



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 195

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Police, Hon Lia Finocchiaro MLA:

Watch Houses

1. Please advise how many people were held in each of the NT watch houses as of 31 January 2026? Please provide a breakdown for each facility, and of those prisoners please provide.

The following tables and data relate to the primary Police Watch Houses across the Northern Territory Police Force (NTPF).

a. how many identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Police Watch Houses	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Alice Springs	62	0
Alyangula	1	0
Darwin	9	0
Katherine	10	0
Nhulunbuy	1	0
Palmerston	75	4
Tennant Creek	11	0

- Data captured over a 24 hour period on 31 January 2026

b. how many were on remand?

Police Watch Houses	Remand
Alice Springs	28
Alyangula	0
Darwin	0
Katherine	3
Nhulunbuy	0
Palmerston	50
Tennant Creek	0

- Data captured over a 24 hour period on 31 January 2026

c. How many were in police custody; and

Refer to question 1d.

d. How many were in corrections custody?

Police Watch Houses	Police	Corrections
Alice Springs	34	28
Alyangula	1	0
Darwin	9	0
Katherine	7	3
Nhulunbuy	1	0
Palmerston	62	17
Tennant Creek	11	0

2. Could you advise the average number of people who have been held in watch houses each month from January 2025 – January 2026? Please provide data for each facility.

Police Watch Houses	2025 Jan	2025 Feb	2025 Mar	2025 Apr	2025 May	2025 Jun	2025 Jul	2025 Aug	2025 Sep	2025 oct	2025 Nov	2025 Dec	2026 Jan
Alice Springs	14	14	12	12	9	12	14	12	12	12	8	19	24
Alyangula	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1
Darwin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7
Katherine	6	6	6	6	5	4	4	5	5	7	5	6	6
Nhulunbuy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Palmerston	19	25	28	30	31	28	27	29	29	32	29	32	32
Peter McAulay Centre	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tennant Creek	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	4	3	3

- Data is the average count per month.
- Darwin Watch House commenced operations in December 2025 on a limited basis from Thursday to Sunday each week and accepts persons in custody only under sections 128 or 133AB of the Police Administration Act.
- For Darwin - Refer to the Department of Corrections (DoC) for the months of January 2025 to November 2025.
- For Peter McAulay Centre - Refer to the Department of Corrections (DoC) for the months of March 2025 to January 2026.
- The Palmerston Watch House is no longer used by the DoC and the count relates to police custody only.

3. Could you advise the highest number of people held in each of the watch houses for each month from January 2025 to January 2026? Please provide data for each facility.

Police Watch Houses	2025 Jan	2025 Feb	2025 Mar	2025 Apr	2025 May	2025 Jun	2025 Jul	2025 Aug	2025 Sep	2025 Oct	2025 Nov	2025 Dec	2026 Jan
Alice Springs	61	37	48	50	41	50	56	69	56	63	24	71	86
Alyangula	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	8	12
Darwin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	32
Katherine	55	41	37	27	19	14	14	15	18	34	20	35	24
Nhulunbuy	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	3
Palmerston	53	113	146	133	143	129	131	137	105	90	82	87	84
Peter McAulay Centre	32	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tennant Creek	13	13	17	11	10	10	11	14	22	13	24	18	15

- Data identifies the highest daily number of persons held on a single day within each month, with the specific date of this occurrence not recorded as part of the data set.
- Darwin Watch House commenced operations in December 2025 on a limited basis from Thursday to Sunday each week and accepts persons in custody only under sections 128 or 133AB of the Police Administration Act.
- For Darwin - Refer to the Department of Corrections (DoC) for the months of January 2025 to November 2025.
- For Peter McAulay Centre - Refer to the Department of Corrections (DoC) for the months of March 2025 to January 2026.

4. What operational and physical changes have been made to the Darwin watch house to make it suitable for longer-term stays?

The Department of Corrections (DoC) has assumed control of the Darwin Watch House since March 2023. Refer any questions regarding longer term stays to the DoC.

5. For the month of January 2026, for each Watch House/Police Prison in the NT, please advise:

a. What was the average number of prisoners held?

Police Watch Houses	2026 Jan
Alice Springs	24
Alyangula	1
Darwin	7
Katherine	6
Nhulunbuy	1
Palmerston	32
Tennant Creek	3

- Data is the daily average

b. What was the highest number of prisoners held in a day?

Refer to question 3.

c. What was the highest number of prisoners held in a cell?

This information is not captured in a format that can be readily extracted from NT Police systems and would require a significant manual review of every individual prisoner custody records.

d. What was the longest amount of time that a prisoner was held in this facility?

Police Watch Houses	Longest time spent in custody (hours)
Alice Springs	432
Alyangula	264
Darwin	148.8
Katherine	134.4
Nhulunbuy	112.8
Palmerston	19.2
Tennant Creek	12.0

- Data is the highest number of hours recorded for an individual stay during the month of January 2026

e. What was the average length of stay for prisoners?

Police Watch Houses	Average length of stay (hours)
Alice Springs	60
Alyangula	72
Darwin	7.2
Katherine	50.4
Nhulunbuy	7.2
Palmerston	43.2
Tennant Creek	26.4

- Data is the average number of hours recorded for an individual stay during the month of January 2026

- f. If there was an allocated space for exercise, and if so, how often could prisoners access it?**

There is no designated exercise area available for prisoners in either Palmerston, Darwin or Alice Springs.

- g. For how long during each 24-hour period the lights were switched off?**

The lights in Police Watch Houses always remain on. They may be dimmed during night-time hours at the discretion of the Watch Housekeeper.

- h. How often prisoners could shower in a bathroom outside their cell?**

Prisoners may shower once daily, upon request, subject to operational demands.

- i. How often prisoners could spend outside their cell on a daily basis?**

Persons in custody generally remain confined to their cells, except for specific purposes such as reception processes, showering, telephone calls, charging or bailing procedures and release.

- j. How many phone calls were made by prisoners?**

The total number of telephone calls made by persons in custody is not recorded within current police information systems.