

You may write under one, some, or all of the headings. Read the full list of headings and questions before you make your submission. The questions are prompts to assist you with your responses and they do not need to be answered directly.

The appropriateness of facilities in which children are detained

- How would you describe the immigration detention facility? Are there fences, checkpoints and mechanisms that limit the movement of children?
- Is there access to a natural environment for children?
- Is there private space for children and families for living and sleeping?
- Is the immigration detention facility a clean and pleasant environment?
- In your view, what is the impact of detention on children? Describe your response to the conditions of detention for children.

Write your response here:

The impact of detention on children and young adults is very significant. We have seen increased behavioural issues when children and young adults in our care spent longer time in detention.

Issues that we noticed are:

- *poor day-night routines and sleeping and eating patterns*
- *increased anxiety*
- *poor mental health*
- *more self harm and suicidal ideation*
- *inability to perform at school*
- *inability to build friendships*
- *difficulties learning independent living skills*

We noticed that the longer children and young people are in care the more severe the issues are.

The impact of the length of detention on children

- Does the timeframe of the detention have a particular impact on children? For example, is there any difference in the ways in which a child responds to immigration detention after 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year? Please give examples.

Write your response here:

As outlined in the previous question, we saw that the longer that young spent in detention the bigger the problems are. The last group of our clients had been in detention for less than 2 or 3 months and they were able to adapt reasonably well to community detention but in the past we have had clients that stayed in detention for longer and there were a lot more issues managing these clients. There were a lot of incidents, suicidal ideation and self harm and severe issues in developing trusting relationships with staff. The amount of trauma seemed to be more obvious and more on the surface then clients who spent less time in detention. Another issue with clients that spend a long time in detention is that most have very poor routines, in the detention centers they can eat when they like and there are often not too many activities. This leads for many young adults to a routine of staying up late, eating late and sleeping during the day. The problem is that because of their trauma they find the nights scarier because they worry and because of the anxiety they can not sleep. This effects in very poor sleeping patterns and increased mental unwellness.

Measures to ensure the safety of children

- Can you describe the measures to protect children from harm?
- Is there support for children who may be suffering from trauma either as a result of previous life experiences or in relation to the experience of detention?
- Please describe the security checks for children as they enter and leave immigration detention facilities. Do you think these checks are appropriate for children?

Write your response here:

Trauma Informed care is important to reduce the effects of trauma, a safe and secure environment where the child and young adult can start building trusting relationships with adults. It is also important to normalise the environment of traumatised children and young adults as much as possible including having meals together, living in a safe space, going to school with other teenagers, having activities to keep them distracted and a sense of fulfillment. This is the period in a persons life where they start forming relationships and the time to learn, study and physically and cognitively develop. Reduced opportunities lead to poverty and this leads to increased risk of illness, physically and mental. By keeping children in detention during this important stage we prevent them growing up to become healthy adults. In addition by having kids and young adults in detention they are often re-traumatised by this system, uniforms and environment where there is a lot of self harm and mental illness, an environment where there is little hope and security and officers in uniforms that can add to the negative experiences these children have with authority. These children and young adults have also often experienced physical and sexual abuse which makes them more vulnerable and may lead to children exploiting themselves in the detention centers.

Provision of education, recreation, maternal and infant health services

- Is formal education available to children? Please describe the types of education that are available. Is it appropriate for the age, the educational level and needs of the child?
- Are there playgrounds and play equipment for children?
- Can you describe the medical services and support that is available for expectant mothers and new mothers? Can you describe the medical support for babies and infants? Do you think these services are appropriate?

Write your response here:

The educational and recreational opportunities for young adults and children are very limited in the detention centers, which has a lot of implications for their further development and future as outlined in the previous question.

The separation of families across detention facilities in Australia

- Do you have experience of family separation due to immigration detention?
- Are you aware of instances of family separation as a result of immigration detention?
- What forms of contact are available for families to maintain communication?
- What efforts were made to reunite children with siblings and parents?
- What are the effects of family separation on children?

Write your response here:

No comment

The guardianship of unaccompanied children in detention in Australia

- What care and welfare services are available for children who arrive in Australia without parents or family members?
- Are the supports adequate?
- Is closed detention appropriate for unaccompanied minors? How can they be best supported?
- The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is the legal guardian for unaccompanied children in detention – is this an appropriate arrangement?

Write your response here:

We believe that closed detention is not appropriate for Unaccompanied Minors. Community detention is a much better model for these young adults. The care could be improved by more delegated responsibilities to the organisations that care for the children on a day to day basis. The restrictions do not encourage better care or more safety but just put up administrative barriers that are costly and not effective. Every item that needs to be purchased and every overnight stay request takes around 2 weeks to get approved. This creates a lot of unnecessary administration. Baptist Care also provides care to UHMs (Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors) and these processes are much simpler for both the department and our organisation.

Another issue is that the UAMs receive care 24/7 until they are 18 and when they receive a bridging visa they hardly receive any support. It would be much better to have a system (as with UHMs) that gradually reduces support to give the clients the opportunity to become more independent. This normalises the situation, is more cost effective and gives the young people a better chance to develop independent living skills.

Assessments conducted prior to transferring children to be detained in ‘regional processing countries’

- Can you describe the pre-transfer assessments conducted prior to transferring children to regional processing countries?
- Are the pre-transfer assessments appropriate for children?
- Does the Department of Immigration and Border Protection respond appropriately to the findings in the pre-transfer assessments?

Write your response here:

No comment

Progress that has been made during the 10 years

(since the Commission's 2004 report: *A last resort? National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention*)

- Have alternatives to detention such as community detention and the granting of visas been sufficiently utilised in the past 10 years?
- Have the living conditions for children in detention facilities improved in the past 10 years? What have been the changes?
- Have there been changes to laws and policies dealing with children in immigration detention to ensure that they comply with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*?

Write your response here:

No comment