and is updating these programs to ensure they are delivered in ways that engage young people and are evidence-based.

The range and type of recreation activities and vocational training also varies between detention centres. Recreation activities are important as they can help provide young people with living skills, such as teamwork and problem solving, which will help them when they are released. Similarly, vocational training can lead to work or further education in the community.

As recreation budgets are small, detention centres engage non-government organisations to run recreational activities at no or low cost. These can be difficult to arrange depending on the services available and how well detention centres engage the local community. In addition, Juvenile Justice and Department of Education staff within centres were uncertain about the effect of recent changes in the vocational education sector on the availability of courses. Overall, more is needed to clarify what Juvenile Justice wants to achieve regarding recreation activities and vocational training and ensure programs align with these outcomes.

### **Getting young people back to school in the community is challenging**

Both Juvenile Justice and Department of Education staff advised that it was difficult to plan young peoples' return to school in the community after they are released. They advised that some schools are reluctant to accept former Juvenile Justice students and it is hard to enrol students in school if they do not know where the young person will live. Despite schools in detention centres having a transition officer or team, this problem continues to be a challenge. To address this, Juvenile Justice and the Department of Education are funding research to help them develop a transition framework for young people in detention.

### **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. Juvenile Justice custodial and community staff were confused about who is responsible for discharge planning. Engagement from other government agencies was not always timely. It is also difficult to plan discharge for young people on remand because they can be released from detention at very short notice.

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

We found that the proportion of young people being referred to services in the community after release has increased over the last five years. Staff have built good relationships and networks with agencies in their local community. However, 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. A number of initiatives have been implemented to help address these issues, for example:

- Juvenile Justice funding services such as housing, employment and casework support
- clinicians located in Juvenile Justice community offices to improve access to health services
- pre-release units in two detention centres which link people to outside agencies
- a supported housing program run by one detention centre to help people live on their own.

Despite these initiatives, accessing services in the community is a continuing problem. Many staff said supported housing and mentoring played an important role in engaging young people and helping them to reintegrate. It is encouraging to see that Juvenile Justice intends to fund mentoring services in future.

Juvenile Justice does not monitor referrals to non-Juvenile Justice funded services. This would help demonstrate unmet need and inform resource decisions and dialogue with other agencies. It should also publish reintegration outcomes for young people leaving detention on its website.

### **Good interagency cooperation in detention centres but community engagement varies**

We found good interagency cooperation within detention centres. Staff from Juvenile Justice, the Department of Education, and the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, all spoke of collaborative and supportive relationships. Some detention centres have also built good relationships and connections with the Aboriginal community and non-government organisations. However, this was not the case for all detention centres, with staff reporting that it was difficult to engage some community organisations.

More should also be done to improve joint planning on reintegration with government departments at the strategic level.

## Reintegration outcomes are monitored but not referenced in planning documents

Juvenile Justice regularly monitors reintegration and reoffending outcomes for young people leaving detention. These include whether young people have somewhere safe to live, are back at school, in the workforce, and are reducing their offending behaviour. However, there are currently no reintegration goals in its corporate planning documents.

We found that nine in ten young people leaving Juvenile Justice's custody when their sentence expires have somewhere to live. However, less than half are working, training, or going to school, and only a third participate in community activities. Currently, around one in two young people leaving detention reoffend within one year of leaving Juvenile Justice's care, and four in five reoffend within two years. These rates have been relatively stable over the last ten years. We recognise that while Juvenile Justice has a role to play in reducing reoffending, there are many factors which contribute to reoffending rates which are outside its immediate control, although it seeks to influence these. These factors include the young person's cognitive ability, family environment, education and employment, health and welfare.

Juvenile Justice advised that it is rare to see large shifts in reoffending rates. It is hard to turn around offending behaviours quickly. Young people in detention have complex needs and often enter Juvenile Justice's care multiple times. However, given Juvenile Justice has been updating its offence-based programs, it will be in a good position in future to see whether these changes have helped reduce reoffending. To do this, it should first clarify the outcomes it wants to achieve for young people leaving detention so that it has a means of measuring success in this area.

## Recommendations

### We recommend that Juvenile Justice NSW:

By July 2016:

1. include reintegration outcomes and measures in its next strategic framework so that it clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve for young people leaving detention
2. publish data on its website on the reintegration outcomes of young people leaving detention.

By December 2016:

3. as part of its upcoming case management review:
  - clarify roles and responsibilities for discharge planning to minimise any delays
  - examine ways of improving discharge planning for young people on remand.
4. work with the Department of Family and Community Services to improve access to information on shared clients and make it easier for young people to use homelessness referral line 'Link2home'
5. improve recording of referrals to services that do not receive funding from Juvenile Justice to better demonstrate areas of unmet need.

By July 2017:

6. clarify what it wants to achieve from recreation activities offered in detention centres including how it will engage community organisations to achieve this
7. work with the Department of Education and Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development to:
  - assess the impact of vocational education reforms on the availability of vocational training offered young people in detention centres
  - clarify what it wants to achieve from vocational training offered in detention centres including how it will engage the education sector to deliver this
8. increase work release opportunities for young people in detention centres
9. find out what has worked well in detention centres that have developed good relationships with the local Aboriginal community and see what can be applied to other centres



10. undertake more joint planning with other agencies at the strategic level on young people reintegrating from detention into the community
11. in consultation with the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, review the effectiveness of Community Integration Teams in engaging young people with health services in the community and consider expanding the program if results improve access to services.

By December 2017:

12. work with the Department of Education to roll out the Statewide framework for transitioning school-aged young people from detention centres into the community
13. in consultation with the Department of Family and Community Services, review the effectiveness of Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre's supported accommodation model to see whether it can be extended to other centres.

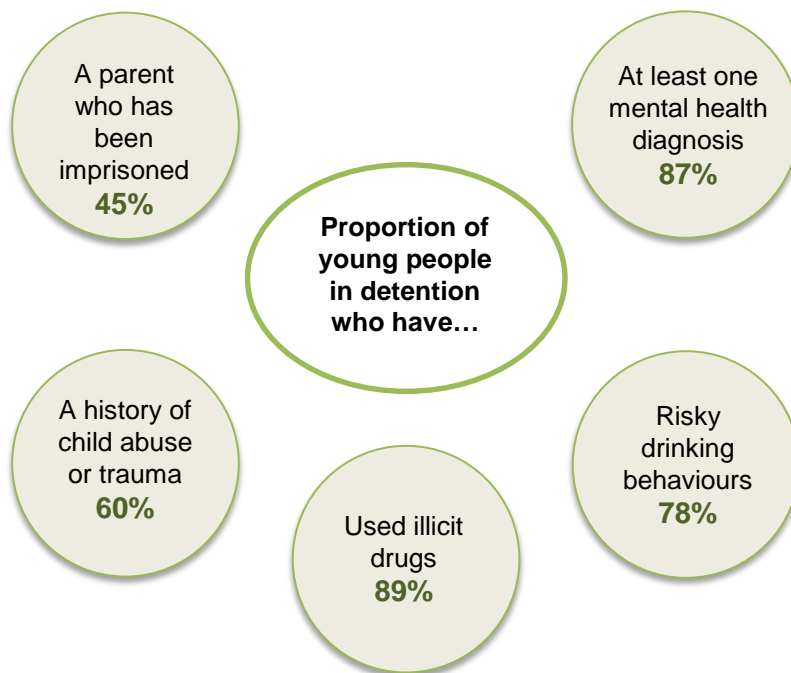
# Introduction

## 1.1 Young people in detention

On an average day, around one in five young offenders in New South Wales who are being supervised under a court order are in detention centres. Most young people in detention are male, aged between 16 and 17 years, and are in detention for three-four months. Around 50 per cent are indigenous.

Young people in detention include some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community. Many are from unstable family environments, are poorly educated, and have negative peer associations. Others suffer from homelessness and neglect and may be victims of abuse.

### Exhibit 1: Characteristics of young people in detention



Source: 2009 NSW Young People in Custody Health Survey: Full Report.

While young people in detention represent a small proportion of the overall youth population, the cost to the community is high. The Productivity Commission reports that in 2014–15, the average daily cost of detaining a young person in New South Wales was \$1,495. This is much higher than the cost of supervising young people in the community at \$123 per person per day.

Juvenile Justice data shows that in 2014–15, there were 286 young people in detention on any given day. While this figure has been decreasing in recent years, New South Wales has consistently remained above the national average in relation to the daily rate of young people in detention.

Studies show that the most serious and persistent adult offenders were detained as juveniles. Programs to rehabilitate young people in detention can reduce the risk that they will transition into the adult criminal justice system, delivering social and economic benefits to the entire community.



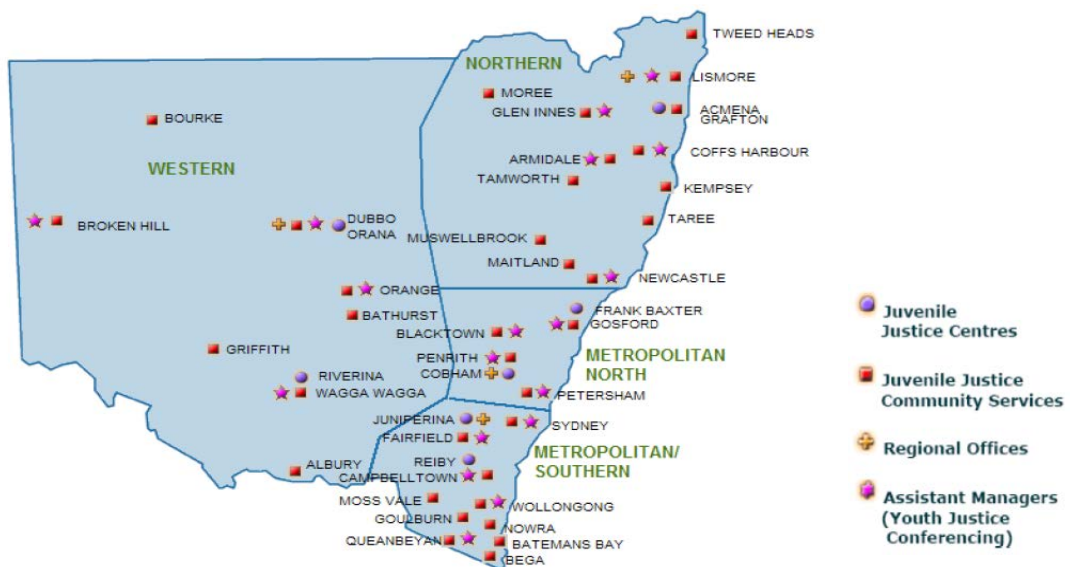
## 1.2 The role of Juvenile Justice NSW

Juvenile Justice NSW (Juvenile Justice) is part of the NSW Department of Justice. It works with young people who have been found guilty of an offence committed between the ages of ten and 17.

One of Juvenile Justice's key roles is to take care of young people who have been sentenced to a period of detention. There are currently seven juvenile detention centres in New South Wales. It also takes care of young people who have been remanded in custody. This means that the court has ordered them to be looked after in a detention centre until their matter has been finalised.

Juvenile Justice also looks after young offenders when they are released from detention and are on parole in the community. There are currently 35 community offices in New South Wales.

### Exhibit 2: Juvenile Justice NSW Service Locations



Source: Juvenile Justice NSW.

Juvenile Justice's overall objective is to help reduce reoffending. It provides a range of programs and services that are designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate young people in detention into the community. In developing and delivering these programs, Juvenile Justice takes into account Australian and international research on 'what works' to reduce reoffending.

A key focus of its work is addressing factors that contribute to young people's offending behaviour. This includes things like peer influence, substance abuse, and violent behaviour. Young people in detention are also required to attend school and can attend vocational training and improve their living skills.

To aid reintegration, Juvenile Justice works closely with other agencies in the justice and human service portfolios, such as corrective services, police, education, health and community services. It also funds community programs and refers young people to services provided by non-government organisations in the community.

### 1.3 About the audit

This audit accepted the broad premise that programs to reintegrate young people into the community when they are released from detention can have positive effects for these young people and the community.

On this basis, we assessed how well Juvenile Justice prepares and assists young people to reintegrate into the community after they are released from detention. To help answer this question we asked how well Juvenile Justice:

- prepares young people in detention for release back into the community
- links young people to programs and support services after they are released.

As part of field work we visited four Juvenile Justice detention centres and four community offices. We also spoke to other stakeholders including:

- Department of Education staff who teach in schools in detention centres
- Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network clinicians who provide health care to young people in centres and in the community
- community organisations who work with young people who are in Juvenile Justice's care.

The agency's response to the audit report is at Appendix 1. Further information on the audit scope and criteria is at Appendix 2.

# Key findings

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## 2. Preparing young people for release from detention

**Juvenile Justice has many processes and programs in place to identify and address young people's needs to prepare them for release into the community. However, more needs to be done to improve discharge planning, and recreational activities and training available to young people in detention.**

Juvenile Justice has effective processes in place to identify the needs of young people in detention. Risks and needs are identified promptly, and young people can access counselling and programs in detention to help reduce their reoffending behaviour. Young people can also undertake vocational training, although both Juvenile Justice and school staff within centres were unclear about the effect of recent vocational education reforms on the availability of courses.

We found completion rates for programs that help address offending behaviour vary from 60 to 100 per cent. The range and type of recreation activities also differs between centres. Juvenile Justice is progressively updating its programs to ensure they are based on evidence of what works and delivered in a way that engages young people. Juvenile Justice should also determine what it hopes to achieve from leisure and recreation activities, including how they can be tailored to improve reintegration.

Juvenile Justice starts preparing young people for release as soon as they enter detention. However, staff raised a number of key barriers which made this more difficult. These included limited housing options for young people leaving detention, difficulties in transitioning young people back to school in the community, and lack of prompt engagement from some other government agencies. There is also some confusion between custodial and community staff about who should be responsible for the discharge planning process.

Each young person has a case plan, which sets out goals that the young person should work towards in order to successfully reintegrate into the community. However, there is no overarching reintegration strategy that sets out key goals and how Juvenile Justice will improve outcomes in relation to accommodation, education, and employment.

### Recommendations

We recommend that Juvenile Justice:

- include reintegration outcomes and measures in its next strategic framework so that it clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve for young people leaving detention
- clarify what it wants to achieve from recreation activities including how it will engage community organisations to achieve this
- work with the Department of Education and Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development to:
  - assess the impact of vocational education reforms on the availability of vocational training offered young people in detention centres
  - clarify what it wants to achieve from vocational training offered in detention centres including how it will engage the education sector to deliver this
- increase work release opportunities for young people in detention centres
- find out what has worked well in detention centres that have developed good relationships with the Aboriginal community and see what can be applied to other centres
- as part of its upcoming case management review:
  - clarify roles and responsibilities for discharge planning to minimise any delays
  - examine ways of improving discharge planning for young people on remand
- work with the Department of Education to roll out the Statewide framework for transitioning school-aged young people from detention centres into the community
- work with the Department of Family and Community Services to improve access to information on shared clients and make it easier for young people to use 'Link2home'.

## 2.1 Setting outcomes for young people leaving detention

We found that while Juvenile Justice staff have a clear understanding of the reintegration outcomes they hope to achieve for young people in detention, these are not reflected in Juvenile Justice's current strategic planning framework.

### **Reintegration outcomes are set for each young person**

Juvenile Justice's primary goal is to reduce reoffending by working with young people to change the attitudes and beliefs which lead to their offending behaviour. This goal is reflected in case management policies and procedures and informs the day to day work that is done with young people.

Juvenile Justice staff advised that there are key reintegration outcomes that they seek to achieve for young people leaving detention. These include ensuring that young people are:

- in safe and secure accommodation
- participating in education or training
- participating in community activities
- addressing their health needs, such as mental health or substance abuse.

Staff are required to tailor these outcomes to the needs of each young person and record them in their case plan. They may require young people to attend school, enrol in a vocational training course or attend programs to help address their offending behaviour.

### **No clear link between reintegration outcomes and strategic planning documents**

Although case plans outline reintegration outcomes, these are not set out in current strategic planning documents. For example, Juvenile Justice's 2015–16 business plan identifies many initiatives, however, it is not clear how some of these will help young people reintegrate in the community.

Performance measures are also activity based, for example:

- 100 per cent of centre staff trained to deliver evidence based programs
- new practice framework implemented
- case management review stage two implemented and 100 per cent of staff trained
- 10 per cent increase in referrals to Waratah Pre-Release Unit.

Some initiatives, such as increasing referrals to a pre-release unit in a detention centre, more clearly link to reintegration. However, the absence of formal reintegration outcomes in planning documents will make it more difficult for Juvenile Justice to demonstrate the extent to which its initiatives have contributed to these outcomes.

Juvenile Justice is part of the Department of Justice, which also includes other divisions such as corrective services, the courts, and the arts. There is very little in the Department's current corporate plan on reintegrating young people into the community. Nor do the Premier's Priorities and State Priorities include any targets on juvenile reoffending. Despite this, Juvenile Justice advises that it monitors progress against the target in the previous State Plan NSW 2021, which is to reduce juvenile reoffending by five per cent by 2016. We discuss reoffending rates in section 3.4.

## 2.2 Identifying the needs of young people in detention

We found that Juvenile Justice has sound processes for identifying the needs of young people in detention. Staff assess the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of each young person, such as their health, welfare and educational needs, and factors that affect their offending behaviour. These needs are generally reflected in each young person's case plan.

### Juvenile Justice identifies risks and needs that relate to offending behaviours

Juvenile Justice identifies the risks and needs of young people promptly. When a court orders a young person to be supervised by Juvenile Justice, his or her case worker conducts an assessment to identify risk factors and needs that relate to their offending behaviour. This assessment is known as a Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory.

Juvenile Justice has developed policies and procedures to support the assessment process. For example, there is an assessment guide to assist case workers to collect required information.

### Exhibit 3: Assessing young people's risk of reoffending

The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) is an assessment tool that identifies key areas of risk and need in relation to a young person's offending. Information about a young person is organised into eight key areas:

- prior and current offences
- education and employment
- substance abuse
- personality and behaviour
- family and living circumstances
- peer relations
- leisure and recreation
- attitudes and beliefs.

The assessment tool calculates an overall risk / need score, which is used to determine the level of supervision a young person requires from Juvenile Justice and guide the support a young person receives. For example, if the risk assessment indicates that a young person's offending behaviour is linked to drug or alcohol use, he or she may be referred to appropriate programs and support services.

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW.

Time standards have also been set, which require the YLS/CMI to be completed within six weeks of a young person being allocated to a staff member. Data provided by Juvenile Justice indicates that the timeliness of assessments has improved over the last five years. In 2014–15, 87 per cent were completed within the required timeframe.

### Exhibit 4: Proportion of assessments undertaken with required timeframe

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Number of YLS/CMIs completed	618	623	577	583	535
Per cent completed within six weeks	71.7	80.4	78.5	81.3	87.1

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW.

In order to get a complete picture of a young person, Juvenile Justice seeks information from a number of sources. Case workers talk to the young person, their family members, employers, and other significant people in the young person's life. Information is also requested from other agencies about a young person's school history, medical history, and previous contact with the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).

Juvenile Justice staff advised that it is sometimes difficult to obtain consent from FACS to obtain information from other agencies, such non-government organisations. This occurs when a young person is in the care of the Minister or Secretary for Family and Community Services, for example, a child in foster care. While this largely depends on local relationships between staff and FACS, it means it may take longer to get all the information required. Juvenile Justice advised that currently around 12 per cent of young people in detention are FACS clients.

### Health, welfare, and learning needs are promptly identified

Juvenile Justice also collects information on other health and welfare needs when a young person first enters detention. For example, young people are assessed by detention centre staff to identify:

- health concerns and psychological issues
- learning needs
- other welfare needs, such as unpaid fines or identity documents.

This generally occurs as part of induction within the first seven days of a young person arriving at the centre. Staff immediately refer young people with any health or psychological issues to counsellors or health staff based at the centre, including Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network clinicians. Department of Education staff also assess young people's learning needs and ensure they attend school at the centre as soon as possible.

Welfare needs may not directly relate to a young person's offending behaviour, but need to be addressed if young people are to reintegrate into the community after they are released. For example, a young person might not have the documents they need to get a job or register for government services, such as a birth certificate, drivers licence, Tax File Number or bank account.

### **Each young person has a case plan but the quality varies**

Each young person is assigned a caseworker who uses the information collected during the assessment process to prepare a case plan for the young person. Case plans set goals to address the risks and needs identified in the assessment process.

We found that the quality of individual case plans can vary. We reviewed a number of case plans stored on the Juvenile Justice case management system and found that case plan goals were not always specific, measurable, or focused on community integration. For example, case plans might include goals such as 'participate in activities' and 'follow instructions'. They might require a young person to attend school or vocational training, but might not include strategies to achieve this. Goals were not always written in a way a young person could easily understand.

Juvenile Justice is aware of these issues which it identified as part of its recent quality assurance reviews. It is introducing a case management project which may improve the quality of case plans. The project aims to reduce any duplication that exists in the current process and develop a model focused on young people which is informed by research and best practice principles.

### **Case plan preparation is timely**

Although not stipulated in policy, all Juvenile Justice staff we spoke to said case plans had to be in place within six weeks of a young person entering detention. The Productivity Commission reports that in 2014–15, Juvenile Justice staff prepared 100 per cent of case plans for young people in detention within this timeframe.

This data excludes young people on sentences of less than six weeks and any ongoing case plans which began before a young person was sentenced. Juvenile Justice advised that staff develop case plans for all young people in custody, including those on short sentences and on remand.

## **2.3 Addressing rehabilitation and reintegration needs**

We found that young people access programs and services that aim to address their rehabilitation and reintegration needs, however completion rates are low in some cases. Barriers include young people refusing to participate, changes to young peoples' security classification preventing participation, or poor program design. Juvenile Justice is progressively updating its offence-based programs to ensure they are evidence-based and deliver expected outcomes. The nature and type of leisure and recreational activities also varies across centres.

### **Programs are in place which aim to address offending behaviour**

Juvenile Justice has a number of programs in place that are designed to address offending behaviour, also called therapeutic programs. See Exhibit 5.

Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART), which is the main program for young people being supervised in the community, will be rolled out to all detention centres in 2016. Juvenile Justice staff advised us that this will lead to greater continuity between detention and community supervision. For example, young people being supervised by Juvenile Justice in the community can continue to complete CHART if they are later sentenced to detention.

The challenge for Juvenile Justice will be to ensure staff working in its Juvenile Justice Centres have sufficient skills and experience to deliver these programs. Typically, counsellors in detention centres deliver these programs. However, Juvenile Justice plans to involve centre case workers in delivering programs, including CHART.

#### **Exhibit 5: Key therapeutic programs available in detention centres**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>
Alcohol and Drug Education	An education program providing young people with drug and alcohol education and harm minimisation strategies.
X-Roads	A skills based intervention program for young people with more serious drug or alcohol issues.
Dthina Yuw ali	A culturally appropriate alcohol and drugs program targeted at young Aboriginal males.
Our Journey to Respect	A culturally appropriate program targeted at young Aboriginal males that addresses issues with violence.
Love Bites	Domestic and family violence and sexual assault prevention program.
Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART)	Cognitive behavioural therapy based program designed to help young people change their attitudes and beliefs. Currently being trialled in a pre-release unit in one detention centre.

Note: There are currently no culturally appropriate programs that cater to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, although other programs are available.

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW.

#### **Overall completion rates have improved but vary between programs**

Young people attend programs in detention that address risks and needs identified in the assessment process. For example, if substance use is identified as a risk factor for reoffending, then a young person will attend an alcohol and drug program.

Data provided by Juvenile Justice indicates that overall completion rates for programs have improved slightly over the last few years, from 55 per cent in 2010–11 to 63 per cent in 2014–15. However, completion rates between programs vary. In 2014–15, 13 programs were run across the different centres with completion rates between 60 and 100 per cent. These results indicate some programs may be more effective than others.

Juvenile Justice is progressively updating its therapeutic programs and caseworker interventions to ensure they are evidence-based and deliver expected outcomes. In 2014–15, it reviewed its therapeutic programs to improve the quality of its interventions for young people in its care. For each program, it reviewed the evidence base, how it is delivered, completion rates and exclusion criteria. As a result of this review, it ceased some programs and modified others, for example, changing delivery from group based therapy to one-on-one intervention.

Other barriers cited by Juvenile Justice staff included young people refusing to participate in programs, or being unable to attend because their security classification had changed. The time spent by young people in detention is also a factor, with shorter periods limiting the time staff can spend delivering programs and providing casework support. Juvenile Justice's new practice framework acknowledges this last issue in part. It advised that it aims to deliver a continuous case management approach that recognises young people will move, often many times, between detention and community supervision.



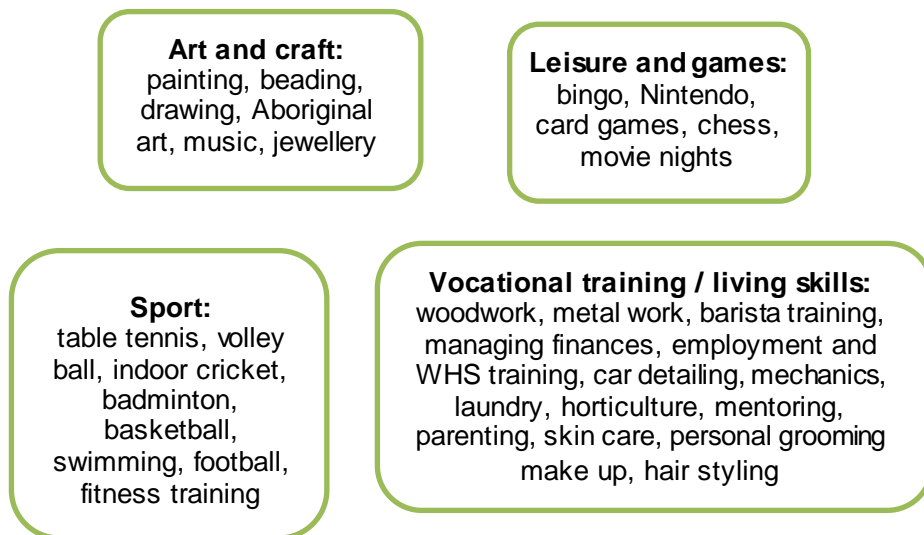
## All centres offer recreation activities and vocational training to young people

Detention centres offer a range of non-therapeutic activities to young people such as recreation activities and vocational training.

Recreation activities can include sport, art and craft, and games. Recreation activities do not directly help young people to address their offending behaviour, but support the broader work to rehabilitate young people while they are in detention. For example, activities can help young people practice teamwork and problem solving skills, or simply engage them in a positive activity that they can continue after they are released.

In addition to academic education, schools in detention centres also offer vocational training programs. Vocational training can provide a pathway to work or further education in the community. Programs are determined by an education and training committee including the Juvenile Justice centre manager, school principal, training providers, and other community organisations where appropriate.

### Exhibit 6: Recreation and vocational activities in detention centres



Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, Audit Office site visits.

### More strategic focus needed for recreation activities and vocational training

The range and type of recreation and vocational activities available to young people depends on the detention centre they are detained in. While many activities are similar in nature, larger centres, particularly those located in or close to metropolitan areas tend to run a wider variety of activities.

Centre managers said that their vocational and recreation programs were heavily influenced by their budget and the services available in the community. Program budgets are quite small compared to the overall cost of caring for young people in detention. In 2014–15, detention centres spent as little as \$6,500 and up to around \$23,000 on vocational and recreation activities.

As a result, detention centres either organise activities themselves or engage non-government organisations to run programs at low or no cost. This makes it harder for centres in regional areas, where there may be less services available in the community. Centre managers also need to make sure that, where possible, services offered by other organisations align with Juvenile Justice's priorities and will aid reintegration in the long-term. They need to do more than just 'keep kids busy'.

Staff at two of the Juvenile Justice detention centres we visited spoke about 'bringing the outside in'. They acknowledged that the structure provided in detention was very different to the environment many young people come from. Therefore ensuring young people interact with people from outside the centre was seen as key to reintegration.

Some examples of such activities included:

- community service activities (for example, Rural Fire Service and surf lifesaving)
- involvement in Statewide school programs such as Music Aviva
- involvement in guide dogs training / RSPCA education
- arranging football games against high schools in the local area
- Aboriginal mentoring program.

Some Juvenile Justice staff advised that it can be particularly challenging to arrange activities for young people during school holiday periods. In five of the seven detention centres, schools operate an extended school year, generally around 15 days more each year than schools in the community. These arrangements are negotiated between the Department of Education and relevant unions.

Given the challenges discussed above, Juvenile Justice should clarify what it hopes to achieve from its recreation activities and vocational training. This includes how programs can be tailored to improve reintegration outcomes and engage community agencies and the education sector to achieve these. This will ensure more young people have the same or similar opportunities aimed at improving their reintegration, regardless of the detention centre they are in.

#### **Staff are uncertain about the effect of vocational education reforms on training**

Juvenile Justice and school staff within detention centres were unclear how recent vocational education reforms would affect access to vocational training for young people in their care. For example, staff were uncertain whether some TAFE courses currently offered young people in detention centres would still be available. Vocational training was seen by staff as an important part of reintegration, particularly where it helps young people engage in further education or leads to work in the community. The Department of Education funds schools in centres to work with local TAFE campuses to provide courses for their students.

Given these reforms are relatively new, it is difficult to determine the extent of this issue. Nonetheless, Juvenile Justice and relevant education agencies should assess the impact of these reforms on young people in detention and address any issues uncovered.

#### **More access to work release should improve integration**

Juvenile Justice staff advised that letting young people leave detention on work release, day release or escorted leave is another important step in helping them to reintegrate into the community. Leaving the centre for short periods can give young people a chance to practice skills they have gained in detention and provide access to work experience.

Juvenile Justice staff advised that escorted leave and day leave is fairly common, but work release is more difficult to access. To be eligible a young person must have the required security classification. Two detention centres had pre-release units which were designed to make life in detention similar to that on the outside and enabled young people to access work release routinely.

## Exhibit 7: Waratah and Penang pre-release units

The Waratah Unit is a pre-release unit located at Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre. It is designed to help young people in detention prepare for release from detention and improve their chances of successfully reintegrating into the community.

The unit is located outside, although adjacent to, the centre grounds. Juvenile Justice staff work with other government and non-government agencies to help find young people in the unit work and education opportunities. Young people attend classes or go to work during the day and return to the unit at night. They are also responsible for their own cleaning, cooking and laundry.

Young people are referred to the Waratah Unit from other Juvenile Justice Centres. To be eligible, a young person must:

- be in the last ten to 26 weeks of their custodial sentence
- have no further charges pending against them
- have displayed good behaviour during their time in detention.

The Penang Unit at Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre operates in similar way to the Waratah Unit. Although located on the centre grounds, young people routinely leave the centre to attend work or training in the community and they are responsible for looking after the unit.

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, Audit Office fieldwork visits.

Given the importance of work and training in helping young people reintegrate, there might be scope for Juvenile Justice to examine ways to increase access to work release for young people in detention.

### The level of engagement with the Aboriginal community varies

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people make up 50 per cent of all young people in detention. It is important that these young people are able to maintain a connection to their culture while in detention. A number of detention centres have built 'learning circles' or 'yarning circles', which provide a separate space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths to observe cultural traditions and share information. However, we found that engagement with Aboriginal elders varies between detention centres.

Some centres, such as Reiby and Juniperina, have arranged for Aboriginal elders to visit on a regular basis and talk to young people. Other centres have not been able to form similar connections. While these centres address cultural needs in other ways, including by encouraging young people to engage in events such as National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week, young people may benefit from stronger engagement with elders and other positive role models from the Aboriginal community.

Juvenile Justice should find out what has worked well in those centres that have developed good relationships with local Aboriginal community and see what can be applied at other centres. There might also be a role for more head office support if gaps persist.

## 2.4 Preparing young people for release from detention

We found that Juvenile Justice has good processes in place to prepare young people for release from detention. These processes involve young people and their families, and key government and non-government agencies. However, significant barriers exist which make it difficult to arrange services in some circumstances, potentially delaying support.

### **Formal discharge procedures are in place**

Juvenile Justice has developed procedures to support young people when they leave detention. For example, the needs of young people who are due for release are discussed at a formal meeting and a discharge case conference is held approximately six weeks prior to release. Staff discuss post-release support needs and identify gaps in relation to:

- where the young person will live
- whether the young person has been enrolled in school or TAFE
- employment
- ongoing health and welfare needs.

Young people are involved in the discharge process and attend the discharge conference. Other significant people also participate, including parents and carers, and representatives from other agencies that will support the young person in the community. Health staff based in the detention centre may also refer young people to services in the community such as mental health or drug and alcohol services.

Juvenile Justice continues to monitor post-release arrangements until the day of release, as circumstances can change quickly. For example, a young person's accommodation or employment arrangements may fall through at the last minute.

### **Coordination between custodial and community staff should be improved**

Juvenile Justice community case workers advised us that it can be difficult to contact custodial staff to discuss a young person's post-release needs. This is because key workers, who are the primary point of contact in detention, work shifts whereas community case workers work regular business hours.

Juvenile Justice's case management policy states that community case workers should organise the discharge conference. However some staff were unclear about whose role this was, with custodial staff sometimes organising the conference. Juvenile Justice should clarify roles and responsibilities in this area to minimise delays.

Discharge planning and case conferences can sometimes be delayed because:

- it is hard to arrange a time and day that all participants can attend
- a young person on remand might be released at short notice
- information on where a child in out-of-home care will be living is not always timely
- it is difficult to engage some people, such as parole officers, in the discharge process.

Juvenile Justice advised that it has recently drafted new protocols for liaising with Corrective Services NSW if a young person turns 18 while they are in detention and must be supervised in the community. This may go some way to addressing this last issue above.

### **Transitioning young people back to school in the community can be difficult**

Juvenile Justice and school staff advised that it can be difficult to plan young peoples' return to school in the community after they are released. School enrolments are organised as part of the discharge process or earlier if possible. However, staff advised that this could be hard to arrange because:

- staff do not know where a young person is going to live
- some schools are reluctant to accept former detainees, due to the stigma around being in detention
- young people may be reluctant to go back to their former school if it means seeing the same peer group they associated with before detention.

Detention centres have a school transition advisor or team to help young people transition back to school, higher education, or into the workforce.

## Exhibit 8: Girrakool School Transition Team, Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre

The Girrakool School Transition Team meets weekly to discuss student pathways into education or employment and brainstorm ideas to improve the transition process. The team is overseen by the school Assistant Principal who acts as the transition advisor. This team includes other school and Juvenile Justice staff, and representatives from government and non-government agencies in the community.

The transition team discusses individual cases and organises programs designed to improve student transition. Examples include:

- a careers programs
- visits to the University of New castle
- a reintegration expo focusing on TAFE, university, and apprenticeships
- an Aboriginal community expo
- a vocational assessment program
- TAFE 'try a skill' taster courses
- various indigenous pathway programs.

As a result of this work, the team reported that staff and community attitudes are now more positive in regards to transition. Community links are improving, Juvenile Justice staff are more involved, and student pathways are being developed earlier in the process.

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, Audit Office visit to Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre.

Despite these efforts, challenges still exist in finding education and employment opportunities for students returning to the community. School staff said lack of time was a key factor too. Some staff said it would be good to have a dedicated transition officer who worked across both the custodial and community environment.

Juvenile Justice and the Department of Education are currently co-funding research with the University of New South Wales into the transition of school-aged young people from detention to the community. The purpose of the research is to inform a Statewide transition framework for Juvenile Justice detention centres.

### Organising housing for young people leaving detention can be difficult

To enrol young people in school or link them to local support services, staff must know where a young person will be living when they are released. However, staff advised that accommodation can be very difficult to arrange. Young people may not be able to return home, or do not want to. Most young people are either not old enough, do not have enough money, or do not have the required living skills to live in social housing or rent in the private market. Also, staff told us that places in supported accommodation facilities and youth refuges are limited.

Despite these limitations, Juvenile Justice staff put in a lot of effort to find young people a place to live when they leave detention. A greater challenge is ensuring they have adequate support to remain in stable accommodation. We discuss this further in section 3.2.

Juvenile Justice staff also reported that the current homelessness referral telephone service, called 'Link2Home', can be difficult to navigate. Before Link2Home was introduced in 2014, case workers liaised with crisis housing providers directly. Now young people call Link2Home and wait on hold while a bed is found. Staff said this could be hard for young people in detention because they became frustrated at spending time on hold. This can lead to a young person losing their temper and being denied service.

The Department of Family and Community Services, which runs Link2Home, advised that it does not require Juvenile Justice staff and young people to use the service. They can still contact youth homelessness services directly. It also advised that it has been trialling a new process with Juvenile Justice since mid-2015 to reduce the time spent by young people on the Link2Home service. Juvenile Justice and the Department of Family and Community Services should continue working together to resolve any issues and misinformation about the service.

### **It is difficult to plan for release if a young person is on remand**

Another significant challenge for Juvenile Justice staff is discharge planning for young people on remand. This is because people on remand can be released from detention at very short notice. For example, a young person may be released on bail, or could be sentenced the time they have already served in detention. This makes it difficult for Juvenile Justice to plan for the young person's release, including school, living arrangements, and referral to other relevant services in the community such as health care.

One case file we reviewed was for a young person who had been on remand for 14 months before he was sentenced to detention. In this case, Juvenile Justice has three-four months to work with the young person before his release. While this is adequate time to help plan for his discharge, staff said that young people can be released without any notice, particularly if they are released on bail. When young people's transition needs have not been met, it increases their risk of committing further offences or breaching bail conditions.

### 3. Linking young people to support services after release

**Juvenile Justice staff spend much time and effort addressing young people's offending behaviour and linking them to support services in the community. However, they still face significant barriers which make it difficult to reintegrate young people after release. This is partly due to the complex needs of young people under their care and the limited capacity of organisations in the community to address their reintegration needs.**

We found that while most young people leaving Juvenile Justice when their parole expires have somewhere to live, less than half are working, training, or going to school. Staff said it was hard to convince schools and employers to give young people a chance due to the stigma associated with being in detention.

While accessing mental health and drug and alcohol services can be difficult, staff report that having a Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network clinician located in Juvenile Justice community offices improved access. However these positions do not exist in every region. Housing is also a continuing problem for young people after release from detention, particularly access to supported care and mentoring services.

Despite these barriers, Juvenile Justice staff in the community have built good networks and relationships with agencies in their local area to help young people access services. We found that more young people are being referred to services after discharge than five years ago. However, more should be done to improve joint planning on transition from detention at the strategic level.

Currently, around one in two young people leaving detention reoffend within one year of leaving Juvenile Justice supervision, and four in five reoffend with two years. These rates have been relatively stable over the last ten years. We recognise that while Juvenile Justice has a role to play in reducing reoffending, there are many factors which contribute to reoffending rates which are outside its immediate control.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that Juvenile Justice:

- undertake more joint planning with other agencies at the strategic level on young people reintegrating from detention into the community
- in consultation with the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, review the effectiveness of Community Integration Teams in engaging young people with health services in the community and consider expanding the program if results improve access to services
- in consultation with the Department of Family and Community Services, review the effectiveness of Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre's supported accommodation model to see whether it can be extended to other centres
- improve recording of referrals to services that do not receive funding from Juvenile Justice to better demonstrate areas of unmet need
- publish data on its website on the reintegration outcomes of young people leaving detention.

#### 3.1 Working with other agencies

We found that Juvenile Justice staff work well with other government and non-government agencies in their local area. Staff report building good relationships and networks in their community to help improve young people's access to services. However, more should be done to improve joint planning with other agencies on transition from detention.

#### **Agreements signed with key agencies but protocols needed on discharge planning**

Juvenile Justice has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with key agencies such as the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Department of Education.



The MOUs set out how the agencies will work together to provide services to shared clients including:

- guiding principles
- roles and responsibilities
- information sharing arrangements.

An MOU has also been signed with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages that covers the provision of birth certificates to young people supervised by Juvenile Justice.

The MOUs are high level documents that do not specify how desired outcomes will be achieved, or set timeframes or other standards for service delivery. The latter are generally included in operational guidelines or schedules which underpin the MOU. The MOU with the Department of Education states that the two agencies agree to work together to support the transition of young people leaving custody and returning to school. However, it does not have guidelines in place stating how this will be achieved. The Department of Education advises that it is currently developing these with Juvenile Justice.

The MOU with FACS includes operational guidelines, which have information about some processes, such as the phone number case workers should call to request information, and hours of operation. However, no timeframes are set for the provision of information.

We found some examples of joint planning with agencies, for example, the joint research project with the Department of Education about a state wide transition framework. Juvenile Justice also advised that it is working with Roads and Maritime Services to allow young people to obtain their drivers licence while in detention.

However, we found limited evidence of joint planning with some other agencies, such as the NSW Police Force and Corrective Services NSW, for young people leaving detention. Juvenile Justice works with some of these agencies in other capacities. For example, senior staff are involved in various projects and interagency committees, such as complex clients or child protection. But these may not necessarily focus on young people leaving detention. Given some of the issues discussed earlier around transition planning, there might be scope for Juvenile Justice to develop more specific protocols with agencies around discharge planning.

### **Agencies work well together at the local level**

We found that Juvenile Justice staff who look after young people on parole have built constructive working relationships with other agencies at the local or regional level. For example, case workers advised us that they regularly liaise with their counterparts in FACS and Department of Education regional offices. Staff have also formed working relationships with local Centrelink offices and may also attend meetings with local police to discuss priorities and emerging trends.

Some liaison arrangements between agencies are more formal than others. In some offices, staff advised us that they speak to other agencies when the need arises. In others, such as the Gosford Community Office, the area manager said she regularly meets with her counterpart in FACS to discuss concerns and opportunities for collaboration. Despite good working relationships, many staff said they still faced significant challenges when helping young people reintegrate into the community. These are discussed in section 3.2 below.

## **3.2 Referring young people to support services in the community**

Juvenile Justice has processes in place to address young people's offending behaviour and refer them to support services in the community. However, staff still face significant barriers. This is due in part to the complex needs of young people in their care and the limited capacity of organisations in the community to address their reintegration needs.

## Staff help address young people's offending behaviours

When a young person is on parole, Juvenile Justice community staff continue to work on their offending behaviour. They run a program called Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART), which is a cognitive behavioural therapy program that is designed to reduce the risk of reoffending by changing attitudes and beliefs. Juvenile Justice advises that it has developed an evaluation plan for the program, and the results will be available mid-2017.

### Exhibit 9: Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART)

The Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART) program aims to reduce the risk of young people reoffending. They work with their case worker to complete program units. There are six core units:

- mapping my offences
- thinking and offending
- lifestyle balance
- motivation to change
- problem solving
- relapse prevention.

There are also six additional units that may be required depending on the young person's particular offending behaviour:

- healthy relationships
- motor vehicle offending
- living independently
- violence
- drugs and alcohol
- education and work.

Source: 'Healthinonet' website.

In addition to CHART, community staff run the same programs available to young people in detention centres. In 2014–15, the completion rates for these programs varied considerably more than custodial programs, from 13 to 100 per cent. Barriers are similar to those mentioned previously, such as young people refusing to participate. They may not turn up for appointments with staff, or may be affected by drugs or alcohol. Also, some young people are just not willing to engage with their case worker.

However, as discussed previously, Juvenile Justice has ceased or modified many of these after it reviewed their effectiveness. Indeed, CHART, the main program offered by community staff had a completion rate of 82 per cent in 2014–15.

### Young people are referred to services to address their welfare and support needs

Juvenile Justice staff also refer young people to services in the community to help address their broader welfare and support needs. This enables case workers to spend more time focusing on a young person's offending behaviour. Young people may be referred to multiple services at the same time depending on their needs. These services generally fall into two categories:

- services funded under Juvenile Justice's Joint Support Program (JSP)
- other government and non-government agencies in the community.

Under the JSP, Juvenile Justice currently has 13 contracts with community organisations to provide a range of services in each Juvenile Justice region to aid a young person's integration. These include:

- case work support
- employment placement and support
- short term crisis accommodation
- long term accommodation support
- family intervention counselling.

Tendering for the next round of JSP contracts was recently undertaken. Some adjustments have been made to funded service types, and mentoring has been added as a new service. Juvenile Justice also funds two adolescent drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs in Dubbo and Coffs Harbour.

A young person may also be referred to other support services that do not receive funding from Juvenile Justice. These include:

- community-based mental health services
- Police Citizens Youth Clubs
- youth refuges
- alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities.

**More young people are being referred to services after discharge**

Although there are no timeframes for when referrals should occur, we found that the proportion of young people being referred to services has increased. In 2014–15, 73 per cent of young people were referred to services within six weeks of discharge from detention. This is up from 62 per cent in 2010–11.

**Exhibit 10: Proportion of young people referred to services within six weeks of discharge**

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Per cent referred within six weeks of discharge	62.1	54.6	64.5	70.8	72.8

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, Joint Support Services only.

This means that more young people are getting help to reintegrate back into the community.

**Accessing mental health and drug and alcohol services can be difficult**

We were advised that it could be difficult for young people to access mental health services in the community. Juvenile Justice staff refer young people to community-based mental health services, such as:

- Head Space – a national service that provides early intervention to 12-25 year olds
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – a community mental health service.

Staff told us that community mental health teams are sometimes reluctant to accept young people leaving detention as clients, given the complex nature of the cases. If a young person has both mental health and substance abuse issues, they may instead suggest that a young person first be treated for their alcohol or drug issues. Depending on where a young person lives, we also heard that there can be waiting lists for these services. A lack of public transport in some areas can also hinder access for young people who may not be old enough to drive or have access to a car.

Similarly, case workers advised it can be difficult to find a place for young people in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. They said even if a place was available, it is not uncommon for young people to leave treatment after a few days, as the facilities are voluntary and young people find it difficult to comply with behavioural rules.

**Onsite health staff help improve access to services but staff are not located in all areas**

Despite the issues, we found that the presence of health staff in Juvenile Justice community offices can help improve access to mental health and drug and alcohol services.

## Exhibit 11: Community Integration Team clinicians

In 2007-08, the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network introduced four Community Integration Team (CIT) clinicians in Juvenile Justice community offices. There are now 11 CIT positions, five of which are based in the greater Sydney metropolitan area, with the remaining in regional New South Wales. A CIT clinician's key role is to support young people leaving detention who have mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems that require follow-up in the community.

Juvenile Justice staff advised that CIT clinicians were an integral part of the casework team. They believed CIT clinicians improved access to health services for young people because they understood the health system and could 'speak the same language' as other health staff in the community. CIT clinicians may also take part in case review meetings where a young person's health needs may be discussed.

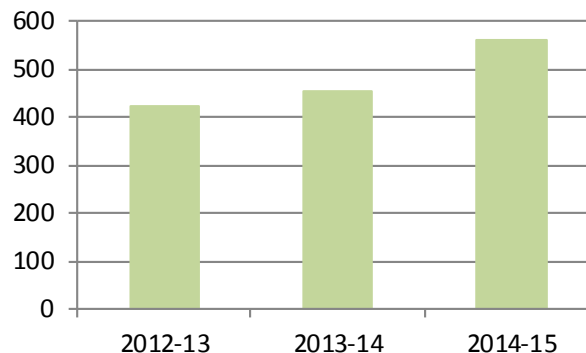
Source: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, Audit Office interviews.

NSW Health advises that in 2015 the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network received funding as part of a mental health initiative to fund CIT positions permanently. Prior to this, some CIT positions were temporary.

All Juvenile Justice and health staff we spoke to wanted more CIT clinicians. This is because they are not available in all community offices. The Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network allocates CIT positions to areas with the greatest number of young people leaving detention with mental illness and drug/alcohol problems.

The number of young people accessing CIT services has increased recently, including a 23 per cent increase between 2013–14 and 2014–15.

## Exhibit 12: Number of new people managed by CIT



Source: Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network 2014–15 Year In Review.

Substance abuse and other mental health concerns can increase the risk a young person may reoffend and is therefore a key factor in their reintegration. Given that almost nine in ten young people in detention have at least one mental health condition and used illicit drugs, we believe health and justice agencies should expand the current CIT model if shown to improve access to health services.

## Housing is a continuing problem for young people after release from detention

Juvenile Justice staff advised that housing continues to be an issue after young people are released. Young people might regularly move houses or 'couch surf' with friends. Even where a young person returns to their family, if he or she has an unstable family environment, living arrangements may quickly become unsuitable.

Juvenile Justice funds crisis and long-term accommodation under the Joint Support Program. However, staff advised that the number of beds is limited. As can be seen below, just over half of all referrals to the Joint Support Program for supported accommodation were accepted in 2013–14.

### Exhibit 13: JSP referrals to crisis and long term accommodation in 2013–14

Crisis accommodation		Long-term accommodation support	
No. of referrals	No. accepted	No. of referrals	No. accepted
65	43	92	51

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, JSP 2013–14 Report to Executive Committee.

The need for supported accommodation was a key theme in all our discussions with Juvenile Justice staff. Many said that having somewhere to live was not enough. Young people needed someone to help them with day-to-day living, and advise them on key decisions they may have to make. One detention centre we visited has a supported accommodation program in place to address some of these issues.

### Exhibit 14: Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre Accommodation Support Program

The Juniperina Accommodation Support Program is a partnership between Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre and the Department of Family and Community Services. The program aims to help young girls leaving detention to live on their own in social housing.

It is overseen by a committee which meets monthly to discuss potential candidates and monitor progress. A brokerage service provides support to the girls to cope with independent living, and help them engage in education or work. Around 30 young people have completed the program since it was first trialled in 2006–07.

Juvenile Justice staff said the program worked well in their view because it was not a crisis response, but rather, girls' needs are identified early and key staff work with them to build skills and take more responsibility.

Source: Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre, Audit Office interviews.

Another key theme raised by many Juvenile Justice staff was the importance of mentoring. A number of detention centres and community offices engaged people to mentor young people on an ad hoc basis. However, many staff wanted something long-term. Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre works with Shine for Kids, a non-government organisation, to provide a longer-term mentoring program. Young people are matched with mentors six months before their release and for up to 12 months in the community. Mentors work closely with Juvenile Justice case workers, the young person and their families to help them reintegrate into the community.

Both supported accommodation and mentoring programs ultimately offer young people the same thing; a responsible adult to guide and support them in making decisions affecting their life. It is encouraging to see that Juvenile Justice has added mentoring as a funded service for the next round of contracts for the Joint Support Program. We think this is a step in the right direction. Juvenile Justice should also examine whether it can extend Juniperina's supported accommodation model to other detention centres.

### 3.3 Monitoring referrals to support services in the community

We found that Juvenile Justice staff monitor referrals to support services in the community, however, only referrals to its Joint Support Program are fully documented and monitored by management.

#### Juvenile Justice monitors the performance of the Joint Support Program

Juvenile Justice staff record referrals to JSP services in the case management system and monitor the performance of each provider. This includes:

- meeting providers every six weeks to review progress against outcomes for young people
- reviewing providers' annual summary reports and audited financial statements
- reviewing progress against key performance indicators.

Where a provider is not meeting expectations an improvement plan may be put in place, although Juvenile Justice advises that this has not yet occurred. Continued underperformance may result in contract termination.

Juvenile Justice executive staff also monitor the performance of JSPs, specifically referral targets, whether expected outcomes were achieved, and any changes in the YLS/CMI risk ratings. In 2013–14, 34 per cent of required outcomes were achieved and the number of referrals exceeded annual targets for some services.

Use of crisis accommodation beds was low in the Southern and Western regions, at 15 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. It is unclear why these are low. It could be due to the location of the crisis beds. Staff in a regional office we visited said that it is not practical to refer a young person to a crisis bed if it is located hours away from a young person's usual place of residence.

Data from 2013–14 also raised concerns about whether information was being accurately entered into the Juvenile Justice case management system. For example, there has been an increase in the number of referrals that had no information on whether required outcomes were achieved. Similarly, not all YLS/CMI results were recorded on the system.

### **Referrals to other services are monitored informally but not always documented**

Case workers advised that they monitor referrals to other services informally, that is, non-JSP providers. This might mean calling a service to see if a young person has attended, or find out if there are new places available.

Juvenile Justice staff are not required to document all non-JSP referrals. Some staff told us that they only enter non-JSP referrals on the case management system if they regularly use a service. Data we obtained from Juvenile Justice indicates that only seven referrals were made to drug and alcohol services in 2014–15. We think this appears very low given a high proportion of young people say they drink alcohol and use illicit drugs. It could be that this data is captured in the 'other referral' categories of the system, however, this is not broken down by service type. In our file review, we found that this information was sometimes documented in the case notes section.

Better information on referrals should help Juvenile Justice demonstrate service gaps, such as mental health and substance abuse. It could then use this information when negotiating agreements with other agencies, or to inform resource decisions.

## **3.4 Monitoring outcomes for young people leaving detention**

We found that Juvenile Justice monitors the reintegration outcomes of young people leaving their care, including whether young people access housing, education or work opportunities. This shows that while most young people have somewhere to live, less than half are working, going to school, or training. Currently around one in two young people leaving detention reoffend within 12 months of leaving Juvenile Justice supervision, and this rate has been relatively stable over a ten year period.

### **Reintegration outcomes are monitored**

Juvenile Justice monitors the reintegration outcomes of young people leaving its care. It conducts an exit survey for each young person that captures information on whether young people are:

- living in safe and secure accommodation
- participating in education or training, or the workforce
- engaged in community activities
- reducing their risk of reoffending.

Data from the previous five years indicates that most young people have somewhere to live when their parole period expires and they leave Juvenile Justice’s supervision. However, in 2014–15, less than half of young people leaving supervision were participating in education, training or employment. And only one in three young people were participating in community activities.

**Exhibit 15: Young people in detention leaving Juvenile Justice supervision**

Outcome	2010–11 %	2011–12 %	2012–13 %	2013–14 %	2014–15 %
Safe and secure accommodation	90.3	89.2	90.6	87.0	90.1
Participating in education or training	41.5	41.5	34.8	34.8	36.2
Participating in employment	14.8	17.5	15.4	18.2	11.6
Participating in community activities	28.4	32.3	29.1	31.0	31.5
Reduction in risk of reoffending (YLS/CMI assessment)	43.4	38.6	38.2	38.9	42.8

Source: Juvenile Justice NSW, exit summary data.

Note that a reduction in risk of reoffending does not mean that a young person will not reoffend. However, it may help in determining whether the programs and other support they received while under supervision are effective in reducing their risk factors.

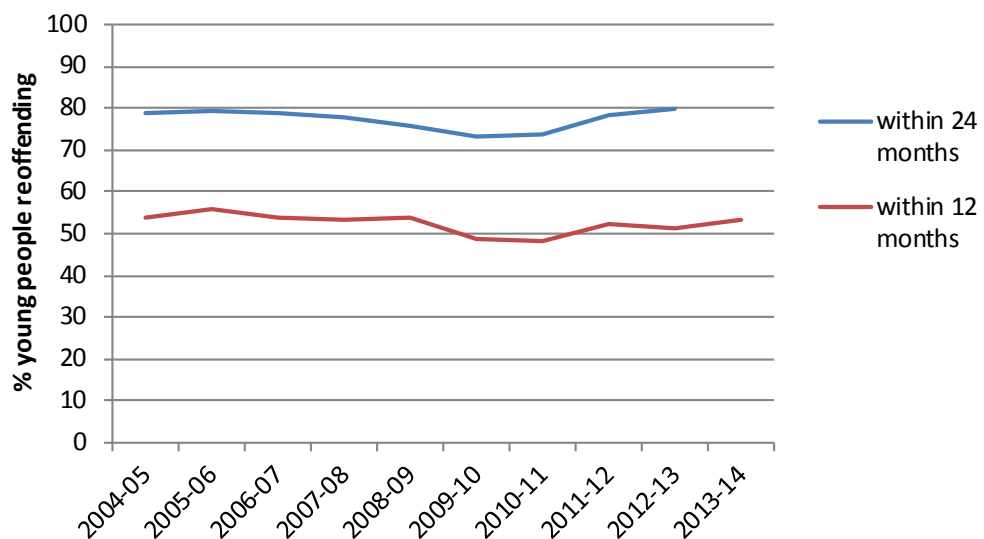
While accommodation, community participation, and risk of reoffending rates have been relatively stable over the past five years, young people are less likely to be engaged in education or employment.

These figures partly reflect the complex needs of the young people in Juvenile Justice’s care. Staff said it could be very difficult to engage young people. Also, it was hard to convince schools, vocational training providers and employers to give these young people a chance due to the stigma associated with being under Juvenile Justice supervision. While staff spent a lot of time and effort to find a place for young people to live, supported housing was seen as the more important service gap.

**Reoffending outcomes for those leaving detention are monitored**

Juvenile Justice monitors reoffending outcomes for young people leaving detention. Currently, around one in two young people leaving detention reoffend within one year of leaving Juvenile Justice’s supervision, and four in five young people reoffend with two years.

**Exhibit 16: Rate of young people leaving detention who reoffended**



Note: Data relates to young people with a custodial sentence who are followed-up at the end of their fixed sentence.

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research provided by Juvenile Justice.



The reoffending rate has remained relatively stable over the ten-year period between 2004-05 to 2013-14. Juvenile Justice advises that it is rare to observe large shifts in reoffending rates. Young people under supervision have complex and high needs, and may be supervised by Juvenile Justice for a short period of time only. It is not uncommon for a young person to enter and exit Juvenile Justice supervision a number of times during their adolescence. Juvenile Justice advised that working with these young people is about making incremental gains, not turning their offending behaviours around overnight.

We recognise that while Juvenile Justice has a role to play in reducing reoffending, there are many factors which contribute to reoffending rates which are outside its immediate control, although it seeks to influence these. These factors include the young person's cognitive ability, family environment, education and employment, health and welfare.

Juvenile Justice staff said other reoffending data could be a more useful indicator of effectiveness. This includes:

- how long it takes a young person to reoffend
- the seriousness of reoffending
- frequency of reoffending.

Juvenile Justice does not currently monitor this information, although the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has reported this information for all juvenile offenders as part of monitoring progress against the previous NSW State Plan 2021.

Given Juvenile Justice has been updating its offence-based programs, it should be in a good position in future to review whether these changes have helped to reduce reoffending.

### **Reoffending outcomes are reported publicly**

Juvenile Justice publishes information on the reoffending outcomes for young people leaving detention on its website. Publishing information on these outcomes helps improve public accountability.

Juvenile Justice also publishes exit data, for example, the proportion of young people leaving its care that have somewhere to live and are accessing education and training opportunities. However, this data captures all young people in its care, and does not separate young people who spent time in detention from those who were only supervised in the community.

# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Agency response



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DM16/28

Ms Margaret Crawford  
Auditor-General  
Audit Office of New South Wales  
GPO Box 12  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Ms Crawford

Thank you for the final report; *Reintegrating young offenders into the community after detention*. The Secretary asks that I reply on his behalf on this occasion.

Juvenile Justice has reviewed the final report and prepared responses to each of the recommendations made. Please find the response attached.

Thank you for undertaking this important work to help Juvenile Justice improve processes and provide better services to the young people in our custody and care.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kate Connors'.

Kate Connors  
Chief of Staff  
Office of the Secretary

26 APR 2016

## Auditor General Final report: Reintegrating young offenders into the community after detention

### Juvenile Justice Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Juvenile Justice Response	Notes
<p><b>By July 2016:</b></p> <p>1. Include reintegration outcomes and measures in its next strategic framework so that it clearly sets out the results it wants to achieve when young people leave detention.</p>	Agreed	
<p>2. Publish data on its website on the reintegration outcomes of young people leaving detention.</p>	Agreed	
<p><b>By December 2016:</b></p> <p>3. As part of its upcoming case management review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clarify roles and responsibilities for discharge planning to minimise any delays</li> <li>- examine way of improving discharge planning for young people on remand.</li> </ul>	Agreed	
<p>4. Work with the Department of Family and Community Services to improve access to information on shared clients and make it easier for young people to use homelessness referral line 'Link2home'.</p>	Agreed	Juvenile Justice has regular operational meetings with FACs and this issue was raised with managers at the last MOU meeting.
<p>5. Improve recording of referrals to services that do not receive funding from Juvenile Justice to better demonstrate areas of unmet need.</p>	Agreed	

Recommendation	Juvenile Justice Response	Notes
<p><b>By July 2017:</b></p> <p>6. Clarify what it wants to achieve from leisure and recreation activities, including how it will engage community organisations to achieve this.</p>	Agreed	<p>Juvenile Justice is clear about the role of these activities which are designed to complement education and vocational programs, connect young people to their community through sporting clubs, promote pro social activities and teamwork, and help young people stay fit and healthy while in custody. These goals may need to be better articulated in planning and procedure documents.</p>
<p>7. Work with the Department of Education and Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assess the impact of vocational education reforms on the availability of vocational training offered young people in detention centres</li> <li>- clarify what it wants to achieve from vocational training offered in detention centres including how it will engage the education sector to deliver this</li> </ul>	Agreed	
<p>8. Increase work release opportunities for young people in detention centres</p>	Agreed	<p>Noting the limitations for employment in some regional areas.</p>
<p>9. Find out what has worked well in detentions centres that have developed good relationships with the local Aboriginal community and see what can be applied to other centres.</p>	Agreed	<p>Noting that what works well in one centre ie; Aboriginal Dance, Spiritual learning's etc., cannot be undertaken generically because of the mix of Aboriginal groups across the state and even within one specific area there may be different views about what should be undertaken. Juvenile Justice will continue to consult with local communities about appropriate connections and activities.</p>
<p>10. Undertake more joint planning with other agencies at the strategic level on young people reintegrating from detention into the community.</p>	Agreed	
<p>11. In consultation with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, review the effectiveness of Community Integration Teams in engaging young people with health services in the community and consider expanding the program if results improve access to services.</p>	Agreed	<p>Noting that this is dependent on Department of Health funding.</p>

Recommendation	Juvenile Justice Response	Notes
<p><b>By December 2017:</b></p> <p>12. Work with the Department of Education to roll out the statewide framework for transitioning school aged young people from detention centres into the community.</p>	Agreed	
<p>13. In consultation with the Department of Family and Community Services, review the effectiveness of Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre's supported accommodation model to see whether it can be extended to other centres.</p>	Agreed	<p>Noting that all young people currently in Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC) will be moved to Reiby JJC in July 2016.</p>

## Appendix 2: About the Audit

### Audit objective

This audit assessed how well Juvenile Justice NSW (Juvenile Justice) prepares and assists young people to reintegrate into the community after they are released from detention.

### Audit scope and focus

The audit sought to answer the following questions:

1. how well does Juvenile Justice prepare young people for release back into the community after detention?
2. how well does Juvenile Justice link young people to programs and support services after they are released from detention?

We focused on young people who have been convicted of an offence and sentenced to a period of detention in a juvenile detention centre.

### Audit criteria

For audit question one, we checked whether Juvenile Justice:

- has a reintegration strategy that sets out what it wants to achieve and how it will measure success
- identifies the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of each young offender in detention
- ensures that young offenders attend programs while in detention that address their rehabilitation and reintegration needs
- reviews the identified reintegration needs of each young offender before he or she is released from detention.

For audit question two we checked whether Juvenile Justice:

- works with relevant agencies to provide young offenders with access to programs and services that meet their reintegration needs
- refers young offenders to support services that meet their reintegration needs
- monitors whether young offenders are accessing support services that meet their reintegration needs
- monitors reintegration outcomes for young offenders who have been released from detention.

### Audit exclusions

We did not specifically assess young people:

- who are diverted from the formal criminal justice system through the use of warnings, cautions or Youth Justice Conferences
- who are convicted of an offence and sentenced to community-based supervision.

### Audit approach

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standards ASAE 3500 on performance auditing. The Standard requires the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with the auditing requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

We acquired subject matter expertise by:

- interviewing departmental staff who work with young people in detention centres and in the community
- interviewing other key stakeholders
- reviewing policies, procedures and other documents
- analysing relevant data
- examining approaches in other jurisdictions.

### **Fieldwork visits**

We visited four Juvenile Justice Centres and four Juvenile Justice Community Offices:

<b>Juvenile Justice Centres</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice Community Offices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frank Baxter</li><li>• Juniperina</li><li>• Orana</li><li>• Reiby</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campbelltown</li><li>• Burwood</li><li>• Gosford</li><li>• Dubbo Central West</li></ul>

### **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided by Juvenile Justice NSW. In particular we want to thank our liaison officers and Juvenile Justice Centre and Community Office staff who participated in interviews and provided material relevant to the audit.

### **Audit team**

Tiffany Blackett and Kellie Blakemore conducted the performance audit. Rod Longford acted as Engagement Reviewer.

### **Audit cost**

Including staff costs and overheads, the estimated cost of the audit was \$229,302.



# Performance auditing

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## **What are performance audits?**

Performance audits determine whether an agency is carrying out its activities effectively, and doing so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant laws.

The activities examined by a performance audit may include a government program, all or part of a government agency or consider particular issues which affect the whole public sector. They cannot question the merits of government policy objectives.

The Auditor-General's mandate to undertake performance audits is set out in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

## **Why do we conduct performance audits?**

Performance audits provide independent assurance to parliament and the public.

Through their recommendations, performance audits seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government agencies so that the community receives value for money from government services.

Performance audits also focus on assisting accountability processes by holding managers to account for agency performance.

Performance audits are selected at the discretion of the Auditor-General who seeks input from parliamentarians, the public, agencies and Audit Office research.

## **What happens during the phases of a performance audit?**

Performance audits have three key phases: planning, fieldwork and report writing. They can take up to nine months to complete, depending on the audit's scope.

During the planning phase the audit team develops an understanding of agency activities and defines the objective and scope of the audit.

The planning phase also identifies the audit criteria. These are standards of performance against which the agency or program activities are assessed. Criteria may be based on best practice, government targets, benchmarks or published guidelines.

At the completion of fieldwork the audit team meets with agency management to discuss all significant matters arising out of the audit. Following this, a draft performance audit report is prepared.

The audit team then meets with agency management to check that facts presented in the draft report are accurate and that recommendations are practical and appropriate.

A final report is then provided to the CEO for comment. The relevant minister and the Treasurer are also provided with a copy of the final report. The report tabled in parliament includes a response from the CEO on the report's conclusion and recommendations. In multiple agency performance audits there may be responses from more than one agency or from a nominated coordinating agency.

## **Do we check to see if recommendations have been implemented?**

Following the tabling of the report in parliament, agencies are requested to advise the Audit Office on action taken, or proposed, against each of the report's recommendations. It is usual for agency audit committees to monitor progress with the implementation of recommendations.

In addition, it is the practice of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to conduct reviews or hold inquiries into matters raised in performance audit reports. The reviews and inquiries are usually held 12 months after the report is tabled. These reports are available on the parliamentary website.

## **Who audits the auditors?**

Our performance audits are subject to internal and external quality reviews against relevant Australian and international standards.

Internal quality control review of each audit ensures compliance with Australian assurance standards. Periodic review by other Audit Offices tests our activities against best practice.

The PAC is also responsible for overseeing the performance of the Audit Office and conducts a review of our operations every four years. The review's report is tabled in parliament and available on its website.

## **Who pays for performance audits?**

No fee is charged for performance audits. Our performance audit services are funded by the NSW Parliament.

## **Further information and copies of reports**

For further information, including copies of performance audit reports and a list of audits currently in-progress, please see our website [www.audit.nsw.gov.au](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au) or contact us on 9275 7100.

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Making a difference through audit excellence.

## Our mission

To help parliament hold government accountable for its use of public resources.

## Our values

**Purpose** – we have an impact, are accountable, and work as a team.

**People** – we trust and respect others and have a balanced approach to work.

**Professionalism** – we are recognised for our independence and integrity and the value we deliver.

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