

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE “CHILDREN NEED HELP, NOT HARM”: 20th April 2022.
SRWA, YACWA, ALSWA, & CPAC calls for Raising the Age, increased protections in
response to OICS report showing and human rights violations inside Banksia Hill
Juvenile Detention Centre- one day after \$25 million government funding boost.**

SRWA, YACWA, and CPAC welcome the state governments funding announcement to improve conditions at Banksia Hill, but the seriously alarming conditions identified by OICS in WA’s children’s prison demonstrate the urgent need to move children under 14, and young people on remand out of the centre, and to cease use of the ISU until conditions improve.

- Social Reinvestment WA (SRWA) contacted the Department of Justice and the Minister for Corrective Services on 14 February 2022 raising concerns of human rights violations at Banksia Hill following news of young people kept in cells for up to 22 hours a day.
- SRWA called for [6 key areas for immediate action](#), of which 3 have been responded to with government commitments. SRWA also recommended that Banksia Hill immediately move children under the age of 14, and young people who have not yet been sentenced, out of the centre considering the crisis conditions.
- On Tuesday 19th April, OICS tabled a report in parliament detailing numerous human rights violations at Banksia Hill, and suicide pacts among young people held in ISU.
- On Monday 18th April, the WA Government announced a commitment of \$25 million to improve conditions at the centre.

Comments attributed to Daniel Morrison, Social Reinvestment WA, Co-Chairperson:

“We welcome the increase in staffing numbers, move to a therapeutic and rehabilitative model, and introduction of an Aboriginal Response and Crisis Care unit. However, the OICS report shows WA urgently needs to move children under 14, and young people on remand, out of Banksia Hill.”

“At risk children and young people need access to programs and interventions on their country and in their communities, not in prisons. Community led Justice Reinvestment sites such as Olabud Doogethu are already working to reduce youth crime in the Kimberley.”

Comments attributed to Sophie Stewart, Social Reinvestment WA, Manager:

“Improvements in Banksia Hill are desperately needed to maintain a basic level of care for these young people, however the long term solution is not going to be found within the walls of a children’s prison.”

“Prison is not an appropriate or particularly effective intervention for young people needing intense support. Children need help, not harm. Ultimately we need a shift in policy that sees an end to the incarceration of children under 14. SRWA are releasing a blueprint next month detailing evidence based reforms to fix our youth justice system.”

Comments attributed to Mason Rothwell, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia:

“Young people and the youth sector have repeatedly told us the environment of Banksia Hill is not therapeutic and is causing additional harm. Roughly fifty per cent of young people entering Banksia Hill return in two years.”

“Banksia Hill Detention Centre requires immediate attention to uphold the basic human rights of young people, but Western Australia needs to take urgent steps to address the broader youth justice system. Evidence-based youth work saves lives and should be prioritised to support young people in their communities.”

Comments attributed to Peter Collins, Director Legal Services, Aboriginal Legal Services WA:

“The present approach to juvenile justice system has been failing children, their families and the community for many years. Punitive approaches do not work. Locking vulnerable children up does not work.”

“While the facilities at Banksia Hill Detention Centre are in dire need of improvement, this should not be the primary focus. Raising the age and keeping children out of custody through prevention, diversion and trauma informed therapeutic approaches is the only way forward.”

“The government has an opportunity which it may never have again to reimagine the way in which it deals with young people, especially young Aboriginal people, who come into contact with the justice system. It should not waste it.”

ENDS.

About Social Reinvestment WA:

Social Reinvestment WA is a coalition of almost 30 non-profit organisations campaigning since 2014 to end the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in WA. They lead development of justice reinvestment solutions in partnership with communities, and run the Raise the Age campaign in WA. www.socialreinvestmentwa.org.au/raise-the-age

About YACWA:

YACWA is the peak body for young people and the youth sector in Western Australia. YACWA operates primarily as a human rights organisation, seeking to address the exclusion of young people in a changing society. YACWA is a key member of SRWA. www.yacwa.org.au

About CPAC:

The Children’s Policy Advisory Council brings together 30 expert WACOSS Members in order to ensure a cohesive whole of sector response is continued to be developed around children’s policy. <https://www.wacoss.org.au/networks/childrens-policy-advisory-council/>

About Aboriginal Legal Service of WA:

ALSWA is currently the largest community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal organization in Australia. It provides legal aid services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Western Australia. www.als.org.au/

Media Contact:

Sophie Stewart

Campaign & Coalition Manager, Social Reinvestment WA

Ph: 0434 968 276 | E: sophie@wacoss.org.au