



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 298

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Police, Hon Lia Finocchiaro MLA:

Watch House Population and Children in Custody

1. The answer to Written Question No. 48 of the 15th Assembly provided, in table form, the average daily number of people detained in each police custody centre for each of September, October and November 2024. In that same form, please provide the average daily number of persons detained in each police custody centre for each month from May 2025 to the most recent complete month.
 - a. How many persons were held in police watch houses across the Northern Territory on the day immediately before the commencement of the bail amendments in May 2025, and how many are held today, by facility?
 - b. What is the maximum number of persons that should be detained at each police custody centre, and what is the designed capacity of each in cells and in persons?
 - c. On how many days since May 2025 did the number detained at each centre exceed that maximum?
 - d. How many people were held on remand in Northern Territory correctional facilities on the day immediately before the commencement of those amendments, and how many are held on remand today?
 - e. If the remand population in correctional facilities does not fall to you, which Minister is responsible for it?
2. Since the commencement of those amendments in May 2025, how many children and young people have been held on remand in police watch houses?
 - a. How many children and young people were held in a police watch house over the same period other than on remand, including in pre-charge custody? Please state the basis on which each group is identified.

- b. Please provide the number aged 10 or 11, the number aged 12 or 13, and the number aged 14 to 17. The age of criminal responsibility was lowered from 12 to 10 with effect from October 2024.
 - c. What was the average and the longest period for which a child was held?
 - d. Where a figure for an individual watch house is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
 - e. If age at the time of detention is not compiled in that form, in which system is the date of birth of a person received into custody recorded, and in what format?
- 3. Of the children and young people held in police watch houses since May 2025, how many were subsequently not charged, had charges withdrawn, or were dealt with without a conviction being recorded?
 - a. Where a figure is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total for each category.
- 4. Since May 2025, how many children and young people held in police watch houses have required medical treatment at the watch house or transfer to hospital?
 - a. In which system are such incidents recorded?
 - b. How many of those incidents were reported to the Ombudsman, to the Children's Commissioner, or to any other oversight body, and to which body?
- 5. The Ombudsman's Watch House Investigation Report records the operational impact on policing of high numbers of persons held in watch houses. How many priority one incidents were not responded to within the Force's target response time in 2025–26?
 - a. How does that figure compare with each of the two preceding years?
 - b. Is the reason for a delayed response recorded, and in which system?
 - c. If the Force does not record whether watch house duties contributed to a delayed response, has any analysis of that question been undertaken, and on what date?

6. Were there any periods in 2025–26 during which no watch house in the Northern Territory was being used for the ongoing detention of any person?
 - a. If so, please provide the dates and duration of each such period.
 - b. If there were none, on how many days in 2025–26 was at least one person held in a watch house for longer than 24 hours?
 - c. In which system is the occupancy of each watch house recorded, and at what interval?
7. How many officer shifts were assigned to watch house duties in 2025–26, expressed in full-time equivalent terms, and how does that compare with each of the two preceding years?
 - a. What is the estimated cost of those duties in 2025–26?
8. The Northern Territory Police Force has released data on young people held in watch houses in response to requests under the Information Act, including data covering the period March to September 2025. In the same form as those releases, please provide, from 1 October 2025 to the most recent complete month:
 - a. the number of individual young people taken into custody at each watch house, by month;
 - b. the number of youth custody incidents at each watch house, by month;
 - c. the number of those young people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, by month;
 - d. Where a monthly figure for an individual watch house is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide monthly total.
 - e. How many requests under the Information Act for data on young people held in watch houses has the Force received since 1 January 2025, how many were granted, and what fee was charged for each?
 - f. Is this data published anywhere other than in response to a request under the Information Act and, if not, will the Force publish it and from what date?