

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT

NT Royal Commission Response Background Paper

1.2 Fact Sheet - Facts about Current Youth Justice Detainees

Issue

Factual information about the nature and circumstances of children currently detained in the youth justice system is critical to understanding the nature, extent and appropriateness of detention of children.

Evidence

The young people detained in the youth justice system are not, as many believe, predominantly people convicted of serious and violent crimes. In addition, many of those detained are very young.

Data

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that on an average day in 2015-16 in the NT, Aboriginal young people made up 96% of the detention population; and 71% of young people in detention were unsentenced

Observation by Danila Dilba Health Service staff providing services at Don Dale (where the majority of detainees are held) indicates that:

- Between 60 and 70% of young people detained are on remand, not sentenced.
- A significant number of very young people are detained at any time – as young as 11 years. Danila Dilba Health Service staff have noted that on some occasions more than 20% of detainees are aged 14 or under.
- Less than half of the young people are sentenced or remanded for serious and violent crimes.
- The vast majority – 100% on some days – of detainees are Aboriginal young people.
- A significant proportion of young people in detention are in the care of Territory Families child protection services.

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for 2015-2016, see: Youth Justice Fact Sheet No. 77, Northern Territory: Youth Justice Supervision in 2015-16.

Observations of DDHS staff.