



## Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

### **Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023**

#### **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA

Reference: Hearing on 14 November 2023, Annual Report of Community Services Directorate

In relation to: Youth Justice Policy and Services and Community Groups in Bimberi

The Annual Report states that the government is focussing 'on improving and building relationships with community service providers and agencies to deliver programs in custody that foster meaningful connection and supported pathways for people back in the community' (p. 92). I have asked questions about this on many occasions, and the last time was told that the only legal restriction is having WWVP registration.

1. What are the known obstacles that have made it difficult or less likely for community groups 'to deliver programs in custody that foster meaningful connection and supported pathways for [young] people back in the community'?
2. What steps is the government doing to address these obstacles and build capacity for community groups to deliver programs in custody?

Minister Davidson: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. For community services to deliver programs to young people in custody they must meet the minimum legislative requirement which is holding a valid Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration as previously advised.

Beyond this legislative requirement, the community service must undertake risk assessments and must meet the safety and security protocols of the centre. Providers may be required to seek exemption to bring items into the centre. At times the programs proposed, or equipment suggested by community services providers do not meet Bimberi Youth Justice Centre's (Bimberi) safety requirements and the Support and Services Team will work with the provider to consider how a modified or alternate program can be offered.

The safety and security considerations also consider the dynamics between young people at the centre. This can impact the number of young people who can participate in programs all at once, or which specific young people can interact with each other. Again, the team at Bimberi will work to try to get as many young people engaging with the provider as possible

but may have to schedule several visits for this to occur or break the cohort into smaller groups for sessions.

There must be a Bimberi staff member available to accompany and supervise all visitors coming into the centre. Having visits pre-booked assists Bimberi in ensuring that there are staff available to supervise.

Logistically it can sometimes be difficult to schedule community services into to the centre when there are a range of other service providers also in operation. Specifically, within Bimberi it is compulsory to attend school up to the age of 17 years and most of our young people over 17 years choose to participate in education. In addition to this, young people also have appointments scheduled with Custodial Mental Health Services, Primary Health Services, their CYPs case managers and legal appointments including attendance at Court. Further, visits with families and friends are scheduled on afternoons and weekends. This then leaves limited time, apart from weekends, afterschool hours and school holidays, for the delivery of programs by other services, without impacting on other services the young person is required or may wish to engage with.

Bimberi has found it challenging to find services who are willing to provide programs on weekends or in the afternoon. Also, many community services run programs in the community during the school holidays or have lower staff level due to leave at these times, so are limited in their ability to deliver programs at Bimberi.

As noted above, given the small numbers within Bimberi and the mix of remanded and sentenced young people, there are associated challenges with delivering manualised programs, that are commonly delivered in larger correctional settings. Given Bimberi's transient population with high numbers of young people on remand, it can be difficult to ensure that there is a consistent group who participate in a program from beginning to end.

2. Within Bimberi, maintaining strong communication between the Centre and the community service ensures that any foreseen obstacle in the provision of programs is addressed early to the best of Bimberi's ability.

The Bimberi Support and Services Team often contact community services directly to discuss the needs of the young people in the centre and how that service may be able to best assist. At other times, the community service initiates the contact, identifying that they would like to deliver a program within Bimberi. Any community service member can contact the centre and ask to speak to a member of the Support and Services Team.

In both circumstances the first steps are for the Support and Services Team and the community service provider to meet and discuss in more specific detail what the needs are of the young people and how the community service would like to work towards meeting those needs. Through this meeting, community service providers are also informed about general processes at Bimberi to ensure they understand the context they would be working in, the requirements for services to come into the centre and some of the logistics regarding coordination of services.

In other circumstances if the proposal is for a more general program that is available for all young people or a specific cohort of young people, then the community service provider is asked to submit a written proposal for the program; outlining the purpose/goals and target audience of the program, details of delivery method including time/length and potential

availability of the community service providers and any details related to resources that might be needed to deliver the program.

The Support and Services Team will liaise with the community services provider if there are any aspects of the proposal that need to be worked through and once those are resolved the program will be scheduled.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature: 

Date: 28/11/23

By the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Ms Emma Davidson MLA