



STATEMENT FROM THE MONITOR

New Tasmanian youth justice facility at Pontville

Around 29 October 2025, Laurel House and a group of other community and legal organisations published and distributed a joint statement seeking immediate closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) and abandonment of the new Tasmanian youth justice facility at Pontville (new facility) plus some other recommendations - some consistent with the Commission of Inquiry (COI), some inconsistent.

Of course, I support the right of the signatories to express their views.

But with the proposal for the immediate closure of AYDC, to also abandon the new youth justice facility is inconsistent with the recommendation to close AYDC as soon as possible and in the context of building a new secure centre which is therapeutic, trauma-informed, and is part of a significant jigsaw of reforms contained in Recommendations 12.1 to 12.39 of the COI.

These are significant reform-based recommendations which the COI designed to address the issues in respect of Tasmania's response to institutional sexual abuse in the light of the systemic past history of harm and abuse at AYDC.

In that context not only of the recommendations, which I am responsible for monitoring in my role as Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor, but also in the underlying text, I cannot support the immediate closure of AYDC without an alternative, which provides for the safety of the community and the safety of the young person all supported by appropriate care arrangements together with broader bail facilities and improved community-based services.

I do not support the rejection and proposed review of the new facility at Pontville. I was involved in overseeing the planning of the facility as Chair of the Independent Expert Panel up to my appointment to this role and which considered the site that was selected by government after examination of many other sites.

The rejection of the proposed new youth justice facility is likely to prove to be a repudiation of a number of the recommendations designed to promote the creation of a homelike, therapeutic and trauma informed centre.

An abandonment of the new facility excludes key elements from the series of recommendations approved by government and approved by Parliament. It is a form of cherry picking, when what is approved is the whole package which the COI set out and which clearly would have addressed most of the broader concerns set out in the joint statement.

I continue to closely monitor the significant designing and planning efforts that are in place for the new facility. They are well advanced and are likely to meet the recommendations of the COI.

Further, I am concerned that adopting those ideas outlined in the joint statement would not only undermine the intention of the COI, but would leave little choice but to either delay the closure of AYDC by years or alternatively, if closed, would lead to many young people being placed in secure facilities in either the Launceston or Hobart remand prisons or Risdon prison.

It may also undermine community and political support for the significant social reform packages, which had the broad political support of the previous Parliament, for the implementation of each and every one of the recommendations of the COI, including my appointment to monitor, review and evaluate such implementation.

Finally, I note that the joint statement, and the website of Laurel House have quoted public statements made by me, which although accurate in the quotes themselves, implicitly infer that I support the ideas contained in the joint statement. Whilst some if not many parts of the joint statement are in harmony with the recommendations of the COI, some are not. The first I saw, heard or read of the joint statement was when I was provided a copy as part of the publication process.

- Robert Benjamin AM KC